

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Improve the Quality of Teachers

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

Sec. 1. 20-A MRS §13012, sub-§2-A, as amended by PL 2011, c. 635, Pt. B, §4, is further amended to read:

2-A. Qualifications. State board rules governing the qualifications for a provisional teacher certificate must require that a certificate may only be issued to an applicant who meets the requirements of subsection 2-B, has successfully completed a student teaching practicum experience of at least one academic year in duration, which must have begun during the applicant's sophomore year, and a student teaching experience of at least 1524 weeks during the applicant's senior year and:

A. For elementary school, has met academic and preprofessional requirements established by the state board for teaching at the elementary school level and has graduated with a grade point average of at least 3.0 based on a 4.0 grade point system from an accredited, degree-granting educational institution upon completion of:

- (1) A bachelor's degree from a 4-year accredited college or university;
- (2) A 4-year program in liberal arts and sciences; or
- (3) An approved 4-year teacher preparation program and has majored in the subject area to be taught or an interdisciplinary program in liberal arts;

B. For secondary school, has met academic and preprofessional requirements established by the state board for teaching at the secondary school level and has graduated with a grade point average of at least 3.0 based on a 4.0 grade point system from an accredited, degree-granting educational institution upon completion of:

- (1) A bachelor's degree from a 4-year accredited college or university;
- (2) A 4-year program in liberal arts and sciences; or
- (3) An approved 4-year teacher preparation program and has majored in the subject area to be taught;

C. Is otherwise qualified by having met separate educational criteria for specialized teaching areas, including, but not limited to, special education, home economics, agriculture, career and technical education, art, music, business education, physical education and industrial arts, as established by the state board for teaching in these specialized areas; or

D. Has completed 6 credit hours of approved study within 5 years prior to application, has met entry-level standards and has held either a professional teacher certificate that expired more than 5 years prior to the application date or a provisional teacher certificate issued prior to July 1, 1988 that expired more than 5 years prior to the application date.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §13015, sub-§3, ¶¶C and D, as enacted by PL 1983, c. 845, §4, are amended to read:

C. A description of the duties of the master teacher responsible for the design and coordination of a teacher action plan; ~~and~~

D. A description of any current or planned linkages the support system has or will have with institutions of higher education, department personnel and members of the public in the operation of its support system; ~~and~~

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §13015, sub-§3, ¶E is enacted to read:

E. For provisional teachers during each year of their probationary period:

(1) Observations of classroom instruction of a minimum of 4 classes; and

(2) Formative feedback and continuous improvement conversations throughout the school year.

Sec. 4. 20-A MRSA §13016, sub-§5 is enacted to read:

5. Master's degree. Notwithstanding subsections 1, 2 and 3, an individual who has not completed a master's degree program and who is issued a teacher certificate in accordance with this chapter on or after July 1, 2015 may not renew the teacher certificate or be issued another certificate under this section unless the individual completes a master's degree program within 5 years of being employed as a teacher in the State.

Sec. 5. 20-A MRSA §13406, as enacted by PL 2005, c. 635, §6, is repealed.

Sec. 6. 20-A MRSA §13407 is enacted to read:

§ 13407. Minimum salaries beginning in 2016-2017

Each school administrative unit shall establish a minimum salary of \$40,000 for certified teachers for the school year starting after June 30, 2016 and in each subsequent school year. Each school administrative unit shall provide to the department on or before October 1st the number of teachers eligible for incremental salary increases as defined in section 15689, subsection 7-A, paragraph A.

Sec. 7. 20-A MRSA §15689, sub-§7-A is enacted to read:

7-A. Adjustment for minimum teacher salary. Beginning in fiscal year 2017-18 and in each subsequent fiscal year, the commissioner shall, in accordance with this subsection, increase the state share of the total allocation to a qualifying school administrative unit by an amount necessary to achieve the minimum salary for certified teachers established in section 13407.

A. As used in this subsection, unless the context otherwise indicates, the term "qualifying school administrative unit" means a school administrative unit that the commissioner determines to have a locally established salary schedule with a minimum teacher salary of less than \$40,000 in school year 2015-2016. As used in this subsection, unless the context otherwise indicates, "incremental salary increases" means the incremental increases in the salaries of teachers employed by a qualifying school administrative unit in school year 2015-2016 necessary to meet the minimum salary requirements of section 13407 in fiscal year 2016-17 and thereafter.

B. The commissioner shall allocate the funds appropriated by the Legislature in fiscal year 2017-18 and each subsequent fiscal year in accordance with the following.

(1) The amount of increased funds provided to qualifying school administrative units under this subsection must be the amount necessary to fund the incremental salary increases.

(2) The number of teachers eligible for incremental salary increases in a qualifying school administrative unit for a fiscal year must be based on the local staff information supplied to the department pursuant to section 13407 in that fiscal year.

(3) The increased funds provided under this subsection must be issued to the qualifying school administrative units as an adjustment to the state school subsidy for distribution to the teachers. Qualifying school administrative units must use the payments provided under this subsection to provide salary adjustments to those teachers eligible for incremental salary increases. The department shall collect the necessary data to allow the funds to be included in the qualifying school administrative unit's monthly subsidy payments beginning no later than February 1st of each fiscal year.

C. The amounts required to meet the employer's share of teacher retirement costs attributable to payments in fiscal year 2017-18 pursuant to Title 5, section 17154 and each subsequent fiscal year under this subsection must be paid by the commissioner to the Maine Public Employees Retirement System in the appropriate year. As used in the paragraph, "teacher" has the same meaning as in Title 5, section 17001, subsection 42.

Sec. 8. 20-A MRSA §15689-A, sub-§25 is enacted to read:

25. Salary supplements for approved support systems for teacher certification.

The commissioner shall pay the costs attributable to the involvement of classroom teachers in the operation of a school administrative unit's support system approved in accordance with the provisions

of section 13015. The amount of the payments must be equal to the classroom teacher's per diem salary rate multiplied by the number of days the classroom teacher is involved in the operation of an approved support system.

Sec. 9. Qualifying scores for initial teacher certification. No later than July 1, 2016, the Department of Education shall increase the qualifying scores for the standardized qualifying examinations for applicants for initial teacher certification as set forth in its Rule Chapter 13: Qualifying Examinations for Teachers, Educational Specialists and Administrators to bring them into closer accord with the qualifying scores for the standardized qualifying examinations for initial teacher certification established by other states.

Sec. 10. Costs. The Department of Education shall determine the amount of state funds necessary to meet the requirements of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 15689, subsection 7-A and shall report that amount to the Joint Standing Committee on Education no later than December 15, 2015. The committee shall report out a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 127th Legislature to provide the necessary funding.

Sec. 11. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

FINANCE AUTHORITY OF MAINE

Student Financial Assistance Programs 0653

Initiative: Provides funding to pay the costs of doubling the amount of loans awarded to eligible students from the Educators for Maine Program.

GENERAL FUND	2015-16	2016-17
All Other	\$250,000	\$250,000
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	\$250,000	\$250,000

SUMMARY

This bill proposes to improve teacher quality in the State by amending the current statutes related to programs involving teacher preparation, support systems for provisional teachers, teacher certification, teacher salaries and college loans for students enrolled in a program of study leading to certification as a teacher. The bill includes the following provisions.

1. It expands the student teaching experience and specifics an academic achievement level necessary for applicants to qualify for a provisional teaching certificate.

2. It strengthens the support systems required to provide assistance for provisional teachers during each year of their probationary period.

3. It directs the Commissioner of Education to pay salary supplements to classroom teachers who are involved in the operation of a school administrative unit's support system approved in accordance with the provisions of the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 13015.

4. It provides that an individual who has not completed a master's degree program and who is issued a teacher certificate in accordance with Title 20-A, chapter 502 on or after July 1, 2015 may not receive a renewed certificate or a new teaching certificate unless the individual completes a master's degree program within 5 years of being employed as a teacher in the State.

5. It increases the minimum salaries for certified teachers to \$40,000 beginning in the 2016-2017 school year and includes state funding for the incremental costs of meeting this minimum as part of the school funding formula.

6. It requires the Department of Education to increase the qualifying scores for the standardized qualifying examinations for applicants for initial teacher certification in its Rule Chapter 13: Qualifying Examinations for Teachers, Educational Specialists and Administrators no later than July 1, 2016.

7. It provides additional appropriations for the Educators for Maine Program within the Finance Authority of Maine in order to double the annual investment of state loan funds awarded to eligible students.