

2019 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Teacher licensure and preparation

Minnesota is at a critical juncture for our students. Leaders need to decide if our children deserve highly-prepared educators or if they will just settle for quick fixes that will do nothing to stop the growing shortage of qualified teachers.

Unfortunately, state lawmakers decided to do the latter and lowered Minnesota's teacher licensing standards, claiming it will help bring more people into the profession.

Evidence shows it won't work (see Educator Policy Innovation Center report, "The Merits of Teaching Preparation Grounded in Equity: Critical Components for Developing and Retaining Educators Who are Responsive to Minnesota's Diverse and Complex Communities," February 2018). Putting more unprepared and under-trained teachers in our classrooms will hurt student achievement and increase inequities in education.

Licensing overhaul lowers Minnesota's high standards

Minnesotans value high standards for our doctors, nurses and accountants. The same should be true for our teachers.

But in 2017, Minnesota's state lawmakers drastically reduced the requirements to teach in Minnesota classrooms. This has dramatic implications for Minnesota's students, especially students of color.

Lawmakers made this decision even though Minnesota doesn't have a licensing problem. States with lax licensing standards have teacher shortages. In addition to the 60,000 licensed teachers working in Minnesota's public and charter schools, there are a minimum of 30,000 actively licensed teachers in the state, under the age of 60, no longer working in the field of education.

Decades of academic research also concluded that quality teacher preparation, not on-the-job training, yields better outcomes for students. Scholars have confirmed that:

- Properly-trained classroom teachers produce higher-achieving students as measured by academic assessments.
- Teachers lacking adequate preparation lead to negative outcomes for students.
- Fully-prepared teachers are more likely to stay in the profession.

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**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

Minnesota can restore quality, strengthen prep programs

Teacher preparation, not on-the-job training, is critically important to student achievement and success. Minnesota should be maintaining high standards, not lowering them, and strengthening preparation programs. How can lawmakers and stakeholders change course? Education Minnesota supports the following changes to the state's tiered licensure system:

- Close the loophole that allows a candidate to attain a Tier 3 license without having completed teacher preparation.
- Allow Tier 1 teachers to be part of the teacher bargaining unit.
- Limit Tier 2 eligibility to individuals who are actively working toward a Tier 3 license.
- Eliminate the requirement that ties a teacher's summative evaluation to their licensure status.

The Minnesota Legislature can also do the following to improve teacher preparation programs, get more highly-qualified teachers in our classrooms and diversify the profession:

- Invest resources in higher quality and collaborative relationships between teacher preparation programs and school districts.
- Fully fund public institutions of higher education in the form of subsidizing free/affordable college education, tuition tax relief and education debt relief.
- Increase teacher salaries to incentivize long-term commitments to our most diverse and our most impoverished schools.
- Build grow-your-own programs that provide education support professionals quality pathways to become licensed teachers.
- Support research about how Minnesota teacher preparation programs can achieve better results for a diverse demographic of teacher candidates.
- Expand the Minnesota Teacher Loan Repayment Program by providing adequate funding and broadening eligibility requirements to include school-based counselors, nurses, social workers, psychologists, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and other support personnel.

It's time to focus on what's really causing our state's teacher shortage and lack of diversity in the profession. Teachers want respect and support in their classrooms and profession. And they need relief from standardized testing and redundant paperwork that takes away from student learning time.