

- SUBJECT:** Educator preparation programs and teacher evaluations
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Aycock, Allen, J. Davis, Deshotel, Dutton, Farney, Huberty, K. King, Ratliff, J. Rodriguez, Villarreal
- 0 nays
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 25 — 28-0
- WITNESSES:** For — Sandra West, Science Teachers Association of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Patricia V. Hayes, Stand for Children Texas; Ben Maddox, Kids First; Mike Moses; Jim Nelson; Justin Yancy, Texas Business Leadership Council)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association)
- On — Priscilla Aquino-Garza, Educate Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Anderson, Texas Education Agency; Melva V. Cardenas, Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators)
- BACKGROUND:** The 82nd Legislature in 2011 passed SB 866, which included requirements for educator preparation related to detecting and educating students with dyslexia. The 82nd Legislature also passed SB 1620, which included requirements to obtain a certificate to teach an applied STEM (or science, technology, engineering or mathematics) course.
- DIGEST:** SB 1403 would reenact SB 866 and 1620 from the 82nd session and make other changes to educator preparation programs and teacher evaluations in Education Code, sec. 21.044. It also would require surveys of teacher pay and working conditions.
- Teacher certification.** Each educator preparation program would be required to provide information regarding:
- the skills and responsibilities of educators and the high

- expectations for students;
- the effect of supply and demand on the educator workforce;
- the performance over time of the educator preparation program;
- the importance of building strong classroom management skills;  
and
- the framework for teacher and principal evaluation.

The bill would require 15 credit hours for certification in grades 7-12 for math and science and 12 hours for teachers not teaching those subject areas.

It would require the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) not to exceed a requirement for an overall grade point average of at least 2.75 or the equivalent for the last 60 semester credit hours. An exception to the minimum GPA requirement could be granted only in extraordinary circumstances and could not be used by a program to admit more than 10 percent of candidates.

SBEC would determine the satisfactory level of performance required for each certification examination and would allow 45 days to pass before a person could retake the exam.

**Teacher evaluations and mentoring.** School districts would be required to conduct more frequent classroom observations and walk-throughs to ensure that teachers received adequate evaluation and guidance. This would be done more frequently for inexperienced teachers. Feedback would be provided promptly so that the appraisal could be used as a development tool.

**Teacher surveys.** The Texas Education Agency (TEA) would be required to consult with the Teacher Retirement System of Texas to determine median salaries of teachers by grade level and subject, post the median salaries on the agency website, and report to the Legislature.

The bill would allow funding for teacher mentoring to be used for scheduled release time for mentors to meet with the teachers they were assigned to mentor. The commissioner would report annually to the Legislature on the effectiveness of district mentoring programs.

TEA also would be required to annually analyze the cost of living in each region of the state to determine if teacher salaries were comparable to

salaries paid to persons engaged in comparable professions.

The bill also would require TEA to conduct a statewide survey of working conditions, including demands on a teacher's time, campus and district leadership, support for new teachers, professional development opportunities, and other matters. The survey would be designed to prevent disclosure of participants, and teachers could decline to participate. The initial survey would be completed by September 1, 2014, and aggregate results would be released to the public.

TEA would periodically conduct an audit of professional development requirements and work to eliminate conflicting requirements.

TEA could only use available funds and resources from public or private sources to conduct the surveys.

The bill also would require a new advisory committee to evaluate the implementation of changes made by SB 1403 and a joint review by public and higher education agencies of existing standards for educator preparation programs.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2013.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

SB 1403 would increase entry requirements for educator-preparation programs to improve the quality of candidates seeking to teach Texas students. It would add credit hours for math and science to ensure the best-trained teachers were delivering those subjects.

Requiring a satisfactory level of performance on each core subject covered by the generalist exam would be a step forward.

Teachers would receive timely feedback of their appraisal results and could use that information to immediately improve their performance.

The salary data review and comparison to other professionals on a regional basis would provide relevant information for state and local decisions on teacher pay.

The bill's provisions on annual surveys of teacher working conditions and periodic audits of professional development requirements and mentoring also would provide valuable information to improve the teaching

profession.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

SB 1403 could result in decreased enrollment in educator preparation programs at a time of growing student populations and a great need for teachers as many teachers are retiring or otherwise leaving the profession.

The bill would cost \$1.1 million for fiscal 2014-15 for annual cost-of-living analyses and surveys of working conditions required by the bill, according to the Legislative Budget Board.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

SB 1403 would not go far enough in raising entry requirements for teacher preparation programs. The bill also could have done more to overhaul the teacher evaluation system, including taking into account student test scores as Dallas and Houston ISDs are doing.

**NOTES:**

The fiscal note states that the bill would cost TEA an estimated \$800,000 in fiscal 2014 and \$300,000 in subsequent years for an annual cost-of-living analysis. TEA also estimates a \$300,000 cost in fiscal 2014 to contract for the statewide survey of working conditions for public school teachers.