

TO: The Honorable Judge Barbara Neilson
FROM: Karen Balmer, Executive Director
DATE: May 21, 2009
RE: Rebuttal Period Response, re: Proposed Rules Governing Reading Preparation, Elementary and Middle School Licensure, and Technology-Related Licensure for Teachers

Most of the concerns expressed in the comment period that ended on May 14, 2009, were concerns that the Board of Teaching addressed in the SONAR, the Board's witness testimony, or the Board response submitted on May 14, 2009. However, one letter raised additional questions that were not addressed by the Board and the Board would like to respond.

Question #1: If approved, would colleges and universities be able and willing to adequately respond to the demands created by the proposed rules?

In each of the three task forces, representatives from MACTE (Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education) were highly engaged. We did not receive any feedback suggesting that our higher education institutions would no longer offer licensure programs as a result of the proposed changes.

Question #2: Who would provide the technology-related learning opportunities? To ensure quality and rigor, would continuing education providers be required to demonstrate competency relative to the technology standards prior to offering an in-service?

MN Rule 8710.7300: Local Committees for Continuing Education and Relicensure governs the renewal practices for teacher licensure. This rule grants authority to the local committees for reviewing and approving the clock hours submitted by teachers. While there are currently four specific relicensure requirements, it is not the practice for these committees to approve professional development providers. Rather, it is the job of the committee to review each teacher's submission of development opportunities and determine whether they are appropriate. The proposed additional clock hour requirement would function in the same way.

Question #3: Who would pay technology-related staff development costs relative to licensure renewal?

This would function in the same way as the existing clock hour requirements. Many Minnesota districts provide targeted training to their staff that aligns with district or building-level goals. However, teachers could also pursue opportunities outside of their district.

Question #4: If approved, how would the licensure changes affect existing teachers? For instance, would an elementary teacher with a middle level specialty still be

allowed to teach in the specialty area, or would he/she need to go back to school to get one of the new endorsements? Would any of the previously licensed teachers in any of the areas be “grandfathered” in? What if the new rules result in the need for additional variances in other areas?

When licensure rules are changed, the practice of the Board of Teaching has been to continue to recognize existing licenses and allow them to be renewed. As such, teachers who are already licensed would not be required to meet the new standards. All teachers, however, would be held to the new clock hour requirement for the purpose of license renewal.

Question #5: How much additional pre-service learning time would be required for a teacher candidate to comply with the proposed requirements? Would pre-service candidates be required to earn their teaching licenses in four years, or would five years be the norm? If so, who would pay the additional costs?

The Board of Teaching does not set a number of credits, courses, or years required to earn a license. Rather, these are determinations made by each institution. The reading requirements are the most substantial proposed changes, and it the following considerations are critical:

1. The K-6 program will no longer have the specialty area requirement; as such, there will be additional time available in the program to address the reading standards.
2. Approximately half of our institutions currently require a “Reading in the Content Area” (or similar) course for the content-specific licensure programs. This is generally a 2-3 credit course, and the Board believes that it is sufficient to meet the revised reading standards.

Question #6: How would the additional requirements serve to attract the best and brightest to the field of teaching?

The Board believes that the proposed standards, as informed by significant stakeholder input in the three task forces, will prepare teachers well. As such, our teachers will find even greater success in the field. This will serve to further strengthen teaching as an attractive option for new teacher candidates.