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# Assembly Panel Endorses Teacher Proficiency Tests

□ City school trustees vote to increase proficiency standards for 1984 graduates and make them even tougher for 1985. Page B1.

By Sigrid Bathen  
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A bill requiring proficiency tests for California public school teachers cleared its first legislative hurdle Tuesday when it was endorsed by an Assembly education subcommittee.

The unanimous subcommittee approval came despite opposition from the powerful California Teachers Association.

On the heels of student proficiency test results that indicate that as many as one-fourth of all California high school seniors may not graduate this June, the subcommittee seemed unimpressed by teacher arguments against the proficiency tests for them.

Student proficiency tests are required, beginning with this year's graduating class, under a 1976 bill authored by Assemblyman Gary Hart, D-Santa Barbara, who also wrote the teacher proficiency bill.

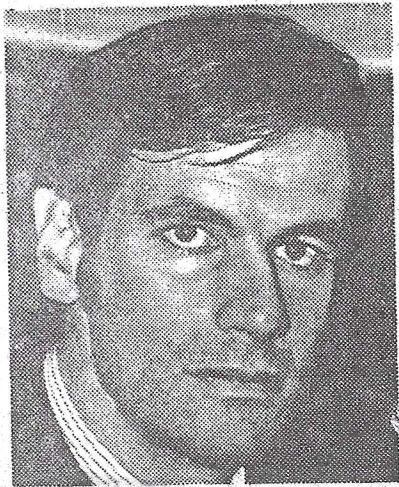
Hart seeks to stem the growing tide of poor student performance and declining support for the public schools.

The teacher proficiency bill would become effective next year.

Hart provided the Assembly Education Subcommittee on Educational Reform Tuesday with a grim picture of state standards and meager academic requirements of teacher training institutions.

He said some standard test of teacher basic skills is clearly needed. "The level of difficulty should be significantly higher than the pupil proficiency tests, which are very basic and rudimentary," he added.

Hart's bill would require teachers applying for jobs for the first time, or renewing credentials, to pass the test.



Bee file photo

GARY HART  
... out to raise standards

One of several teacher proficiency bills introduced in the Legislature this session, it would also apply to teacher aides.

Given apparent public sentiment for some form of proficiency testing of teachers, CTA opposition has become considerably milder than when the bill was introduced last month.

Testifying before the subcommittee Tuesday, CTA representatives said they were primarily opposed to the requirement that already employed teachers must take the exam

when they renew credentials.

Terry Lee Perkins, a Pico Rivera reading specialist who chairs the CTA's credentials committee, said she must renew her special credential every five years.

Under the Hart bill she would have to take the proficiency exam while teachers who are currently employed and hold general education credentials would not be required to take it.

Assemblywoman Sally Tanner, D-El Monte, agreed that the renewal portion of the bill "doesn't seem equitable," but her motion to strike it

from the bill was defeated.

Assemblyman Robert Naylor, R-Redwood City, said the bill should apply to all teachers regardless of their employment status. "It is permanently damaging to school children to go through even one year with a teacher who lacks basic proficiency," Naylor said.

A former teacher himself, Hart said as many as 11,000 teachers may hold so-called "emergency credentials" which permit them to teach in California schools with no degree and as few as 90 units of college credit.

"It's very difficult to get a handle on the credentialing process," Hart said. He said the proficiency bill is supported by the California Commission on Teacher Preparation and Licensing, which would be charged with responsibility for drafting the test.

Commission representative Marjorie Brodt said the commission uses the National Teachers Examination to determine the abilities of prospective California teachers who do not graduate from the 71 programs in California which are state-approved for teacher training.

Persons scoring 50 percent or higher on the test pass it, Brodt said. That low cutoff point, she added, is 25 to 28 percentile points below the level recommended by credentialing experts. She said California candidates score slightly higher than the national norm of 50.

"We felt we would have a shortage of teachers if we went to the 75th percentile," she told the committee. "Our scores are no different than those of high school students. They are declining."

Hart commented: "I am convinced that the entrance and graduation requirements in our teacher colleges and universities are almost nonexistent. Because of declining enrollment, if students can pay the tuition, the schools will admit them."