

SUBJECT: Relating to teacher mentoring, certification, and service bonuses

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Sadler, Dunnam, Grusendorf, Hardcastle, Hochberg, Olivo, Smith  
0 nays  
2 absent — Dutton, Oliveira

WITNESSES: For — None  
Against — Joe Roberts, Reform Party of Dallas County

BACKGROUND: A shortage of teachers has forced Texas' education agencies to focus additional resources on recruiting and retaining new teachers. Districts need more teachers to fill vacancies created by increasing student enrollment and retiring teachers. One of the main problems is the high attrition rate of new teachers. On average, 20 percent or more of all new teachers do not return to the classroom to teach a second year. A report by the Texas Center for Educational Research notes that of the teachers who began teaching from 1993 to 1995, between 13 percent and 19 percent left the profession after the first year, and by the end of the third year, 35 percent to 43 percent had quit teaching. The shortage has hit low-performing schools especially hard.

DIGEST: **Teacher mentoring and induction.** CSHB 1143 would require the education commissioner to make grants to school districts using funds appropriated for purposes of this section. The commissioner would have discretionary authority, but grants would be limited to a maximum of \$3,000 for each new teacher holding a school district teaching permit or an alternative certification, and \$1,000 for each new teacher who graduated from an education preparatory program or came to Texas from another state.

A district would have to use these funds only to support:

- ! a mentor or induction program for new teachers;
- ! employment of new teachers under a 12-month contract providing for

- significant professional development and training;
- ! signing bonuses for new teachers in shortage areas; or
- ! payment of college tuition for appropriate semester credit hours received by a new teacher.

**Alternative certification for bachelors degree holders.** The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) could issue a teaching certification to a person who held a bachelor's degree with an academic major or interdisciplinary academic major other than education that was related to at least one subject in the prescribed Texas curriculum, and who performed satisfactorily on the teacher certification exam. Persons with a bachelor's degree related to one curriculum area only would be limited to certification to teach only in that area.

**Certification of out-of-state teachers.** The bill would permit SBEC to issue a teaching certificate to a teacher holding a certificate or other credential issued by another state, who had performed satisfactorily on a teacher certification exam that was similar to and at least as rigorous as the Texas teacher certification exam. This would apply to certificates issued on or after September 1, 2001. Certificates issued prior to that date would be governed by the law in effect on the date the certificate was issued, and the former law would be continued in effect for that purpose.

**Bonuses for service at low-performing school campuses.** A teacher or principal who was identified by the commissioner as an experienced, extraordinary educator and who agreed to serve at a low-performing school campus for three years would be entitled to a bonus of not more than \$3,000, as determined by the commissioner. The commissioner would award bonuses from funds appropriated for that purpose.

The commissioner would have to adopt criteria for identifying experienced, extraordinary educators. The criteria would have to include:

- ! demonstrated ability to improve student performance;
- ! subject matter expertise;
- ! if applicable, performance by the educator's students or former students on the Scholastic Assessment Test, the American College Test, TAAS, and in college; and

! any other criteria the commissioner deemed appropriate.

The bonus would have to be paid at the beginning of the first year in which the educator served at the low-performing campus. An educator who did not serve the entire three-year period would have to repay the bonus. The bill also would require SBEC to impose sanctions on an educator who received a bonus but did not serve the entire period. The commissioner and SBEC could waive repayment and sanctions for good cause.

**Immunity from liability for professional employees.** The bill would amend current law exempting professional employees from personal liability for any act incident to or within the scope of the duties of his or her position, except where a professional employee used excessive force or was negligent and caused bodily harm. The bill would make this section expressly applicable to a professional employee of a school district who provided personnel information on a current or former employee to another school or district.

CSHB 1143 would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001. The bill would apply beginning with the 2001-2002 school year.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

**Teacher mentoring and induction.** Providing districts with the means to support beginning teachers would help keep teachers in the classroom and would alleviate the teacher shortage. Teacher retention is the easiest part of the teacher shortage to address. Retaining new teachers saves time and money associated with recruiting and interviewing additional teachers, reduces the need for long-term substitute teachers, and results in a more experienced and qualified teaching staff. The top complaint among teachers who leave the profession is lack of mentoring and support in their first year of teaching. Some professional organizations, such as a national organization of music teachers, provide mentoring to support new teachers and encourage them to remain in teaching. The Legislature should be encouraging SBEC, SBOE, and school districts to develop best practices for teacher mentoring.

**Alternative certification for bachelors degree holder.** Alternative certification would allow Texas to fill empty school classrooms with

knowledgeable instructors. Alternative certification would allow retired individuals to give something back to their communities by pursuing a second career in teaching. It also would allow individuals in other career fields to bring their expertise and knowledge to the classroom for the benefit of Texas students. Individuals only would be certified to teach in areas in which they had shown expertise. This would not cost the state and would alleviate teacher shortages significantly. Alternative certification would be preferable to the emergency teacher certification that many districts now employ, which provides no guarantee of the knowledge or expertise of an emergency-certified teacher. Alternative certification would help alleviate teacher shortages in rural areas, where it is often hard to attract teachers, because evidence shows that Texas retirees tend to move to smaller towns and rural areas.

**Certification of out-of-state teachers.** Allowing reciprocity with other states would ease a significant barrier to entry for teachers moving to Texas. Due to the teacher shortage, districts have focused their recruitment efforts on attracting out-of-state teachers. However, a teacher licensed in another state must take the Texas teacher certification exam in order to obtain a Texas teaching license. Also, teachers in military families are affected by Texas' lack of reciprocity. A military spouse teacher moving to Texas would have to take the Texas teacher certification exam in order to obtain a Texas teaching certificate, which discourages some teachers from doing so. This is a loss to Texas.

**Bonuses for service at low-performing school campuses.** Top notch educators have many employment choices, particularly when there is a teacher shortage. Low-performing campuses often have a hard time recruiting teachers to work with kids who are falling behind educationally at an early age. Bonuses would help attract top educators to low-performing schools, thus improving the quality of education offered at those campuses.

**Immunity from liability for professional employees.** This provision would clarify current law by expressly stating that the "truth in hiring" immunity applies to school district employees.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

**Teacher mentoring and induction.** The bill should not permit school districts to use grant money for signing bonuses. It would permit school districts to use the money to attract teachers from other districts instead of providing professional development for new teachers. The bill would not provide any standards or guidelines for a mentoring program, nor would it define a mentor. It would not even require a district to use the money for a mentoring program. In addition, there is no data demonstrating that signing bonuses are effective in recruiting or retaining teachers.

**Alternative certification for bachelors degree holder.** This form of alternative certification would not help raise the educational standard. It would allow a person with no training in teaching to be fully certified as a teacher. A person who holds a degree in a subject and is knowledgeable in that area is not necessarily qualified to teach. This form of alternative certification is insulting to certified teachers. Texas should treat teaching as a profession, like medicine, law, or pharmacy, and require appropriate training before issuing a license. This alternative certification would be a way to reduce salary costs for school districts, because a person holding the certification would be less expensive to hire than a certified teacher with adequate professional development. This form of certification essentially allows districts to give up on finding qualified, certified teachers.

During Connecticut's teacher shortage, the state took the opposite approach of this bill. The state required higher standards, more exams, and required all new teachers to participate in a mentoring program. In addition, the state required mandatory training in the art of teaching. The state also significantly raised teacher salaries. Instead of watering down the profession, the state raised the bar. Connecticut now has a teacher surplus.

**Bonuses for service at low-performing school campuses.** A \$3,000 bonus would not do much to attract top teachers to low-performing campuses. This amounts to "combat pay" and would be an insult to teachers who have chosen to teach at low-performing campuses for reasons other than financial gain.

**Immunity from liability for professional employees.** This provision would allow employees to slander teachers to future employers and face no consequences. The bill should provide a safeguard against slander.

OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:

**Teacher mentoring and induction.** Mentoring and induction are important, but the grant program that CSHB 1143 would establish would not go far enough. To solve the teacher shortage, Texas must work with institutions of higher education to refine teacher education programs, and encourage top students to pursue a teaching career.

**Immunity from liability for professional employees.** This provision is not necessary because existing “truth in hiring” laws already apply to school employees.

NOTES:

The committee substitute removed provisions relating to parental notification of the qualifications of district teachers. Under the substitute, the commissioner would determine the amount of any bonuses issued to educators under specified maximum amounts rather than setting the amount by statute. The substitute would authorize SBEC to issue a certificate to an educator who held a certificate or other credential issued by another state and performed satisfactorily on an examination similar to and at least as rigorous as the examination required for educators in this state.

LBB estimates the bill would cost \$62,232,914 through the biennium ending August 31, 2003. LBB estimates an additional fiscal impact in 2004 (\$31,309, 240), 2005 (\$32,652,806), and 2006 (\$34,252,806).

This bill originally was part of HB 500 by Grusendorf, which the Public Education Committee considered HB 500 in a public hearing on February 20.