

October 17, 2016

Chair Wiger, Chair Erickson and members of the Teacher Licensure Study Group:

We appreciate your commitment to developing solutions to improve Minnesota's teacher-licensure system, which, according to a 2016 Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) report, is "broken and needs significant changes."

After presenting its licensure proposals, the study group called on stakeholders to submit proposals that would restructure the state's teacher-licensure system. In response, we have convened a coalition of advocates who represent educators, parents, students and community leaders to identify shared priorities.

We recommend that the state adopt a tiered licensure system that is objective, fair, simple and refrains from adding unnecessary, subjective and unclear requirements to licensure.

Restructuring the teacher licensure system

The OLA recommends a tiered-licensure system as one possible approach to make Minnesota's licensure system more transparent and consistent. We encourage the study group to adopt recommendations that make modest improvements to current law.

Over the last several years, legislators have heard the call to change our licensure systems from frustrated teachers and school leaders across the state. Policymakers responded by thoroughly discussing the issue and modifying law to curb teacher shortages, improve teacher diversity, provide districts more flexibility in their teacher recruitment and hiring and strengthen our schools by recognizing the quality of teachers beyond their formal Minnesota teacher training.

Current law provides teachers from other states with a clear path to a Minnesota license, though some of these provisions have not been implemented with fidelity. As we develop a tiered system, we should focus not on completely re-writing the law in ways that would make these paths less streamlined, but instead on making the specific changes needed to add further clarity to original legislative intent.

Our tiered licensure recommendations make only small adjustments to current law and, unlike some working group proposals, do not add new, unnecessary and unclear requirements. The tiers are linear and simple to understand, which would allow our licensing agency the opportunity to approve or deny licensure applications without bias or extensive rule-making. Below is our ideal model of tiered licensure.

Tiered Licensure

Tier	Title	Requirements	Duration	Renewability	To next tier
1	Community License	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School district or charter school attests the need to hire the candidate; 2. Candidate holds at least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree; • At least eight credits in content area; • 5 years of professional experience in subject area; • Field-specific methods training; • At least two years teaching experience; • Passing score on all required licensure exams; • Completion of human relations coursework; • Teaching in a field for which there is no licensed applicant. 	2 years	Once. Unlimited if teaching in a shortage area consistent with 122A.18, subdivision 4a or in an area where a MN license does not exist.	
2	Initial License*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bachelor's Degree; 2. Complete one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolled in a state-approved residency or alternative certification program • Holds or held a license to teach within the licensure area where the scope of the out-of-state license is no more than two grade levels less than a similar Minnesota license; 	2 years	Twice.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete Exam 2. Complete Human relations preparation requirements 3. Complete one of the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • field specific methods • 2 years teaching experience • student teaching

3	Professional License*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete all exams and human relations preparation components; 2. Complete one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • field-specific methods coursework • 12 weeks of student teaching • 2 years of teaching experience in similar field • teacher mentorship • cohort program or equivalent experience 3. Complete one of the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • License from another state • Credential from an accredited teacher preparation program • Masters in teaching; • National Board Certification • Licensure via Portfolio 	5 years	Unlimited	
4	Master License	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completes Tier 3 requirements 2. National Board Certification or Masters in subject area 3. Letter of recommendation from school/district leadership 4. Exemplary review from 2 most recent summative evaluation 			

* An out-of-state teacher with a license that is more limited in scope or content than a MN license can be issued an initial or professional license for the associated scope or content.

We stand ready to support this legislative study group in making the changes recommended to fix our broken teacher-licensure system.

Sincerely,

Daniel Sellers, Ed Allies
Jim Bartholomew, Minnesota Business Partnership
Rick Campion, Prodeo Academy
Lars Erdal, Education Evolving
Joe Nathan, Center for School Change
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