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An Act To Establish in Law a Method for Alternative Certification of Teachers

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §13013, sub-§1, as amended by PL 1997, c. 266, §16, is further amended to read:

1. Definition. A professional teacher certificate is a renewable certificate issued to an individual who has held a provisional certificate and has met the qualifications of this section, except as provided in subsection 2-A, paragraphs B and D, or who satisfies the alternative certification requirements of section 13013-B.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §13013, sub-§2-A, ¶C, as amended by PL 2001, c. 534, §4, is further amended to read:

C. Holds a provisional teacher certificate issued pursuant to section 13012, subsection 2-A, paragraph D and has taught for at least one year under a provisional teacher certificate; or

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §13013, sub-§2-A, ¶D, as enacted by PL 1997, c. 266, §17, is amended to read:

D. Is seeking to hold only adult education or from birth to under age 6 endorsements; or

Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §13013, sub-§2-A, ¶E is enacted to read:

E. Meets the alternative certification requirements under section 13013-B.

Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §§13013-B and 13013-C are enacted to read:

§ 13013-B. Alternative certification

1. Definitions. As used in this section, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

A. "Alternative certification" means a professional teacher certificate issued under section 13013 in accordance with this section.

B. "Alternative program" means a program designed in accordance with this section that qualifies an individual for alternative certification.

C. "Teacher preparation program" means:

(1) An educator preparation program as defined under section 13008;

(2) A method established by the state board pursuant to section 13011, subsection 6 for a person who has not completed an educator preparation program as defined under section 13008 to obtain provisional educator certification; or

(3) An alternative route to certification program.

2. Alternative program approval. The commissioner may certify alternative programs. In order to be certified, an alternative program must meet the requirements of subsection 4 and:

A. Be provided by a public or private institution of higher education, a school administrative unit or a private, nonprofit teacher or administrator training organization approved by the state board; and

B. Accept for participation in the alternative program only persons who, in accordance with rules adopted by the state board, meet or are likely to meet upon graduation from the alternative program the requirements for alternative certification established under subsection 8, paragraphs B, C and D.

3. Certified alternative programs. A graduate of an alternative program certified under subsection 2 is eligible for a professional teacher certificate issued under section 13013 in accordance with this section.

4. Alternative program elements. An alternative program must provide for its participants an intensive training program in teaching that meets standards established by rule by the state board that includes the following components:

A. Targeted course work of, at minimum, 12 college credit hours and, at maximum, 18 college credit hours for secondary school teaching and 24 college credit hours for elementary school teaching or the equivalent;

B. Mentorship or student teaching experiences with teachers rated at the highest or next highest level of effectiveness under the rating scale required under section 13704, subsection 3. Mentorship or student teaching experience must comprise a significant portion of the alternative program;

C. Assessments that provide for:

(1) An initial evaluation of a candidate's competencies in order to determine an appropriate individualized professional development plan;

(2) An evaluation of each candidate demonstrating successful completion of the alternative program; and

(3) An evaluation conducted after classroom placement for each alternative program graduate; and

D. Classroom preparation of pedagogical knowledge that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(1) Requirements for professional preparation specified by the state board;

(2) Techniques for using a variety of data indicators for student progress and instructional decision making;

(3) Methodologies, including technology-based methodologies, for teaching subject content that supports applicable state standards for students;

(4) Techniques for effective classroom management, including behavioral management and differentiated instruction for all students; and

(5) Techniques and strategies for ensuring a safe learning environment for students.

5. Data collection. The commissioner shall evaluate the performance and growth of alternative program graduates by tracking and reporting performance data relating to those graduates, their students and the school administrative units that hire those graduates. The commissioner shall provide the information to school boards and the state board. The information must include, but is not limited to:

A. Data relating to students taught by alternative program graduates, including, but not limited to:

(1) Performance under the statewide system of learning results established under section 6209;

(2) Student transcripts; and

(3) Student attendance and student mobility;

B. Data relating to teachers who have graduated from alternative programs, including, but not limited to:

(1) Teacher credentials, such as master's degrees, teacher preparation programs completed and certification levels and endorsement areas;

(2) Teacher assessments, such as whether a teacher is determined to be highly qualified pursuant to the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 United States Code, Chapter 70 or determined to meet such other designations as may be established by federal law or regulations for the purpose of tracking the equitable distribution of instructional staff;

(3) The alternative program from which the teacher graduated; and

(4) The specific teacher preparation program the teacher was enrolled in within the alternative program; and

C. Data relating to schools and school administrative units, which must include, but not be limited to:

(1) School population;

(2) Annual student graduation rates;

(3) Annual teacher retention rates; and

(4) School disciplinary records, such as data relating to suspensions, expulsions and other disciplinary actions.

A school board shall report all necessary information required by this subsection to the commissioner. The commissioner must provide for technical assistance and training of school staff in the data collection and reporting process.

6. Minimum standards of performance. By October 31, 2015, the state board shall establish minimum standards of performance for alternative programs based on the data collected pursuant to subsection 5.

7. Suspension. If the alternative program fails to meet the standards established under subsection 6 for 2 consecutive years, the commissioner shall suspend certification of the alternative program. The provider of an alternative program suspended under this subsection may reapply for certification of the alternative program.

8. Alternative certification eligibility. An applicant for alternative certification under this section must, in accordance with rules adopted by the state board:

A. Satisfy the criminal history records check requirements of section 6103 and section 13011, subsection 8;

B. Hold a bachelor's, master's, doctorate or professional degree from an accredited college or university with a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or the equivalent on another scale in accordance with rules adopted by the state board, except that the commissioner may consider course work or life experiences in partial fulfillment of the requirements of this paragraph;

C. Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge, through an appropriate measure of academic proficiency, such as Graduate Record Examination scores;

D. Demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge for each subject area in which the applicant applies to be endorsed in accordance with section 13013, subsection 3; and

E. Satisfy all the requirements of and graduate from an alternative program certified under this section or hold a valid teaching certification issued pursuant to an alternative teaching certification program approved in another state or territory of the United States.

9. Temporary certification. The commissioner may issue a one-year teacher certificate to a person certified to teach in another state or territory of the United States who meets all the certification requirements of subsection 8 except the requirements of subsection 8, paragraph D. The one-year certificate must include endorsements that specify one or more grades and subject areas that the person is authorized to teach based on the grades and subject areas the person is authorized to teach under the out-of-state certificate. After satisfying the requirements of subsection 8, paragraph D, a person holding a one-year certificate is eligible for a professional teacher certificate issued under section 13013. If the requirements of subsection 8, paragraph D are not met during the validity period of the one-year certificate due to circumstances beyond the control of the person issued the certificate, the school that employs that person may request, and the commissioner may grant, an extension of the one-year certificate for up to one calendar year.

10. Alternative certification usage. Alternative certification in accordance with this section may not be limited with respect to subject or grade taught or geographic location, except in accordance with subsection 8, paragraph D.

11. Rules. The state board shall adopt rules necessary to implement the provisions of this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

§ 13013-C. Minimum standards for all teacher preparation programs

By October 31, 2016, the state board shall develop minimum standards of performance for all teacher preparation programs, as defined in section 13013-B, subsection 1, paragraph C, and shall by October 31, 2017 adopt certification, data collection, program review and program suspension requirements for all teacher preparation programs.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes an alternative pathway to teacher certification. Under this bill, programs that prepare persons for alternative certification are certified by the Commissioner of Education. The programs

must provide targeted course work in teaching, mentoring or student teaching experience, classroom preparation and student assessments. Graduates of these programs are eligible to obtain professional teacher certificates. The bill also requires the State Board of Education to establish minimum standards of performance for these programs and, by October 31, 2016, to develop minimum standards of performance for all teacher preparation programs.