

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education

BILL: SB 896

INTRODUCER: Senator Burgess

SUBJECT: Educator Certification Pathways for Veterans

DATE: January 31, 2022

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Lloyd</u>	<u>Caldwell</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 896 creates an additional pathway for veterans to qualify for educator certification. The bill removes the requirement that an applicant for a temporary educator certificate hold a baccalaureate degree if the applicant has completed:

- At least 48 months of active-duty military service with an honorable discharge or medical separation; and
- At least 60 college credits with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, as provided by one or more accredited institutions of higher learning or a nonaccredited institution of higher learning that the Department of Education has identified as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's degree or higher.

The exception in the bill authorizing a temporary certificate for less than a baccalaureate degree applies only to subject area specializations requiring only a bachelor's degree. The bill provides that a temporary certificate issued under this pathway is valid for five school fiscal years and is nonrenewable.

The bill also removes the requirement for an honorably discharged veteran to have served on active duty to qualify for the waiver of initial general knowledge, professional education, and subject area examination fees and certification fees.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.

II. Present Situation:

Florida's public school system enrolls approximately 2.8 million students annually across 67 school districts in grades pre-Kindergarten through 12.¹ During the 2020-2021 school year, these

¹ Florida Department of Education, *About Us*, <https://www.fldoe.org/about-us/> (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

students were supported by almost 340,000 personnel in administrative, instructional, and support positions, with 60 percent identified as instructional staff.² Teachers represent 87 percent of instructional personnel.³ Instructional staff also include other personnel who interact with students outside of the traditional classroom setting, such as guidance counselors, librarians, social workers, and school psychologists.

Educator Certification Requirements

Educational personnel in public schools must possess appropriate skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; adequate pedagogical knowledge; and relevant subject matter competence so as to demonstrate an acceptable level of professional performance.⁴

The State Board of Education (SBE) designates the certification subject areas, establishes competencies, and adopts rules in accordance with which education certificates are issued by the Department of Education (DOE) to applicants who meet the requirements.⁵

Initial Eligibility

In order to seek educator certification, a person must attest to uphold the principles of the United States (U.S.) and meet other general eligibility requirements, which include receipt of a bachelor's or higher degree from an approved postsecondary institution and minimum age, background screening, moral character, and competence requirements.⁶

Professional Educator Certificate

A professional certificate is awarded to an applicant who meets the basic eligibility requirements for certification and demonstrates mastery of:⁷

- General knowledge, only if serving as a classroom teacher;
- Subject area knowledge; and
- Professional preparation and education competence.

Mastery of general knowledge may be demonstrated through several methods, including the passing of one of several different examinations identified by the SBE, having a teacher education certification from another state, or teaching at a state college or university or private college level for a minimum of two semesters in either full-time or part-time status.⁸

Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of subject area knowledge are specified in law and include passing a subject area or other alternative examination as approved by the SBE, a valid

² Florida Department of Education, *Staff in Florida Public Schools – Full Time Staff Summary, 2020-21, Final Summary 2, State/District Level Report*, <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/staff.shtml> (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

³ Florida Department of Education, *Staff in Florida's Public Schools, Full-Time Instructional Staff Summary, 2020-2021, Final Survey 2, State/District Report*, <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/staff.shtml> (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

⁴ Section 1012.54, F.S.

⁵ Section 1012.55(1)(a), F.S.

⁶ Section 1012.56(2), F.S., and Rule 6A-4.003, F.A.C.

⁷ Section 1012.56(2)(g)-(i), F.S.

⁸ Section 1012.56(3), F.S.; and Fla Admin. Code. R. 6A-4.004(2020).

teaching certificate from another state, a valid certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), or a passing score or program completion of a specified defense language proficiency test or program.⁹

A candidate for a professional certificate may demonstrate professional preparation and education competence through completion of a teacher preparation program and a passing score on the corresponding professional education competency exam required by the SBE.¹⁰ Other means include:¹¹

- Documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state, the NBPTS, or a national educator credentialing board approved by the SBE.
- Passing the professional education competency examination and documentation of two semesters of successful, full-time or part-time teaching in a state college or university or a private college or university approved by the DOE.
- Successful completion of professional preparation courses, successful completion of a professional preparation and education competence program, and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination;
- Successful completion of a professional development certification and education competency program.
- Successful completion of a competency-based certification program and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs are accountable for producing individuals with the competencies and skills necessary to achieve state education goals.¹² Each teacher preparation program must be approved by the DOE based on criteria specified in law.¹³ Teacher preparation programs result in qualification for an initial Florida Professional Educator's Certificate and include:¹⁴

- Initial teacher preparation programs, which are offered by Florida postsecondary institutions to prepare instructional personnel.
- Educator preparation institutes, which are offered by Florida postsecondary or qualified private providers that provide instruction for non-education baccalaureate or higher degree holders.
- Professional development certification programs, in which a school district, charter school, or charter management organization may provide instruction for members of its instructional staff who are non-education baccalaureate or higher degree holders.

Before program completion, each candidate must demonstrate his or her ability to positively impact student learning growth in the candidate's area or areas of program concentration during a prekindergarten through grade 12 field experience and must pass each portion of the Florida

⁹ Section 1012.56(5), F.S.

¹⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida* (Oct. 1, 2020), incorporated by reference in rule 6A-4.0021, F.A.C., available at <http://www.flrules.org/Gateway/reference.asp?No=Ref-10344>.

¹¹ Section 1012.56(6), F.S.

¹² Section 1004.04(1)(b), F.S.

¹³ Section 1004.04(3), F.S.

¹⁴ Section 1004.04, F.S.; Rule 6A-5.066(1)(k), (r), and (y), F.A.C.

Teacher Certification Examination required for a professional certificate in the area or areas of program concentration.¹⁵

Temporary Educator Certificate

A temporary teaching certificate is valid for 3 school fiscal years and is nonrenewable.¹⁶ The DOE is required by law to issue a temporary certificate to any applicant who:¹⁷

- Completes applicable subject area content requirements or demonstrates mastery of subject area knowledge by, for example, successful completion of an approved exam; and
- Holds an accredited degree or a degree approved by the DOE at the level required for the subject area specialization in state board rule.

The DOE offers a variety of pathways to transition from a temporary to professional teaching certification, including certification programs, professional training programs, and professional preparation college courses.¹⁸

A professional education competence program allows instructional personnel with a temporary certificate may demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence through classroom application of Florida's core standards for effective educators and instructional performance.¹⁹

Additions to Certificates

Once an educator holds a valid Florida Temporary or Professional Certificate, the educator may be eligible to add another subject coverage according to subject specialization requirements in the SBE rule.²⁰ Add-on programs are offered by colleges, universities, and school districts and must be approved by the department. Currently, 34 school districts operate their own certification add-on programs.²¹

Non-certificated Personnel

District school boards are authorized to employ selected non-certificated personnel to provide instructional services in the individuals' fields of specialty or assist instructional staff members as education paraprofessionals.²² School board and charter school governing board policies for non-certificated instructional are required to include specified provisions to create parity with certificated personnel. For example, policies are required to assure that non-certificated

¹⁵ Section 1004.04(2)(d), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 1012.56(7), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 1012.56(7)(b), F.S.

¹⁸ Florida Department of Education, Certification Pathways and Routes, *Pathways to Upgrade from a Temporary to a Professional Certificate*, <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/pathways-routes/> (last visited Jan. 3, 2022).

¹⁹ Rule 6A-5.066(1)(u), F.A.C.

²⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Certificate Additions*, <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/additions/> (last visited December 10, 2021).

²¹ Florida Department of Education, *Professional Development Certification Programs*, <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/preparation/pdcp.stml> (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

²² Section 1012.55(1)(c), F.S.

personnel possess the necessary relevant knowledge and a clear understanding of all relevant instructional practices and policies.²³

Out-of-Field Instructors

An instructor may be approved by the district school board or charter school governing board to teach a field in which the instructor lacks certification after a determination that a teacher with appropriate certification coverage is not available. While employed, approved out-of-field instructors must satisfy specified college credit or equivalent inservice training in an approved district add-on program or district approved subject content professional development program.²⁴

Out of 644,437 courses in public schools that received a school grade in 2018-19, 6.79 percent were taught by an out-of-field instructor.²⁵

Adjunct Teachers

District school boards are also authorized to issue an adjunct teaching certificate to any applicant who satisfies general eligibility requirements for certification and has expertise in the subject area to be taught. An applicant is considered to have expertise in the subject area if the applicant demonstrates sufficient subject area mastery through passage of a subject area test.²⁶

Non-Degreed Teachers of Career Education

Qualifications for part-time and full-time non-degreed teachers of career and technical education programs are based primarily on successful occupational experience rather than academic training.²⁷ A holder of a certificate based on nonacademic preparation which entitled him or her to employment to teach classes in career or adult education may not be assigned to teach in a regular academic field of the kindergarten through grade 12 school program.²⁸

Military Personnel, Veterans, and Spouses

Fee Waivers

The SBE is required to waive initial general knowledge, professional education, and subject area examination fees and certification fees for:²⁹

- A member of the U.S. Armed Forces or a reserve component thereof who is serving or has served on active duty or the spouse of such a member.
- The surviving spouse of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces or a reserve component thereof who was serving on active duty at the time of death.

²³ Rule 6A-1.0502, F.A.C.

²⁴ Rule 6A-1.0503(3), F.A.C.

²⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Identification of Critical Teacher Shortage Areas for 2021-2022*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7766/urlt/CTSA2122.pdf>, at 9.

²⁶ Section 1012.57(1), F.S.

²⁷ Section 1012.43, F.S.

²⁸ Section 1012.43(2), F.S.

²⁹ Section 1012.59(3), F.S.

- An honorably discharged veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces or a veteran of a reserve component thereof who served on active duty and the spouse or surviving spouse of such a veteran.

A fee waiver is valid for up to five years after the veteran or his or her spouse is determined eligible and can be requested online.³⁰

Military Extensions to Certificates

If an educator with a temporary certificate is called to active duty or volunteers, whether in wartime or peacetime, the educator may request an extension of time to his or her temporary certificate equal to the amount of time spent in service. A spouse of an active duty service member or reserve unit may also request a two-year military extension to a temporary certificate to complete the requirements for a Professional Certificate.³¹

Federal Troops to Teachers Program

In 1993, the Department of Defense (DOD) established the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program to assist transitioning service members and veterans in beginning careers as school teachers. The program provided counseling and referral services to assist members and veterans in meeting education and licensing requirements to secure a teaching position.³²

Within the program, the DOD provided assistance of up to \$5,000 to eligible members to obtain certification or licensing as educators, and up to \$10,000 in bonuses to participants who agree to teach in high-poverty schools.³³

Members of the armed forces who wish to receive the program's assistance for placement are required to have a bachelor's or advanced degree, and priority is given to those members who have educational or military experience in science, mathematics, special education, or vocational/technical subjects.³⁴ To receive the stipend, participants are required to:³⁵

- Be enrolled in an accredited institution that would result in licensure as a full-time teacher;
- Commit to full-time teaching in an eligible or high need school for three years; and
- If not retired or discharged due to service-connected physical disability, commit to serving three years in reserves.

The program's goals include reducing veteran unemployment, increasing the number of male and minority teachers in classrooms, and addressing the teacher shortage issues in schools that serve low-income families and in the critical subject areas including math, science, special

³⁰ Rule 6A-4.0012(8)(e), F.A.C.

³¹ Section 1012.56(7)(c), F.S.

³² United States Army, *Troops to Teachers (TTT)*, [https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Troops-to-Teachers-\(TTT\)?serv=122](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Troops-to-Teachers-(TTT)?serv=122) (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

³³ U.S. Department of Education, *Troops to Teachers Program*, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/troops/index.html> (last visited Jan. 12, 2022).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ United States Army, *Troops to Teachers (TTT)*, [https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Troops-to-Teachers-\(TTT\)?serv=122](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Troops-to-Teachers-(TTT)?serv=122) (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

education, foreign language, and career and technical education. Since the program's launch in 1993, more than 100,000 veterans have transitioned to a career in education.³⁶

The TTT program was extended through July 1, 2025, in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022.³⁷

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 896 creates an additional pathway for veterans to qualify for educator certification. The bill removes the requirement that an applicant for a temporary educator certificate hold a baccalaureate degree if the applicant has completed:

- At least 48 months of active-duty military service with an honorable discharge or medical separation; and
- At least 60 college credits with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, as provided by one or more accredited institutions of higher learning or a nonaccredited institution of higher learning that the Department of Education has identified as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's degree or higher.

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The bill also removes the requirement for an honorably discharged veteran to have served on active duty to qualify for the waiver of initial general knowledge, professional education, and subject area examination fees and certification fees.

The potential availability of additional educators, especially as Florida faces a teacher shortage in certain regions and in specific instructional subject matters could provide district school board with enhanced options and expanded personnel choices. Experienced military leaders who have mentored and educated military service members for years may have skills and experiences that can translate easily to the classroom and would be a ready-made workforce for Florida's public and charter schools and could address short and long-term workforce needs.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2022.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

³⁶ United States Army, *Troops to Teachers (TTT)*, [https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Troops-to-Teachers-\(TTT\)?serv=122](https://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Benefit-Library/Federal-Benefits/Troops-to-Teachers-(TTT)?serv=122) (last visited Jan. 28, 2022).

³⁷ Pub. L. No. 117-81, s. 1605 (Dec. 27, 2021).

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends sections 1012.56 and 1012.59 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.