
Alternative Pathways to Teacher Preparation

June 2023

A report submitted in accordance with Minn. Stat. § 122A.2451, Subd. 9(b)

Introduction

The Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board is submitting this report in accordance with Minn. Stat. § 122A.2451, Subd. 9(b).

In 2017, the Minnesota Legislature amended statutes to clarify the processes, terms, and criteria for alternative teacher preparation providers. The Legislature's most significant change to law was the removal of the requirement to partner with an institution of higher education. The 2017 legislation also provided \$750,000 in grant funding for alternative pathway providers to seek unit approval and develop teacher preparation programs.

With the dissolution of the Board of Teaching, the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) oversees all teacher preparation providers within the state. PELSB continues to work with alternative pathway providers to ensure they are meeting the necessary standards for teacher preparation unit and program approval.

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Background

In order to offer teacher preparation, whether traditional or alternative, in Minnesota, a provider must first receive approval from PELSB as a “unit” by meeting standards for organizational operation, teacher preparation design, and fiscal solvency. The 2021-adopted standards are enumerated in [Minn. Rules 8705.1010](#).

The Board’s recently adopted unit and program rules that went into effect on May 1, 2021. The goals of the rulemaking included:

- To establish a single set of standards that are inclusive of all teacher preparation provider types
- To remove or modify standards that are overly burdensome or hamper innovation
- To update, clarify, and streamline existing standards in an effort to eliminate redundant requirements and enhance transparency
- To separate and reorganize existing multifaceted standards into discrete, measurable standards
- To align rule with shifts in the field of teacher preparation, including the design of high-quality, authentic clinical experiences
- To acknowledge national accreditation in an effort to reduce provider workload and reduce redundancies
- To update and clarify the program approval process (both the initial approval process and the ongoing (“continuing”) approval process)
- To encourage continuous improvement while requiring greater accountability
- To establish a clear and transparent discretionary variance process

Under newly adopted rule, to initiate the approval process, a provider submits a notice of intent and submits a written application or self-study describing and providing evidence of meeting the unit standards. Then, a peer review team provides feedback around any gaps in the self-study. Next, the provider has an opportunity to address deficiencies in an addendum. Finally, the peer review team looks at unit records and conducts interviews of teacher educators, advisory groups, school partners, cooperating teachers, administration, current candidates, and former candidates. Once the site visit is complete, the review team provides a recommendation to the Board for whether approval should be granted. The full Board makes a final determination on unit approval.

Providers must also seek approval for each licensure program that it will offer for teaching candidates. The provider is required to submit documentation and evidence that its program will meet the specific licensure standards for that program. PELSB staff members coordinate an external program review team who reviews the program application. The review team then provides a recommendation to PELSB for whether approval should be granted. The full Board makes a final determination on licensure program approval.

Current Status of Alternative Pathways

As of July 6, 2023, there are three alternative teacher preparation programs enrolling candidates in licensure programs. Of the six approved preparation providers, five hope to offer programming in special education.

The following are PELSB-approved preparation providers:

- Lakes Country Service Cooperative
 - Lakes Country Service Cooperative was granted unit approval in October 2018, becoming the first alternative pathway provider in Minnesota.
 - LCSC has four approved additional licensure programs: CTE Transportation Careers, CTE Manufacturing Careers, CTE Construction Careers, and Work-Based Learning.
 - In the last three reporting academic years (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2020-2022), 172 candidates have been enrolled in these additional licensure CTE programs. Of those candidates, 125 candidates have earned licenses.
 - There have been 48 completers of Work-Based Learning, 12 completers of CTE Manufacturing Careers, and 17 completers of CTE Construction Careers.
- TNTP
 - TNTP received initial unit approval in July 2019.
 - TNTP has two approved initial licensure programs: Elementary Education and Academic Behavioral Strategist.
 - TNTP first enrolled candidates in the 2021-2022 academic year. There were 20 candidates enrolled in the Elementary Education programs and 11 candidates enrolled in the Academic and Behavioral Strategist program
- Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota (LDA MN)
 - LDA MN received initial approval in June 2019.
 - LDA MN has one initial licensure program: Academic and Behavioral Strategist.
 - In the last three reporting academic years (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2020-2022), 23 candidates have been enrolled.
- Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative
 - The SW/WC Service Co-Op received initial unit approval March 2020.
 - SWWC has two approved additional to Academic Behavioral Strategist (ABS) programs: Autism Spectrum Disorders and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders.
 - SWWC hopes to enroll candidates in the fall of 2023.
- Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS)

- MPS received initial unit approval in February 2022.
- MPS is currently seeking program approval for Special Education: Academic and Behavioral Strategist. MPS cannot enroll candidates until it gains program approval.
- Indigo Education
 - Indigo Education received initial unit approval September 1, 2022.
 - Indigo Education plans on seeking approval for a Special Education: Academic and Behavioral Strategist program.

Future of Alternative Pathways

PELSB continues to provide logistical support to organizations seeking teacher preparation unit and program approval. This includes working closely with aspiring alternative pathway providers and collaborating with established teacher preparation providers to create new and innovative licensure programs.

PELSB supports continued grant funding from the state legislature that will help establish and enhance innovative teacher preparation opportunities in Minnesota. PELSB maintains that alternative teacher preparation pathways can diversify Minnesota's teacher workforce and fill gaps in regions and licensure areas that have faced shortages of well-qualified licensed teachers.

The Board views the availability of alternative teacher preparation pathways as an integral component of the tiered licensure system. These alternative pathways provide individuals who become Minnesota educators as Tier 1 or Tier 2 teachers with the opportunities and support to advance through the tiered licensure system with options that can meet their learning styles, physical locations, schedule limitations, and financial constraints.

In 2023, the Board proposed \$800,000 for funding pathways to licensure. The 2023 Minnesota Legislature granted this funding to support Tier 2 teachers in seeking a Tier 3 license through teacher preparation or licensure via portfolio.