Association of Metropolitan School Districts
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Position on Teacher Licensure

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts supports multiple pathways to teacher licensure including through the Tiered Teacher Licensure System, registered teacher apprenticeships, and several pathway programs to address staffing shortages and diversify the teacher workforce. State policymakers should build on these programs and authorize Minnesota to join the Teacher Mobility Compact[1] and create additional flexibility within licensure areas to address educator shortage areas.

AMSD BELIEVES

- Maintaining multiple pathways to teacher licensure is critical to recruiting and retaining teachers of color and Indigenous teachers and teachers in shortage areas.
- Research shows that diversifying the teacher workforce is critical to eliminating the achievement gaps between students of color and Indigenous students and white students.
- Out-of-state recruitment is an essential element in diversifying the teacher workforce and addressing the teacher shortage and Minnesota's current tiered licensure system is an essential tool in recruiting out-of-state candidates.

BACKGROUND

In 2016, the Legislative Auditor released a report that evaluated the state of Minnesota's teacher licensure system.[2] Based on recommendations in the report, in 2018 the Legislature and Governor adopted a new 4-tiered teacher licensure system and created a new agency, the Professional Educator and Licensure Standards Board (PELSB), to oversee and implement the new system. The legislation created four tiers of licensure for teachers to be certified to teach in Minnesota. Amendments were adopted in the 2023 session resulting in the licensure framework[3] reflected in the graphic on page 2.

According to the 2025 PELSB Teacher Supply and Demand Report[4] released in November 2025, Minnesota counted 110,254 teachers and related service providers in the 2024-25 school year, holding 174,054 field specific licenses — an "extremely minimal increase" from 2023-2024 of only four (110,250) and a decrease of just more than 4,000 from 2022-2023 (114,312).

The report shows that the number of teachers entering the profession has continued to incrementally drop year-over-year since 2022. It also shows that there has been an increase in the percentage of teaching assignments filled by teachers holding a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license, or out-of-field permission (OFP) — reflecting the teacher shortage across the state. The licensure areas filled with those teachers remained consistent in three areas:

- Special education fields.
- Language licensure areas.
- Career and technical fields (likely due to a lack of preparation programs).

While the tiered licensure system has created some pathways for more teachers, the report also noted that in 2023, eligibility requirements for a Tier 2 license were modified to be issued to those with

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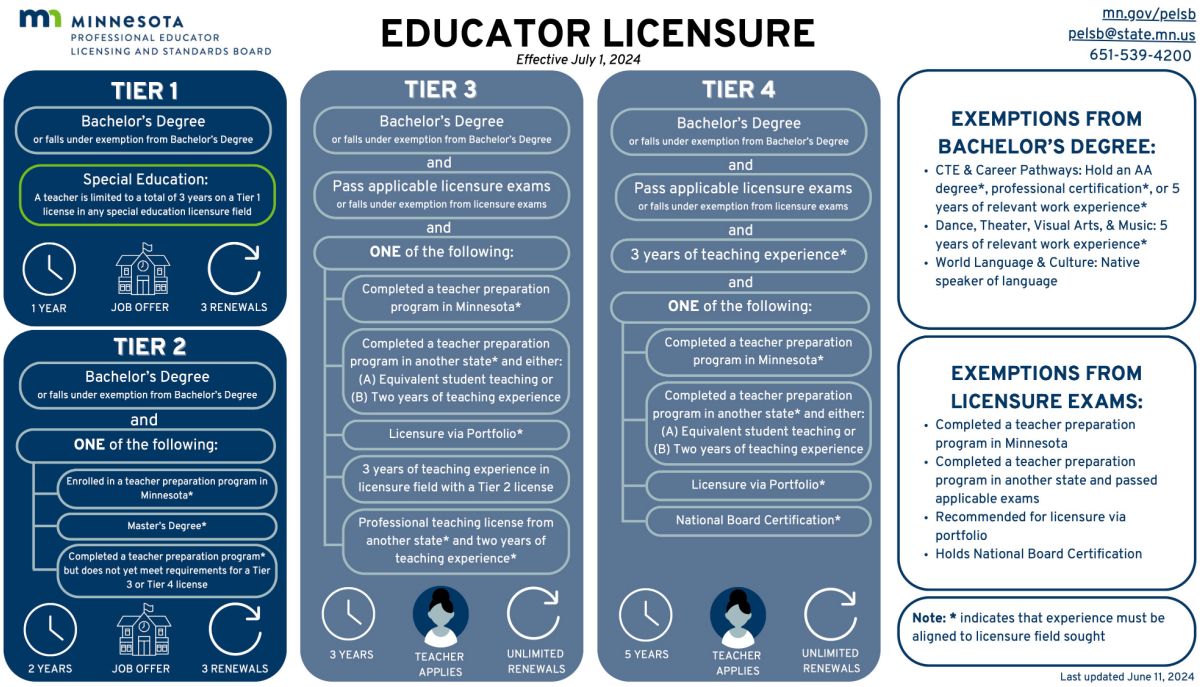

advanced expertise in the licensure area or be enrolled in teacher preparation. As a result of those changes, there has been a decrease in individuals issued a Tier 2 license between 2023-25.

Diversification of the teaching ranks also remains a challenge. Overall, Teachers of Color represent less than 8 percent of teachers holding a tiered license statewide, while the percentage of students of color is nearly 40 percent.

The requirement that educators who completed a Minnesota teacher preparation program or licensure via portfolio pass the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examination (MTLE) was removed with the 2023 legislation, which the report notes allowed nearly 1,000 educators — a significant portion of which were educators of color or American Indian — to obtain a Tier 3 license. But the actual percentage of teachers of color in Minnesota still has only increased by just more than 1 percent statewide since 2023. Students of color in Minnesota outpaced that increase across all Economic Development Regions by nearly 3 percent statewide.

Notably, the number of teacher candidates of color is climbing. Nearly 16 percent of candidates who completed teacher preparation in Minnesota in 2025 self-identified as teachers of color — more than 4 percent higher than in 2023, when they comprised just 11 percent.

In addition to tiered licensure, Minnesota has established additional pathways for future educators through several programs including Grown Your Own grants, Special Education Teacher Pathway grants, Teacher Residency Programs, and the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program.

These programs have provided important pathways to recruit and train high quality teachers to help address the teacher shortage and diversify the educator workforce. It is critical that state policymakers continue to support and expand these programs to build and retain our educator workforce.

SOURCES

1. Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact: https://teachercompact.org/
2. Minnesota Teacher Licensure Evaluation Report: Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor: https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/teachers.pdf
3. Professional Educators and Licensing Standards Board presentation to the AMSD Board of Directors, October 2023: https://www.amsd.org/shared-files/13016/
4. 2025 PELSB Teacher Supply and Demand Report: https://www.amsd.org/shared-files/14223/