

Date of Hearing: April 5, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 170 (O'Donnell) – As Introduced January 17, 2017

SUBJECT: Teacher credentialing

SUMMARY: Removes the prohibition on elementary school teachers majoring in education as undergraduates. Specifically, **this bill:**

Removes the prohibition on the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) awarding multiple subject preliminary teaching credentials to individuals who possess baccalaureate degrees in professional education.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the CTC to establish professional standards, assessments, and examinations for entry and advancement in the education profession. (EC 44225).
- 2) States that the preliminary teaching credential is to be granted upon:
 - a) possession of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution in a subject other than professional education
 - b) completion of an accredited program of professional preparation, and either successful passage of an examination or assessment that has been adopted or approved by the commission in the subject or subjects appropriate to the grade level to be taught, or completion of an accredited program of subject matter preparation and successful passage of a basic skills proficiency test.
- 3) Establishes among the minimum requirements for the preliminary multiple or single subject teaching credential the possession of a baccalaureate degree or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution of postsecondary education.
- 4) Requires the CTC to encourage accredited institutions to offer undergraduate minors in education and special education to students who intend to become teachers.
- 5) Federal law regarding eligibility for Pell Grants permits students enrolled in teacher preparation programs to receive a basic grant if they meet certain requirements and are not enrolled in an institution of higher education that offers a baccalaureate degree in education.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author states: “Under current law, the only subject teachers cannot major in during college is education.

AB 170 removes this prohibition for elementary and middle school teachers, allowing universities to design education majors for prospective teachers, giving faculty the flexibility to

design and offer an education major if, in their professional opinion, such a program would strengthen their teachers' preparation for the classroom. Teachers would still be required to pass a subject matter competency examination to earn their credential, and the major would still need to meet the subject matter standards of undergraduate preparation established by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

The decision to prohibit teachers from majoring in education was made during the Sputnik-era, when subject matter knowledge was viewed as paramount, and pedagogical training was viewed as suspect and largely unnecessary. But while subject matter knowledge is clearly required for effective teaching, it is certainly not sufficient. The prohibition on majoring education has pushed training in the complex "how" of teaching into an increasingly crowded, year or two of study.

The current prohibition on studying education also predates many important developments in public education, including the inclusion of students with disabilities, large numbers of English learners, and the use of technology for instruction and assessment - changes which require a higher level of pedagogical skill. Recent movement toward a "common trunk" of preparation for general education and special education teachers will also increase time required for pedagogical training. The advent of the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards - which emphasize inquiry, depth of understanding, communication, and application of concepts over rote memorization and teacher-directed learning - makes pedagogical skill even more critical.

Authorizing multiple subject teachers to earn a baccalaureate degree in education would allow future teachers to spend more time gaining critical knowledge and skills about how to instruct our students."

The backstory: Sputnik, brainwashing, and a dentist. The prohibition on teachers majoring in education as undergraduates dates to the Fisher Act of 1961. Why was this prohibition put in place?

An extensive history of California teacher credentialing published by the CTC titled "A History of Policies and Forces Shaping California Teacher Credentialing" tells the story in remarkable detail.

This account notes that "profound international and national happenings merged alternately with purely California considerations to result in a climatic session of the 1961 Legislature," notably "an aggressive drive by the Soviet Union toward some kind of world supremacy," combined with a strong dislike and distrust of professional "educationalists." The authors note that "this storm of public criticism reached its peak in 1958, incited by the Soviet launch of Sputnik in fall of 1957." Though no evidence seems to have presented to support this view, "the perceived over-emphasis upon professional methodology in the preparation of teachers" emerged as a prime target in the effort to assign blame for the U.S. standing in the space race.

Two organizations formed to lobby on this issue in the 1950's. The Council for Basic Education (which remained active until 2004) sought to "influence schools and, especially, the legislature to reform public school curricula and teacher education programs, and using "an incessant theme of attack... its influence accelerated greatly following Sputnik." A second organization, the Committee for Improving Teacher Education was led by university presidents, Nobel laureates, and an encyclopedia editor, and "pointedly lacking traditional professional educators."

These organizations argued that, “while professional education departments might be tolerated, they should serve a minor role in teacher preparation.” They argued that the schools “had added many ‘frills’ and non-essentials to the curriculum; they had employed teachers who had been thoroughly ‘brainwashed’ by the college departments of education.” They sought to “reduce drastically the ‘professional’ preparation of teachers.”

The advocacy of these organizations largely eclipsed a painstaking process which had been underway since 1954 - a “sustained and sincere effort to improve the confusing, variegated requirements and standards,” led by the President of the California Council on Teacher Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. They had created a representative committee which had “conducted an intensive drive to reach statewide professional consensus on a new credential structure and on rigorous standards for preparation,” and had just completed their recommendations for improving credentialing when debate over the Fisher Act began.

The Legislature initially “showed little interest in the issue,” but in 1958, due to “near-universal distress about Soviet advances in science it acknowledged the growing political magnetism of the issue.” An editorial in the Sacramento Bee urged the creation of a joint Legislative-citizen commission on education. The Legislature established the Joint Interim Committee, which in turn appointed a Citizen’s Advisory Commission on Education, chaired by a Glendale dentist.

The Commission recommended, among other things, that all teacher education institutions should keep courses on methods to a minimum. Specifically, it recommended “(a) a significant decrease in the number of educational methods courses, (b) a year of postgraduate study for all credential candidates; and (c) a required subject-matter major other than education.” Rival bills were introduced to address the issue, and SB 57 (the Fisher Act) stalled in the Assembly Education Committee before becoming law, over the opposition of the California Teachers Association. Testimony from hearings on the Act indicates that at the time the proponents were not certain what course of study the academic major would involve.

While Sputnik served as a rallying point for the advocates who were unconvinced of the value of pedagogical training and who were skeptical about the progressive education movement, it is also worth considering the Fisher Act in the social and economic context of post-War California. Massive population growth from high birth rates and migration to the West (yielding 50% growth between 1950 and 1960 alone) led to an explosion in the school-age population. According to the CTC’s account, schools struggled to meet the demand for qualified teachers, and the result was “generous use of ‘emergency’ or temporary credentials.” How much of the concern driving the Fisher Act was related to having underprepared teachers in California classrooms?

Isn’t “strong subject matter preparation and a concern for children” enough? The unresolved debate about the value of pedagogical training. In the CTC’s “A History of Policies and Forces Shaping California Teacher Credentialing,” a co-author discusses the debate over the appropriate balance between subject matter and pedagogical preparation. He notes that among those who held that pedagogical training should be reduced:

Embedded in this view was a persistent belief that strong subject matter preparation and a concern for children or youth is sufficient preparation for teaching. For these critics, the importance or value of pedagogy was quite small. They presumed that the techniques of teaching could be grasped through common sense or on the job...Those policy makers who

acknowledged the need for some pedagogical training tended to argue for very limited exposure to purely pedagogical coursework.

He notes that this view persists, “even as the complexity of the classroom has increased and research clearly indicates the need for instructional skill and sensitivity that goes far beyond common sense.” Nearly sixty years after the Fisher Act,

Policy makers, and the general public, seem unconvinced that teaching is a true profession, requiring advanced technical training to be effective. The combination of the enduring low status of education programs on college and university campuses and the general belief that experience is the best teacher has generated a tension between theory and practice, the lecture hall and the field site, that is not found in any other profession.

Is California education in 2017 the same as it was in 1960? The Fisher Act of 1961 predates many important events which shape California’s public schools in 2017. Among them are:

- The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and subsequent immigration and refugee policy, which has resulted in dramatically higher enrollments of English learners and a more culturally diverse school population
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1974, which requires that students with exceptional needs receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, and promotes the inclusion of special education students in mainstream settings
- Massive population growth, and economic changes resulting in the highest cost-of-living adjusted child poverty rate in the nation.
- The advent of the personal computer and the Internet, which has transformed access to information, the use of data in educational decision making, and nearly all other aspects of modern life
- Dramatic shifts in curriculum and instruction, including new instructional methods relating to the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, integrated and designated English language development for English learners, and a shift from traditional vocational education to instruction in academically integrated career pathways
- An increasing focus on school climate and social and emotional learning in support of academic achievement

Major in Fisheries Biology or Construction Management and become a teacher? Yes. Major in Education and meet the same subject matter requirements? No. Under current law, a teacher can major in any subject other than education and, as long as she has met the subject matter requirements and passed a subject matter examination, she can become a California teacher. However, a teacher who meets the same subject matter requirements but majors in education may not.

What does this bill require? This bill does not require any institution of higher education to establish an education major, and does not require any prospective teacher to major in education. This bill would allow faculty at each institution of higher education to develop and offer education majors for prospective teachers. The author’s intent is to give faculty the opportunity to design and offer such a major if, in their professional opinion, such a program would strengthen their teachers’ preparation for the classroom.

What would an education major look like, compared to liberal studies? Just as the proponents of the Fisher Act were uncertain about the content of an academic major in 1961, it is difficult for many California educators to identify the content of an education major, since they have been prohibited for decades. Comparisons are also difficult because most other states permit teachers to earn their credential while earning their bachelor's degree.

For that reason it may be useful to compare California's liberal studies major to another state's education major. A cursory comparison between the liberal studies major at a CSU campus and an elementary education major in Minnesota (not an integrated program) helps to identify a difference in the balance between subject matter and pedagogical training.

At the CSU campus a multiple subject teacher candidate majoring in liberal studies takes roughly 73 units in subject matter (language and literature, mathematics, science, history and social sciences, and visual and performing arts), and about 15 units in courses which offer more in depth study and pedagogical training. In contrast, a Minnesota teacher majoring in education takes 43 units in subject matter and 35 units in pedagogy. Both require a practicum course.

If California were to permit institutions to develop education majors for multiple subject teachers, the balance between subject matter and pedagogy would be determined by the faculty, who would have to ensure that their graduates met CTC's standards for subject matter preparation. But, as illustrated above, an education major could allow teachers to devote more coursework to the study of pedagogy.

Retention is key to addressing the teacher shortage, and teachers well prepared in pedagogy stay in the classroom. Could permitting education majors support the training that keeps teachers in the profession? According to the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) the supply of new teachers in California is at a 12-year low. Enrollment in educator preparation programs dropped by more than 70 percent over the last decade, and has fallen below the number of estimated hires by school districts around the state.

The LPI notes that attrition is a key part of the shortage, reporting that the 8% national annual attrition rate for teachers is responsible for more than 90% of the current demand for teachers and a projected 85% or more in the years to come, and that reducing the number of teachers who leave the profession would significantly reduce the shortage.

According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, research shows that well prepared teachers are more likely to remain in teaching. So what are the characteristics of teacher preparation prepare teachers so that they are more likely to stay in the profession, particularly early in their careers, when attrition is highest?

According to the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, pedagogical preparation has the biggest effect on retention early in a teacher's career. Specifically, "those with more training in teaching methods and pedagogy—especially practice teaching, observation of other classroom teaching and feedback on their own teaching—were far less likely to leave teaching after their first year on the job."

Permitting multiple subject teachers to major in education would enable teachers to increase their training in pedagogy, as well as begin it earlier. Education major courses could provide more and earlier opportunities for practice teaching, observations, and feedback on their own teaching.

These opportunities are important components of pedagogical training which keep teachers in the profession, thereby assisting California in meeting the demand for qualified teachers.

What assurances would there be of subject matter preparation? If, under this measure, teachers could major in education as undergraduates, what would ensure that they receive sufficient subject matter preparation?

Teachers would still be required to pass a subject matter competency examination to earn their credential, and the major would still need to meet the subject matter standards of undergraduate preparation established by the CTC.

Pell Grant issue. Under federal law, a student may not receive a Pell grant for a fifth-year certification program if the campus where they intend to study offers an education major.

Pell Grants have a lifetime use limit of 12 full-time semesters or six years. According to the U.S. Department of Education, because students take six or more years to complete their undergraduate degree, some run out of eligibility before starting their credential program.

There are other forms of financial aid available for eligible students who want to continue their education, including TEACH Grants, CalGrants, State University Grants, Federal Work-Study funding, Federal Stafford and Perkins student loans.

How does this relate to integrated and fifth year credentialing programs? Current law authorizes teachers to complete a bachelors and a fifth year credentialing program, as well as an “integrated” (sometimes called blended) program in which they earn their credential while they are earning their bachelor’s degree.

This bill would not change either of these options in structure, but would allow the content within those program options to change from a liberal studies degree to an education degree. It probably would support the development of integrated programs for multiple subject teachers because it would allow for more pedagogical training in the undergraduate degree.

The crowded 5th year credential program. Teacher preparation programs are required to meet standards for educator preparation in order to be accredited. According to the CTC, since 1970 additional content has been added content have been added to the preliminary teaching credential program coursework since 1970. They include:

- Enhanced content in the teaching of reading (1998)
- Teaching English learners (EL) – formerly 12 semester units (1999)
- Competency in the use of computers (2000)
- Some health and mainstreaming content (2001)
- Theoretical content in health, mainstreaming, technology, teaching ELs (2006)
- Teaching Performance Assessment (2008)

State moving toward a “common trunk” for special and general education teacher preparation, requiring more pedagogical training. In 2015 the California Statewide Task Force on Special Education, comprised of the CTC, the State Board of Education, and the California Department of Education, published a report titled “One System: Reforming Education to Serve

ALL Students.” Among other topics, this report addressed educator preparation for teachers of students with exceptional needs.

A key conclusion of those meetings was that the current system, which separates general education and special education preparation, has resulted in the dual problem that special education credential holders do not have sufficient background in the general education curriculum, and that general education teachers do not have sufficient training to meet the needs of special education students. The Task Force recommended that the state adopt a “common trunk” of preparation, in which candidates for credentials in both general and special education receive preparation in meeting the needs of all students.

If the state adopts this approach, additional pedagogical content will be required in multiple subject teachers’ preparation. If an education major were available, intuitions could begin instruction in this content during teachers’ undergraduate study, deepening their understanding and skills, relieving pressure on the already crowded 5th year credential program, and perhaps encouraging some prospective teachers to consider pursuing becoming a special education teacher - an area of severe shortage.

Prior legislation. SB 5 (Padilla) Chapter 171, Statutes of 2013 limits the duration of teacher credentialing programs to two years. An early version of the bill would have permitted teachers to major in education as undergraduates.

SB 1646 (Alpert) of the 2001-02 Session would have permitted education majors for multiple and single subject teaching credentials, and would have required the CSU to establish degree programs in elementary education, only if a federal waiver was granted to authorize students to be eligible for Pell Grants. This bill died on the Senate Inactive File.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Association of California School Administrators
 Education Trust - West
 EdVoice
 California Federation of Teachers
 Californians Together
 California Association for Bilingual Education
 California Association of Suburban School Districts
 California Federation of Teachers
 Los Angeles Unified School District
 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson
 Teachers of Tomorrow

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087