

SESSION OF 2024

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE ON SENATE BILL NO. 407

As Amended by Senate Committee on
Education

Brief*

SB 407, as amended, would require the State Board of Education (State Board) to authorize individuals who have completed an alternative teacher certification program to apply for and obtain an initial teaching license.

The bill would be in effect upon publication in the *Kansas Register*.

Alternative Teacher Certification Program

The bill would define an “alternative teacher certification program” to mean a teacher preparation program that:

- Operates in at least five states;
- Has been in operation at least ten years;
- Includes subject-area content training and pedagogical training that covers effective instructional delivery, classroom management and organization, assessment, instructional design, and professional learning and leadership; and
- Requires applicants to pass a subject area examination and a pedagogy examination to successfully complete the program.

*Supplemental notes are prepared by the Legislative Research Department and do not express legislative intent. The supplemental note and fiscal note for this bill may be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.kslegislature.org>

Applicant for an Initial Teaching License

The bill would require an individual who applies for an initial teaching license to:

- Submit an official transcript to confirm the awarding of a bachelor's degree or higher from a college or university that has an accreditation recognized by the State Board;
- Submit proof of completion of the alternative teacher program;
- Submit an application for an initial license with the required licensure fees; and
- Complete all background check requirements.

The bill would further provide that an individual who obtains an initial teaching license based on completion of this program would be authorized to teach the subject area and educational level that correspond to the certification received through the applicant's successful completion of the alternative teacher certification program, including:

- Elementary education;
- Elementary education unified;
- English language arts;
- History, government, and social studies;
- Mathematics;
- General Science;
- Biology;
- Chemistry;
- Physics;
- Secondary education unified; and
- High-incidence and low-incidence special education.

State Board of Education; Mentorship

The bill would require the State Board to treat any individual who successfully obtains an initial teaching licensure under the bill in the same manner as an individual who completes a traditional teacher preparation program. This treatment would include during the progress of converting such initial license to another license type.

An individual who obtains the initial license pursuant to provisions of the bill will be required to participate in a school district-based teacher mentorship program during the first two years of the individual's employment.

The bill would require the State Board to adopt rules and regulations necessary to carry out the bill's provisions.

Background

The bill was introduced by the Senate Committee on Education at the request of a representative of the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (American Board). [Note: A companion bill, HB 2521, has been introduced in the House.]

Senate Committee on Education

In the Senate Committee hearing on February 8, 2024, a representative of the American Board provided **proponent** testimony, stating the American Board and other alternative teacher preparation programs serve as an invaluable tool to assist states in addressing teacher shortages. The conferee noted the American Board's program is intended to complement existing pathways to licensure and enhance the pools of teachers in Kansas schools. Program participation, duration, cost, and programming information was also provided.

Written-only proponent testimony was submitted by representatives of Americans for Prosperity-Kansas and the Kansas Policy Institute. This testimony generally addressed the need to reduce present barriers to licensure, which would expand the teacher base statewide.

Written-only neutral testimony was submitted by a representative of Topeka Public Schools (USD 501), who indicated support for rigorous training of teachers through criteria established by and with approval of the State Board.

Opponent testimony was provided by representatives of the State Board, the Kansas Association of School Boards, Kansas National Education Association, and USA-Kansas and the Kansas School Superintendents' Association. Opponents generally noted the current regulated alternative licensure program and pathways in place in Kansas and the recent enactment of the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact, which will serve as another tool for recruitment. Two State Board members addressed the Board's constitutional responsibility for licensing teachers, indicating that educator preparation programs currently are and must be subject to accreditation by the Board and requirements currently in place for applicants for licensure.

The Senate Committee on Education amended the bill to :

- Remove provisions that provided applicants would not have to either complete a professional education pedagogy coursework at an accredited college or university engaged in teacher preparation or hold a valid teaching license in another state that was earned through completion of an alternative teacher certification program;
- Modify an application requirement to specify the official transcript must be from a college or university that has an accreditation recognized by the State Board;

- Revise subject areas and educational level certifications to align with some of the content areas within Kansas teacher licensure requirements; and
- Change language that would permit the State Board to require an individual to participate in a mentorship program during the individual's first year of employment to instead require the individual to participate in this program for the first two years of employment in Kansas.

Fiscal Information

According to the fiscal note prepared by the Division of the Budget on the bill, as introduced, enactment of the bill would have no fiscal effect for the State Department of Education. The Division of the Budget notes that any administrative expenses that would be required to implement the bill would be performed by existing agency staff.

Education; alternative teacher certification program; teacher licensure; certification; State Board of Education; rules and regulations