

SUBJECT: Stipends for certain nationally certified teachers

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 10 ayes — Eissler, Hochberg, Allen, Aycock, Farias, Jackson, Olivo, Patrick, Shelton, Weber

0 nays

1 absent — Dutton

WITNESSES: For — Cheryl Bollish, Texas Partnership for Accomplished Teaching; Pascal Forgione, Austin ISD; Vernagene Mott, Pflugerville ISD.
(*Registered, but did not testify:* Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Amanda Brownson, Texas School Alliance; Nan Clayton, League of Women Voters-Texas; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Dwight Harris, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Alejandra Martin, Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: The Educator Excellence Awards Program provides incentive awards for classroom teachers. School districts must use at least 60 percent of grant funds to reward classroom teachers who effectively improve student achievement as determined by meaningful, objective measures. The remaining funds may be used only to provide stipends to effective mentors, teachers certified in critical shortage areas, teachers in schools that have had difficulty hiring or retaining students, and teachers with postgraduate degrees.

DIGEST: HB 709 would allow districts to use the discretionary portion of the Educator Excellence Fund to provide stipends to classroom teachers who have obtained national board certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

HB 709 would apply to the 2009-2010 school year.

The bill 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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 709 would give school districts the flexibility and funding to provide an incentive for teachers to obtain National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) certification. In June 2008, the National Research Council of the National Academies released a report finding that students taught by NBPTS-certified teachers make higher gains on achievement tests than those taught by teachers who have not achieved certification. This research also found that NBPTS certification has a positive impact on teacher retention.

NBPTS has certified 74,000 teachers since 1987 through a process as rigorous as medical or law degree programs. Of those, only 472 work in Texas. Austin Independent School District has more national certified teachers than any other district in Texas — 191 — and has led the state in nationally certified teachers for seven years. Austin ISD pays stipends of up to \$3,000 per year for NBPTS-certified teachers. The stipend serves not only as a reward for hard work, but as an incentive to mentor colleagues. HB 709 would allow more districts grant these incentive awards by using discretionary funding under the Educator Excellence Awards program to reward those teachers who satisfy the rigorous NBPTS standards.

When Gov. Perry vetoed an identical bill, HB 2646 by Rose, in 2007, he mentioned the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) as a competing program to NBPTS. At that time, ABCTE offered only an alternate pathway *into* teaching, which is not comparable to the advanced credential offered by NBPTS. The ABCTE certification is not recognized by the Texas Education Agency as an acceptable certification for public schools in Texas, only for private and charter schools. Since that time, ABCTE has completed a pilot Distinguished Teacher Certification program, which eventually could become comparable to NBPTS. The pilot program has certified 53 teachers in Florida and Tennessee, but it has not yet been ascertained whether the effectiveness of ABCTE-certified teachers matches that of NBPTS-certified teachers.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 709 is vendor-specific, as the bill would permit only teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to be eligible

for stipends under the Educator Excellence Awards program. Competing certification boards, such as the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, also should be recognized and not placed at a competitive disadvantage. There is no reason to give preference to NBPTS certification over other worthwhile programs that recognize teachers who consistently improve student performance.

NOTES:

The companion bill, HB 1763 by Watson, has been referred to the Senate Education Committee.

The 80th Legislature in 2007 enacted an identical bill, HB 2646 by Rose, which was vetoed by Gov. Perry.