



PA 18-34—sSB 455
Education Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

SUMMARY: This act makes various changes affecting minority teacher recruitment and retention, including:

1. modifying teacher certification laws to make it easier to obtain certain certification or cross endorsement (§§ 4 & 8);
2. requiring the State Department of Education (SDE) to identify and use or support a number of practices and programs to improve minority teacher recruitment (§ 1);
3. requiring SDE to develop or review and approve a new alternate route to certification (ARC) program that allows people in certain professions, including paraeducators, charter school teachers, and veterans, to become teachers (§ 2);
4. adding a member to the teacher Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) and requiring the council to work collaboratively with the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force on issues of equity and closing the achievement gap (§ 3);
5. increasing, from 10 to 13, the membership of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and requiring the chairpersons to appoint one of the new members to serve as the third chairperson (§ 5);
6. requiring the State Board of Education's (SBE) five-year education plan to include a statement that the state's teacher workforce should reflect the state's racial and ethnic diversity (§ 6);
7. limiting the scope of local and regional boards' of education minority recruitment plans to educators, rather than staff (§ 7); and
8. requiring SDE to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with teacher licensure test vendors to let certain test takers retake the exam for free (§ 9).

It also makes a number of minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2018, except the provision on the MOU on retaking licensure exams is effective upon passage.

§§ 4 & 8 — TEACHER CERTIFICATION

The act makes changes in teacher certification laws regarding initial certifications, cross endorsements for certificate holders, and licensure exam exceptions for out-of-state teachers.

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Initial Educator Certifications (§ 4)

By law, SBE must issue an initial educator certificate to any person who (1) holds a bachelor's degree from an accredited higher education institution and (2) completed an approved educator preparation program or ARC program.

Existing law requires applicants who complete an ARC program to also (1) meet the requirements for one of the state's temporary certificates (i.e., 90-day or resident teacher certificate) and (2) complete an SBE-defined subject area major (i.e., undergraduate major) or qualify for a waiver.

Instead of completing the subject area major, the act allows an applicant to substitute (1) a satisfactory score on an appropriate SBE-approved subject area assessment and (2) completion of advanced coursework in a relevant subject area.

Cross Endorsements and Out-of-State Reciprocity for Exams and Assessments (§ 8)

The act requires any person who holds an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate and achieves a satisfactory score on the appropriate SBE-approved subject area assessment to be issued a cross endorsement in the relevant certification endorsement area matching a teacher shortage area. By law, the commissioner must annually issue a list of the subject shortage areas for certified teachers (CGS § 10-8b).

The act creates an exception for a person who achieved a satisfactory score on an equivalent competency examination or subject area assessment required for educator certification in another state. Such a person is not required to achieve a satisfactory score on Connecticut's competency exam or subject matter assessment, provided SBE determines that the other state's requirements are at least equivalent to Connecticut's.

§ 1 — RESEARCH, PRACTICES, AND RELATED STEPS

The act requires SDE, by January 1, 2019, and in consultation with the Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council (see BACKGROUND), to:

1. identify research and successful practices to enhance minority teacher recruitment throughout the state;
2. identify and establish public, private, and philanthropic partnerships to increase minority teacher recruitment;
3. use, monitor, and evaluate innovative methods to attract minority candidates to the teaching profession, particularly in subject areas with teacher shortages as determined by the education commissioner pursuant to existing law;
4. modernize the process for educators to get professional certification by eliminating obstacles to certification to increase competitiveness with other states;
5. identify and use high quality, affordable, and bias-free educator tests for certification;
6. adopt passing scores for educator certification tests that do not exceed the

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- multi-state passing scores to increase competitiveness with surrounding states;
7. support new and existing educator preparation programs that commit to enrolling greater numbers of minority teacher candidates in a manner that supports interstate reciprocity;
 8. monitor, advise, support, and intervene in when necessary, local and regional boards' of education efforts to prioritize minority teacher recruitment and develop innovative strategies to attract and retain minority teachers in their districts;
 9. starting July 1, 2019, include a question on demographic data of applicants for positions requiring certification in SDE's annual hiring survey distributed to boards of education; and
 10. starting by July 1, 2020, annually report on the survey's applicant demographic data to the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and the Education Committee.

§ 2 — ARC PROGRAM FOR ALTERNATE PROFESSIONS

The act requires SDE, in consultation with the Office of Higher Education, to develop, or review and approve, an ARC program that enables those in alternate professions to obtain an initial educator certification, the first of three certification levels in Connecticut.

Program Eligibility

To qualify for this certification, a person from an alternate profession must hold at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and be one of the following:

1. a paraeducator (i.e., a classroom assistant who helps teachers or other professional staff with instruction or related services);
2. a veteran (i.e., a person honorably discharged or released from active U.S., military service);
3. a Connecticut charter school educator permit holder; or
4. a person currently or previously employed as a professor at an accredited higher education institution.

A person from an alternate profession also may include someone with a master's degree from a social work program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education or, for someone educated outside the United States or its territories, an educational program deemed equivalent by the council.

Program Requirements

Under the act, an ARC program developed or approved must (1) include instruction in classroom management and cultural competency, (2) align with SBE-adopted standards for teaching competencies, and (3) meet other criteria as SDE requires.

Starting July 1, 2019, the act waives the existing special education coursework requirement for initial educator certification and requires SBE, upon receiving a

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proper application, to certify applicants who (1) successfully complete an ARC program developed or approved under the act and (2) meet the teacher certification testing requirements or related exceptions (e.g., out-of-state testing reciprocity). The certificate is valid for three years.

SDE must include on its website a description of, and the requirements for, each approved ARC program.

§ 3 — PEAC

Membership

By law, PEAC is within SDE and consists of representatives of various education stakeholder groups, such as teachers and boards of education. The act adds to the council's membership a representative from the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force designated by the task force chairpersons.

Duties

Existing law requires PEAC to help SBE develop a model teacher evaluation and support program, including an implementation plan, guidelines, and a data collection and evaluation support system. The act also requires the council to collaborate with the task force to focus on issues of equity and closing the achievement gap, as defined in state law. Starting July 1, 2018, the council must collaborate with the task force and incorporate into its work strategies a framework for educators to effectively close the achievement gap and increase educational opportunities.

§ 5 — MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT TASK FORCE

The act increases, from 10 to 13, the membership of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force. It does so by requiring the Commission on Equity and Opportunity executive director to appoint three new members, one each with expertise in African American, Latino and Puerto Rican, and Asian Pacific American affairs.

The act also (1) eliminates from the task force membership the executive director and (2) requires the task force chairpersons, by July 31, 2018, to appoint an additional member to serve as the task force's third chairperson. Under the act, the third chairperson has the same authority and duties as the other chairpersons.

§ 6 — SBE FIVE-YEAR EDUCATION PLAN

By law, SBE must craft and adopt a five-year comprehensive plan for elementary, secondary, vocational, career, and adult education. Under the act, plans adopted after July 1, 2018, must include a policy statement that the demographics of public school educators should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the state's total population. The current five-year plan expires in 2021.

§ 7 — BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND MINORITY RECRUITMENT

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Prior law required boards of education to develop and implement a written plan for minority staff recruitment in order for students to interact with teachers from other racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds to reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation. The act limits the plan's scope to minority teachers, instead of minority staff.

§ 9 — RETAKING LICENSURE EXAMS

The act requires the education commissioner, by January 1, 2019, to enter into a MOU with one or more teacher licensure assessment vendors to provide licensure exams to eligible applicants in Connecticut. Under the act, the MOU must include requirements that, upon an applicant's request, the:

1. applicant be allowed to retake any licensure exam he or she did not pass, provided the score is within a range the commissioner prescribes; and
2. vendor (a) assumes the cost of any exam retake and (b) provides SDE with the applicant's individual score on the licensure exam he or she did not pass.

Under the act, "eligible applicants" are those applying for an initial educator certificate who have successfully met the SBE-specified preparation and eligibility requirements, but who have not passed any licensure exam.

The act also requires SDE to provide, within available appropriations and upon an applicant's request, educational materials to help the applicant obtain an initial educator certificate. The materials must be provided using the results of the applicant's individual score report on the licensure exam that he or she did not pass.

BACKGROUND

Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council

The council is part of SDE and it includes parties from outside the department, including members of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force and representatives from higher education institutions and educator unions (CGS § 10-156bb).