

Date of Hearing: March 27, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
AB 525 (Luz Rivas) – As Amended March 18, 2019

SUBJECT: Teacher credentialing

SUMMARY: Permits a candidate for a special education or pupil personnel services credential to hold a baccalaureate degree in education, and makes numerous technical changes to law regarding teacher credentialing. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Permits candidates for the education specialist credential, which authorizes teaching special education, and the pupil personnel services credential, which includes school counseling, school social work, school psychology, and school child welfare and attendance services, to have majored in education.
- 2) Removes references to “highly qualified teacher” under the No Child Left Behind Act, which was eliminated when the law was reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- 3) Removes a reference to pre-internship credentials, which are no longer issued.
- 4) Requires the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to periodically provide reports and recommendations to the Legislature regarding the state’s teacher workforce for purposes of developing and reviewing state policy, identifying workforce trends, and identifying future needs.
- 5) Requires these reports to be made publicly available on the CTC’s website. States that the CTC may make use of information obtained from the California Department of Education (CDE), including information obtained for purposes of monitoring teacher assignments.
- 6) States that the nonpersonally identifiable educator identification number for each educator to whom the CTC issues a credential, certificate, permit, or other document authorizing that individual to provide a service in the public schools shall be used for purposes of sharing data with local educational agencies (LEAs) and the CDE to satisfy the reporting requirements of reporting on the teacher workforce and misassignment monitoring system.
- 7) Permits the nonpersonally identifiable educator identification number to be used to disclose data for research purposes, pursuant to Civil Code requirements regarding, among other things, protection of human subjects.
- 8) Clarifies, for purposes of identifying that the authorization for single subject world languages teachers to teach Chinese is either an authorization to teach Mandarin or Cantonese.
- 9) Eliminates the requirement to ensure that oral proficiency in English is a criterion for scoring the performance of candidates.
- 10) Corrects obsolete code references.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the education specialist credential to authorize teachers to teach students with exceptional needs, and establishes the pupil personnel services credential to authorize individuals to serve as school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school child welfare and attendance services personnel.
- 2) Permits candidates for multiple subject teaching credentials to have earned a baccalaureate degree in education.
- 3) Prohibits candidates for single subject credentials, education specialist credentials, and pupil personnel services credentials from having a baccalaureate degree in education.
- 4) Establishes the non-personally identifiable education number for each educator to whom the CTC issues a credential, certificate, permit, or other document.
- 5) Establishes a single subject credential in World Languages with an authorization in Chinese.
- 6) Requires the CTC to submit biennial reports to the Legislature concerning teacher assignments and misassignments based, in part, on the annual reports of the county superintendents of schools.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author states: “The shortage of teachers in California could grow even worse should the Legislature fail to update statutes governing the agency that trains and licenses them. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission) is tasked with ensuring integrity, relevance, and quality in the preparation, certification, and discipline of California teachers.

AB 525 makes a number of statutory changes that the Commission has identified as necessary, dealing with a range of subjects including baccalaureate requirements, data-sharing, teaching assessments, internships, and terminology.”

Why can't special education teachers major in education? The prohibition on teachers majoring in education as undergraduates dates to the Fisher Act of 1961. 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 climactic 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.

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 Advisory 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.” It is possible that some of the concern which led to the Fisher Act was related to having underprepared teachers in California classrooms.

Since 2001 there were several attempts to reverse this prohibition. In 2017, AB 170 (O’Donnell) was enacted, allowing multiple subject credential candidates to major in education. Single subject, education specialist, and pupil personnel services credential candidates are still subject to this prohibition.

State moving toward a “common trunk” for special and general education teacher preparation. This bill permits a candidate for a credential to teach in special education to have majored in education. In 2015 the California Statewide Task Force on Special Education, comprised of the CTC, the State Board of Education, and the CDE, 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, and the CTC later adopted, a “common trunk” model of preparation, in which candidates for credentials in both general and special education receive preparation in meeting the needs of all students.

Under a “common trunk” model, additional content addressing the needs of all students will likely be added to the preparation programs for both general and special education teacher candidates. If an education major were to be available to special education credential candidates

(as it is for multiple subject candidates), intuitions might more easily implement a “common trunk” model.

Prior and related legislation. AB 1210 (Jones-Sawyer) of this Session would establish a new process for the monitoring of teacher assignments in schools, including charter schools.

AB 3048 (Irwin) of the 2017-18 Session would have established a new process for the monitoring of teacher assignments in schools, including charter schools. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

AB 170 (O’Donnell) Chapter 123, Statutes of 2017 permits individuals who majored in education to be eligible to receive a multiple subject teaching credential.

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

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (sponsor)
Public Advocates Inc.

Opposition

None on file

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