



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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Position on Tiered Licensure for Teachers

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.¹ At the time of its release, Minnesota's teacher 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.

At the conclusion of its report, the 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 licensure system and creating a new agency, the Professional Educator and Licensure Standards Board, to oversee and implement the new system. The 2018 legislation created four tiers of licensure for teachers to be certified to teach in Minnesota. The Education Bill adopted in 2023 included several changes to requirements resulting in the following framework:²

- Tier 1 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree or meeting one of the following exemptions:
 - If teaching in career and technical education (CTE) or a career pathway (CP) course, the applicant has an AA degree, or a professional credential, or five years of relevant work experience.
 - If teaching a world language or culture, the applicant is a native speaker of the language.
 - If teaching in the performing or visual arts, the applicant has 5 years of relevant work experience.

Tier 1 is a one-year license that can be renewed three times. The applicant must have a job offer from a Minnesota public school district and the district and applicant apply jointly. The district must show it could not find a teacher holding a Tier 2, Tier 3, or Tier 4 licensed teacher for the position. These teachers are in the bargaining unit but do not earn credit toward probation and do not have continuing contract rights.

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- Tier 2 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree or falls under an exemption from a Bachelor's Degree and;
 - Enrollment in a Minnesota approved teacher prep program, or
 - Master's degree in content area, 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 of experience teaching in the subject area. This option is eliminated effective July 1, 2024. Teachers who received their Tier 2 license based on this pathway can use their license through the 2025-26 school year.

Tier 2 is a two-year license and can be renewed three times. The applicant must have a job offer from a Minnesota public school district and the district and applicant apply jointly. Tier 2 teachers are in the bargaining unit but do not earn credit toward probation. However, if a Tier 2 teacher gets to Tier 3, two years of successful teaching at Tier 2 can count toward the three year probationary requirement. Tier 2 teachers do not have continuing contract rights.

- Tier 3 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree or falls under an exemption from a Bachelor's degree and one of the following:
 - Completion of a Minnesota-approved teacher preparation program, or
 - Completion of a teacher preparation program from another state that includes field-specific student teaching equivalent to the requirements of Minnesota programs, or
 - Portfolio in a given licensure field, or
 - Three years of teaching experience at Tier 2 without being placed on an improvement plan and passing scores on applicable Minnesota content and pedagogy exams, or
 - Professional teaching license from another state, license in good standing, two years of teaching experience, and passing scores on applicable Minnesota content and pedagogy exams.

Tier three is a three-year license and can be renewed indefinitely. The teacher applies for the license independently. Tier 3 teachers are in the bargaining unit and must complete three years of probation. If the teacher got to Tier 3 via a Tier 2 license, two years of successful teaching at Tier 2 can count toward the probationary requirement. Tier 3 teachers have continuing contract rights after the completion of the probationary period.

- Tier 4 Licensure: Requires a bachelor's degree or fall under an exemption from a Bachelor's Degree, and
 - Completion of a preparation program, and
 - Three years of teacher of record in the licensure field.

Tier 4 is good for 5 years and can be renewed indefinitely. The teacher applies for the license independently. Teachers are in the bargaining unit and have continuing contract rights after completion of the probationary period.

The tiered licensure system has provided pathways to recruit and hire high quality teachers to help address the teacher shortage and diversify the educator workforce. It is critical that state policymakers maintain multiple pathways to build and retain the educator workforce.

SOURCES

- ¹. Minnesota Teacher Licensure Evaluation Report: Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor:
<https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/pedrep/teachers.pdf>
- ². Professional Educators and Licensing Standards Board presentation to the AMSD Board of Directors, October 2023:
<https://www.amsd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/AMSD-Presentation-Oct-2023.pdf>