



## Input to SBEC Regarding Agenda Item 6: Adoption of Review of 19 TAC Chapter 239

February 21, 2020

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

The authorizing statutes for Master Teacher (MT) certificates were repealed by House Bill (HB) 3 of the 86th Texas Legislature (2019) in order to avoid confusion between a different provision in the bill that creates a teacher designation system including the label “master.” Since then, SBEC has begun implementation of the law to eliminate issuance and renewal of MT certificates and designate MT certificates as “legacy” certificates. Upon expiration of their legacy certificate, some teachers will be unable to continue in their current teaching assignments without getting special approval from their school district or obtaining a new certificate. The proposed four-year rule review of 19 TAC Chapter 239 provides the board with an opportunity to ensure that these teachers’ current teaching assignments will not be jeopardized, which would be wasteful of their expertise and efforts and present a detriment to students and schools.

Above and beyond what is required for teachers, the Master Teacher credential was a class of certificate only obtained after initial certification. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), there are 4,997 Master Teachers and 82% (4,078) of these are Master Reading EC-12 Teachers. Sixty-seven percent of MTs overall and 70% of Master Reading Teachers have an advanced degree. Master Teachers 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. Clearly, MTs are highly trained, highly skilled individuals who have a great interest in and impact on student learning. Faced with the impending expiration of this specialized certificate, teachers who rely on their MT certificate for their teaching placement must either receive permission from their district to remain in their position as uncertified for the assignment, pay additional fees to take credit-by-exam for a new certificate, or find a new job.

ATPE urges SBEC to exercise its authority to remedy this issue through a revision of its rules, specifically by creating a new set of renewable certificates into which only these existing MTs may transition in order to retain their same assignments. It would be inefficient to subject legacy MT certificate holders to additional, unnecessary burdens simply to stay in their current teaching positions 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 prompt SBEC action, the expiration of these certificates without replacement may 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](mailto:government@atpe.org) for any additional information.