

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 90 hours of practicum and a student teaching experience of at least 15 weeks, which must commence no later than the applicant's junior year and continue only after the applicant's satisfactory disposition assessment 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 in the applicant's teacher preparation course work 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 in the applicant's teacher preparation course work 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.

For the purposes of this subsection, "practicum" means direct student engagement, including but not limited to tutoring, planning and implementing lesson plans and otherwise directly interacting with students on an individual basis or in a group setting. "Practicum" does not include activities that are composed solely of observing classrooms or students.

Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §13012, sub-§2-C is enacted to read:

2-C. Teacher preparation programs. Except as provided in this subsection, by July 1, 2018:

A. An educational institution offering an approved teacher preparation program must maintain a 3.0 average grade point average based on a 4.0 grade point system for all students completing the program and receiving a recommendation from the educational institution for certification in the preceding academic year;

B. An educational institution offering an approved teacher preparation program shall develop a disposition assessment instrument that clearly describes the operational definition of each disposition component for candidates; and

C. An educational institution offering an approved teacher preparation program shall report to the department average grade point averages and shall report them separately for undergraduate and postbaccalaureate students completing the program who receive recommendations for certification.

Prior to July 1, 2018, the dean or director of an approved teacher preparation program in compliance with the requirements of paragraphs A, B and C may request that the commissioner waive the grade point average requirement established under subsection 2-A, paragraphs A and B for an applicant for a provisional teacher certificate under extenuating circumstances.

If an educational institution through its teacher preparation program is unable to meet the grade point average requirements by July 1, 2018, the educational institution may request up to 2 one-year extensions from the commissioner. The commissioner may not provide an extension that commences on or after July 1, 2020.

Sec. 3. 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. 4. 20-A MRS §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 improvement conversations throughout the school year.

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

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

§ 13407. Minimum salaries beginning in 2018-2019 school year

A school administrative unit shall establish a minimum salary of \$40,000 for certified teachers for the school year starting after June 30, 2018 and in each subsequent school year. A 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 MRS §15689, sub-§7-A is enacted to read:

7-A. Adjustment for minimum teacher salary. Beginning in fiscal year 2018-19 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, "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 2017-2018. 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 2017-2018 necessary to meet the minimum salary requirements of section 13407 in fiscal year 2018-19 and thereafter.

B. The commissioner shall allocate the funds appropriated by the Legislature in fiscal year 2018-19 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.

Sec. 8. 20-A MRSA §15689-A, sub-§27 is enacted to read:

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

The commissioner shall pay the costs attributable to the involvement of 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 teacher's per diem salary rate multiplied by the number of days the teacher is involved in the operation of an approved support system.

Sec. 9. State Board of Education; rulemaking. The State Board of Education shall amend the standards and procedures for the review and approval of preparation programs for education personnel established in its rule Chapter 114: Purpose, Standards and Procedures for the Review and Approval of Preparation Programs for Education Personnel to articulate and outline clear standards for a memorandum of understanding between student teachers, teacher preparation programs and participating school administrative units. The State Board of Education shall solicit comments from teacher preparation programs, teachers and school administrative unit leaders as to the appropriate standards that should be part of the memorandum of understanding. The proposed amendments to the rules must include:

1. A memorandum of understanding template, which must be developed with teacher preparation programs and cooperating teachers, that clearly outlines the requirements for both participants. Student teachers, teacher preparation programs and school administrative units hosting cooperating teachers must be required to sign a memorandum of understanding outlining the expectations of all parties involved in the student teaching experience and practicum as defined in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, section 13012, subsection 2-A;

2. Ways to increase the number of cooperating teachers, including but not limited to financial compensation, a positive effect on the performance evaluation of a cooperating teacher, recertification credit and college credit; and

3. Rules to implement the grade point average requirement provisions for teacher preparation programs established under Title 20-A, section 13012, subsection 2-C related to the issuance of provisional teacher certificates.

Rules adopted or amended pursuant to this section are major substantive rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. The State Board of Education shall submit the provisionally adopted amendments to its rule Chapter 114: Purpose, Standards and Procedures for the Review and Approval of Preparation Programs for Education Personnel to the Executive Director of the Legislative Council by January 12, 2018.

Sec. 10. Professional Standards Board. The Governor shall appoint members for all vacant positions on the Professional Standards Board established under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 20-A, chapter 502-B no later than November 1, 2017, and the Professional Standards Board shall convene a meeting no later than December 1, 2017.

Sec. 11. 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 and Cultural Affairs no later than December 15, 2017. The committee shall report out a bill to the Second Regular Session of the 128th Legislature to provide the necessary funding.

Sec. 12. 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 funds available for loans awarded to eligible students from the Educators for Maine Program.

GENERAL FUND	2017-18	2018-19
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 and teacher salaries and funding college loans for students enrolled in a program of study leading to certification as a teacher.

The bill expands the student teaching experience and academic achievement requirements for a provisional teacher certificate. It specifies the number of hours of practicum an applicant must complete, clarifies the time frame during which the student teaching experience must occur and specifies that the grade point average requirement applies only to an applicant's teacher preparation course work. The bill enacts a grade point average requirement with respect to applicants recommended by educational institutions offering teacher preparation programs.

The bill strengthens the support systems required to provide assistance for provisional teachers during each year of their probationary period and requires the Commissioner of Education to pay salary supplements to teachers who are involved in the operation of such systems.

The bill increases the minimum salary for certified teachers to \$40,000 beginning with the 2018-2019 school year and includes in the school funding formula state funding for the incremental costs of meeting this minimum beginning in fiscal year 2018-19.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to amend its rule Chapter 114: Purpose, Standards and Procedures for the Review and Approval of Preparation Programs for Education Personnel to articulate and outline clear standards for a memorandum of understanding between student teachers, teacher preparation programs and participating school administrative units.

The bill directs the Governor to appoint members to vacant positions on the Professional Standards Board by November 1, 2017 and directs the board to convene a meeting by December 1, 2017.

The bill 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.