

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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With the start this week of the 2016 legislative session, the Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE) thought it would be an appropriate time to briefly share our legislative priorities and some policy thoughts for this year.

Our policy priorities remain essentially the same as they were in 2015, focused on:

- the preparation of a more diverse teaching force;
- ensuring that all those licensed in Minnesota and all pathways to licensure meet the same, high standards;
- a proposed revision of Minnesota's SEPs to focus on a smaller number of critical standards aligned to the new INTASC standards that could aid review of out-of-state candidates while providing equity for Minnesota candidates;
- support for teacher preparation as a career-long process that begins with initial licensure and continues with on-going opportunities for professional support and growth; and
- reducing an over-reliance on standardized licensure assessments while ensuring that required measures are reliable, valid, accessible, appropriate, and free of bias.

Fundamental to these specifics are MACTE positions shared with the members of the Senate Education Committee last week: our abiding commitment to state-level licensure based on state-level decisions, not recommendations of individual administrators; and our belief in and support for an independent professional standards board, a majority of whose members are classroom teachers. We are hopeful that discussions undertaken in 2016 can lead to plans in 2017 for systemic changes in how we recruit, prepare, license, and retain teachers rather than the "tinkering around the edges" that has been too much a part of recent legislative sessions.

We believe that the recently released report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) can provide some of the foundation for this work. We are impressed by the breadth and fairness of the OLA analysis and recommendations. We know that the Board and staff are already taking steps to address some of those recommendations, notably seeking changes in statutory language to bring more clarity to terminology, roles, and responsibilities for teacher licensure. We are in full agreement with the report's recognition that changes made by the legislature in 2015 have resulted in our Minnesota candidates being held to different and higher standards than out-of-state candidates. We also agree with the report's clear assessment that in sharing responsibility for procedural and other problems, the legislature, MDE, and BOT must all be part of solving the problems and issues brought to light.

We have concerns about specific elements of the sample offered in the OLA report for a tiered licensure system but believe the basic concept is sound and merits deep discussion. If there is consensus that such an approach should be developed, we hope the BOT will bring broad constituencies to the table to consider and potentially shape such a system. MACTE would very much like to be a part of those discussions.

As always, it is our hope to engage with you as we all seek to ensure that all students in Minnesota have teachers who possess the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to reach and teach them effectively.