



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

House Office Building, 9 South
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: 517/373-6466

**ALTERNATIVE TEACHER
CERTIFICATION; URBAN & RURAL
SCHOOLS**

**House Bill 5768 (Substitute H-1)
First Analysis (3-19-02)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Charles LaSata
Committee: Education**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

School officials in some regions of the state, and within some disciplinary fields, have reported they have difficulty recruiting teachers. The shortage of teachers is due to many things: the aging teacher workforce and imminent retirement of thousands of teachers, swelling enrollments, initiatives to reduce class size, poor working conditions in some school districts, and un-competitive pay in disciplinary fields such as mathematics and science. What's more, many novice teachers do not stay long in the profession; the turnover rate is high.

An estimated 2.2 million new teachers will be needed to replace retiring teachers before 2010, nationwide. Although schools of education graduate some 200,000 potential new educators each year, more than 20 percent leave teaching within the first three years. Within five years, about 30 percent leave. According to the Midwestern Office of the Council of State Governments, pay is a contributing factor, since beginning teachers earn nearly \$8,000 less than other college-educated professionals; after twenty years experience, that gap widens to more than \$23,000 for those with a bachelor's degree, and more than \$32,000 for those with a master's degree. Pay is lowest in the Midwest, where only three states pay above the national average for veteran teacher salaries--Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana (according to 1997-98 salary rankings). However, those who leave teaching also cite the lack of professional support and poor job environment. The key elements that contribute to job satisfaction, according to the American Federation of Teachers reports, are reduced class sizes, enforcement of strict discipline policies, and modernized school buildings. The high turnover in the teaching profession coupled with demographic trends and adverse working conditions combine to make recruiting difficult.

States are beginning to consider a number of new approaches to retaining and attracting quality teachers: higher pay for entry level teachers; signing

bonuses; college loan forgiveness; reimbursement of certification fees; induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers; alternative certification; and performance-based pay structures.

These initiatives come as policymakers acknowledge a heightened recognition that high quality teaching is extremely challenging work, requiring a depth of understanding in a learning discipline, the ability to create and modify curricular units that align across grade levels within the discipline, the skill to develop tests and score an array of evaluations and assessments, and also some understanding of human growth and development, since successful teachers must struggle every day to ascertain what sense their many students are making of the lessons they teach.

Generally, accelerated certification education programs are designed to provide people who have a college degree outside the field of education with the knowledge, skills, and classroom experience necessary to become effective teachers, although short courses have been developed in some regions where the shortage is particularly acute. (See *BACKGROUND INFORMATION*.) The typical programs take one year to 15 months to complete, and are based at universities that already educate and certify teachers. These one-year accelerated programs are designed to give newcomers to the teaching profession hands-on experience and an introduction to the best research-based practices, as they learn about teaching, student development in a subject matter discipline, curriculum design, and assessment. Many of the programs team a novice teacher with a veteran in the field, in order to provide the newcomer with a knowledgeable mentor. For example, a 15-month accelerated certification program in Texas includes access to on-line forums and activities and two years of mentoring while working as a teacher in a school district.

House Bill 5768 (3-19-02)

In Michigan, a new program to accelerate the training of teachers for the Detroit Public Schools, where there are 1,100 vacancies, began at the start of this academic year at Wayne State University. Candidates have bachelor's degrees upon entering the program and earn a master's degree within four years, as they teach. In addition to the program at Wayne State University, year-long, post-baccalaureate accelerated programs already are in place at Saginaw Valley State University, and the University of Detroit Mercy; and, a year-long program during which a candidate completes three math courses has been designed to certify elementary school mathematics teachers through Aquinas College.

In order to enlarge the pool of teachers available to teach in disciplinary fields that report shortages, and in school districts that have vacancies difficult to fill, legislation has been introduced to create more accelerated teacher certification programs in Michigan.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5768 would amend the Revised School Code to accelerate teacher certification in some urban or rural areas that have critical shortages of public school teachers.

More specifically, the bill encourages school districts located in urban areas to work with approved teacher education institutions, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Education, to develop and implement local programs that provide alternative opportunities for non-certificated people to obtain a temporary teaching credential, and to work toward achieving a professional education teaching certificate. Under the bill, the local programs would include at least these features:

- include participants who held a bachelor's degree and were enrolled in a teacher certification program or a master's degree program, or, with the approval of the department, were without a bachelor's degree but enrolled in a teacher certification program;
- allow participants to teach in a school district under a temporary teaching credential while they completed their degree or program requirements;
- require participants to teach in critical shortage areas, including but not limited to early childhood, early elementary, special education, bilingual education, and secondary mathematics and science;

- stipulate that the temporary teaching credential, issued by the Department of Education, was valid for one year and renewable on a yearly basis for up to four additional years;

- stipulate that participants were supervised by mentors who were experienced certificated teachers who taught in the same school;

- ensure that participants are granted credit toward student teaching requirements for teaching under the program;

- require that participants agree to abide by the teacher collective bargaining agreement in effect in the school district, and receive wages and benefits according to the terms of the agreement while teaching under the temporary teaching credential; and

- give priority in selecting participants to recently unemployed workers who had obtained a bachelor's or master's degree, including but not limited to individuals who were working as substitute teachers.

The bill would require the Department of Education to work with interested school districts located in urban and rural areas to develop and implement the kinds of programs the bill describes.

MCL 380.1531d

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Short courses for select candidates. To meet the teacher shortage in areas where it is particularly acute, some school officials have begun recruiting new teachers from among the ranks of accountants, doctors, lawyers, retired military officers, and others who would switch careers, although career switchers now represent only 5 percent of the nation's 2.8 million public school teachers. Sometimes the career switchers are trained to teach in short courses designed by the school district, in consultation with a university-based certification program. For example, in New York City a four-week intensive short course (about teaching methods, lesson plans, and requiring that candidates earn passing marks on two state examinations) is offered to a select group of well-qualified subject matter experts who want to switch careers. Massachusetts also has an accelerated program which provides some classroom training in summer school, and the state pays a \$20,000 signing bonus to former engineers and other professionals who meet qualifications set by the state's commissioner of education.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Fiscal information is not available.

ARGUMENTS:***For:***

States are beginning to consider a number of new approaches to retaining and attracting quality teachers: higher pay for entry level teachers; signing bonuses; college loan forgiveness; reimbursement of certification fees; induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers; alternative certification; and performance-based pay structures. This legislation would allow alternative certification programs to be developed in school districts where teacher shortages were acute, and in fields where the need was critical. The program would establish a temporary teaching credential, renewable on a yearly basis for up to four years, and it would require the novice teacher who is seeking alternative certification to be mentored by an experienced teacher in the same school where the novice teacher was assigned. The temporary teaching credential would allow a person to teach while completing his or her degree or program requirements.

Against:

Alternative certification and a temporary teaching certificate should be restricted to those who already have earned a bachelor's or master's degree. This bill would allow teachers to be hired without a bachelor's degree in any field, if they were enrolled in a teacher certification program. That provision would permit school districts to hire teaching candidates who had very little understanding of a learning discipline, and virtually no experience in a classroom where curricular materials and assessments must be developed daily, as teachers work with young people to guide their subject matter learning. Further, the under-qualified teachers likely would be hired in areas where shortages are most acute--and often the geographic areas having acute shortages are those with students who are the most difficult to educate because of the poverty and violence in their lives. Policymakers would not pass laws to permit professionals-in-training and without full credentials to practice in dentistry or medicine or nursing or law or engineering. The same prohibition should hold for teaching. Candidates for the profession should not have full-time positions until they are well-educated in the theory and practice of teaching and learning in the subject matter learning disciplines--the core technology of schools. Although certification does not ensure high quality teaching in all instances,

certification generally serves as a proxy for teacher quality.

POSITIONS:

The Middle Cities Education Association supports the bill. (3-14-02)

Oakland Schools supports the bill. (3-15-02)

The Michigan Association of School Administrators supports the concept of the bill. (3-14-02)

The Michigan Education Association supports the substitute version of the bill. (3-14-02)

The Michigan Federation of Teachers and School Related Personnel has concerns about the bill. (3-14-02)

Analyst: J. Hunault

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.