

Schools may be learning lesson from special teaching permits

People granted such permits do not have to go through the regular state teacher certification process.

AUSTIN (AP) — Nearly one-fourth of special teaching permits intended to bring outstanding people to the classroom have been awarded to people whose college or work background in their teaching area is limited or nonexistent, state records show.

Those people received 29 of the 129 special permits granted under a new program, according to Texas Education Agency documents obtained by The Associated Press.

The program allows school districts to license teachers for particular subjects if state education officials approve.

People with such permits don't have to go through the regular state teacher certification process, and a teachers' group says that opens a back door into the profession.

Education Commissioner Mike Moses, who has final say on such permits, has denied 86, with others pending.

The program, part of a 1995 education law designed to increase local control over education, was billed as a way to get uniquely qualified people into the classroom — such as a doctor teaching a health class.

According to 209 applications obtained by the AP under the Open Records Act, many permits seem to be good examples

of that intent.

Among them: a language program utilizing teachers of Japanese, Russian and Mandarin Chinese who were educated in Tokyo, Kiev and Taiwan; a choir teacher who has performed at venues as diverse as Carnegie Hall and Fiesta Texas; and law officers teaching criminal justice.

But a number of others lack such credentials.

Permits were issued to 14 people who either had no specified work experience in the area they teach or whose work background had limitations noted by TEA staff.

"Not qualified technically, but all they got," said a notation about one person licensed to teach manufacturing graphics.

An algebra teacher's application said "experience does not justify" a permit.

Academic limitations also were found.

Four had no college classes in at least one area they are teaching. A third-grade teacher had no elementary education coursework. On five others, officials found applicants weak in academics.

Five more people got permits despite problems in both academics and work experience.

School districts, which may assign mentors to work with such new teachers, often included compensating factors in permit requests.

Among them: an outstanding academic record despite no work experience; classroom effectiveness; being a good role model; or a lack of certified teacher applicants.

Moses conceded that the decisions might appear arbitrary.

But he said he and agency staff work hard to "make the most balanced decisions we can."

"I'm sure some could second-guess us," Moses said. "I would not make any pronouncements that there's an absolute science to this. It's plowing new ground."

In some cases, Moses said, superintendents provided more information about a prospective teacher's background or about difficulties a school district had in hiring someone.

Most of the 209 permit requests came from smaller school districts, which Moses said may have a harder time attracting teachers than those in large urban areas.

"I think there are small school districts that are struggling to get qualified and talented people in their classrooms. It's not a real big surprise that the rural school districts would be the ones making a lot of the requests" for special permits, Moses said.

"We would probably try to err on the side of the school district. Quite frankly, it's their request. It's one they're going to have to live with."

Senate Education Committee Chairman Bill Ratliff, R-Mount Pleasant, an author of the law, said that's proper.

"I think he ought to give a lot of weight to the local needs and their decision on how to meet the needs," Ratliff said. "That's not to say he ought to allow them just to hire anybody. I don't think there's any indication he plans to do that."

Ratliff noted that people with special permits that might be questioned make up a tiny percentage of the state's more than 220,000 teachers.

NEWS BRIEFS

Architects meeting to design Northgate area

The Brazos Chapter of the American Institute of Architects is conducting a two-day design meeting for a portion of the historic Northgate district of College Station.

The chapter will work with the city of College Station and Texas A&M architectural faculty members and students to establish an architectural future plan for the Northgate area.

Final results of the planning session will be presented Friday at 2 p.m.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Borlaug to speak

Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, winner of the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize, will discuss his involvement with the "green revolution" that led to a boon in India's food grain exports.

The speech at 7 p.m. in 504 Rudder Tower is sponsored by the India Association.

Clayton to discuss arguments on religion

The Texas A&M Department of Philosophy and Humanities will present a colloquium at 3:45 p.m. today in 506A Blocker Building.

Dr. John Clayton, religious studies at Lancaster University, will speak on "The Ends of Argument in Religious Traditions." Admission is free.

Sociological research opportunities outlined

The Texas A&M Department of Sociology will present a colloquium today at noon in 326 Academic Building.

Richard Udry, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, will speak on the "National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health: Surprising Opportunities for Sociological Research." Admission is free.

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Wednesday	5:00pm	6:45pm	9:00pm	BVCASA-LVA
Thursday	5:00pm	6:45pm	9:00pm	EKS-BVCASA
Friday	5:00pm	7:15pm	9:00pm	LVA-EKS
Saturday	5:00pm	6:45pm	9:00pm	BVCASA-LVA
Sunday	4:00pm	6:00pm	8:00pm	St. Joseph School Church

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Israelis elect Peres as premier to replace Rabin

The new Prime Minister must select Cabinet members swiftly and plans to keep Israeli peace.

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Uniting to prove that ballots, not bullets, must determine the government of Israel, lawmakers across the political spectrum backed Shimon Peres as premier on Wednesday.

President Ezer Weizman gave the Labor Party leader 21 days to form a new Cabinet

after parties representing 111 out of the 120 Knesset members — including most of the right-wing opposition — recommended him.

Many Israelis are deeply repentant over the poisonous political atmosphere that cost Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin his life. Peres accepted Wednesday's offer "with a heavy heart, in light of the circumstances."

"The death of a great prime minister, the late Yitzhak Rabin, has left the nation shocked and pained," he said. "I will make every effort to form a government that will broaden peace

with our neighbors and within us."

Meanwhile, police arrested an eighth student suspected of aiding Rabin's assassination, and charged two others for attempting to desecrate the slain prime minister's grave.

Peres, 72, has been a fixture of Israeli politics since the 1950s. He now plans to surround himself with younger lieutenants and try to tap the surprising new support from young people, who have turned out by the hundreds of thousands to mourn Rabin.

BILLS

Continued from Page 1

box be placed in a Southside location, somewhere centrally placed between Heldenfels and the Military Science Building.

- On-line Transcript Bill: The Senate requests the registrar to offer an on-line transcript service free of charge. The transcripts could be used for unofficial purposes only since they would not be stamped with the A&M seal. Privacy of students' transcripts would be maintained.
- Student Senate Seat Allocation Bill: The seats of the Senate should be reallocated because they do not reflect the current distribution of students' living areas and academic colleges.

CULTURES

Continued from Page 1

only practical way for cultures courses to be implemented.

"We have different colleges," Waligura said. "We have different needs. We need to have different curriculums."

Senate debate on an alternate cultures course bill, the Degree Marketability Act, ended when the bill's authors proposed withdrawing it from the Senate floor, unsatisfied with amendments that had been made to it.

The Degree Marketability Act called for implementation of a three-hour U.S. cultures requirement and a three-hour international cultures requirement, to be chosen from a lengthy list of courses already approved by the Faculty Senate.

Chris Miller, an off-campus senator and a sophomore English major, was among senators who were upset that the bill was withdrawn.

"They have taken away a choice from the student body," Miller said.

Other senators said the Senate's decision to accept the authors' motion to withdraw their bill showed that the Senate was not generally favorable toward the bill anyway.

Jason Ross, a liberal arts senator and a senior political science major, said the withdrawal was "not too much different than voting down the bill."

As the only remaining cultures course bill, failure of the American and International Cultures Proposal would have left the Senate cultures bill passed several years ago, which called for a three-hour U.S. cultures requirement, in effect.

Tracey McAllister, an off-campus senator and a senior marketing major, said the Senate should pass the American and International Cultures Proposal so that a semester's worth of work and debate would not be wasted.

"If this fails, we will walk out of this chamber having done nothing," McAllister said. "It's time for this to be over."

But Chris Halvorsen, Senate external affairs chair and a senior accounting major, said the Senate should postpone action on the bill, allowing it to go to a student referendum, "allowing 5,000 students to decide instead of 60."

"Are we listening to the people who say 'yea' or 'nay', the loudest, or are we listening to the largest number of people?" Halvorsen asked.

All of the Senate officers voted against the American and International Cultures Proposal.

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