

REFERENCE TITLE: school district superintendents; certification; requirements

State of Arizona
Senate
Fifty-seventh Legislature
Second Regular Session
2026

SB 1693

Introduced by
Senators Diaz: Fernandez, Gonzales, Hatathlie, Kuby, Miranda, Sears

AN ACT

AMENDING SECTIONS 15-501.01 AND 15-503, ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES; RELATING
TO SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Arizona:

2 Section 1. Section 15-501.01, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended
3 to read:

4 15-501.01. Requirements for teachers, superintendents and
5 educator preparation programs; certificates;
6 rules; reciprocity; placement; posting

7 A. Notwithstanding any other law, all teachers who are certificated
8 pursuant to this section must have a baccalaureate degree and a valid
9 fingerprint clearance card.

10 B. The state board of education shall adopt rules for the issuance
11 of the following types of certificates for teachers:

12 1. Standard teaching certificate.

13 2. Alternative teaching certificate for persons who obtain training
14 pursuant to subsection C, paragraph 1 of this section.

15 3. Subject-matter expert standard teaching certificate for persons
16 who obtain training pursuant to subsection C, paragraph 8 of this section.

17 4. Classroom-based standard teaching certificate for individuals
18 who obtain training from a school district or charter school.

19 5. Career and technical education teaching certificate.

20 C. The state board of education shall adopt rules to carry out the
21 purposes of this section. The rules:

22 1. Shall provide for a variety of alternative teacher and
23 administrator preparation programs that allow for variations in program
24 sequence and design to apply for program approval. The state board shall
25 adopt rules pursuant to this paragraph designed to allow for a variety of
26 formats and shall not require a prescribed answer or design from the
27 program provider in order to obtain approval from the state board. Any
28 rules adopted by the state board pursuant to this paragraph shall be
29 substantially different from the rules adopted for the approval of
30 traditional preparation programs and may not unnecessarily restrict a
31 variety of alternative preparation programs from operating and providing
32 instruction in this state. The state board shall evaluate each program
33 provider based on the program's ability to prepare teachers and
34 administrators and to recruit teachers and administrators with a variety
35 of experiences and talents. The state board shall allow universities
36 under the jurisdiction of the Arizona board of regents, community colleges
37 in this state, private postsecondary institutions licensed by this state,
38 school districts, charter schools, professional organizations, nonprofit
39 organizations and private entities to apply for program approval and shall
40 create application procedures and certification criteria that are
41 substantially less restrictive than those for traditional preparation
42 programs. At the completion of an alternative preparation program,
43 graduates shall:

44 (a) Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited postsecondary
45 education institution.

1 (b) If applicable, demonstrate professional knowledge and subject
2 knowledge proficiency pursuant to section 15-533.

3 (c) Obtain a valid fingerprint clearance card pursuant to section
4 15-534.

5 (d) If applicable, complete training in structured English
6 immersion as prescribed by the state board pursuant to section 15-756.09.

7 (e) If applicable, complete training in research-based systematic
8 phonics instruction as prescribed in paragraph 2 of this subsection.

9 (f) Demonstrate the required proficiency in the Constitutions of
10 the United States and Arizona as prescribed in section 15-532.

11 2. Shall require that, within three years after a certificate for
12 elementary education or early childhood education is issued, the
13 certificate holder complete, from a public or private provider, at least
14 forty-five classroom hours or three college-level credit hours, or the
15 equivalent, in both research-based:

16 (a) Science of reading instruction, including systematic phonics
17 instruction.

18 (b) Reading instruction, including training on assessments,
19 instructional practices and interventions to improve student reading
20 proficiency. Instruction provided pursuant to this subdivision must meet
21 the requirements for dyslexia training prescribed in section 15-219.

22 3. Beginning August 1, 2025, shall establish a literacy endorsement
23 as a requirement for all certificated teachers who provide literacy
24 instruction in kindergarten programs or in any of grades one through five
25 as determined by the board. The rules shall require that a certificated
26 teacher who receives a certificate after August 1, 2025 and who provides
27 literacy instruction in kindergarten programs or in any of grades one
28 through five must obtain a literacy endorsement within three years after
29 the teacher's certificate is issued. The rules shall require that a
30 certificated teacher who received a certificate before August 1, 2025 and
31 who provides literacy instruction in kindergarten programs or in any of
32 grades one through five must obtain a literacy endorsement on or before
33 August 1, 2028. The literacy endorsement shall require the teacher to
34 complete evidence-based science of reading training or coursework as
35 determined by the board and to pass a literacy instruction assessment to
36 show that the teacher is capable of doing all of the following:

37 (a) Effectively teaching foundational reading skills, phonological
38 awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

39 (b) Implementing reading instruction using high-quality
40 instructional materials.

41 (c) Providing effective instruction and interventions for students
42 with reading deficiencies, including students with characteristics of
43 dyslexia.

44 4. Shall require all approved educator preparation programs in
45 elementary education, early childhood education and mild-moderate special

1 education, as defined by the state board of education, to require the
2 courses that are necessary to obtain a literacy endorsement pursuant to
3 paragraph 3 of this subsection.

4 5. Shall establish a process to allow a local education agency, at
5 the request of a teacher, to verify to the department of education that
6 the teacher possesses the instructional knowledge and skills prescribed in
7 paragraph 3 of this subsection, demonstrated through classroom
8 observations and student achievement data across subgroups using
9 evidence-based measures. A certificated teacher who has had a local
10 education agency verify the teacher's knowledge and skills in the science
11 of reading pursuant to this paragraph is not required to complete the
12 coursework, training or assessment requirements prescribed in paragraph 3
13 of this subsection to obtain the literacy endorsement.

14 6. Shall not require a teacher to obtain a master's degree or to
15 take any additional graduate courses as a condition of certification or
16 recertification.

17 7. Shall ~~allow but shall not~~ require the superintendent of a school
18 district to obtain A STANDARD PROFESSIONAL SUPERINTENDENT certification
19 from the state board of education.

20 8. Shall provide for the issuance of a subject-matter expert
21 standard teaching certificate to persons who have expertise in a content
22 area or a subject matter. Persons who are certified pursuant to this
23 paragraph shall complete training, if applicable, in structured English
24 immersion as prescribed by the state board pursuant to section 15-756.09.
25 Persons who are certified pursuant to this paragraph are exempt from the
26 subject knowledge proficiency requirements prescribed in section 15-533
27 and from the proficiency requirements prescribed in section 15-532 on the
28 Constitutions of the United States and Arizona. Persons who are subject
29 to subdivision (a) of this paragraph are also exempt from the professional
30 knowledge proficiency requirements pursuant to section 15-533. A person
31 who obtains a subject-matter expert standard teaching certificate pursuant
32 to this paragraph may provide instruction in the person's field of
33 expertise in grades six through twelve at any public school in this state.
34 Issuance of the subject-matter expert standard teaching certificate may
35 not be conditioned on the person's employment with a local education
36 agency. A person who meets the requirements of this paragraph shall be
37 issued a subject-matter expert standard teaching certificate without
38 having to demonstrate professional knowledge proficiency pursuant to
39 section 15-533, except that the person shall have at least two years to
40 demonstrate professional knowledge proficiency pursuant to section 15-533.
41 School districts shall evaluate and provide support pursuant to section
42 15-537 to teachers who are certified pursuant to this paragraph. If a
43 person fails to meet the professional knowledge requirements of this
44 section within two years, the department of education or state board of
45 education may temporarily suspend the subject-matter expert standard

1 teaching certificate. A certificate that is temporarily suspended
2 pursuant to this paragraph is not considered a disciplinary action, and a
3 person shall be allowed to correct the deficiency within the remaining
4 time of the subject-matter expert standard teaching certification. This
5 paragraph does not require a person who has obtained another type of
6 teaching certificate from the state board to obtain a subject-matter
7 expert standard teaching certificate pursuant to this paragraph in order
8 to provide instruction in grades six through twelve. Persons who are
9 certificated pursuant to this paragraph shall review and attest to
10 reviewing the best practices for social media and cellular telephone use
11 between students and school personnel adopted by the state board of
12 education pursuant to section 15-203, subsection A, paragraph 44 before
13 receiving a certificate and, within two years after receiving a
14 certificate, complete training in professionalism and ethics from a public
15 or private provider approved by the state board of education, which may
16 include a no-cost option to the person provided by the state board. A
17 person is eligible for a subject-matter expert standard teaching
18 certificate pursuant to this paragraph if the person has a baccalaureate
19 degree and meets any of the following requirements:

20 (a) Has taught courses relevant to a content area or subject matter
21 for the last two consecutive years and for a total of at least three years
22 at one or more regionally or nationally accredited public or private
23 postsecondary institutions. A person demonstrates compliance with this
24 requirement by providing the state board with written proof of employment
25 for specific durations from one or more qualifying postsecondary
26 institutions.

27 (b) Has either a baccalaureate degree, a master's degree or a
28 doctoral degree in a specific subject area that is relevant to a content
29 area or subject matter taught in public schools.

30 (c) Demonstrates expertise through relevant work experience of at
31 least five years in a field that is relevant to a content area or subject
32 matter taught in public schools. A person demonstrates compliance with
33 this requirement by providing the state board with written proof of
34 employment.

35 9. Notwithstanding section 15-533, shall exempt persons applying
36 for a secondary education certificate from the subject knowledge portion
37 of the proficiency examination if the state board determines that the
38 person has work experience in science, technology, engineering or
39 mathematics and can demonstrate adequate knowledge of a particular subject
40 through a postsecondary education degree or twenty-four credit hours of
41 relevant coursework.

42 10. Shall allow for a certificate issued to a person pursuant to
43 subsection B, paragraph 1, 3, 4 or 5 of this section or section 15-203 or
44 15-782.01, as applicable, to be both issued and renewed for at least
45 twelve years and may not require more than fifteen hours of continuing

1 education credits each year in order to renew that certificate pursuant to
2 this paragraph.

3 11. Shall allow for a certificate issued to a person pursuant to
4 subsection B of this section or section 15-132, 15-203 or 15-782.01, as
5 applicable, and any endorsement or approved area related to that
6 certificate, to be renewed at least two years but not more than ten years
7 after that certificate expires without any other requirements adopted by
8 the state board of education or the department of education if the person
9 is in good standing and possesses a valid fingerprint clearance card
10 issued pursuant to section 15-534. A certificate renewed pursuant to this
11 paragraph shall be identical to the expired certificate.

12 D. The rules for certification reciprocity shall include a
13 requirement that the applicant possess a comparable valid certification
14 from another state and be in good standing with that other state. An
15 applicant who possesses a valid certification from another state and a
16 fingerprint clearance card pursuant to section 15-534 and who is in good
17 standing with that other state shall be issued a comparable standard
18 certificate or a comparable certificate issued pursuant to section 15-132,
19 15-203 or 15-782.01, as applicable, without any other requirements from
20 the state board of education or the department of education. A person who
21 is issued a certificate pursuant to this subsection is not required to
22 meet any requirement prescribed in section 15-533.

23 E. Placement decisions of teaching intern certificate holders
24 issued pursuant to subsection C, paragraph 1 of this section and section
25 15-552 shall be based on agreements between the teacher preparation
26 provider, the provider's partner organizations and the local education
27 agency. The practices of the department of education and the rules and
28 policies of the state board of education may not restrict placement of
29 teaching intern certification holders based on local education agency
30 instructional models and may only consider the academic quality of the
31 school, the effectiveness of the teaching intern certification holder's
32 on-site mentor and the opportunity for a wide variety of schools and
33 school models to access teaching intern certification holders.

34 F. Notwithstanding subsection A of this section, the following
35 persons are not required to have a baccalaureate degree:

36 1. A teacher who is otherwise exempt by law from obtaining a
37 baccalaureate degree and who provides instruction in STEM or career and
38 technical education pursuant to section 15-782.01.

39 2. A person who obtains any of the following:

40 (a) A Native American language certificate.

41 (b) A student teaching intern certificate.

42 (c) A junior reserve officer training corps certificate.

43 (d) An athletic coaching certificate.

44 (e) An emergency substitute certificate.

1 G. On or before November 15 of each year, the department of
2 education shall report and post on its website all of the following:

3 1. The total number of teaching certificates issued in the previous
4 calendar year disaggregated by the type of teaching certificate and
5 demographics.

6 2. The total number of currently issued teaching certificates in
7 this state disaggregated by the type of teaching certificate and
8 demographics.

9 3. Any other historical data or trends regarding certificated
10 individuals in this state.

11 Sec. 2. Section 15-503, Arizona Revised Statutes, is amended to
12 read:

13 15-503. Superintendents, principals, head teachers and school
14 psychologists; term of employment; evaluation;
15 contract delivery; nonretention notice

16 A. The governing board may:

17 1. Employ a superintendent or principal, or both. If the governing
18 board employs a superintendent, the governing board shall determine the
19 qualifications for the superintendent by action taken at a public meeting.
20 The governing board shall require a superintendent to have BOTH OF THE
21 FOLLOWING:

22 (a) A valid fingerprint clearance card that is issued pursuant to
23 title 41, chapter 12, article 3.1.

24 (b) A STANDARD PROFESSIONAL SUPERINTENDENT CERTIFICATION FROM THE
25 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PURSUANT TO SECTION 15-501.01, SUBSECTION C,
26 PARAGRAPH 7.

27 2. Appoint a head teacher.

28 3. Jointly with another governing board employ a superintendent or
29 a principal, or both. If the governing board jointly employs a
30 superintendent, the governing boards shall jointly determine the
31 qualifications for the superintendent by action taken at a public meeting.
32 The governing boards shall require a superintendent to have BOTH OF THE
33 FOLLOWING:

34 (a) A valid fingerprint clearance card that is issued pursuant to
35 title 41, chapter 12, article 3.1.

36 (b) A STANDARD PROFESSIONAL SUPERINTENDENT CERTIFICATION FROM THE
37 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PURSUANT TO SECTION 15-501.01, SUBSECTION C,
38 PARAGRAPH 7.

39 B. The term of employment of superintendents may be for any period
40 not exceeding three years, except that if the superintendent's contract
41 with the school district is for multiple years pursuant to this
42 subsection, the school district shall not offer to extend or renegotiate
43 the contract ~~until no~~ earlier than fifteen months before ~~the expiration of~~
44 the contract EXPIRES. The term of employment of principals may be for any
45 period not exceeding three years, except that if the principal's contract

1 with the school district is for multiple years, the school district shall
2 not offer to extend or negotiate the contract until May of the year
3 preceding the final year of the contract. The school district governing
4 board or the governing body of the charter school shall communicate the
5 superintendent's or principal's duties with respect to the classroom site
6 fund established by section 15-977.

7 C. The governing board shall establish systems for ~~the evaluation~~
8 ~~of~~ EVALUATING the performance of principals and other school
9 administrators and certificated school psychologists in the school
10 district. In the development and adoption of these performance evaluation
11 systems, the governing board shall avail itself of the advice of its
12 administrators and certificated school psychologists. Each evaluation
13 shall include recommendations as to areas of improvement in the
14 performance of the certificated school psychologist if the performance of
15 the certificated school psychologist warrants improvement. After
16 transmittal of an assessment, a governing board designee shall confer with
17 the certificated school psychologist to make specific recommendations as
18 to areas of improvement in the certificated school psychologist's
19 performance. The governing board designee shall provide assistance and
20 opportunities for the certificated school psychologist to improve
21 performance and shall follow up with the certificated school psychologist
22 after a reasonable period of time for the purpose of ascertaining
23 that the certificated school psychologist is demonstrating adequate
24 performance. The evaluation process for certificated school psychologists
25 shall include appeal procedures for certificated school psychologists who
26 disagree with the evaluation of their performance, if the evaluation is
27 for use as criteria for establishing compensation or dismissal.

28 D. On or before May 15 each year, the governing board shall offer a
29 contract for the next school year to each certified administrator and
30 certificated school psychologist who is in the last year of the person's
31 contract unless, on or before April 15, the governing board, a member of
32 the board acting on behalf of the governing board or the superintendent of
33 the school district gives notice to the administrator or certificated
34 school psychologist of the governing board's intention not to offer a new
35 contract. If the governing board has called for an override election for
36 the third Tuesday in May as provided in section 15-481, the governing
37 board shall offer a contract for the next school year to each certified
38 administrator or certificated school psychologist who is in the last year
39 of the person's contract on or before June 15 unless, ~~no~~ NOT later than
40 five days after the override election excluding Saturday, Sunday and legal
41 holidays, the governing board, a member of the governing board acting on
42 behalf of the governing board or the superintendent of the school district
43 gives notice to the administrator or the certificated school psychologist
44 of the governing board's intention not to offer a new contract. The
45 administrator's or the certificated school psychologist's acceptance of

1 the contract shall be indicated within thirty days after the date of the
 2 written contract or the offer is revoked. The administrator or
 3 certificated school psychologist accepts the contract by signing the
 4 contract and returning it to the governing board or by making a written
 5 instrument that accepts the terms of the contract and delivering the
 6 written instrument to the governing board.

7 E. Notice of the governing board's intention not to reemploy the
 8 administrator or certificated school psychologist shall be made by
 9 delivering the notice personally to the administrator or the certificated
 10 school psychologist or by sending the notice by certified mail, postmarked
 11 on or before the applicable deadline prescribed in subsection D of this
 12 section, and directed to the administrator or the certificated school
 13 psychologist at the person's place of residence as recorded in the school
 14 district records.

15 F. The governing board shall make available the evaluation and
 16 performance classification of each principal in the school district to
 17 school districts and charter schools that are inquiring about the
 18 performance of the principal for hiring purposes.

19 Sec. 3. Existing contracts: applicability

20 A. A school district may not offer, execute, extend or renew a
 21 contract for the employment of a superintendent for any term that includes
 22 the 2027-2028 school year, or any subsequent school year, if the
 23 superintendent does not have a valid standard professional superintendent
 24 certification from the state board of education.

25 B. Any individual who is employed as a school district
 26 superintendent and who has not obtained a standard professional
 27 superintendent certification from the state board of education pursuant to
 28 section 15-501.01, Arizona Revised Statutes, as amended by this act, shall
 29 obtain a standard professional superintendent certification not later than
 30 June 30, 2027. A school district may terminate a superintendent's
 31 employment for failure to comply with the requirements prescribed by this
 32 subsection.