

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1555
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Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Great teaching requires the mastery of many skills and a strong understanding of content is critical to teacher effectiveness. Texas requires licensing examinations to ensure that its teachers meet a minimum standard of subject-matter knowledge.

However, at the elementary school level, the content examinations currently used for licensing 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 because only the cumulative score is reported to certifying agencies and school employers.

This means, for example, that a candidate could answer all of the questions incorrectly on the algebra section of the exam, and still receive his or her license. That teacher could even go on to teach algebra.

Further limiting the usefulness of licensing examinations is that the passing standard for the overall score is a standard deviation below the average test score. This means that a teaching candidate can earn a score well below the mean and still become a teacher in the State of Texas.

S.B. 1555 amends the Education Code to require that the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) propose rules requiring a teacher to perform satisfactorily on each section of an examination in order for an educator to be considered to have performed satisfactorily on the examination as a whole. The bill further provides that SBEC establish for each examination a rigorous minimum score indicating satisfactory performance.

As proposed, S.B. 1555 amends current law relating to requirements for state educator certification examinations.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the State Board for Educator Certification is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 21.048, Education Code) and SECTION 2 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 21.048(a), Education Code, to require that the rules proposed by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) prescribing comprehensive examinations for each class of certificate issued by SBEC require each educator to perform satisfactorily on each section of an examination for an educator to be considered to have performed satisfactorily on the examination as a whole, and establish for each examination a rigorous minimum score indicating satisfactory performance.

SECTION 2. Requires SBEC to propose rules relating to certification examinations as provided by Section 21.048(a), Education Code, as amended by this Act, not later than January 1, 2014.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2013.