

State Laws on Teacher Quality and Effectiveness

At least five areas of teacher quality and effectiveness are currently prescribed in state statute or rule. They deal with teacher education and preparation, licensure, compensation, and certification.

The Minnesota Board of Teaching approves teacher preparation programs and institutions

The Minnesota Board of Teaching approves Minnesota colleges and universities and their teacher preparation programs. Individuals who complete board-approved teacher preparation programs can be recommended for a teaching licensure. The board evaluates and approves teacher preparation institutions and programs at least once every seven years. The board may grant approval of an institution, grant conditional approval pending the institution meeting stated conditions, and revoke or suspend an institution or preparation program that does not meet the requirements in rule. The board also may grant five-year approval of experimental teacher preparation programs that meet certain criteria.

The standards the board uses to evaluate teacher preparation institutions and programs are similar to the standards that the National Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (NCATE) uses to accredit teacher preparation institutions and programs. The board also approves individual licensure programs, such as elementary or math education.

Teachers must satisfy teacher preparation and continuing education requirements

A traditional teacher candidate must complete a board-approved teacher preparation program (including student teaching), pass basic skills exams in reading, writing, and math, and pass exams of general pedagogical knowledge and licensure-specific teaching skills before the board may issue the candidate a teaching license. A candidate who completes a teacher preparation program in another state may be eligible for a teaching license. The board issues licenses for specific circumstances, including a nonrenewable license, a temporary limited license, and a short-call (or short-term) substitute teacher license.

A teacher must complete 125 clock hours of continuing education in order to renew a five-year professional license for another five-year period. Continuing education must include preparation in the key warning signs of early-onset mental illness in children and adolescents, further reading preparation, use of positive behavior interventions, use of technology, and evidence of work that demonstrates professional reflection and growth in best teaching practices. The board may grant variances to its licensure rules.

New teachers must complete a probationary period

Two statutes govern conditions of continuing employment for licensed teachers: [Minnesota Statutes section 122A.40](#) applies to teachers in public schools generally; and [Minnesota Statutes section 122A.41](#) applies to teachers in the Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth school districts. A newly licensed probationary teacher must successfully complete three years of continuous employment before becoming a

continuing contract or tenured teacher. During the probationary period, a school board must formally evaluate probationary teachers, but the standards for the evaluations are not specified and the school board has considerable discretion in deciding whether to renew the probationary teacher's employment contract.

Continuing contract and tenured teachers are entitled to employment-related protections

Once a teacher receives a continuing contract or tenure, the teacher is entitled to employment-related protections, including bumping rights and just cause and due process guarantees. The terms "continuing contract rights" and "tenure rights" mean that a district may not dismiss a teacher without cause. These terms offer equivalent procedural protections and are often used interchangeably. The laws require mentoring for probationary teachers and peer coaching for continuing contract teachers but do not specify the standards or frequency for these activities. The continuing contracts of teachers in nonfirst-class city school districts remain in full force and effect unless a circumstance leads the school board to terminate the teacher. Tenured teachers in first-class city school districts may be discharged or demoted under specified circumstances.

Q-Comp is a voluntary teacher advancement and compensation program

The 2005 Minnesota Legislature adopted a voluntary alternative teacher professional pay system called Q-Comp that expanded alternative compensation programs and funding. Q-Comp allows interested districts, school sites, and charter schools and their teachers to develop and implement a professional teacher development and compensation plan specific to local needs. All Q-Comp plans contain five components: career advancement options; job-embedded professional development; an objective teacher evaluation plan aligned with the local staff development plan; performance pay that bases at least 60 percent of compensation increases for teacher performance on schoolwide student achievement gains and individual teacher evaluations; and an alternative salary schedule that is reflected in the local collective bargaining agreement and requires a "reformed" steps-and-lanes salary schedule. Receipt of Q-Comp funds is contingent upon state Department of Education (MDE) approval of a Q-Comp plan and the availability of Q-Comp funds. As of the 2009-2010 school year, MDE had approved 44 districts and 31 charter schools to implement Q-Comp.

National board certification is a voluntary process by which classroom teachers can be nationally certified

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has developed professional standards for what K-12 classroom teachers should know and be able to do. The board devised an assessment system and a voluntary certification process by which teachers can be certified in 24 fields and developmental levels of instruction. Research shows that the influence of certification on teacher practice and morale, professional development, and areas of school improvement such as leadership development, teacher mentoring, monitoring of student performance, team-building, and curriculum development is positive. The research is more mixed in terms of the impact of certification on student achievement as measured by standardized tests. National board certification impacts several teacher licensure rules related to issuing licenses and fulfilling clock hour requirements.

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