

2021 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Teacher licensure and preparation

Minnesota's shortage of practicing and prospective teachers is real – and it will only get worse if the Legislature fails to respond with policies that attract and retain more educators, particularly teachers of color.

In 2017, the Legislature used this very real teacher shortage it created as a pretext to ram through an overhaul of the teacher licensure system that corporate-backed groups had wanted for years.

Let's improve the Tiered Licensure Law so it can both honor teacher preparation and recognize different pathways into teaching, while allowing districts to use the system as a vehicle to elevate teachers, support them through their career and keep them in the classroom.

Our proposal includes:

- Permitting Tier 1 teachers – many of whom are people of color – to join the teacher bargaining unit so they may negotiate together for the time and resources to get the training they want and need at the local level. The freedom to join a union also protects educators against exploitation.
- Recruiting and retain more teachers of color. This includes getting rid of the racially biased Minnesota Teacher Licensing Examinations, or MTLE, an unnecessary barrier for some aspiring educators who have already completed their college coursework, and expanding so-called “grow-your-own” programs to support current education support professionals who want to become licensed teachers.
- Closing the loophole that allows a candidate to attain a Tier 3 license without any type of teacher preparation.
- Ensuring Tier 1 licenses are appropriately granted.

It's time to focus on what's really causing our state's teacher shortage and attracting and retaining more teachers of color. Minnesota can do this by supporting the Increase Teachers of Color Act which would:

- Expand grow-your-own pathway programs for ESPs who want to become licensed teachers, create more “Intro to Teaching” concurrent enrollment courses, offer more scholarships and grants and provide hiring and retention bonuses to attract more teachers of color and American Indian teachers.
- Get rid of the racially biased Minnesota Teacher Licensing Examinations, an unnecessary barrier for some aspiring educators who have already completed their college coursework.
- Create more mentoring programs, require school leaders to build more culturally accurate curriculum and affirming environments to learn and work in and evaluating principals on their leadership skills and practices in these areas to keep more teachers of color and American Indian Teachers in the profession.
- Prohibit discrimination or discipline for teaching about persons from protected classes.

Teachers want respect and support in their classrooms and profession. And they want Minnesota to fully fund public education so schools have the resources they need so all students, no matter what they look like, can thrive and pursue their dreams.

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www.educationminnesota.org

Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  1762



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