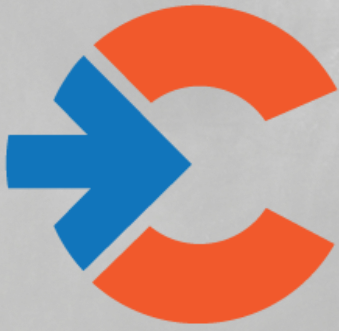




CHIEFS
for **CHANGE**



TEACHER LICENSURE POLICY

State & Local Examples
April 2024

INTRODUCTION

Teacher licensure policy serves as a cornerstone in the education system, setting the baseline for who is considered a qualified teacher. These policies encompass the requirements, processes, and standards that individuals must meet to teach in K-12 public schools. The primary aim of the standards is to ensure that educators possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and grounding to foster student learning and development effectively.

Recent years have seen a dynamic shift in the landscape of teacher licensure, driven by a pressing need to address teacher shortages and adapt to the evolving educational paradigms.

Innovative pathways to licensure have emerged, offering more flexibility and acknowledging diverse professional backgrounds and experiences. These pathways often integrate advanced technology and competency-based evaluations, reflecting a broader shift towards personalized and practical assessments. Furthermore, the growing recognition of the field's evolution - and need for continued learning - has propelled the prioritization of professional development into licensure frameworks, ensuring that teachers' skills remain relevant and most up-to-date.

However, the evolution of teacher licensure policies is not without its challenges.

Striking a balance between maintaining rigorous standards and embracing alternative certification routes presents a complex dilemma. Discrepancies in licensure standards across different jurisdictions create barriers to teacher mobility, complicating efforts to address regional teacher shortages.

Additionally, ensuring that licensure assessments align with contemporary educational needs and teaching methodologies poses a significant challenge, necessitating ongoing policy evaluation and reform. The internationalization of the teacher workforce further complicates this landscape, requiring licensure policies to be adaptable yet stringent enough to uphold educational quality.



It becomes evident that navigating these currents requires a delicate balance of innovation, flexibility, and unwavering commitment to educational excellence.

The ongoing discourse around licensure policy not only reflects the changing contours of education but also underscores the pivotal role of teachers in shaping future generations.

There are several state- and district-based examples of reform levers that should be considered.

Some states and districts are changing the criteria for licensure, others are expanding the qualifying score on state licensing tests, and some are dropping licensure tests altogether.

EDUCATION WEEK

REPORT FINDINGS

California legislators voted to allow teacher candidates to skip two different exams—the basic skills test and a subject matter exam—if they have taken approved college courses.

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt signed a bill that removes the requirement for teacher-candidates to pass a general education exam that covers communication, critical thinking, and computation.

Missouri's state board of education recently voted to grant teaching certificates to test-takers who score within one standard error of measurement, meaning they missed the qualifying score by a few questions.¹

¹<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/states-relax-teacher-certification-rules-to-combat-shortages/2022/06>

STATE EXAMPLES OF LICENSURE REFORM



Arizona residents [can now start training to become a teacher without a bachelor's degree](#), as long as they are enrolled in college and are supervised by a licensed teacher. However, if these candidates have an emergency teacher certificate—which is issued when a school can't fill a vacancy otherwise—they can teach without supervision.



Connecticut has been recognized for its [efforts](#) to streamline the teacher certification process and provide alternative pathways for individuals with subject matter expertise but without traditional education degrees. The state's [changes](#) aim to attract a diverse pool of talented individuals into the teaching profession.



Delaware has made efforts to [align teacher preparation programs](#) with the needs of schools and students. The state has focused on enhancing the quality of teacher preparation and licensure to improve the overall effectiveness of educators.



Florida military veterans without a bachelor's degree can [now receive a five-year teaching certificate](#), as long as they have completed at least 60 college credits with a 2.5 grade point average and can pass a state exam to demonstrate mastery of subject-area knowledge. The veterans must be monitored for at least two years by a more experienced educator.



Louisiana has implemented a [performance-based](#) assessment for aspiring teachers. The state introduced a performance-based assessment for aspiring teachers, emphasizing practical classroom skills and effectiveness.

STATE EXAMPLES OF LICENSURE REFORM



Michigan has undertaken [reforms](#) to simplify the teacher certification process and provide more flexibility in pathways to licensure. The state's efforts aim to address teacher shortages and diversify the teaching workforce.



New York has undertaken [reforms](#) to simplify the teacher certification process, making it more accessible for individuals with relevant expertise to enter the teaching profession. The state has also focused on [improving the alignment](#) between teacher preparation programs and the needs of schools.



North Carolina has implemented changes to its [teacher licensure policies](#) to address shortages and attract individuals with expertise in high-demand subject areas. The state has explored alternative pathways and incentives to recruit and retain effective teachers.



Tennessee made a significant shift to teacher evaluation and licensure by introducing the [Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model \(TEAM\)](#) in 2011. The standardized criteria and evaluation signaled a shift to comprehensive reviews, prioritizing frequent observation, constructive feedback, student data, and professional development.



Texas has a program that allows schools to hire non-certified professionals to teach industry-specific courses, like high school CTE classes. Districts can extend the flexibility to hire these same professionals for core subjects and lower grade levels.

Through and through, the policies that are generating headlines - and moving systems forward - are those driving innovative solutions that prioritize professional acceleration for sake of student achievement.

DISTRICT EXAMPLES OF LICENSURE REFORM & PROGRAMMATIC INITIATIVES

Several districts have taken the initiative to address what they can with regard to teacher licensure policy as well. District-level changes in teacher licensure can vary, and success is often measured by improved teacher effectiveness, student outcomes, and increased teacher satisfaction. Here are some examples of district-level changes in teacher licensure and adjacent programs that have shown success:

1 Residency Programs and Mentoring

Some districts have implemented teacher residency programs, providing aspiring educators with immersive classroom experiences under the mentorship of experienced teachers. These programs support the transition from pre-service training to full licensure and have shown success in retaining new teachers and improving their effectiveness.

2 Focused Professional Development

Districts may tailor professional development programs to address specific needs identified through teacher evaluations and student performance data. This targeted approach helps teachers enhance their skills in areas that directly impact student learning, contributing to overall success.

3 Collaboration with Local Universities

Establishing partnerships with local universities allows districts to align teacher preparation programs with district needs. Collaborative efforts can result in more relevant coursework, practical experiences, and seamless transitions for aspiring teachers from university programs to district classrooms.

4 Alternative Pathways to Licensure

Some districts have created alternative pathways to licensure to attract professionals with expertise in high-demand fields, such as STEM or career and technical education. These pathways may involve targeted training and mentorship, allowing individuals to enter the teaching profession more efficiently.

DISTRICT EXAMPLES OF LICENSURE REFORM & PROGRAMMATIC INITIATIVES

- 5 Differentiated Roles and Career Pathways**

Districts may implement differentiated roles and career pathways for teachers, allowing them to specialize in areas like curriculum development, instructional coaching, or leadership. This approach recognizes and utilizes teachers' strengths while providing opportunities for career growth.
- 6 Data-Informed Decision Making**

Successful districts use data to inform decisions related to teacher licensure. This includes analyzing teacher evaluation data, student achievement results, and feedback from professional development to continuously refine licensure policies and support structures.
- 7 Culturally-Responsive Teaching Training**

Districts that incorporate culturally-responsive teaching training into licensure requirements address the needs of diverse student populations. This focus on cultural competence contributes to improved relationships between teachers and students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- 8 Teacher-Led Professional Learning Communities**

Creating teacher-led professional learning communities allows educators to collaborate, share best practices, and engage in ongoing professional development. Districts that support these communities often see increased teacher collaboration and a positive impact on instructional practices.
- 9 Performance-Based Assessments**

Implementing performance-based assessments as part of the licensure process ensures that teachers demonstrate their abilities in real classroom settings. Such assessments may include lesson observations, student work analysis, and reflections, providing a more comprehensive evaluation of teaching effectiveness.
- 10 Incentives for National Board Certification**

Districts may offer incentives for teachers to pursue National Board Certification, recognizing and rewarding accomplished teaching practices. National Board Certified Teachers often contribute to improved student outcomes and serve as mentors for their colleagues.

CONCLUSION

These examples highlight both state and district-level changes that focus on enhancing teacher preparation, support, and ongoing development. Successful initiatives often involve collaboration among educators, administrators, universities, and community stakeholders to create a comprehensive approach to teacher licensure.

Ultimately, the work of increasing the educator workforce and improving the experience and performance of teachers cannot be left solely to policy. The implementation of high-quality training programs, robust supports and a collaborative ecosystem of education partners is essential to truly move the needle.