

- SUBJECT:** Allowing virtual observation options for educator certification
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Dutton, Allison, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley, Huberty, K. King, Talarico, VanDeaver
- 2 nays — Allen, M. González
- 2 absent — Lozano, Meza
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 3 — 30-0
- WITNESSES:** No public hearing.
- BACKGROUND:** Under Education Code sec. 21.051, before a school district may employ a candidate for certification as a teacher of record and after the candidate's admission to an educator preparation program, the candidate must complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience in which the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities under supervision at a public school campus or a private school approved for the purpose by the Texas Education Agency. The board is required to propose rules providing flexible options for persons for any field-based experience or internship required for certification.
- DIGEST:** SB 1590 would require the State Board for Educator Certification, in its rules providing flexible options for field-based experience or internships required for certification, to include options for candidate observations that provide for:
- two observations to occur in person and two additional observations to occur in virtual settings that were equivalent in rigor to in-person options for observations; or
 - three observations to occur in person.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds

record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2021.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 1590 would provide flexible options for preparing the teacher workforce by allowing a mix of in-person and virtual observations of candidates for educator certifications. To accommodate the observations of candidates' teaching skills during the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) amended its rules to allow field supervisors to observe candidates virtually. The bill would recognize the benefits of technology to facilitate teacher certification by authorizing virtual observation options for field-based experiences and internships required for certification.

Under the bill, the combination of rigorous in-person and virtual observations would provide flexibility for candidates and teacher preparation programs while ensuring that important aspects of in-person observations were maintained.

Having the option in law would ensure that potential educators did not experience delays in completing their certification requirements in the event that schools switched to virtual learning due to a future disaster. In addition, SBEC would have rulemaking authority to implement the best way to continue using the virtual option.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

SB 1590 would continue a practice of observing teaching candidates remotely that, while necessary during the pandemic, does not need to continue indefinitely. Just as the pandemic showed that in-person teaching is superior to virtual teaching, a virtual observation is unlikely to match an in-person observation in rigor or value.