

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2018

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 2168 (Thurmond) – As Amended April 4, 2018

SUBJECT: Special education

SUMMARY: Establishes the Special Education Teacher Grant program and appropriates two million dollars in one time grants to retain and mentor special education teachers. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Makes Legislative findings and declarations that in order to ensure the retention of new special education teachers entering the teaching field, it is essential California have a mechanism for growing, supporting, and maintaining high quality, well-trained, and supported teacher mentors.
- 2) Appropriates the sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) in carryover funding from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 et seq.) to the Superintendent on a one-time basis, available for encumbrance until June 30, 2022, to establish a statewide framework and training and support network for the purpose of training and supporting qualified mentor teachers who will be supporting the new statewide influx of special education teachers in California.
- 3) Defines “eligible entity” as any of the following:
 - a) An institution of higher education.
 - b) A nonprofit public benefit corporation.
 - c) A county office of education.
 - d) A partnership among multiple organizations of the types described.
- 4) Requires, of the funds appropriated, the department to allocate a one time grant of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to an eligible entity with demonstrated expertise in the area of recruitment and retention of teachers at elementary and secondary schools.
- 5) Defines “local educational agency” as a school district, a county office of education, a charter school, or a special education local plan area.
- 6) Requires, of the funds appropriated, the department to offer one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) as grants to local educational agencies to create or expand local and regional infrastructure to support special education teacher mentoring for the purpose of supporting the retention of new special education teachers.
- 7) Authorizes a local educational agency to use funds awarded for activities that include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

- a) Training for existing teachers to become certified mentor teachers.
 - b) Stipends for mentor teachers.
 - c) Building a community of practice for mentors and mentees.
 - d) Piloting mentor teacher training systems.
- 8) Requires the department to award grants on a competitive basis using criteria it establishes.

EXISTING LAW: Establishes the California Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System, to be administered jointly by the commission and the Superintendent. In administering the system, the commission and the Superintendent shall approve the most cost-effective programs of support and assessment. The commission and the Superintendent also shall ensure that programs meet the Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Programs adopted by the commission and that local programs support beginning teachers in meeting the competencies described in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession adopted by the commission. The system shall do all of the following:

- 1) Provide an effective transition into the teaching career for first-year and second-year teachers in California.
- 2) Improve the educational performance of pupils through improved training, information, and assistance for new teachers.
- 3) Enable beginning teachers to be effective in teaching pupils who are culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse.
- 4) Ensure the professional success and retention of new teachers.
- 5) Ensure that a support provider provides intensive individualized support and assistance to each participating beginning teacher.
- 6) Improve the rigor and consistency of individual teacher performance assessments and the usefulness of assessment results to teachers and decision makers.
- 7) Establish an effective, coherent system of performance assessments that are based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession adopted by the commission.
- 8) Examine alternative ways in which the general public and the educational profession may be assured that new teachers who remain in teaching have attained acceptable levels of professional competence.
- 9) Ensure that an individual induction plan is in place for each participating beginning teacher and is based on an ongoing assessment of the development of the beginning teacher.
- 10) Ensure continuous program improvement through ongoing research, development, and evaluation. (Education Code 44279.1)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: This bill creates a mentorship program for special education teachers by funding a state wide organization to develop model mentorship programs and trainings, and by funding local education agencies to implement those model programs.

According to the author, "California's dramatic teacher shortage is most prominent in special education. We not only need an influx of new teachers, but also support, in the form of established mentor teachers, for existing teachers and those teachers coming into the profession. It is essential that the state establish a network and mechanism to train and support mentor teachers and administrators who will play a critical role in preparing teachers for long, productive, and successful careers. As the current retention rate for special education teachers is less than three years, these new mentor teachers will be available to all teachers seeking additional support. This \$2 million allocation will be a compliment to existing and proposed programs to ensure ongoing assistance for mentors and administrators tasked with supporting special education educators."

Teacher mentoring. According to the New Teacher Center, "The hands-on help provided by teacher mentors directly advances teacher effectiveness and, by extension, the education of students. Students excel when we support our teachers. When teachers receive quality mentoring, students learn more— 2–4 months of additional learning in ELA/reading and 2–5 months of additional learning in math."

According to Dara Barlin from the New Teacher Center, "Districts that once had revolving-door relationships with their new teachers have cut attrition rates in half. Entire cohorts of beginning teachers have begun to foster student gains similar to or greater than their veteran peers' results. And mentors are reigniting their own passion for teaching. When mentoring programs thrive, schools systems are also more likely to develop a comprehensive vision for assessing and supporting instructional excellence and to reconfigure their evaluation and tenure structures around that vision. More important, they have a much greater chance of transforming their schools into vibrant learning communities capable of helping all teachers, and all students, succeed."

Community of Practice. This bill creates a state wide organization to develop and create a Community of Practice. Communities of practice can be defined, in part, as a process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in a subject or area collaborate over an extended period of time, sharing ideas and strategies, determine solutions and build innovations. There must be a community. A necessary component is that members of a specific field interact and engage in shared activities, help each other, and share information. They build relationships to allow them to learn from each other. There must be a practice. A requirement for a community of practice is that members are practitioners.

Grant Program Parameters. Some of the parameters of the grant program would benefit from more details, such as specifying a maximum grant amount per local education agency, since the source of funding is rather limited. Further, the author should consider including additional details about the priorities that CDE might use in awarding both the state wide grant and the local education agency grants.

Teacher shortage. School districts across the State of California are experiencing a serious shortage of qualified teachers. There are chronic shortages in the areas of math, science and special education. Further there is a shortage among bilingual teachers, and it is estimated that this shortage will grow with the growing popularity of language immersion and dual language immersion programs.

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 has 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. It is estimated teacher hires for the 2015-16 school year increased by 25 percent from the previous year, while credentials issued to fully prepare new teachers increased by less than 1 percent from the previous year, and enrollment in teacher education programs increased by only about 2 percent.

Committee Amendments: Staff recommends the following committee amendments.

- 1) Expand the list of eligible entities to establish the statewide support network to include local education agencies, including both school districts and county offices of education.
- 2) Clarify that the statewide support network shall focus on retention of teachers and remove the reference to recruitment of teachers.
- 3) In the local mentorship program, eliminate the reference to teachers becoming "certified" mentor teachers and eliminate the reference to local education agencies building a community of practice, since that will be a statewide organization activity.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Common Sense Kids Action
PresenceLearning
Public Advocates

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Chelsea Kelley / ED. / (916) 319-2087