

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

Kathleen Foord, President
kathleen.foord@mnsu.edu 507-389-1607

Bob Utke, Executive Assistant
bobjutke@gmail.com 612-759-7878

Pathways to Practice

Individuals seeking licensure in Minnesota currently have an array of pathways available to them to meet the state's rigorous standards and demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge, skills, and dispositions identified as essential to supporting effective teaching and learning. These include alternatives articulated in state rule and statute, as well as variations in programs built on institutional and programmatic strengths and in response to the changing interests and realities of individuals seeking licensure. What needs to remain constant is adherence to the rigorous standards articulated by the Board of Teaching, guarding against hasty efforts to "shortcut" pathways to licensure that might yield quick responses to immediate needs but that lack the rigor and quality needed to meet student needs.

Key Points:

- **Many alternative pathways focus on areas of teacher shortage.** In Minnesota, rural districts are finding it increasingly difficult to find licensed teachers to meet their staffing needs. In some cases, these reflect areas of demonstrated shortage, while in others they likely reflect the challenges of staffing small programs.
- **Some alternative pathways to licensure provide candidates with very brief periods of preparation in teaching methods prior to their placement in classrooms as the "teachers of record"** without a co-teaching supervisor or regular mentor. These candidates function as classroom teachers *while* they are learning effective teaching strategies, classroom management strategies, and other essential skills rather than *after* they have completed programs and demonstrated mastery on required Minnesota assessments. Not all alternative pathway candidates complete licensure preparation during their work as the teacher of record.
- **Minnesota's current Standards of Effective Practice (SEPs) are unnecessarily long and detailed.** While clear and shared definitions of what we expect teachers to "know and be able to do" as they begin practice are essential, we also need standards that aren't a "mile wide and an inch deep."
- **Alternatively prepared teachers are placed disproportionately in hard-to-staff urban schools, often by design.** Concerns about the high percentage of newly or alternatively licensed teachers in these schools have led to lawsuits and other potential responses to resulting equity concerns, as well as attention to the impact on student learning of high rates of teacher turn-over in these schools.

How Minnesota Should Respond:

- All pathways to licensure in Minnesota should be required to meet the same, high standards; provide the same extensive documentation about candidate performance; and complete the same rigorous and regular approval process.
- Alternative licensure programs approved to operate in Minnesota should be required to actively partner with an approved Minnesota college or university.
- Any agreements designed to expedite licensure for candidates prepared outside of Minnesota should include requirements that those states' standards have been determined to be fully comparable to Minnesota's Standards of Effective Practice.
- The Board of Teaching should lead a process to revisit the SEPs, working to reduce them to a set of comprehensive, yet manageable and appropriate, standards for licensure.