

# SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 1444

SPONSOR: Senator Klein

SUBJECT: Teacher Certification

DATE: March 22, 2000

REVISED: 03/27/00 \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/1 amendment</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

## I. Summary:

This bill will eliminate the current authority for school districts to develop alternative certification programs for educators. It will create a statewide alternative certification program and a grant program to encourage mid-career professionals to make a transition to teaching through alternative certification.

The bill amends s. 231.15, F.S., and creates a new section of the Florida Statutes.

## II. Present Situation:

### Background

The 1999 Legislature required the Department of Education to review all statutes and rules relating to educator certification. The *Review of Florida Educator Certification* concludes in part that Florida's current certification system "creates barriers to recruitment of qualified individuals from other states and professions."

According to a 1999 Senate Education Committee interim project (#00-30):

Florida lacks a coordinated, statewide method for recruiting and preparing the best candidates to become and remain teachers. Its requirements for temporary, professional, and alternative certification are characterized by contradiction and confusion. . . . The major recommendation is the development of a statewide approach to recruiting and preparing teachers who possess the characteristics identified in effective teachers. This approach . . . should involve a comprehensive, state-level alternative to the traditional certification process. . . . [The] State should abandon its practice of allowing school districts to develop alternative certification programs on their own, even with a requirement for state-level approval.

Florida has 213,977 people certified to teach, but only 129,731 (61 percent) of them are employed as classroom teachers. Of those, about 4,000 hold a temporary certificate.<sup>1</sup>

Florida's projected need for teachers in 1999-2000 is 10,157, with some districts experiencing much greater need than others.<sup>2</sup> In Hillsborough County, for instance, over a thousand new teachers were needed in fall of 1999.<sup>3</sup>

### **Alternative Certification in Florida**

In s. 231.17, F.S., school districts are authorized to establish their own alternative certification program for teachers, if approved by the state Department of Education. There is no provision for a state-developed alternative certification program. Only Hillsborough County has implemented a successful, state-approved alternative certification program, and two more are nearing the end of the planning stage. The Hillsborough County model requires a candidate to obtain employment by the school district, earn a temporary certificate, and enter into an agreement with a participating school to satisfy demonstration of professional education competencies and professional preparation course work. Under that program, called Preparing New Educators, 74 new teachers have been employed for the 1999-2000 school year.

Elementary school teachers cannot use the alternative route to certification because of the pedagogical requirements of teaching reading and other basic childhood learning skills. These competencies must be mastered before allowing a candidate to have primary responsibility for a classroom, and they require college coursework.

### **Troops to Teachers Program**

The Troops to Teachers program is designed to help former military personnel enter public education as teachers. It is funded by the federal government as a \$4 million grant program to school districts. Since the inception of the program in January 1994, 3,000 service members have entered the teaching profession. The program was created in the 1993 Defense Authorization Bill to ease the effect of military downsizing. It is managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Support, called DANTEs, a Department of Defense agency. Currently the program operates 20 state Placement Assistance offices, including one in Florida.<sup>4</sup> According to officials in the Department of Education, the program has recruited 270 new teachers for Florida's schools. The success of these programs is not so much in the numbers but in their ability to meet demographic or program needs. Almost all of the teachers are male, 29 percent are members of minority groups, and 66 percent are teaching mathematics or science. Eleven percent reported that they were teaching general special education.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Source: Florida Department of Education: Teacher Certification Database for certification data; Office of Educational Information and Accountability for employment data.

<sup>2</sup>*Projected Number of Teachers Needed Through 2010-2011*, Florida Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Planning and Budgeting, March 1998.

<sup>3</sup>Telephone interview, Hillsborough County Office of Teacher Recruitment.

<sup>4</sup>C. Emily Feistritzer and others, *Profile of Troops to Teachers*, National Center for Education Information, 1998.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

A related program, called Soldiers to Scholars, provides scholarships to former military personnel who are completing their baccalaureate degrees and have agreed to enter the teaching profession. They live in high-poverty areas of Orlando while attending college, and most (73 percent) accept employment in inner-city schools. Currently 34 people are in this program.

### **Transition to Teaching Act**

On June 24, 1999, the United States House of Representatives passed H. R. 2344, the "Transition to Teaching Act," by Representative Jim Davis of Florida. If passed unchanged by the Senate, that act will appropriate \$18 million for the Troops to Teachers program and a new program designed to encourage mid-career professionals to become educators. The funds may be used to recruit participants, to provide up to \$5,000 per participant for stipends and other financial incentives, to assist teacher training institutions to meet the needs of the participants, and to place people who complete the program in teaching positions.

To earn the stipend and other financial incentives, a participant must agree to teach for 3 years in a "high-poverty local education agency." That term, however, is defined as a school district in which the number of children from families below the poverty line is 20 percent or greater, or in which the number of such children exceeds 10,000. Because poverty occurs in "pockets" within large urban districts, and is fairly pervasive in small rural ones, most school districts in Florida meet that definition.

Because the program requires a participant to have a baccalaureate degree, it is not a scholarship program but an incentive program to enter into an alternative certification program.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

In an amendment to s. 231.15, F.S., the legislation under consideration will repeal the current authority for school districts to develop alternative certification programs. In a newly created statute, it will create a statewide program modeled after the one implemented in Hillsborough County. The program is "not intended to place novice teachers into difficult classroom situations, but to create a route to professional certification that is rich in classroom experience, meets individual needs, and exploits the unique accomplishments of experienced adults."

A participant must be eligible for a 2-year temporary certificate and must be an instructional employee whose teaching assignment does not vary from day to day. The principal must agree to coordinate the program.

The program requires at least 180 days of teaching under the supervision of a clinical educator and trained support team -- a mentor teacher, a representative of a state-approved educator-preparation program, and the principal.

The applicant is not exempt from any of the accomplished practices required of other teachers but is allowed to demonstrate competency in the classroom or by using work products or past experience as evidence, rather than by completing courses. The Department of Education may identify any of the practices that must be achieved through professional development programs or classroom instruction.

The second part of the new statute will create a pilot program modeled after the Transition to Teaching Program described in H. R. 2344, and the Soldiers to Scholars program. The program authorizes a grant to higher education institutions that contain a state-approved educator-preparation program. The grant will fund a recruitment program and a training and support program for participants. It will provide a "training stipend" to participants, but does not stipulate an amount. Presumably, the amount will be established in the federal guidelines, currently up to \$5,000.

A participant must be eligible for the alternative certification program *or* be capable of earning a teaching certificate after 15 college credit hours. This latter provision is similar to the Soldiers to Scholars program, in that it may support students who are not yet in teaching assignments and who may be pursuing professional certificates through the traditional route rather than the alternative route. It will also have the effect of allowing participants to become elementary school teachers, a profession that requires pedagogical training in areas such as childhood development and the teaching of reading.

A participant must agree to become fully certified within 2 years after employment in an instructional position, and must teach for at least 1 more year, for a total of at least 3 years in the classroom.

The Commissioner of Education will determine how participants will repay the funds if they fail to complete their service obligation. He or she will also provide guidelines for districts to evaluate the program's success and coordinate the information in a report to the Governor and Legislature.

The Department of Education may adopt rules to implement the program.

The effective date is July 1, 2000.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

##### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

##### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

Depending upon funding provided, a number of teachers may be eligible for up to \$5,000 for agreeing to participate in the alternative certification program as a career-changing professional.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill stipulates that the program will be implemented only to the extent funding is provided. The federal Transition to Teaching program proposes \$18 million nationwide, and under this bill Florida would be eligible to receive a grant from the program as soon as funds are released.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Amendments:**

#1 by Education:

Clarifies that a state community college will become eligible for a grant for the Transition to Teaching Pilot Program by having courses within a state-approved teacher preparation program rather than having the program itself.