

Date of Hearing: August 18, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
SB 614 (Rubio) – As Amended August 10, 2020

Policy Committee: Education Vote: 5 - 2

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill repeals the current state assessment a K-12 teacher credential candidates must pass to demonstrate competency in reading instruction. This bill instead requires a teacher to demonstrate competency through a different teaching assessment.

Specifically, the bill, on January 1, 2025, repeals the existing state assessment for competency in reading instruction, the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA), and directs the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to ensure, by July 1, 2024, all Teacher Performance Assessments (TPAs) assess teacher credential candidates for multiple subject credentials and special education credentials for competency in reading instruction. The bill requires the content of the new assessment to align with the current English Language Arts and Development curriculum frameworks adopted by the State Board of Education.

The bill also provides additional options for teacher candidates to fulfill the competency in reading instruction requirement in the interim. Specifically, the bill allows a candidate who is unable to pass the RICA to complete portions of the RICA assessments, as approved by CTC, or complete coursework, as approved by CTC, that addresses the content the teacher candidate did not successfully complete.

Lastly, the bill allows certain teacher candidates who were unable to become fully credentialed teachers due to closure of RICA test centers during the COVID-19 pandemic to take courses to demonstrate competency in reading instruction, as approved by CTC.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time special fund or General Fund (GF) costs, potentially in the low millions of dollars over several years, for the CTC to add competency in reading instruction tasks to four TPAs.

Specifically, the CTC would need to design, field test and implement the new tasks. Based on previous test development costs, the CTC estimates a cost of approximately \$2 million over three years, including two consultant-level full-time equivalent employees at a total cost of \$300,000 annually. Ultimately, costs could be higher or lower depending on the details of CTC's approach to developing the new tasks.

- 2) Ongoing special fund fee revenue loss to the CTC of about \$900,000 annually beginning in the 2024-25 fiscal year due to the repeal of RICA and resulting loss of RICA fees. (The CTC receives fees of either \$67 or \$102 per test, depending on the test version.) According to

CTC, some lost fee revenue could be recouped if additional fees for the competency in reading instruction tasks were added to the TPA and collected by CTC. (Currently, teacher candidates pay a total of \$300 in fees for the TPA not to CTC, but to the TPA administrator, the Pearson Company.)

- 3) Special fund fee revenue loss to the CTC, likely ranging between the low and mid hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, through the 2023-24 fiscal year. These losses are attributable to teacher candidates completing portions of the RICA assessments or completing coursework rather than paying fees to take the full RICA. Some of this fee revenue loss, especially in the nearer term, would be attributable to test center closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4) One-time special fund or GF costs, potentially in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, for CTC to hire or contract staff to provide options to teacher candidates to fulfill the competency in reading instruction requirement; specifically, to (a) evaluate coursework for up to 234 different programs for whether they fulfill reading competency requirements and (b) modify the RICA to allow candidates to complete portions of the RICA assessments. Ultimately, costs could be higher or lower depending on the details of CTC's approach to complying with these requirements.
- 5) GF cost pressures of an unknown amount to teacher preparation programs at the University of California and California State University (CSU) to modify their programs to comply with this bill's new approach to demonstrating competency in reaching instruction.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, the RICA is an outdated barrier preventing otherwise qualified teacher candidates from becoming credentialed. The author contend urgency is required to take steps to replace RICA because of teacher shortages.
- 2) **Teacher Credentialing in California.** Law specifies requirements for becoming a credentialed teacher in California and CTC oversees the process. Generally, prospective teachers first must acquire a "preliminary" credential by meeting various requirements and then become fully credentialed after a period of five years of holding a preliminary credential and meeting several additional requirements. Typically, to achieve a preliminary credential, amongst other requirements such as holding a bachelor's degree, a teacher candidate must (a) satisfactorily complete a program of professional preparation and (b) study alternative methods of developing English language skills, including the study of reading for all students and the satisfactory completion of comprehensive reading instruction. To fulfill requirement (a), a teacher candidate typically must successfully complete a TPA. To fulfill requirement (b), a teacher candidate typically must successfully pass the RICA.
- 3) **TPA and RICA.** The state in 2008 began to require a teacher candidate to complete a TPA. A TPA includes defined performance tasks relating to areas such as pedagogy, video-recording teaching and reflecting on practice. A TPA's performance tasks must be completed within a site placement where the teacher candidate works with teachers and students. In addition, candidate performance data on the TPAs is to be used to inform teacher program accreditation. Currently, CTC has approved four TPAs, and teacher preparation programs have discretion to select which of the four assessments they will use to prepare their teacher

candidates. The CTC currently is developing a special education TPA. Teacher candidates currently are not required to demonstrate competence in reading instruction as a TPA task.

The state in 1998 began to require a teacher candidate to pass the RICA to ensure they have competency in reading instruction. A candidate may take either a written assessment or a video assessment version of the RICA. Most teachers take the written assessment, which consists of 70 multiple choice questions, four constructed responses and one case study question. The statute requiring teacher candidates to study alternative methods of developing English language skills, including the study of reading, consists of explicit requirements governing what the study of reading must entail. This bill makes changes to this section of statute to strike certain language.

- 4) **CTC Funding.** The CTC's funding comes from fees it collects for credentials, accreditation and testing. The CTC holds revenues in two special funds: The Teacher Credential Fund (TCF) and the Test Development and Administration Account (TDAA). The TCF has about \$25 million in reserve, but \$14 million was borrowed in the 2020-21 fiscal year for the GF. This loan is to be paid back with interest to the CTC in three years. The TDAA has about \$3 million in reserve, but, according to the Legislative Analyst's Office, this fund is running at a deficit. Recently, the CTC used \$1.2 million from the TDAA to fund the development of the special education TPA. In addition, there is some precedent for CTC recipient of GF for test development: The 2015-16 budget included \$1 million GF for CTC to develop a TPA for school administrators in addition to \$1 million in federal funds.
- 5) **Support and Opposition.** This bill is supported by various groups, including the California Teachers Association and Public Advocates. Both groups contend the RICA is outdated and limits the teacher candidate pool, with effects most acute for teacher candidates of color.

This bill is opposed by various groups, including Decoding Dyslexia California and EdVoice. Both groups contend that elimination of the RICA would lead to teachers who are less prepared to teach reading instruction to all students and take specific issue with this bill's striking of certain explicit requirements governing what the study of reading must entail.

- 6) **Related Legislation.** AB 1982 (Cunningham), of this legislative session, creates a temporary alternative to the California Basic Educational Skills Test for teacher credential candidates. AB 1982 has not been set for a hearing by the Senate Education Committee.

AB 2485 (Kalra), of this legislative session, creates a temporary alternative pathway to fulfilling the requirements of the Subject Matter Competency Requirement for teacher credential candidates. AB 2485 has not been set for a hearing by the Senate Education Committee.

Analysis Prepared by: Natasha Collins / APPR. / (916) 319-2081