



Where Minnesota School Boards Learn to Lead

October 19, 2016

Chair Erickson, Chair Wiger and members of the Educator Licensure Advisory Group,

Thank you for your commitment to improving Minnesota's teacher licensure system. Our associations are dedicated to working with you to address the issues identified in the Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) report on teacher licensure. We support the recommendations outlined in the OLA report and believe implementing them would provide greater clarity, accountability, transparency and help address the teacher shortage that is facing school districts throughout the state.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer some input as you continue your deliberations. We want to stress that our comments relate to teacher licensure. We believe the Board of School Administrators is functioning effectively and efficiently and we are strongly opposed to merging oversight of teacher and administrator licensure. With that clarification, the observations below reflect input we have received in meetings and communications with our members over the past several months.

Governance

We believe a single state entity should be responsible for all teacher licensure activities to reduce confusion, improve transparency, and provide for greater accountability. While it would be workable to place responsibility for all licensure activity under a professional board, we believe there is a strong case for consolidating responsibility for all teacher licensure decisions in a licensing division under the Department of Education. Oversight of teacher discipline and conduct, on the other hand, should be the responsibility of a professional educator board.

A new MDE licensing division should include the following:

- The MDE commissioner should have specified rule-making authority to oversee the licensure system and teacher preparation programs
- A clearly defined appeals process
- A licensing division director responsible for:
 - Making licensing determinations consistent with state statute
 - Overseeing and approve teacher preparation program
 - Providing periodic reports to the Governor and Legislature

Restructuring the teacher licensure system

The OLA identifies a tiered-licensure system as one possible approach to make Minnesota's licensure system more transparent and consistent. We believe a tiered-licensure system is worthy of consideration and could help address the teacher shortage. It would be important that a tiered licensure system be very clearly articulated, easy to understand and open pathways to licensure to help address the growing teacher shortage.

The tiered licensure system we recommend is similar to recommendations from other stakeholder groups.

(over)

Tier	Title	Requirements	Duration	Renewability
1	Content License	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School district or charter school attests to the need to hire the candidate and there is no qualified applicant. 2. Must be assigned a mentor. 3. Candidate holds at least two 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; 	2 years	Twice with the option for an additional renewal upon school district request.
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 in which the licensure area is within the scope of the out-of-state license and is no more than two grade levels less than a similar Minnesota license; • At least one summative evaluation with a rating equivalent to effective or higher. 	3 years	Twice
3	Professional License*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has met the requirements of initial licensure and completed 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; • At least one summative evaluation with a rating equivalent to effective or higher; 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; 4. Out of state/country applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 3 years teaching experience; • Must be assigned a mentor; • Must take all required tests. 	5 years	Unlimited
4	Retired Teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Must be teaching in the scope of the last active teaching experience; 2. Minimum of 10 years of teaching experience. 	2 years	Twice

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

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Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations and please feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



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