SPONSOR: Sen. Sokola & Rep. Scott
Sens. Henry, Lopez, Poore, Simpson, Townsend, Ennis;
Reps. Barbieri, Bolden, Heffernan, Hudson, Viola, K. Williams

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
147th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE BILL NO. 51

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATOR LICENSURE, CERTIFICATION, AND PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

Section 1. Amend the title of Chapter 12, Title 14 of the Delaware Code, by making insertions as shown as shown by underlining and deletions as shown by strike through as follows:

CHAPTER 12. EDUCATOR LICENSURE, CERTIFICATION, EVALUATION, ~~AND~~ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND PREPARATION PROGRAMS.

Section 2. Amend § 1210, Title 14 of the Delaware Code by making insertions as shown by underlining and deletions as shown by strike through as follows:

§ 1210. Tier One -- Initial licensure.

(a) An initial license is valid for 3 years unless revoked. The Department shall issue an initial license under this section if an applicant demonstrates that the applicant has received a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited 4-year college or university, has achieved a passing score on an examination of general knowledge such as Praxis I, has achieved a passing score on both a content-readiness exam and a performance assessment as specified by the Department no later than July 1, 2015, and has either completed a student teaching program or meets any 1 of the following alternatives to student teaching:

(1) One year of teaching experience consisting of a minimum of 91 days of long-term teaching experience in 1 assignment, except that this provision shall not apply to applicants seeking an initial license to teach in a core content area. For the purposes of this section, “core content area” means any subject area tested by the state assessment system, including Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. Experience in the Alternative Routes to Licensure and Certification program or the Special Institute for Teacher Licensure and Certification program may not be used to meet this alternative; or

(2) The applicant is enrolled and participating in the Alternative Routes to Licensure and Certification Program pursuant to subchapter VI of this chapter of this title; or

(3) The applicant is enrolled and participating in the Special Institute for Teacher Licensure and Certification pursuant to subchapter V of this chapter of this title.

(b) Notwithstanding the requirements of subsection (a) of this section, ~~an initial license may be issued to an applicant who meets all other requirements for initial licensure except for passage of the PRAXIS I exam, provided that the applicant must pass PRAXIS I within the period of time from the date of hire to the end of the next, consecutive fiscal year. If proof of passage of PRAXIS I has not been provided during the time period specified, the initial license will be suspended unless the superintendent of the school district submits to the Secretary of Education a written request for a 1-year extension. The request must also document the effectiveness of the applicant. Any~~ an applicant who is within 2 points of the passing score on the reading, writing, or mathematics section of ~~PRAXIS~~ Praxis I may use a composite score to meet the requirements of passage. An applicant seeking an initial license to teach~~ing~~ the secondary content area of ~~Math~~ Mathematics or English/Language Arts must also ~~meet the~~ achieve a passing score on the corresponding section of Praxis I. The Department may also require that an applicant achieve a passing score on both a content-readiness exam and performance assessment. The assessments and the passing scores shall be approved by the Department, and shall be developed or identified in collaboration with Delaware educators.

(c) If a licensee intends to apply for a continuing license, the licensee shall, prior to the expiration of that licensee's initial license, complete professional development and mentoring activities as may be required by rules and regulations promulgated and adopted pursuant to this chapter.

(d) Pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated and adopted pursuant to this chapter, the Department may issue an initial license to an applicant with less than 3 years of teaching experience who is licensed as an educator in another jurisdiction or to an applicant who previously held a valid Delaware certificate that has since expired.

(e) An initial license may not be renewed. It may, however, be extended pursuant to § 1216 of this title.

(f) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a) and (c) through (e) of this section, an initial license may be issued for a period of up to 6 years for applicants in a vocational trade and industry area to complete specified college level course work required for certification. Such applicants must achieve a passing score on an examination of general knowledge such as Praxis I prior to the expiration of initial licensure.

(g) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a), (b) and (d) of this section, the Department shall issue an initial license to an applicant who meets the criteria for Meritorious New Teacher candidate designation adopted pursuant to § 1203 of this title.

Section 3. Amend § 1220, Title 14 of the Delaware Code by making insertions as shown by underlining and deletions as shown by strike through as follows:

§ 1220. Standard certificate.

(a) The Department shall issue a standard certificate to an applicant who meets the requirements for licensure and has acquired the prescribed knowledge, skill, or education to practice in a particular area, to teach a particular subject or to instruct a particular category of students. Where applicable and available, an applicant for a standard certificate must have achieved a passing score on an examination of content knowledge, such as Praxis II. This requirement shall apply to all applicants teaching special education in a core content area, as defined in § 1210 of this title, in secondary schools.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, the Department shall issue a standard certificate to an applicant who:

(1) Meets the requirements for licensure and holds a valid and current license or certificate from another state; or

(2) Meets the requirements for a Meritorious New Teacher candidate designation adopted pursuant to § 1203 of this title.

~~(c) The Department shall recognize a professional status certificate or standard certificate that is otherwise valid if issued prior to August 31, 2003. The Department shall also recognize a limited standard certificate or a temporary certificate issued prior to August 31, 2003, provided that the educator successfully completes the requirements set forth in the limited standard certificate or the temporary certificate.~~

Section 4. Amend Chapter 12, Title 14 of the Delaware Code by adding a new subchapter and by making insertions as shown by underlining as follows:

Subchapter VIII. Education Preparation Programs

§ 1280. Educator Preparation Program Approval.

(a) Consistent with § 122 of this title, no individual, public or private educational association, corporation, or institution, including any institution of post-secondary education, shall offer an educator preparation program for the training of educators to be licensed in this State without first having procured the assent of the Department for the offering of such programs. A program approval process based on standards adopted pursuant to this section must be established for educator preparation approval programs, phased in according to timelines determined by the Department, and fully implemented for such programs in the State. Each program shall be approved by the Department based upon significant, objective, and quantifiable performance measures.

(b) Each teacher preparation program approved by the Department shall establish rigorous entry requirements as prerequisites for admission into the program. At a minimum, each program shall require applicants to:

(1) Have a grade point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or a grade point average in the top 50th percentile for coursework completed during the most recent two years of the applicant's general education, whether secondary or post-secondary; or

(2) Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge, including the ability to read, write, and compute, by achieving a minimum score on a standardized test normed to the general college-bound population, as approved by the Department.

Each educator preparation program may waive these admissions requirements for up to 10% of the students admitted. Programs shall implement strategies to ensure that students admitted under such a waiver receive assistance to demonstrate competencies to successfully meet requirements for certification.

(c) Each teacher preparation program approved by the Department shall incorporate the following:

(1) A clinical residency component, supervised by high quality educators, as defined by the Department. The clinical residency shall consist of at least ten weeks of full-time student teaching. Clinical experiences shall also be interwoven throughout and aligned with program curriculum.

(2) Instruction for prospective elementary school teachers on research-based strategies for childhood literacy and age-appropriate mathematics content;

(3) Ongoing evaluation of students, consisting of no less than an annual evaluation, aligned to the statewide educator evaluation system;

(d) Each teacher preparation program approved by the Department shall establish rigorous exit requirements, which shall include but not be limited to achievement of passing scores on both a content-readiness exam and a performance assessment.

(e) Education preparation programs administered by institutions of higher education shall collaborate with the Department to collect and report data on the performance and effectiveness of program graduates. At a minimum, such data shall measure performance and effectiveness of program graduates by student achievement. The effectiveness of each graduate shall be reported for a period of 5 years following graduation for each graduate who is employed as an educator in the State. Data shall be reported on an annual basis. The Department shall make such data available to the public.

(f) The Department shall promulgate rules and regulations governing educator preparation programs pursuant to this subchapter in collaboration with Delaware educators.

Section 3. The effective date of this Act shall be July 1, 2014.

SYNOPSIS

This bill strengthens teacher preparation by raising the standards for entry into the teaching profession. More specifically, the bill requires all Delaware teacher preparation programs to set high admission and completion requirements, to provide high-quality student teaching experiences and ongoing evaluation of program participants, and to prepare prospective elementary school teachers in age-appropriate literacy and mathematics instruction. Further, the bill requires preparation programs to track and report data on the effectiveness of their programs. Finally, the bill requires new educators to pass both an approved content-readiness exam and performance assessment before receiving an initial license, and requires special education teachers to demonstrate content knowledge if they plan to teach in a secondary subject.

Author: Senator Sokola