



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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Tiered Licensure for Teachers in Minnesota

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts supports maintaining multiple pathways to licensure under Minnesota’s Tiered Teacher Licensure System to address the teacher shortage and diversify the teacher workforce.

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. At the time of its release, Minnesota’s teaching licensure process was regulated by two agencies: the Board of Teaching and the Minnesota Department of Education. The Legislative Auditor noted that the complexities of the licensure process were often challenging and discouraging — both for prospective teachers and school districts alike.

The Legislative Auditor also noted that a looming teacher shortage was already expected to create challenges for schools to recruit and retain teachers — and that continuing a complicated licensure process would only further inhibit recruitment.

At the time of the report, Minnesota was already facing a significant shortage of teachers in certain areas including a shortage of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers. According to the 2015 Teacher Supply and Demand Report, less than 4 percent of the teacher workforce was comprised of teachers of color. The Legislative Auditor cited the increasing demand for non-traditional licensed professionals, such as CTE instructors. The report also noted the state’s top two shortages were in the areas of emotional and behavioral disorders and learning disabilities.^{1, 2}

At the conclusion of its report, the Legislative Auditor recommended Minnesota streamline its teacher licensure process, and encouraged state policymakers to consider adopting a tiered teacher licensing system. The Legislature and Governor responded by adopting a new 4-tiered teacher licensure system and creating a new agency, the Professional Educator and Licensure Standards Board, to oversee and implement the new system.

Tiered Licensure for Teachers in Minnesota

The 2018 legislation created four tiers of licensure for teachers to be certified to teach in Minnesota:

- Tier 1 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree or, if teaching in career and technical education (CTE) or a career pathway (CP) course, an AA degree, or a professional credential, or five years of relevant work experience. Tier 1 is a one-year license that can be renewed three times.
- Tier 2 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree for all subject areas, except CTE or CP, and enrollment in a Minnesota approved teacher prep program, or a master's degree, or two of the following: completed a teacher preparation program, eight upper division credits in the subject area, training in subject-specific teaching methods, passing scores on state tests in the subject area, or two or more years experience teaching in the subject area.
- Tier 3 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree for all subject areas, except CTE or CP, and passing scores on content and pedagogy exams and one of the following: completion of a Minnesota-approved teacher preparation program, completion of a program from another state that includes field-specific student teaching equivalent to the requirements of Minnesota programs, a portfolio in a given licensure area, three years of teaching experience at Tier 2 without being placed on an improvement plan, or a professional teaching license from another state.
- Tier 4 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree, except CTE or CP, completion of a teacher preparation program, passing scores on the content and pedagogy exams, passing scores on board-approved skills exam, three years of teaching experience in Minnesota and the most recent summative evaluation did not result in an improvement plan.

Minnesota's adoption of a tiered licensure system has been an important first step for school districts to attract high quality candidates from other states, including states with much larger populations of diverse teachers. Out-of-state recruitment is critical to diversifying our teacher workforce because only 4 percent of Minnesota's teachers are people of color or Indigenous and only 11 percent of Minnesota's teacher preparation programs' graduates are people of color or Indigenous.

The tiered licensure system has also provided a pathway to recruit, hire and retain high quality CTE and Career Pathways teachers that was not previously available. Maintaining multiple pathways is critical to ensuring students have the opportunity to graduate from high school ready for college or career.

Endnotes

- ¹. 2015 Minnesota Teacher Supply and Demand Report:
<https://www.educationevolving.org/files/blog/MDE-Teacher-Supply-Demand-Report-2015.pdf>
- ². Minnesota Teacher Licensure Evaluation Report: Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor:
<https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/teachers.pdf>