

Education Minnesota

Judge approves some fixes to state's flawed teacher licensure law

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ST. PAUL, Minn. Aug. 16, 2018 – A state administrative law judge has approved several fixes to the state law that radically lowered the qualifications for earning a license to teach in Minnesota public and charter schools. On Thursday, Administrative Law Judge Barbara J. Case issued a 77-page ruling on a set of proposed rules from the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board to implement the 2017 licensure law.

Education Minnesota presented testimony and written comment on several of the proposed rules, but Education Minnesota President Denise Specht on Thursday evening noted two of them –regarding mentors and cultural competency training for new teachers.

“We’ve been very concerned that the law permits, for the very first time, people with no formal training in education to be hired as licensed teachers,” Specht said. “We argued that these ‘Tier 1’ teachers should at the very least have well-trained, experienced mentors as they learn on the job. We’re relieved to see that the judge has ruled that only districts and charter schools with qualified mentorship programs will be permitted to hire this new class of teacher.”

There is no denying that Minnesota’s corps of teachers is overwhelmingly white while the student body is about one-third children of color and growing more racially diverse every year. Accepted definitions of gender and sexual orientation are changing. Research into implicit bias and systemic racism have progressed in recent years. The need for training in best practices for dealing effectively with diverse student and family populations has never been greater.

“Teachers need specific training to become the most effective educators they can be for students who don’t look them, or who come from different backgrounds,” Specht said. “The vague and mushy definition of cultural competency training favored by some legislators and their allies couldn’t guarantee that new teachers would get the information they need for the students in today’s classrooms. Judge Case was correct to rule in favor of a more detailed definition.”

The ruling is posted on the PELSB website in the section on rulemaking: <https://mn.gov/pelsb/board/rulemaking>.

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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