REMOVING BARRIERS TO TEACHER LICENSURE

Eliminating Teacher Licensure Exams

BACKGROUND

In Minnesota, a teacher who has completed teacher preparation must pass licensure exams in order to obtain a professional license (Tier 3 license). Additionally, in order to move to a Tier 4 license, a teacher must pass basic skills exams in reading, writing, and math.

CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY EXAMS

- National research shows that licensure exams are not strong predictors of teaching effectiveness (Goldhaber 2007; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007).
- Research also shows that licensure exams do not predict teacher quality (Angrist & Guryan, 2008; Shuls, 2017).
- There is no strong correlation between teacher licensure scores and student achievement (Goldhaber, 2007; Goldhaber, Cowan, & Theobald, 2017; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010).
- States that have eliminated content and/or pedagogy exams for completers of teacher preparation: Iowa (2022), New Mexico (2022), and Montana (with 3.0 GPA or higher) (2022).

BASIC SKILLS EXAMS

- Black and Latino teachers pass these exams at lower rates than their White peers, resulting in fewer teachers of color (Nettles, Scatton, Steinberg, & Tyler, 2011).
- The gap in pass rates represents test bias and a barrier to getting qualified teachers in the classroom (Bennett, McWhorter, & Kuykendall, 2006; Memory, Coleman, & Watkins, 2003; Petchauer, Baker-Doyle, Mawhinney, & Ciarkowski, 2015; Petchauer, 2012).
- States that have eliminated basic skills examinations: West Virginia (with 3.0 GPA or higher) (2022).

IMPACT

- 835 teachers currently hold a Tier 2 license because they are unable to pass content and pedagogy exams. Nearly 30% of these teachers are teachers of color.
- Removing exams will eliminate financial barriers to entering the profession (the average cost to take the content and pedagogy exams is $214 and the average cost to take the basic skills exams is $162).

SOURCES

Angrist, J. D., & Guryan, J. (2008). Does teacher testing raise teacher quality? Evidence from state certification requirements. Economics of Education Review, 27(5), 483–503. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ804971.

Bennett, C. I., McWhorter, L. M., & Kuykendall, J. A. (2006). Will I ever teach? Latino and African American students' perspectives on PRAXIS I. American Educational
Research Journal, 43(3), 531–575. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ746826.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2007). Teacher credentials and student achievement in high school: A cross-subject analysis with student fixed effects (NBER Working Paper No. 13617). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED501993.

D'Agostino, J. V., & Powers, S. J. (2009). Predicting teacher performance with test scores and grade point average: A meta-analysis. American Educational Research Journal, 46(1), 146–182. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ830879.

Goldhaber, D. (2007). Everyone's doing it, but what does teacher testing tell us about teacher effectiveness? Journal of Human Resources, 42(4), 765–794
Goldhaber, D., Cowan, J., & Theobald, R. (2017). Evaluating prospective teachers: Testing the predictive validity of the edTPA. Journal of Teacher Education, 68(4), 377–393. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1151175.

Goldhaber, D., & Hansen, M. (2010). Race, gender, and teacher testing: How informative a tool is teacher licensure testing? American Educational Research Journal, 47(1), 218–251. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ883788.

Memory, D. M., Coleman, C. L., & Watkins, S. D. (2003). Possible tradeoffs in raising basic skills cutoff scores for teacher licensure: A study with implications for participation of African Americans in teaching. Journal of Teacher Education, 54(3), 217–227. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ675642.

Nettles, M. T., Scatton, L. H., Steinberg, J. H., & Tyler, L. L. (2011). Performance and passing rate differences of African American and White prospective teachers on Praxis™ examinations (ETS Research Report No. 11-08). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED523733.

Petchauer, E., Baker-Doyle, K. J., Mawhinney, L., & Ciarkowski, B. (2015). "Since feeling is first": Exploring the affective dimension of teacher licensure exams. Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research, 5(2), 167–195. Retrieved April 11, 2018, from http://hipatiapress.com/hpjournals/index.php/remie/article/download/1495/1210.

Petchauer, E. (2012). Teacher licensure exams and Black teacher candidates: Toward new theory and promising practice. Journal of Negro Education, 81(3), 252–267. http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ998549

Shuls, J. V. (2017). Raising the bar on teacher quality: Assessing the impact of increasing licensure exam cut-scores. Educational Policy.