



## Input to SBEC Regarding Agenda Item 16: Discussion of Certificate Options for Legacy Master Teachers

May 1, 2020

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** offers the following comments to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) regarding its discussion of certificate options for legacy Master Teachers.

House Bill (HB) 3 of the 87th Legislature (2019) eliminated the authorizing statutes for the Master Teacher (MT) certificates, required the SBEC to designate these certificates as “legacy” certificates, and barred the MT certificates from being issued or renewed. Unfortunately, these changes have left some MTs unable to continue in their current teaching assignments once their legacy certificates expire without getting special approval from their school districts 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 certificate elimination was to avoid confusion with the bill’s new teacher merit designation system, which uses the label “master.” Chairman Huberty stated that the intent was not to abandon Master Teachers’ expertise and urged the board to take action to allow these teachers to maintain their teaching assignments.

ATPE appreciates the board’s decision to move forward with a remedy for this situation and has been actively involved in stakeholder discussions with the Texas Education Agency. While ATPE supports all options presented to the SBEC, ATPE believes the elimination of the expiration date on the legacy MT certificates is the least burdensome and provides a quick, wide-sweeping fix for all MTs. By allowing legacy MTs a lifetime certificate, some may argue that teachers will skip the professional learning required by the renewal process for other certificates. However, the MT certificate was obtained only as an additional certificate after earning an initial certification. Thus, ATPE believes that most, if not all, MTs will continue to meet renewal requirements for their underlying certificates to sustain employment opportunities.

MTs have already demonstrated a high-level of commitment to their profession through their completion of rigorous and costly programs in order to attain this advanced credential. For example, the Master Reading Teacher (MRT) certification process took a full year or more to complete at an average cost of thousands of dollars, typically paid for out-of-pocket by the teacher. Furthermore, 67% of MTs have an advanced degree. Clearly, MTs are highly trained, highly skilled individuals who have a great interest in and impact on student learning.

ATPE urges SBEC to exercise its authority to remedy this issue, ideally by removing the expiration date on legacy MT certificates. It would be inefficient to subject MTs to unnecessary burdens simply to stay in their current teaching positions that were obtained by virtue of their MT certificate. Furthermore, since 82% of MTs are Master Reading Teachers, the loss of these teachers’ expertise in the classroom would undermine the goal of increasing student literacy which the legislature prioritized through HB 3. Without prompt SBEC action, the expiration of these certificates without replacement may make it more difficult for school districts to find enough appropriately certified personnel to fulfill the assignments previously covered by MTs.

ATPE appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback during this process and invites board members and TEA staff to contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or [government@atpe.org](mailto:government@atpe.org) for any additional information.