

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1555
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Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that great teaching requires the mastery of many skills and that a strong understanding of content is critical to teacher effectiveness. Texas requires certification examinations to ensure that its teachers meet a minimum standard of subject matter knowledge. However, the parties contend that at the elementary school level, the content examinations currently used for certification do not provide an accurate picture of a teaching candidate's content mastery. At all levels, different subjects are often tested together, with a single cumulative score used to determine whether a candidate passes. There is no requirement for a candidate to pass any of the subsections of an examination because only the cumulative score is reported to certifying agencies and school employers. The parties express concern that this means that a candidate could answer all of the questions incorrectly on the algebra section of the examination, still receive a certificate, and even go on to teach algebra.

The parties also note that one factor further limiting the usefulness of certification examinations is that the passing standard for the overall score is a standard deviation below the average test score, which means that a teaching candidate can earn a score well below the mean and still become a teacher in the Texas.

S.B. 1555 seeks to address these concerns by amending current law relating to requirements for state educator certification examinations.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 1555 amends the Education Code to require the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), not later than January 1, 2014, to determine the satisfactory level of performance required for each educator certification examination. The bill requires SBEC, for the issuance of a generalist certificate, to require a satisfactory level of examination performance in each core subject covered by the examination.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.