



Input to SBEC Regarding Agenda Item 15: Proposed Rules 19 TAC 239.101 and 239.103 Regarding Legacy Master Teacher Certificates

July 24, 2020

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** fully supports the proposed rules 19 TAC 239.101 and 239.103, which eliminate the expiration of Legacy Master Teacher certificates and exempt these certificates from renewal requirements.

Effective September 1, 2019, House Bill (HB) 3 of the 87th Legislature (2019) eliminated the authorizing statutes for the Master Teacher (MT) certificates, required SBEC to designate these certificates as “legacy” certificates, and barred the MT certificates from being issued or renewed. Unfortunately, some MTs whose certificates have now expired are unable to continue in their current teaching assignments without getting special approval from their school district or obtaining new certificates. At the February 2020 SBEC meeting, the board received a letter of intent from HB 3 author Rep. Dan Huberty explaining that the MT elimination was to avoid confusion with the bill’s teacher merit designation system, which uses the label “master.” Stating that this change was not intended to deprive these experienced teachers from continuing in their classroom assignments, Chairman Huberty urged the board to take action to fix the issue.

To hone their craft and earn a special credential, MTs undertook rigorous, costly, and time-intensive programs. For example, one ATPE member—a Master Reading Teacher (MRT)—took year-round online classes and face-to-face classes throughout the summer, worked an unpaid internship, and executed cohort work and research to complete her 18-month program, all while teaching and paying for the program out of her own pocket. She was specifically hired for a Reading Interventionist position that sought candidates with an MRT or Reading Specialist certification. Over 80% of MTs are MRTs who work in specialized roles to raise reading levels through small group instruction and to mentor classroom teachers in reading practices and strategies. The loss of these teachers’ expertise in the classroom would undermine the goal of increasing student literacy which the legislature prioritized through HB 3.

MTs have already demonstrated their commitment to teaching, learning, and leading. ATPE believes most, if not all, Legacy Master Teachers will continue to engage in CPE and renew their underlying certificates to have the widest range of employment opportunities available to them. Even though the proposed SBEC rules eliminate renewal requirements for the Legacy MT certificate, it is important to remember that the MT certificate was obtained only as an additional certificate after earning an initial certification. The proposed rule states that all other standard certificates held by the MT are still subject to renewal and continuing professional education (CPE) requirements, which makes it very clear to educators that they will have to continue to meet these requirements in order to maintain their underlying certificates.

ATPE is greatly appreciative of the care and commitment SBEC members have taken to honor the work and service of MTs. We believe the elimination of the expiration date on the legacy MT certificates provides an effective fix for all MTs, and we urge SBEC to support 19 TAC 239.101 and 239.103 as a solution to the unintended consequences of HB 3. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback during this process and invite board members and TEA staff to contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org for any additional information.