

## **SB599 – Excellent Educators for Every Classroom**

Overall, this bill replaces the current legislation that provides for teacher education preparation programs across the state. To date, teacher education preparation programs are traditionally colleges/universities. This bill will allow for additional organizations or groups to offer an Educator Preparation Program (EPP) if their program meets the legislated requirements and is approved by the NC State Board of Education. It is assumed that the colleges/universities that offer teacher education preparation programs now will be able to continue to do so as long as their programs are compliant.

Most significantly, this bill makes changes to alternative routes to teacher licensure for non-traditional teacher education preparation programs. Currently, teachers entering the profession through alternative routes, most commonly known as lateral entry, have two different options for completing requirements once they've been deemed eligible for the alternative license. First, they can associate with a college/university that offers a teacher education program in their specific license area and complete that college/university's requirements. Second, they can request a plan of study from the Regional Alternative Licensing Center (RALC) and complete courses at a college/university, community college, or staff development activities with the employing school district to meet the competencies outlined on the plan of study. In either of these routes, teachers have up to 3 years to complete their coursework or meet all competencies to have their lateral entry license converted to a non-alternative license.

### **There are some very positive attributes of this bill. (New and Positive)**

1. A specific piece of this legislation highlights the need for a pathway for teacher assistants to become teachers. It requires districts to maintain salary and benefits for any teacher assistants who are completing a student internship in the same district in which they are employed.
2. It allows a 2-year phase out of the current lateral entry processes. This will give districts and opportunity to adjust and plan. It also will allow more EPPs to be developed, be reviewed, and approved for operation prior to the current pipeline of these teachers being eliminated.
3. There are 2 Personnel Administrator positions now added to the Commission. This item was requested through the Personnel Administrators of NC professional organization given that it is the Personnel Administrators/Human Resources Administrators who are most familiar with the needs and processes/procedures for alternative licensure.
4. The evaluation requirements for Mentors and Clinical Supervisors have been adjusted to allow those with "Proficient" ratings to serve. They also include specifically that Retirees can be mentors.

### **Components that do not appear to be a change**

1. Requirements for teacher preparation programs to have State Board approval has always been in place. This does not change in this legislation.
2. Annual performance reports for teacher education programs are not new. They are usually referred to as an IHE Report Card.
3. New Teacher Induction Program and Mentor Teacher Training standards/program are not new.
4. Examination requirements for initial professional licenses, including the timelines proposed in this legislation, are not new.
5. The proposed renewal credit requirements are not new.

### **Initial and/or Continuing Concerns**

1. Overall, there were initial concerns about decreasing the amount of time a lateral entry teacher would have to meet requirements as the original legislation allowed up to 2 years. However, in the final version, the Residency license can be extended for up to 2 additional years.
2. The legislation requires a minimum 2.7 GPA for candidates entering a teacher preparation program in a college/university. However, there is a 2.5 minimum GPA for a lateral entry candidate to be employed and obtain a plan of study from an RALC. SB599 requires the 2.7 GPA for all EPPs, thus some candidates will not be eligible for hire because they will not meet the minimum requirement to enroll in an EPP. The legislation, through changes, was amended and allows the Commission to establish courses used for calculation of the 2.7 GPA requirement. This will allow some flexibility in identification of eligible lateral entry candidates. Also, there is now language that allows for experience to be considered (10 years for non-CTE areas and 5 years for CTE areas) rather than solely the GPA.
3. The overall elimination of the Regional Alternative Licensing Centers (RALCs) is a concern. These have served as regional partners with school districts, lateral entry teachers, and potential recruits for years. The adjustment to losing these programs and individuals who are extremely knowledgeable and resourceful. They serve as thought partners for districts who need guidance and assistance through the lateral entry process/licensure process. For the remaining 2 years that the current lateral entry license processes are in place, the RALCs, presumably, will continue to function as they do not. It is also possible that the RALCs will position themselves to be an EPP in the future for consideration by the Commission and SBE. If not, a great deal of knowledge and skill could potentially be lost across the state.
4. There appears to be an additional test that will be required. Specifically, it includes a “Pedagogy Assessment.” One concern here is specifically around the additional cost to a candidate. Also, there is some question about the statistical validity of a test for someone who does not complete a traditional teacher education program as this is what these types of test typically measure.
5. The changes to 115C-299.5. Duty to monitor the state of the teaching profession, are concerning. These revisions will result in additional reporting requirements for school districts in data sets that have previously not been specifically tracked. For example, defining a hard to staff subject area as one that has “resulted in a long-term vacancy of 16 months or more in a particular school in a local school administrative unit” is not a data point that many districts would have. Generally, many districts who have a vacancy for a significant length of time will repurpose the position to another teaching position in order to meet the needs of the students and school. Also, requesting data on vacancies under section (e) may be problematic initially as districts using electronic tools to post vacancies will remove postings and repost in order to keep the vacancy updated for candidates. This will skew the data. Overall districts will need time to plan and implement reporting functions to track this information.
6. In the original version of this legislation, mentor funding was restored. The state did once provide mentor funding to school districts but it was eliminated when the economy suffered. The Mentor Program has remained in place and it has been at the discretion of individual districts as to how to compensate teacher leaders who serve as mentors, or not. Some districts use Title II: Teacher Quality funding, others use local funding. This is unfortunate and continues the historical unfunded mandate by the state to require a mentor who will have very specific duties above and beyond their own teaching responsibilities. Interestingly, Education Week just published an article about the positive impact a mentor has on new teacher improvement and retention. Without adequate funding, mentor programs are not consistently as robust as they might be.

## **Questions for Clarity**

There are many questions regarding the ‘logistics’ that will need to be solidified and put into place for full implementation.

1. The legislation requires at least one field experience in a low-performing school. What if a district doesn't have a low-performing school where there is a suitable placement?
2. The legislation requires a 16-week internship that is further recommends cover both the opening and closing of a school. It is unclear how this would be feasible and effective for a teacher in training.
3. There are references to Sanctions for EPPs. If an EPP is “Warned,” put on “Probation,” or later “Revoked,” what happens to the licenses of those individuals who have completed programs or who are in the process of completing a program when this happens? There is a provision that allows an EPP who is assigned a “revoked status” to continue to train those individuals in their program so that these participants are not penalized. They may not accept new students if “revoked.” It also provides for the State Board and other EPPs to support those with a “revoked” status. However, if it is public information about the status of an EPP, will it be negatively viewed in hiring decision or in reporting?
4. Given the make-up of the Commission and that the State Board will ultimately have approval of any EPP, will there be any oversight provided so that these bodies do not essentially “privatize” teacher preparation?
5. Overall, there are currently 2 approved alternative licensing programs in the state. One is in Guilford County Schools and has been operating for 7-8 years. The second is the newly created CCRESA Local Alternative Teacher Preparation (LATP) Program that was just approved in March 2017 and is due to be fully operational for the 2017-18 school year. What impact, if any, will this legislation have on these 2 programs? (Wake is a partner district in the CCRESA LATP.) One would assume that these programs could apply as EPPs. However, information on that process will need to be shared quickly so that these programs have time to prepare/respond.

## **Additions to SB599 not specifically related to education preparation programs:**

1. Language now allows a local board of education to hire a retired principal or assistant principal as an interim for the remainder of a school year, regardless of licensure status.

**Questions:** Can this be permitted for opening a school? If a principal is reassigned or moved in the very last part of a school year (June) or start of a year (July - August), can a local board hire a retired principal or assistant principal to open a school if they have an expired license? Given that these individuals are subject to the retirement rules and to the legislation around their health benefits, will provisions be made to allow them to remain on their retiree health insurance? Will provisions be made to allow them to be paid from state funds with an expired license without an audit exception from the state that then the district must repay?

2. Background Checks and Employee Dismissal Procedures – Final Version: p. 20; Part IV: Section 4.(a) (1) -Requires a charter board of directors to follow LEA policy/process for criminal history checks; Must notify an LEA, other charter school, or regional school as to the reason for a resignation or dismissal if the criminal history was relevant to the separation.  
Section 4.(c) Superintendent no longer has to meet with a teacher who is incarcerated or in a correctional facility before suspending the teacher who has career status. – Written communication required. – Continues in 4.(e) and no meeting is required to suspend without pay but written communication is required.

Section 4.(d) If a teacher's criminal history is relevant to a resignation, regardless of notice, the Board shall report to the State Board of Education the reason for the resignation.

Section 4.(g) A local board, similar to 4.(a)(1), must share if criminal history is relevant in a resignation if inquiry is made by another LEA, charter or regional school

Additional Conforming Changes:

p. 26 – Section 6.(k) If House Bill 155 becomes law (has been ratified), then GS 115C-325(o)(2) is amended and only requires a 30 day notice from a “career employee.” It also changes the language to allow a local board to request revocation of a license for failure to give 30 days’ notice by a career employee. Finally, it requires a local board to report to the State Board if criminal history is relevant to a career employee’s resignation, whether 30 days’ notice is given or not.