

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

1st Session of the 50th Legislature (2005)

SENATE BILL 502

By: Wilcoxson

AS INTRODUCED

An Act relating to schools; amending 70 O.S. 2001, Section 6-187, as amended by Section 2, Chapter 236, O.S.L. 2002 (70 O.S. Supp. 2004, Section 6-187), which relates to competency examinations; requiring Commission for Teacher Preparation to ensure certain subject area test emphasizes certain competencies; requiring Commission to ensure certain subject area tests are aligned with scientifically based reading-research guidelines; specifying additional program requirements for teachers seeking additional certification in certain areas; authorizing Commission to determine program requirements; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2001, Section 6-187, as amended by Section 2, Chapter 236, O.S.L. 2002 (70 O.S. Supp. 2004, Section 6-187), is amended to read as follows:

Section 6-187. A. A competency examination shall be adopted by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation for the general education, professional education and various subject areas and grade levels for purposes of ensuring academic achievement and competency of each teacher candidate or teacher in the subject area the person is seeking licensure or certification to teach which shall also include licensure or certification as an administrator, as prescribed by the State Board of Education.

1. The Commission, consistent with the purposes of this section, shall ~~promulgate~~ adopt rules and procedures to guarantee the confidentiality of examinations.

2. The Commission shall ensure that the subject area test for elementary education places a higher emphasis on reading, language arts, and mathematics than on other competencies. Further, the reading competencies assessed in the subject area tests for early childhood, elementary, and special education shall be aligned with scientifically based reading-research guidelines.

B. No teacher candidate shall be eligible for licensing until successfully completing the competency examination except those candidates who make application to the State Board and meet the criteria for the Alternative Placement Program pursuant to Section 6-122.3 of this title. Certification shall be limited to areas of approval in which the licensed or certified teacher has successfully completed the examination. Testing for certification for subjects in which a teacher candidate or teacher is seeking a minor teaching assignment or an endorsement to teach shall be limited to the specific subject area test, except as provided for in subsection C of this section.

A teacher candidate or teacher may take the general education, professional education or subject area portions of the examination subject to any limit imposed by the Commission.

C. A teacher may be certified in as many areas as the teacher meets the necessary requirements provided by law and has successfully completed the subject area portion of the examination; however, a teacher seeking additional certification in the areas of early childhood, elementary or special education shall be subject to additional program requirements, as determined by the Commission. Additional certification by subject area test shall be limited to the level of licensure or certification currently held by the teacher. Program requirements must be met along with the successful completion of the subject area test for certification in areas not within the current level of certification.

D. The Commission shall offer the competency examination at least four times per calendar year on dates to be established by the Commission.

E. Nothing in the Oklahoma Teacher Preparation Act shall restrict the right of the State Board of Education to issue an emergency or provisional certificate, as needed. Provided, however, prior to the issuance of an emergency certificate, the local district shall document substantial efforts to employ a teacher who holds a provisional or standard certificate or who is licensed in the teaching profession. In the event a district is unable to hire an individual meeting this criteria, the district shall document efforts to employ an individual with a provisional or standard certificate or with a license in another curricular area with academic preparation in the field of need. Only after these alternatives have been exhausted shall the district be allowed to employ an individual meeting minimum standards as established by the State Board of Education for the issuance of emergency certificates.

SECTION 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 2005.

SECTION 3. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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