

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: HB 234

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: School Administrator Licensure Consideration

Sponsor(s): Representative Thomas A. Garcia

Analyst: David Harrell

Date: February 1, 2009

Bill Summary:

HB 234 adds a new section to the *School Personnel Act* to require the Public Education Department (PED), pursuant to rules promulgated by the department, to grant a Level 3-B school administrator license to an applicant who meets these criteria:

- employment experience as a professional working in an educational setting;
- completion of PED-approved courses in administration and a PED-approved administration apprenticeship program; and
- demonstration of instructional leader competence required by PED and verified by the local superintendent or, in the case of a superintendent, verified by the local school board, through the Highly Objective Uniform Statewide Standard of Evaluation (known as HOUSSE).

Fiscal Impact:

HB 234 makes no appropriation.

Issues:

Because it creates a new route to licensure as a school administrator, HB 234 seems to address an issue identified in the report of a joint study of the three-tiered licensure system by the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), the Legislative Finance Committee, and the Office of Education Accountability (OEA). As presented to the LESC during the 2007 interim, this report identified a shortage of qualified candidates for school administrator positions, among other points of concern.

In addressing the shortage issue, however, HB 234 raises questions about the nature of the applicant and the evaluation of instructional leader competence.

- The phrase “employment experience as a professional working in an educational setting” seems open to interpretation. As the PED analysis notes, “HB 234 does not designate how many years of experience working in a professional educational setting or what kind of positions in a professional setting are acceptable.”
 - It would seem possible, then, for an applicant with no classroom teaching experience whatsoever to be granted a license to serve as a principal or assistant principal of a

regular public school, a head administrator of a charter school, or a superintendent of a school district.

- On this point, the OEA analysis suggests that SB 234 contradicts the consensus in New Mexico – as reflected in the school reform legislation in 2003 and a number of studies since that time – “that school administrators should have an extensive background in teaching or counseling in elementary, secondary or higher education settings.”
- As required by law, PED recently adopted new standards of evaluation for Level 3-B principals and assistant principals. Known as HOUSSE – P, these standards, according to PED, reflect “the most recent research and knowledge about school leaders and leadership performance.”
 - The evaluation process includes data sources linked to student achievement and progress on the school’s Educational Plan for Student Success.
 - Since the school reform legislation enacted in 2003, local school boards have had no role in personnel actions except for hiring a superintendent; therefore, there may be some question whether they are familiar enough with the details of HOUSSE – P to verify the instructional leader competence of a superintendent, as required by HB 234.

Another bill introduced during the 2009 legislative session, SB 133 (endorsed by the LESC), also makes changes in the requirements for administrative licensure to ensure a sufficient pool of qualified applicants (see “Background,” below).

- Among its provisions, this bill creates a four-year, nonrenewable Level 3-B provisional license for school principals in districts with a shortage of qualified candidates. The process begins with a request from the school district that PED issue a provisional Level 3-B license to a Level 2 teacher who the district believes has the potential to be an effective school principal. To qualify for such a license, the candidate must:
 - meet the requirements for a Level 3-A license;
 - be enrolled in a PED-approved induction and mentoring program in the school district; and
 - be accepted into a PED-approved school administrator preparation program.
- To maintain the provisional license, the licensee must receive satisfactory annual evaluations from the school district’s mentoring program and the school administrator preparation program. At the end of the four-year period, the provisional license may be converted to a regular Level 3-B license if the candidate has completed the district’s mentoring program and the administrator preparation program.

Background:

Legislation enacted in 2007 added two routes to administrative licensure: one to allow an applicant with a Level 3-A teaching license and the “highest-ranked counselor license” to qualify for a Level 3-B administrator’s license; and the other to grant, under certain conditions, an

alternative Level 3-B license to someone with a graduate degree and at least six years' experience teaching or administering at the postsecondary level.

During the 2007 interim, the LESC received a written report on SJM 15 (2007), *School Administrator Licensure Pathways*. This report recommended that, as an alternative to the standard administrative license, PED promulgate rules to establish a provisional school administrator license that would be renewable for no more than four years, during which time the candidate completes all of the current requirements for a Level 3-B license, which the report considered the "gold standard" for administrative licensure. This proposal is similar to the provisional license provided by SB 133, noted above.

SB 133 addresses needs identified in testimony before the LESC during the 2008 interim. At that time, the LESC received a report from OEA, in collaboration with PED and the Higher Education Department (HED), that described these agencies' study, in collaboration with school districts and institutions of higher education, in response to Senate Joint Memorial 3 (2008).

- Also endorsed by the LESC, SJM 3 requested that these agencies develop a plan to enhance the recruitment, preparation, mentoring, evaluation, professional development, and support for school principals and other school leaders.
- Through a series of statewide meetings, focus groups, and surveys during the 2008 interim, school district superintendents, principals, teachers, college deans, university faculty, staff from state and legislative agencies, members of the business community, and a variety of other interested parties examined school leadership issues and concerns in New Mexico; studied national research; consulted with representatives of successful programs in other states; and reviewed federal, state, and district policies affecting school leadership.
- The report in response to SJM 3 made several recommendations to address the issues identified in SJM 3, to strengthen "New Mexico's capacity to attract and retain strong school leaders."
- SB 133 implements one of the report's recommendations: to refine certification requirements for administrative licensure. In addition to the provisional license noted above, SB 133:
 - removes the requirement of having been a Level 3-A teacher for at least one year; and
 - adds the requirement of a post-baccalaureate degree or certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Finally, legislation similar to HB 234 was introduced during the 2007 legislative session, but it did not pass.

Related Bills:

HB 373 *School Board Approval of Personnel Decisions*
SB 133 *Teacher Licensure Changes*