

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1403
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Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that the impact of good teachers on a student's academic progress is generally agreed upon as one of the most significant factors in the outcome of a student's academic success. S.B. 1403 seeks to increase the overall support for and quality of teachers.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the State Board for Educator Certification in SECTION 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 1403 reenacts and amends Section 21.044, Education Code, as amended by Chapters 635 (S.B. 866) and 926 (S.B. 1620), Acts of the 82nd Legislature, Regular Session, 2011, to require each educator preparation program to provide information regarding the skills that educators are required to possess, the responsibilities educators are required to accept, and the high expectations for students in Texas; the effect of supply and demand forces on the educator workforce in Texas; the performance over time of the educator preparation program; the importance of building strong classroom management skills; and the state framework for teacher and principal evaluation, including the procedures followed in accordance with statutory provisions relating to educator appraisals and incentives.

S.B. 1403 amends the Education Code to requires rules of the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) proposed under statutory provisions relating to educator certification to provide that a person, other than a person seeking career and technology education certification, is not eligible for admission to an educator preparation program, including an alternative educator preparation program, unless the following conditions are met:

- the person satisfies minimum grade point average requirements prescribed by SBEC, not to exceed an overall grade point average of at least 2.75 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on any course work previously attempted at a public or private institution of higher education or a grade point average of at least 2.75 on a four-point scale or the equivalent for the last 60 semester credit hours attempted at a public or private institution of higher education; and
- if the person is seeking initial certification, the person has successfully completed at least 15 semester credit hours in the subject-specific content area in which the person is seeking certification if the person is seeking certification to teach mathematics or science at or above grade level seven or 12 semester credit hours in the subject-specific content area in which the person is seeking certification if the person is not seeking certification to teach mathematics or science at or above grade level seven; or the person has achieved a satisfactory level of performance on a content certification examination, which may be a content certification examination administered by a vendor approved by the commissioner of education for purposes of administering such an examination for the year for which the person is applying for program admission.

S.B. 1403 requires SBEC's rules to permit an educator preparation program to admit in extraordinary circumstances a person who fails to satisfy the minimum grade point average requirement, provided that not more than 10 percent of the total number of persons admitted to the program in a year fail to satisfy the requirement and, for each person admitted who fails to satisfy the requirement, the director of the program determines and certifies, based on documentation provided by the person, that the person's work, business, or career experience demonstrates achievement comparable to the academic achievement represented by the grade point average requirement.

S.B. 1403 requires SBEC to determine the satisfactory level of performance required for each educator certification examination and, for the issuance of a generalist certificate, to require a satisfactory level of examination performance in each core subject covered by the examination. The bill prohibits SBEC from requiring more than 45 days to elapse before a person is authorized to retake an examination.

S.B. 1403 specifies that the receipt of a written copy of a teacher's evaluation to which each teacher is entitled on its completion is to be prompt and requires a school district, in addition to conducting a complete appraisal of an educator as frequently as required by law, to require that appropriate components of the appraisal process, such as classroom observations and walk-throughs, occur more frequently as necessary to ensure that a teacher receives adequate evaluation and guidance. The bill requires a school district to give priority to conducting appropriate components more frequently for inexperienced teachers or experienced teachers with identified areas of deficiency; to use a teacher's consecutive appraisals from more than one year, if available, in making the district's employment decisions and developing career recommendations for the teacher; and to notify a teacher of the results of any appraisal of the teacher in a timely manner so that the appraisal may be used as a developmental tool by the district and the teacher to improve the overall performance of the teacher.

S.B. 1403 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), each year and using only available funds and resources from public or private sources and in consultation with the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, to collect information from school districts regarding salaries paid to employees entitled to the minimum salary. The bill requires TEA, based on the information collected, to determine the median salaries of teachers in Texas based on grade level and subject matter taught, to post the median salaries on TEA's Internet website, and to report the median salaries to members of the legislature. The bill also requires TEA, each year and using only available funds and resources from public or private sources, to analyze the cost of living in each region of Texas to determine if teacher salaries paid by school districts in a region are comparable to salaries paid in that region to persons engaged in comparable professions and requires TEA to post the results of the analysis on TEA's Internet website and report the results to members of the legislature.

S.B. 1403 requires TEA, each year and using only available funds and resources from public or private sources, to conduct a statewide survey of working conditions for public school teachers. The bill requires the survey to seek information regarding factors that affect the quality of teacher working conditions and sets out examples of such factors. The bill requires TEA, in designing the survey, to evaluate the teacher working conditions survey conducted in North Carolina and incorporate any elements in that survey that TEA considers appropriate for use in Texas and to seek to produce a survey that can be used as a resource by a school district in improving the district's instructional environment and in evaluating and setting standards for principals and superintendents. The bill prohibits a teacher from being required to participate in the survey and requires the survey to be designed to prevent the disclosure of the identity of a survey participant in order to encourage the uninhibited participation of teachers. The bill requires TEA to release aggregate results of the survey to the public and adds a temporary provision, set to expire January 1, 2015, to require TEA to complete the initial survey not later than September 1, 2014.

S.B. 1403 requires TEA, using only available funds and resources from public or private sources, to periodically conduct an audit of the professional development requirements applicable to educators in Texas, including state and federal requirements and requirements imposed by school districts. The bill requires TEA, based on audit results, to seek to eliminate conflicting requirements and consolidate duplicative requirements through the following methods, as appropriate: taking administrative action, encouraging school districts to make appropriate changes to district policies, or recommending statutory changes to the legislature. The bill adds a temporary provision, set to expire September 1, 2014, to require TEA to complete the initial audit not later than August 1, 2014. The bill requires TEA to provide guidance to school districts regarding high-quality professional development and the outcomes expected to result from providing that caliber of professional development.

S.B. 1403 changes one of the authorized uses of funding provided to school districts for mentor teachers from the provision of scheduled time for mentor teachers to provide mentoring to assigned classroom teachers to the provision of scheduled release time for mentor teachers and the classroom teachers to whom they are assigned for meeting and engaging in mentoring activities. The bill requires the commissioner of education to report annually to the legislature regarding the effectiveness of school district mentoring programs. The bill adds temporary provisions, set to expire January 31, 2015, to require the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of representatives, not later than November 1, 2013, to form an advisory committee to evaluate the implementation of statutory provisions relating to educator mentoring and to make recommendations for improvement; to require the committee, with administrative support provided by TEA, to develop recommended guidelines that align teacher induction and mentoring activities with expectations for new teachers based on teaching practice standards; and to require the committee to submit a report of its recommendations to the legislature not later than January 1, 2015.

S.B. 1403 requires TEA, SBEC, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, not later than September 1, 2014, to jointly review existing standards for preparation and admission that are applicable to educator preparation programs, including stakeholder input in the review and development of those standards, and develop and implement modifications necessary to reflect updated standards for the teaching profession. The bill specifies that, to the extent of any conflict, the bill's provisions prevail over another act of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, relating to nonsubstantive additions to and corrections in enacted codes.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2013.