



Input to SBEC Regarding Proposed Rule Review 19 TAC Chapter 239

January 31, 2020

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following comments to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) regarding the proposed review of rules in 19 TAC Chapter 239, Student Services Certificates.

House Bill (HB) 3 passed by the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019 repealed the authorizing statutes for Master Teacher (MT) Certificates in Math, Technology, Reading, and Science, requiring SBEC to designate those certificates as “legacy” certificates until such time as they expire. This change will leave some MT certificate holders unable to continue teaching in their current assignments once their Legacy Master Teacher certificates expire, unless they obtain an additional certification. For instance, a Master Reading Teacher (MRT) who is assigned to teach Reading II at a high school may not have an additional secondary-level certificate enabling them to maintain their current position once their Legacy MRT certificate expires. Given the amount of time and money educators put into becoming MTs, the proposed four-year rule review of 19 TAC Chapter 239 provides the board with an opportunity to ensure that these teachers’ efforts and expertise are not wasted and that their current teaching assignments will not be jeopardized to the detriment of students and schools.

According to the Texas Education Agency, there are 4,997 MTs across Texas, and the vast majority of these (82%) are Master Reading Teachers. Sixty-seven percent of MTs have an advanced degree, and this number is even higher among MRTs, where 70 percent of MRTs also hold a master’s or doctorate degree. These thousands of MT certificate holders completed rigorous and costly programs to obtain their credential. As an example, the previously existing MRT certification process took a full year or more to complete at a cost of thousands of dollars, typically paid for out-of-pocket by the teacher. It is clear from these facts that MTs are highly trained, highly skilled individuals who likely have a great interest in and impact on student learning.

ATPE urges SBEC to exercise its authority to act on this issue through a revision of its rules. It would be inefficient to subject MT certificate holders to additional, unnecessary burdens simply to continue in their current teaching assignments that were obtained by virtue of their MT certificate. Furthermore, the loss of these teachers’ expertise in the classroom would undermine the goal of increasing student literacy, especially in the area of reading, which the legislature prioritized through HB 3. Without SBEC action, the expiration of these certificates without replacement could make it more difficult for school districts to find enough appropriately certified personnel to fulfill the assignments previously covered by MTs.

ATPE appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback during this process and invites board members and TEA staff to contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org for any additional information.