

**REVISE TEACHER CERTIFICATION
AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS**

**House Bill 4716 (Substitute H-2)
First Analysis (7-1-03)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Mike Nofs
Committee: Education**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

According to the Department of Education, there are 97,000 certified classroom teachers in Michigan (and about 130,000 active certified teachers who are not working fulltime).

In Michigan, teachers are prepared by 32 institutions of higher education—all 15 public universities, as well as 17 independent universities and colleges. The programs differ in size and quality. For example, the largest of the four-year teacher education programs is located at Eastern Michigan University, where about 1,000 teachers graduate each year. In fact, the program at Eastern Michigan University is the second largest in the United States. Also nationally recognized is the five-year teacher education program at Michigan State University—a program that many count among the top 10 in the country. Recently, three MSU faculty members with distinguished research reputations were awarded a \$10 million grant from the Carnegie Foundation to undertake research about the quality of the teacher preparation program, a multi-year project that will track new teachers of mathematics and science early in their teaching practice. Yet another highly regarded teacher preparation program is the one-year alternate certification program at the University of Michigan, where a masters degree is offered to highly qualified candidates who wish to enter teaching after working in other professions. A second successful alternate route to teacher certification is an innovative program offered at Wayne State University, undertaken with the Detroit Public Schools, and originally funded by the DeWitt Wallace Foundation. After five years, and supported by mentors, 85 percent of the new teachers who work in the Detroit Schools have stayed on the job. (In contrast, nationwide there is a 50 percent attrition rate among urban teachers within the first two to three years of their teacher practice.)

Each year, between 6,800 and 7,500 new teachers earn teaching certificates in Michigan, and many of those teachers remain in the state to practice in Michigan's 3,500 school buildings. In addition, the

Department of Education has reciprocity agreements with most states in the country under a NASDTEC Interstate Compact, so that teachers certified in those states can transfer their teaching credentials to Michigan, under certain circumstances. [Eight states are not part of the compact: Arizona, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.]

Currently the Revised School Code specifies that the superintendent of public instruction is responsible for determining the requirements for, and for issuing, all licenses and certificates for teachers (including preprimary teachers), the requirements for an endorsement of teachers as qualified counselors, and the requirements for an endorsement for teaching a foreign language in an elementary grade.

Under the law, the superintendent can only issue a certificate to a person who has passed the appropriate exams for a secondary teaching certificate or for an elementary level teaching certificate. To earn a secondary certificate, a teacher must pass both the basic skills exam and the appropriate subject area exam in which he or she applies to be certified. To earn an elementary certificate, a teacher must pass the basic skills exam; if available, the elementary certificate exam; and, also the appropriate subject area exams for each subject area, if any, in which he or she applies to be certified.

In practice, the superintendent of public instruction relies upon the staff within the department's Office of Professional Preparation Services to manage the teacher certification programs. That office, in turn, seeks advice about teacher certification from four advisory committees: the *Teacher Examination Advisory Committee* (which advises the professional staff about the certification examinations), the *Standing Technical Advisory Committee* (which then advises the Examination Advisory Committee about the psychometric reliability and validity of the certification examinations), the *Professional*

Standards Commission for Teachers (which advises about standards and programs), and the *Periodic Review and Program Evaluation Committee* (which advises about procedures and standards for the state's 32 teacher preparation institutions). (See **BACKGROUND INFORMATION** below.)

In addition to addressing matters of teacher certification, the Revised School Code specifies that for the first three years of employment in classroom teaching, a teacher must be assigned to at least one master teacher (or college professor or a retired master teacher) who acts as a mentor. During that three-year period, the teacher also receives an intensive professional development induction into teaching, based upon a professional development plan, and consisting of at least 15 days over the three-year period.

Legislation has been proposed that would create a new, temporary committee to review and revise the teacher certification and mentoring programs.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4716 would amend the Revised School Code to require the Department of Education to appoint a 14-member committee of school board members, superintendents, teachers, principals, a representative of an approved teacher education institution, and a representative of the department, in order to revise the teacher certification rules and mentorship practices currently specified under the code.

Under the bill, the department would be required to establish an advisory committee that consisted of a representative of the department, two principals of Michigan schools, five certificated teachers, three local school superintendents, two school board members, and one representative of approved teacher education institutions. The bill specifies that the Senate Majority Leader and the Speaker of the House would each appoint five members, and the governor would appoint three. [The bill does not specify who would appoint the committee's 14th member, the representative from the department.] More specifically, the Senate Majority Leader would appoint one principal, two teachers, one superintendent, and one school board member. The Speaker of the House would appoint one principal, one teacher, two superintendents, and one school board member. The Governor would appoint two teachers, and one representative of approved teacher education institutions.

Not later than one year after the bill took effect, the advisory committee would be required to review the teacher certification rules and recommend revisions to the superintendent of public instruction. Further, within that year the committee members would be required to review the mentorship practices taking place under the code, and make recommendations to the state superintendent about possible legislation or rules that would improve those mentorship practices. The bill requires that not later than one year after receiving the recommendations, the state superintendent revise the rules in accord with the advisory committee's recommendations.

MCL 380.1526 and 380.1531

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For detailed information about teacher certification in Michigan, visit the Department of Education's web site at <http://www.michigan.gov/mde> and then select "Educators" followed by "Professional Preparation" and then "Teacher Certification" from the menus on the left. The department has a 32-page document online that lists the 32 certified higher education programs that educate teachers (17 private universities and 15 public universities), the tests required for certification, the kinds of licenses teachers earn, the professional development requirements under the law, the mentoring requirements for new teachers, and also the kinds of advanced certifications in the learning disciplines and subject matter domains that are available from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency notes that there could be an indeterminate administrative cost to the Department of Education, in order to appoint the committee and to revise the rules promulgated under Section 1526. While the bill does not state that the department must provide administrative support for, or oversee, the committee, these activities would also create additional administrative costs. (6-16-03)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bill would empower school employers and employees—administrators and teachers—to review the Department of Education's teacher certification and mentoring programs, and then enable them to revise the rules and regulations within one year. This would be a first—offering to those who labor each

and every day ‘at the front-line’ and ‘in the trenches’ of schools the opportunity to have the final say about who should be certified and mentored, when, and how.

Changes that the committee would make in the certification and mentoring programs would be developed quickly, but with care. The bill requires that the temporary committee complete its review and recommendations within one year. Then, the superintendent of public instruction would be required to implement the committee’s recommendations no later than one year after the committee made its final report.

Many promising innovations in education—charter schools, distance learning, on-line and e-learning curricular materials—portend reforms in teaching and teacher preparation. As one member of the House Education Committee noted, “Certification needs to be loosened up,” because some of the most innovative approaches to learning are coming from non-certified teachers. Furthermore, other committee members pointed out that changes in the certification and mentoring programs could allow for alternate routes into teaching, improve teacher quality, enhance teacher recruitment, and stem the 30- to 50-percent attrition rates among new teachers within the first three years of their practice—rates that are now far too high to afford stability for improving schools.

As Titles I and II of the federal No Child Left Behind Act go into effect, and schools are encouraged to deploy certified teachers to teaching assignments within their major or minor field of study, finding new ways to think about certification and teacher quality could help schools comply with the new federal program. For example, changes that would relax certification but retain the tests and strengthen mentoring in a disciplinary field could assist schools that have difficulty recruiting and retaining certified teachers.

When all policymakers in the educational system work together to improve school conditions and the quality of instruction, then more intellectual work will be possible and student achievement can rise. This will require a high level of trust and cooperation within all branches of the government, and at all levels of the educational policy system. A cooperative approach of this kind would value the distinction between knowledge and information, and the ways in which teachers strive for the former, guided by mentors, and generally are in need of lifelong learning opportunities, in order, like all

professionals, to stay current in their fields of disciplinary knowledge.

Against:

Although the bill purports to create an “advisory committee,” in fact it creates a committee that would have the unilateral authority to change the state’s teacher certification and mentoring programs. Currently, these policies are developed by the state superintendent of public instruction and the professional staff in the Department of Education. They make changes in the policies and programs following the advice of four expert advisory committees. The bill would add a fifth “advisory” committee. However, unlike the other committees of advisors, this committee’s recommendations would have to be implemented by the state superintendent no later than one year after the committee issued its report. The bill would, then, give to the members of the committee far too much authority, and invite them to ignore both carefully developed policies, and many well-informed policymakers. Indeed, those who support the bill support an unconscionable abdication of decision-making authority on the part of appointed and elected policymakers in the department.

Optimal mentorship and professional development programs that are research-based—those using approaches that are known to increase the subject matter competence of the adults who guide students’ intellectual development—are now available. And the research also appears to indicate that teacher certification is a fair proxy for teacher quality, because it ensures subject area knowledge, measured by a set of tests.

It is true that a cooperative and research-based approach would include school professionals in any committee that reviewed certification and mentoring programs. And it seems that the inclusion of teachers—most especially teachers—would be necessary in order to identify the ways to enhance teaching, learning, curriculum development and assessment—the core instructional technology of all schools. However, teachers could be forgiven for wondering why their certification and professional learning are so often called into question by policymakers, and why their efforts to keep up-to-date with the advances in research that inform practice are not supported by schools. Why are their preparation programs, unlike those for other professionals such as lawyers and physicians, the subject of constant speculation? In his article “Misunderstanding the Problem of Out-of-Field Teaching,” education researcher Richard Ingersoll

suggests that the second-guessing of teachers and teacher education stems from a tacit conviction that ‘anybody can teach’, and the failure among policymakers to understand the enormous complexity of teaching. The facts indicate otherwise: teaching entails core disciplinary knowledge and technologic expertise that is learned through study and practice, and the teacher’s expertise—like that of those who practice medicine and law—is unavailable to the layman.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Education Association supports the bill. (6-xx-03)

The Oakland Schools Intermediate School District supports the bill. (6-xx-03)

The Michigan Department of Education opposes the bill. (6-26-03)

The Michigan Association of School Administrators opposes the bill. (6-26-03)

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.