A BILL FOR AN ACT

Concerning education requirements for educators to increase awareness of special education issues.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at http://leg.colorado.gov.)

For renewal of an educator license, the bill requires teachers, special services providers, principals, and administrators to complete 10 clock hours of professional development during the term of the license relating to increasing awareness of laws and practices relating to the education of students with disabilities in the classroom, including but not limited to child find and inclusive learning environments.
The bill also requires each educator preparation program, alternative teacher program, and alternative principal preparation program to include course work that provides educator candidates or alternative teacher or principals with an overview of federal laws relating to the education of students with disabilities, individualized education programs, and child find and that teaches educators effective special education classroom practices, including but not limited to inclusive learning environments.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly hereby finds that:

(a) Every student needing special education services in kindergarten through twelfth grade is covered by the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act", 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 et seq., as amended, and its implementing regulations, 34 CFR 300. This federal law states that every child with a disability is entitled to a free and appropriate education, with special education services delivered in the least restrictive environment possible, and must be provided with specially designed instruction according to the student's individualized education program (IEP).

(b) Inclusive classroom environments where students with special needs are included in general education classrooms benefit students both with and without disabilities;

(c) Despite federal and state guidelines making sure special education students get a proper education, many students with disabilities and their families are being left behind in Colorado;

(d) In 2018, less than ten percent of students who had an IEP were meeting grade level expectations in grades three through eight, and less than sixty percent of students identified with a disability graduate high
school in four years;

(e) Moreover, thirty-three percent of all students who have been suspended in kindergarten through second grade had an IEP; and

(f) Educator preparation programs in Colorado are not required to prepare teacher and administrator candidates on special education laws and regulations, creating great variability among educators on the knowledge of federal and state laws regarding special education and best practices for inclusive classrooms.

(2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that teachers, special services providers, principals, and administrators should be aware of special education laws and requirements and effective special education practices, including but not limited to inclusive learning environments, as part of the professional development requirements for renewal of educator licenses, and that the teaching of special education laws and effective special education practices should be required for all students in Colorado's educator preparation programs.

SECTION 2. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-110, amend (3)(b) introductory portion, (3)(b)(I), (3)(b.5), (3)(c)(X), and (3)(c)(XI); and add (3)(b.7) and (3)(c)(XII) as follows:

22-60.5-110. Renewal of licenses. (3)(b) A professional licensee shall complete such ongoing professional development within the period of time for which such professional license is valid. Such professional development may include, but need not be limited to, in-service education programs, including programs concerning juvenile mental health issues and the awareness and prevention of youth suicide; and training in preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse and assault; and laws and practices relating to the education of students...
WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO
CHILD FIND AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS; college or
university credit from an accepted institution of higher education or a
community, technical, or local district college; educational travel that
meets the requirements specified in subsection (3)(d) of this section;
involvement in school reform; service as a mentor teacher for teacher
candidates participating in clinical practice, as defined in section
23-78-103; internships; and ongoing professional development training
and experiences. The state board of education, by rule, may establish
minimum criteria for professional development; except that such criteria
shall not:

(I) Specify any particular type of professional development
activity as a requirement or partial requirement for license renewal,
EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (3)(b.7) OF THIS SECTION;

(b.5) In adopting minimum criteria for professional development
activities, the state board, by rule, may require all or a portion of the
professional development activities to be related to increasing the license
holder's competence in his or her existing or potential endorsement area;
or to increasing the professional licensee's skills and competence in
delivery of instruction in his or her existing or potential endorsement area;
or in the teaching of literacy; OR INCREASING AWARENESS OF LAWS AND
PRACTICES RELATING TO EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE
CLASSROOM, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO CHILD FIND AND INCLUSIVE
LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

(b.7) (I) IN SELECTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
FOR RENEWAL OF A PROFESSIONAL TEACHER, SPECIAL SERVICES,
PRINCIPAL, OR ADMINISTRATOR LICENSE, IN ADDITION TO THE OTHER
REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN THIS SECTION, THE PROFESSIONAL LICENSEE
SHALL COMPLETE TEN OF THE CLOCK HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED DURING THE TERM OF ANY PROFESSIONAL
LICENSE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO
INCREASING AWARENESS OF LAWS AND PRACTICES RELATING TO
EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM, INCLUDING
BUT NOT LIMITED TO CHILD FIND AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS.

(II) A LICENSEE WHO HAS LESS THAN THREE YEARS LEFT IN THE
LICENSE RENEWAL PERIOD ON JUNE 30, 2020, HAS UNTIL THE END OF THE
NEXT APPLICABLE RENEWAL PERIOD TO COMPLETE THE REQUIREMENTS
ESTABLISHED IN SUBSECTION (3)(b.7)(I) OF THIS SECTION AND MAY
SUBMIT CLASSES AND ACTIVITIES COMPLETED WITHIN FIVE YEARS PRIOR
TO JUNE 30, 2020, TO SATISFY THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUBSECTION
(3)(b.7)(I) OF THIS SECTION.

(III) NOTHING IN SUBSECTION (3)(b.7)(I) OF THIS SECTION
PROHIBITS A LICENSEE FROM APPLYING A SINGLE PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COURSE OR ABILITY TO ONE OR MORE CONTENT OR HOURLY
REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION OR BY RULE OF
THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

(c) In selecting professional development activities for the
renewal of a professional license pursuant to this section, each licensee
shall choose those activities that will aid the licensee in meeting the
standards for a professional educator, including but not limited to the
following goals:

(X) Effective organization and management of human and
financial resources to create a safe and effective working and learning
environment; and

(XI) Awareness of warning signs of dangerous behavior in youth and situations that present a threat to the health and safety of students and knowledge of the community resources available to enhance the health and safety of students and the school community; AND

(XII) AWARENESS OF LAWS AND PRACTICES RELATING TO EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO CHILD FIND AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-111, amend (14)(c)(II) and (14)(c)(III); and add (14)(c)(IV) as follows:

22-60.5-111. Authorization - types - applicants' qualifications - rules. (14) Principal authorization. (c) At a minimum, a person's individualized alternative principal program shall ensure that:

(II) The person receives coaching and mentoring from one or more licensed principals and administrators and continuing performance-based assessment of the person's skills development; except that, if the person participates in an individualized alternative principal program offered by a nonpublic school, the person must receive coaching and mentoring from one or more principals and administrators who have three or more years of experience in a nonpublic school; and

(III) The person demonstrates professional competencies in subject matter areas as specified by rule of the state board of education pursuant to section 22-60.5-303; AND

(IV) THE PERSON RECEIVES EDUCATION AND TRAINING THAT PROVIDES THE PERSON WITH AN OVERVIEW OF TITLE II OF THE FEDERAL "AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990", 42 U.S.C. SEC. 12101 ET
SEQ., AS AMENDED, AND ITS IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS; SECTION 504 OF THE FEDERAL "REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973", 29 U.S.C. SEC. 701 ET SEQ., AS AMENDED, AND ITS IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS; THE "INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT", 20 U.S.C. SEC. 1400 ET SEQ., AS AMENDED, AND ITS IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS; INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS; AND CHILD FIND AND THAT TEACHES EFFECTIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM PRACTICES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

SECTION 4. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-205, add (2)(i) as follows:

22-60.5-205. One-year and two-year alternative teacher programs - legislative declaration - standards and evaluation - duties of department - duties of the state board of education - fees. (2) Designated agencies are hereby authorized to implement one-year alternative teacher programs or two-year alternative teacher programs, which two-year programs were formerly known as teacher in residence programs, as follows:

PRACTICES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

SECTION 5. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-305.5, add (3)(a.5) as follows:

22-60.5-305.5. Alternative principal preparation program - legislative declaration. (3) In designing an individualized alternative principal program, the school district, charter school, or nonpublic school shall, at a minimum, ensure that:


SECTION 6. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-1-121, add (2)(c.7) as follows:

23-1-121. Commission directive - approval of educator preparation programs - review. (2) The commission shall adopt policies establishing the requirements for educator preparation programs offered by institutions of higher education. The department shall work in cooperation with the state board of education in developing the requirements for educator preparation programs. At a minimum, the
requirements must ensure that each educator preparation program complies with section 23-1-125, is designed on a performance-based model, and includes:


SECTION 7. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.