



Your Ally. Your Voice.

Public Comments in Support of Proposed Amendments by the State Board for Educator Certification to 19 TAC Chapter 227.10

July 2, 2014

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) offers the following formal comments regarding proposed revisions to 19 TAC Chapter 227.10, relating to the minimum grade point average (GPA) required for admission to an educator preparation program (EPP). We strongly support the State Board for Educator Certification's proposed amendment to raise the minimum GPA requirement from 2.5 to 2.75 for the majority of future educators.

ATPE greatly appreciates the board's thoughtful consideration of our May 2, 2014, testimony encouraging SBEC to raise the minimum GPA requirement. We have long advocated for higher standards and more selective recruitment of educators, and SBEC's move to set a more rigorous minimum GPA requirement for educator certification candidates is a positive step for the profession.

Research shows that having access to an effective educator is the most important school-based factor affecting a student's academic success. In fact, ATPE has devoted significant resources in recent years to research on teacher quality, and that research has reiterated the importance of having high standards for the profession. Making the education profession more selective will raise the prestige of teaching and entice more of our most talented youth to pursue education as a career. By placing minimum standards for educator preparation programs and certification, we can ensure that our teachers are well-prepared to deal with the demands of the classroom and at the same time help reduce costly teacher turnover, which has been estimated to cost the state approximately a half- billion dollars per year.

A number of outstanding educator preparation programs in Texas impose their own GPA requirements that are higher than the state's minimum requirement. However, we must ensure that candidates who enter any of the numerous Texas programs that elect to use the state's minimum criteria are still well-prepared to succeed in the teaching profession. Setting an adequate floor for GPA requirements is particularly important in alternative certification settings, where candidates become teachers of record almost immediately and well before they have met all the requirements for standard certification in Texas. To be successful, alternative certification candidates must have a strong academic foundation prior to being admitted to an educator preparation program that offers such an accelerated route into teaching. A recent

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators. For additional information, contact government@atpe.org.

report by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) was highly critical of the performance of alternative certification programs in Texas. NCTQ graded our state's largest producers of new teachers, which are for-profit alternative certification programs, with an "F" based on certain criteria, including the choice to require only a minimum 2.5 GPA for admission. The report also blamed the failure of Texas alternative certification programs, in part, on state regulations. It is worth noting that Texas is the only state that allows for-profit companies to operate alternative certification programs; in doing so, it has created a perverse incentive to keep admission standards relatively low. On the positive side, however, NCTQ's report lauded the state for its pending move to raise the state's minimum GPA requirement through this rule change.

ATPE believes we do a disservice to teachers and students by placing ill-prepared educators in the classroom and expecting them to achieve excellence in a high-stakes environment. Rather than focusing so much time and energy on finding ways to get low-performing teachers out of the classroom, we will be better served by focusing on raising the standards for entrance into the profession to ensure that teachers enter the classroom adequately prepared and with great potential. Raising admission standards, such as GPA thresholds, also elevates the perceived and actual prestige of the profession, which may help to improve certain aspects of the profession such as better compensation for teachers in the future. Arguably the most important reason to raise the standards for entrance into the Texas teaching profession is the success of our students. Not surprisingly, several countries demonstrating the most international success in student achievement have imposed much more selective entrance requirements for their teachers than seen throughout much of the United States. In Finland, for example, eligibility to become a teacher is limited to the top 10 percent of high school graduates.

House Bill 2012, a 2013 bill empowering SBEC to raise the minimum GPA for educator certification candidates, was a step in the right direction for improving the selectivity of the teaching profession. ATPE strongly supports language in the bill that requires the SBEC to set a minimum GPA requirement of at least 2.5 for admission into an EPP. The board's rulemaking decision to set the minimum GPA at 2.75, an even higher bar for achievement, will make a lasting impact on the future of the education profession. In addition, by maintaining existing exceptions in the GPA rule for a small number of candidates who are able to demonstrate comparable experience, SBEC will be able preserve opportunities for those exceptional individuals desiring to become teachers who may not otherwise qualify to enter an educator preparation program.

ATPE strongly supports the proposed amendment to the minimum GPA rule in 19 TAC Chapter 227.10 and appreciates the Board's thoughtful and dedicated work to raise the standards for entrance into the teaching profession in Texas.