



MINNESOTA BOARD OF TEACHING

26 January 2006

Senate and House Education Committees
Minnesota State Capitol
St. Paul MN 55104

Dear Legislators:

Minnesota Laws 2005, Omnibus K-12 and Early Childhood Education Act, Article 10 section 3, directed the Minnesota Board of Teaching, in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education and other education stakeholders, to prepare and submit to the legislature a report containing:

1. Proposed licensing requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum to facilitate learning in state-approved innovative schools and programs, and
2. Recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools.

The Board and the work group met a total of 9 times between August 2005 through early January 2006. Early in the process it became apparent that this would be a topic upon which many intelligent and dedicated people would disagree. The enclosed report is the result of four months of meeting, discussion, testimony from invited experts, writing, editing and rich interchange of ideas. It represents hard and difficult work by a dedicated group of education professionals.

We initially determined that the legislative charge included two distinct issues, so therefore we divided the report into two parts and addressed them separately. Even though there was some overlap, it appears to have been a prudent decision. We began our work on the first issue in August, and in November began to work through the second issue, while at the same time drafting and editing the report on the first section.

Upon reviewing the report it will become evident that members of the task force held different perspectives and convictions on the first legislative charge to develop the criteria for an interdisciplinary license. Some members of the task force believe there is merit in the development of an interdisciplinary license, while other members feel strongly that a license should not be developed. A large part of the difficulty that the task force encountered was in how

it would be possible to develop a license for state- approved programs for which there is no formal definition or approval process. Without a process for state approval of innovative programs, and a definition of what those programs would and should include, it was difficult to envision a license that would clearly meet the requirements for successful delivery of the programs.

The Board deliberated long and hard on whether to accept the work group's report. Ultimately the Board elected not to take a position on the first part of the report. The Board focused on developing a framework for the characteristics of what an interdisciplinary license would include, should the legislature ask the Board to develop such a license.

There is clear and strong support by the Board for the second section, which addresses flexibility in addressing the needs of small, rural and alternative schools. There was a clear understanding that small and rural schools face real challenges resulting from a variety of factors: the ability to recruit and retain teachers, declining or limited enrollment, and the ability to modify service strategies. The Board will continue to explore alternatives to help meet the needs of all students and schools, including providing more information about the alternatives currently available, as highlighted in the recommendations of this report.

The Board of Teaching formally submits this report. The Board would be happy to provide any additional information you may request about this report and the process used to produce it, as well as engage in additional discussion surrounding this important topic.

Respectfully,

Allen Hoffman
Board of Teaching

Report to the Legislature

January 2006

*As required by
Minnesota Laws 2005 Omnibus K-12 and
Early Childhood Education Act,
Article 10 section 3*

Minnesota Board of Teaching



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January 26, 2006

Estimated Cost of Preparing This Report

Minnesota Statute 3.197 requires the following:

“A report to the legislature must contain, at the beginning of the report, the cost of preparing the report, including any costs incurred by another agency or another level of government.”

This report required the bringing together of various constituent groups for input into the characteristics of this type of license. The groups contributed time and expertise to the development of this report.

Special funding was not appropriated to cover the costs of preparing this report.

Minnesota Board of Teaching costs: \$10,272.71

Other Agency Costs: 0

Individuals from the following organizations, school districts and charter schools served on this task force:

Minnesota Board of Teaching, Education Minnesota, Education Evolving, Minnesota Charter Schools Association, Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Minnesota, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals.

Cost for these organizations:

Total Estimated Cost for preparing this report:

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PART ONE

Introduction

Minnesota Laws 2005 Omnibus K-12 and Early Childhood Education Act, Article 10 section 3 directed the Minnesota Board of Teaching, in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education and other education stakeholders, to prepare and submit to the legislature:

1. Proposed licensure requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum to facilitate learning in state-approved innovative schools and programs and
2. Recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools.

The Board is to provide its recommendations and other findings to the legislature by January 16, 2006.

The Board of Teaching convened a task force which included representation of the legislated entities: *in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education and other education stakeholders*. The task force determined early on that this legislative charge was actually twofold, and therefore determined to divide the tasks, working on them consecutively. Consequently,

- **Part One** of the report concentrates on the first charge: *Proposed licensure requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum to facilitate learning in state-approved innovative schools and programs*.
- **Part Two** of the report concentrates on the second charge: *Recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools*.

Background

Policy makers in the United States have made clear that the goal for the education system must be to educate all learners at high levels. This is a goal that has been set before but has never been achieved by this country or by any other society. The 21st century is demanding that all students be productive learners. That goal must be met if our society is to continue as we know it today. Both educators and policy-makers have agreed that we need different kinds of schools or programs for students with different learning styles. We cannot expect to achieve the goal of educating all students if we do not develop a variety of models designed to address the individual needs of students.

One model is based on the concept that some students learn best when they are learning in an “integrated manner” rather than the “one subject at a time” approach. Others learn best through experiential learning or by “developing projects.” The ASCD has defined “Interdisciplinary Curriculum” and “Integrative Curriculum” as follows:

A way of teaching and learning that does not depend on the usual division of knowledge into separate subjects. Topics are studied because they are considered interesting and valuable by the teachers and students. Both integrated curriculum and interdisciplinary curriculum are intended to help students see connections, but unlike an integrated curriculum, an interdisciplinary curriculum is a way of organizing the curriculum in which content is drawn from two or more subject areas to focus on a particular topic or theme. Rather than studying literature and social studies separately, for example, a group might study a unit called “The Sea,” reading poems and stories about people who spend their lives on or near the ocean, learning about the geography of coastal areas, and investigating why coastal and inland populations have different livelihoods. Effective interdisciplinary and integrative studies have the following elements:

- A topic that lends itself to study from several points of view.
- One or more themes (or essential questions) the teacher wants the students to explore
- Activities intended to further students’ understanding by establishing relationships among knowledge from more than one discipline or school subject

Interdisciplinary curriculum, which draws content from particular disciplines that are ordinarily taught separately, is different from integrated curriculum, which involves investigation of topics without regard to where, or even whether, they appear in the typical school curriculum at all.

The Board of Teaching is charged with the responsibility to maintain high standards for the licensing of teachers in Minnesota public schools. Current Board of Teaching licensure rules require the understanding and demonstration of professional, pedagogical, and content knowledge. This combination of knowledge has been a part of Minnesota’s high quality and high standard licensing system for many years.

Since 2001, teachers in schools with innovative programs have been using the process referred to as “Waiver for Innovative Program,” (MN Statute 122A.09 subd 10), in order

to teach in these innovative programs. A waiver is a special permission granted by the Board of Teaching that permits a licensed teacher to teach in a field(s) for which the teacher is not licensed.

In some “innovative programs,” the teacher does not use a traditional course-based method of instruction, but rather a system which is much more interdisciplinary in nature. The teacher functions more as a facilitator of learning, allowing more ownership of the learning process to be assumed by the student. While the waiver has provided a means for teachers to comply with licensing requirements, clear definitions must be established for “innovative programs.” In order to monitor the “highly qualified” status of each teacher, the Board requires that waiver requests include evidence that the teacher of a core academic subject has met the “highly qualified” requirements via HOUSSE. This verification ensures that each teacher meets the federal requirements for “highly qualified”.

The Board of Teaching has for several years examined the topic of an interdisciplinary license and thus, sought a legal opinion from the Attorney General’s office. As legal counsel to the Board, the Attorney General rendered a legal opinion that the issuance of a teaching license based on something other than content at the secondary level would be in violation of the Board of Teaching’s authority. The opinion also stated that in order to establish a licensed based on pedagogy the Board of Teaching would need legislative authority. It had been determined by previous work groups that an interdisciplinary license would be based solely on pedagogical knowledge. Thus, the Board did not proceed with further work on an interdisciplinary license. The 2004 work group recommended that the Teacher of Record model be used to allow innovative programs to demonstrate that their teachers, collectively, have the required content knowledge. Subsequently, the Board found that the Teacher of Record model was not acceptable in meeting the federal highly qualified teacher requirements.

During the 2004 legislative session, advocates for interdisciplinary instruction proposed legislation to create an interdisciplinary license. The advocates of interdisciplinary instruction believe that creating a specific license is a way to bring legitimacy to this instructional model. The function of a license is that it serves as a guarantee to the public of teacher expertise. The new licensing system that became effective in 2001 requires both pedagogy and subject matter knowledge. In adopting the 2001 licensure rules, the Board argued against licensing simply on pedagogical competency and insisted that both pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge are required for effective teaching.

In order to comply with the 2005 legislative directive, the Board convened a task force to propose licensure requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum and to recommend possible accommodations for teachers employed in charter, alternative, small and rural schools.

Work of the 2005 Task Force

The Minnesota 2005 Omnibus K-12 and Early Childhood Education Act, Article 10, Section 3 directed the Board of Teaching to prepare this report in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and other education stakeholders. The report is to determine the licensure requirements for an interdisciplinary license and to make recommendations for licensing flexibility in small, rural, charter and alternative schools. The Board of Teaching convened a task force to perform this work.

Composition of the Work Group:

Minnesota Board of Teaching
Education Minnesota
Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
Education Evolving
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
Minnesota Department of Education

See appendix A for complete list of members

Task force meetings for this portion of the mandate focused on studying information written by regional and national organizations that have worked with schools using an interdisciplinary/project based curriculum and innovative programs. In addition, there were a number of experts from practicing charter schools, the University of Minnesota, education organizations such as Education Evolving, and *National Louis University at Milwaukee* that provided information to the task force.

Topics studied and discussed included but were not limited to:

- Discipline-based instruction vs. interdisciplinary instructional approach
- The difficulty of teaching in an interdisciplinary fashion
- Breaking down of content silos
- How much content knowledge is needed to be successful?
- Fostering of critical thinking with cross-content teaching
- How NCLB fits with this type of instruction
- How do teachers learn to teach in this manner?
- What does project-based learning look like?
- The number of content areas a teacher could be expected to master
- Should this be an initial or master level license
- How to let teachers be managers
- Is there too much emphasis on ‘what counts’?
- Would all content areas fit into an interdisciplinary license?
- What are the key components of Interdisciplinary Teaching?
- The role that ‘dispositions’ play in an interdisciplinary instruction

- How project-based charter schools organize programs of content for delivery
- How students are assured of meeting academic content standards in innovative programs
- What current aspects of teacher preparation help teachers in this environment
- Where a majority of the students in these settings come from and what are the expectations for student achievement?
- The extent to which project based charter schools want interdisciplinary licensure
- The extent that Minnesota can be a leader in the development of interdisciplinary licensure
- Characteristics of students who apply to and attend innovative programs.
- Characteristics of successful teachers in interdisciplinary programs.
- How does accountability fit with this type of license and instruction?
- What systems currently exist for providing licensing flexibility to teachers employed in small, rural, charter and alternative schools?
- What definitions and guidelines currently exist in rule or statute for innovative programs?

Summary of Findings

Interdisciplinary programs are frequently found in small schools with a non-course based delivery system in which the students self-direct their learning. Teachers in interdisciplinary programs work across ages, grades and content areas as they facilitate student self-directed learning. The task force recognizes that an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning provides an appropriate and successful learning context for many students and teachers.

The task force on interdisciplinary licensure concluded that the development of an interdisciplinary teaching license would require a body of sophisticated knowledge and skills, making this most compatible with advanced professional status. Ongoing professional development and support would be essential and would require substantial funding. Since the Board currently has licenses for each of the core academic subjects, an interdisciplinary license would not include further study in the academic disciplines for which the teacher might not be licensed.

Some members of the task force felt that Minnesota has an opportunity to study and codify an instructional model which is taking hold in some schools with a particular type of student and teacher. These advocates further contended that Minnesota could lead this effort to encourage a type of teaching and learning which may be effective for some students.

Testimony from state and national experts in interdisciplinary learning recommended that an interdisciplinary license not be utilized in a secondary setting due to specific and expected subject matter requirements. Professional opinions of the task force were split. Several task force representatives, while understanding interdisciplinary learning and programs, felt that an interdisciplinary license is not an appropriate means to codify the contributions or successes of interdisciplinary teaching. There was also a desire for better information on student performance within these settings. More information will be found in the recommendation portion of the report. Experts who provided consultative services and presentations to the task force questioned the feasibility, functionality, and necessity of an interdisciplinary license at the secondary level where the teacher's subject knowledge is of critical importance in curriculum for students in grades 7-12. The lack of consensus within the task force for an interdisciplinary license was also influenced by the state licensure requirements and federal requirements of highly qualified teachers. The proposed interdisciplinary license, without evidence of content expertise, will not meet the academic rigor of state licensure requirements; or, the federal "highly qualified" requirements according to the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Even the strongest proponents of interdisciplinary teaching could not provide models for teachers to use to demonstrate the expected subject matter competencies needed to facilitate or teach multiple core academic subjects.

It is important to realize that the federal highly qualified teacher requirement may not be met by teachers who would hold any proposed interdisciplinary license. An interdisciplinary license is not based on a teacher's competency in subject matter, as

expected under NCLB. Developing a license based entirely on a teacher's pedagogical skills, without requirements in specific subject knowledge, is also contrary to Board of Teaching licensure rules. The Attorney General has advised that the Board does not have the authority to create a license based solely on a teacher's pedagogical skills.

Minnesota's licensure policy, similar to NCLB and IDEA 2004 policy, requires teachers to demonstrate content proficiency in each core academic subject for which they seek licensure. As a result, the Board has attempted to accommodate interdisciplinary practices through its waiver process. The waiver process currently allows interdisciplinary practices to proceed, and allows veteran teachers to meet federal "highly qualified" requirements by using the Minnesota HOUSSE Process. (Under the federal No Child left Behind Act, all teachers of core academic subjects must comply with the federal definition of a "highly qualified" teacher, in order for a state to receive certain federal funds for schools. The core academic subjects defined in NCLB and in Minnesota law are: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography. The HOUSSE process provides an avenue for teachers who do not have a major in the core academic subject and who have not passed the state adopted subject matter licensure test, to demonstrate their compliance with federal "highly qualified" requirements).

Individuals reporting to the task force indicated that having to meet federal "highly qualified" requirements has created more challenges for teachers who provide facilitation of learning in several core academic subjects. Due to the federal requirements, teachers must demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter in any of the core academic subjects for which they will be providing direct instruction. Since teachers providing instruction in an interdisciplinary setting facilitate learning in multiple subject areas, complying with the federal content knowledge requirement presents challenges.

Based on examination of the literature about interdisciplinary teaching, interviews with those most directly involved in interdisciplinary teaching at the local and national level, and discussions within the task force, the task force members find that:

- 1) There needs to be a clear focus on the academic achievement of students in schools providing interdisciplinary instruction to ensure that all academic standards are being met.
- 2) While Minnesota Statute 122A.09 Subd. 10 indicates that "...the board of teaching may grant a variance to its rules upon application by a school district for purposes of implementing programs in learning or management" and "to accommodate experimental (innovative) programs that reconfigure the delivery of content," there is currently no definition for "innovative," as it refers to programs or schools.
- 3) Teachers currently on waivers for teaching in "innovative" programs may pursue licensing in a number of manners which include traditional teacher preparation programs, the Licensure via Portfolio process, alternative pathways legislation, post-baccalaureate programs, and individual teacher credential reviews by

institutions of higher education.

- 4) Programs providing interdisciplinary instruction are currently allowed to obtain a waiver from the Board, which allows each individual, with successful completion of the State's High Objective Uniform State Standard of evaluation (HOUSSE), to also meet federal highly qualified teacher requirements.
- 5) Achievement data for students who are enrolled in 'project based schools' and data on their post secondary success is limited.
- 6) Individuals currently working in "innovative" programs who presented to the task force were not convinced that they would support requiring all currently licensed teachers teaching in innovative programs to obtain any new Interdisciplinary License.
- 7) The proposed components of an interdisciplinary license are currently identified in the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Beginning Teachers (Minnesota Rule 8710.2000). These professional and pedagogical standards were adopted in 2001 and identify competencies that all licensed teachers in Minnesota are expected to demonstrate for initial licensure. Proponents of an interdisciplinary license believe that for a teacher to qualify for the proposed interdisciplinary license, the teacher should demonstrate the same standards as a beginning teacher, but at a higher level of competency. Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice address the following ten categories:
 - Subject Matter
 - Student Learning
 - Diverse Learners
 - Instructional Strategies
 - Learning Environment
 - Communication
 - Planning Instruction
 - Assessment
 - Reflection and Professional Knowledge
 - Collaboration, Ethics, and Relationships
- 8) The task force further discussed whether the level of expertise needed for teachers in interdisciplinary programs could or should be acknowledged by obtaining an advanced certificate as opposed to a license.
- 9) While the advocates for an interdisciplinary license recognized the current waiver process as a means to carry out the instruction in compliance with licensure rules, they felt that licensure would validate the instructional delivery system.

10) There are a variety of models of instruction which can be identified as interdisciplinary. Researchers acknowledge a range of terms such as interdisciplinary, project based, multidisciplinary, integrative, integrated, but could not provide consistent or specific definitions. There are many ways in which teachers provide this type of instruction with their students.

Recommendations and Rationale

The development of an interdisciplinary license is controversial. The task force membership had mixed opinions in terms of the appropriateness of this license. The issues addressed by the task force and presented in this report include the appropriateness of a potential license and how an interdisciplinary license could better prepare teachers to demonstrate the proposed competencies needed to work in an interdisciplinary environment.

Minnesota teacher licensure requirements, like the federal highly qualified teacher requirements, require teachers to demonstrate both pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. An interdisciplinary license, which would permit a teacher to facilitate learning in all subjects, would be based on standards for pedagogical knowledge and not require standards for subject matter. A license based solely on pedagogical skills, without specific subject matter standards sets a precedent.

If the legislature chooses to direct the Board of Teaching to develop an interdisciplinary license, this report provides the recommendations that this group of experts identified as necessary for such a license.

In responding to the charge of the 2005 legislature, the task force on interdisciplinary licensure presents the following recommendations to the Board of Teaching for the development of an interdisciplinary license. The 2005 task force was the third working group in three years that the Board of Teaching has convened to explore the need and viability for an interdisciplinary license. While the 2005 task force could not agree on the need or viability to develop an interdisciplinary license, it was agreed that an interdisciplinary license would be based on pedagogy, and that licensure requirements would not evidence the subject matter expertise required of existing Minnesota teacher licenses; nor, would it meet the content requirements of the federal highly qualified teacher requirements in the No Child Left Behind Act. The findings of this task force are consistent with the work of the previous two working groups (2003 and 2004).

The 2005 task force identified for the Board the following ways to address the charge:

The first way is to continue to allow interdisciplinary programs and their teachers to access Board permission by utilizing the “waiver for innovative program” permission (MN Statute 122A.09 subd 10). This has worked relatively well and also allows Minnesota teachers to use the high objective uniform state system of evaluation (HOUSSE) to meet the federal highly qualified requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). Additionally, the Board would encourage and promote the development of certification programs that would concentrate on advanced certification in interdisciplinary instruction.

-OR-

A second way to address the charge is by the development of an interdisciplinary license. While not agreed upon by all members of the task force, this option provides recognition of this instructional strategy and creates a more uniform definition of the skills and attributes teachers need to be proficient in interdisciplinary programs. Holders of a pedagogically based interdisciplinary license would not evidence the subject matter competencies needed to meet federal “highly qualified” standards nor state subject matter competency requirements.

If the Board supports this option and recommends that an interdisciplinary license be adopted, the task force provides the following recommendations for components of an interdisciplinary license:

- | |
|--|
| <p>1. Holding a valid Minnesota middle level, 5-12, or k-12 teaching license, and having teaching experience should be prerequisites for adding an interdisciplinary license.</p> |
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Rationale:

The interdisciplinary license should only be granted to teachers holding a valid Minnesota teaching license at the middle or secondary level, or K-12 licensure in Music, Art, or Physical Education. (School Psychologists, School Nurses, School Social Workers and Speech and Language Pathologists, Elementary licensed teachers, teachers licensed in Special Education and ESL would not be eligible for this license, as they do not have background in a content area).

The work of this task force included bringing in many experts from the field, both in the area of teacher preparation, practicing charter school directors and teachers, and researchers in the area of alternative and innovate education. The conclusions reached by these individuals was that interdisciplinary instruction is very sophisticated and consequently there needs to be a base of knowledge and understanding about students, pedagogy, curriculum design, and school systems in order to be able to be an effective facilitator of learning in interdisciplinary settings. Consequently there should be a requirement that an interdisciplinary

license be granted to teachers already licensed in another content area.

In addition, the ability of one person to master enough content in the varied areas in which they might facilitate learning on any given day requires that they be well versed. The current federal and state requirements for content knowledge demand that a teacher be able to demonstrate competence in all core academic subjects in which he/she provides instruction.

2. Interdisciplinary license should be restricted for use in grades 5-12.

Rationale:

Licensure for elementary grades is already interdisciplinary, so there is no need to change the present elementary teaching license. The request for an interdisciplinary license comes from advocates at the middle and secondary level where instruction has typically taken place in a discipline discrete manner.

3. The required competencies for the interdisciplinary license should be developed based on the Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers and candidate competency be evidenced by the teacher at a more advanced level. (Minnesota Rule 8710.2000)

Rationale:

Minnesota Rule 8710.2000, subpart 2, standard 1 (A-J) are of particular importance for this license in addition to pedagogy standards identified in subpart 3 standards 2-10. The Standards of Effective Practice must be demonstrated at the initial licensure level (beginning teacher). Even though the standards for the successful implementation interdisciplinary instruction are the same, the complexity of this type of instructional design mandates that these standards be demonstrated at more than a basic understanding level. Teachers for this license would need to demonstrate advanced competency of these pedagogy standards.

4. The interdisciplinary license should be required for teachers in state approved innovative programs only.

Rationale:

The Board of Teaching cannot adopt licenses that are optional. If you are providing instruction in an approved interdisciplinary program you will be required to hold an interdisciplinary license.

5. Teachers adding the interdisciplinary license must complete a Board of Teaching approved interdisciplinary licensure program, which must include: a) Demonstration of teacher competencies based on a more advance level of the current Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice (Minnesota Rule 8710.2000); and b) Completion of a practicum or internship in an interdisciplinary program.

Rationale:

The experts who provided guidance to this task force agreed that a period of mentorship in an interdisciplinary learning program would be a crucial part of the licensure requirement.

Preface to number six

Throughout the discussions relative to identifying the proposed requirements for the interdisciplinary license the task force continually faced the question of “What constitutes a state-approved innovative school or Program?”

There was general agreement among the task force members that without a recognized definition or common agreement on what constitutes a state-approved innovative school or program identifying more than the six general components recommended above was at the very least problematic.

6. A recognized or commonly agreed upon definition of what constitutes a ‘state-approved’ innovative school or program should be developed in conjunction with the adoption of an interdisciplinary license.

Rationale:

While it was not in the charge of the task force to define a “state-approved’ innovative school or program, the task force discussed a variety of issues and ideas about what that definition might include. Therefore, the task force recommends that the following elements should be included in the definition of “state-approved’ innovative schools or programs.

Elements should include:

- A requirement that the school or program have individual learning plans for all students
- Evidence of community and parental involvement in the program
- Documentation of a process for tracking individual learner progress and achievement
- Documentation of how individual student attainment of the academic standards will be determined and how evidence of standards acquisition will be documented
- Identification of the processes the school or program will utilize to assess, evaluate and continually innovate



MINNESOTA BOARD OF TEACHING

January 23, 2006

PART TWO

Introduction

Minnesota Laws 2005 Omnibus K-12 and Early Childhood Education Act, Article 10 section 3 directed the Minnesota Board of Teaching in consultation with Minnesota Department of Education and other education stakeholders, to prepare and submit to the legislature:

- (1) Proposed licensure requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum to facilitate learning in state-approved innovative schools and programs and
- (2) Recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools.

The Board is to provide its recommendations and other findings to the legislature by January 16, 2006.

The Board of Teaching convened a task force which included representation of the legislated entities: in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education and other education stakeholders. The task force determined early on that this legislative charge was actually twofold, and therefore determined to divide the tasks, working on them consecutively. Consequently,

- Part One of the report concentrates on the first charge: Proposed licensure requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum to facilitate learning in state-approved innovative schools and programs.
- Part Two of the report concentrates on the second charge: Recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools.

This report addresses the second directive:

- (2) **Recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools.**

Background Information

The Minnesota Board of Teaching is committed to maintaining high standards for the licensing of teachers in Minnesota public schools. Licenses which reflect the understanding and demonstration of pedagogy and content knowledge have been a part of Minnesota's expectations for a high quality licensure system for many years.

Since 2001, teachers in most alternative learning centers have been using the process referred to as "Waiver for Innovative Program" and have been granted Board of Teaching permission to teach in these settings. The Board's permission (waiver) recognizes that the teacher is not using a traditional course-based method of instruction, because of the multiple needs that the students have, and the variety of students with whom a teacher must work on a daily basis. Teaching in an innovative program requires a considerable expertise in understanding students with varied needs and difficulties. The teacher functions more as a facilitator of learning in both an academic, as well as a behavioral sense.

The "Waiver for Innovative Program" permits a teacher to teach in a more "generalist" manner by allowing him/her to teach outside of the particular area of licensure. Granting a waiver has functioned fairly well in Minnesota in allowing unlicensed teachers to work in innovative programs. It also recognizes that the teacher has not yet demonstrated they have adequate content knowledge in all the subject areas in which they provide instruction. Furthermore, the waiver permission allows teachers not to be counted as a teacher in violation on the STAR (the system that correlates teacher licensure and teaching assignment) and consequently meets Board requirements for teaching in a Minnesota classroom.

The federal requirement for being highly qualified in content knowledge has created challenges for some teachers who work in alternative learning settings. According to federal requirements a teachers of core academic subjects must:

1. Hold a bachelor's degree;
2. Be licensed by the state; and
3. Demonstrate subject competence through a bachelor's degree in the teaching subject, a rigorous state test, or through demonstration of the high objective and uniform state system of evaluation (HOUSSE).

The problem experienced by some teachers in innovative programs is the inability to demonstrate the required level of subject knowledge. A teacher on a waiver in an innovative program now needs to be highly qualified in potentially five or six subject areas. Under Minnesota Statute 122A.09, subp 10, the Board of Teaching may grant a teacher in an innovative program a waiver. According to Minnesota's State Plan for Federal Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements a teacher granted a waiver may use the high objective uniform state system of evaluation (HOUSSE) process to meet federal requirements for teaching core academic subjects.

Work of the Task Force

Minnesota Law Laws 2005 Omnibus K-12 and Early Childhood Education Act, Article 10, Section 3 directed the Board of Teaching to prepare this report in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Education and other education stakeholders. The report is to determine the licensure requirements for an interdisciplinary license and to make recommendations for licensing flexibility in small, rural, charter and alternative schools. The Board of Teaching established a task force to perform this work.

Composition of the Task Force:

The task force was composed of representatives of education organizations that have a stake in the outcome. The task force determined early on that this legislative charge was actually twofold, and therefore determined to divide the tasks, working on one before the other. Consequently, the second part of the report concentrates on the second charge: To make recommendations as to the needs for licensing flexibility in small, rural, charter and alternative schools. The following organizations were included in the work of the first part of this legislative mandate:

Minnesota Board of Teaching

Education Minnesota

Minnesota Association of Charter Schools

Education Evolving

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

Minnesota Department of Education

See appendix A for complete list of members.

Task force meetings for this portion of the mandate received or heard testimony from representatives from each of the impacted school settings, some of whom made formal presentations to the full Board at a monthly meeting, and others who worked more closely with the task force.

Topics studied and discussed included, but were not limited to:

- The difficulties of recruiting teachers in small and rural schools
- The small numbers of candidates for many teaching jobs in small and rural schools
- Research now stating that smaller schools are more effective at the same time that NCLB requirements seem to be forcing smaller schools into difficult situations
- The differing requirements for teachers in Alternative Learning Centers
- The differing requirements for teachers in Care and Treatment Facilities
- Highly Qualified requirements putting burdens on teachers who teach multiple subjects to many different students on a daily basis.
- Having teachers who teach multiple subjects to many different students on a daily basis demonstrate their content knowledge.

- Fears of staff members for their institutions when NCLB requirements come into full effect at the end of the 2005-2006 school year
- How learning goals differ in Care and Treatment and ALCs
- How do alternative settings demonstrate accountability
- The definition of what an 'innovative program' is and how this applies to waivers being granted
- The Teacher of Record model and its desirability in these alternative settings
- Can there be differing licensing requirements for Care and Treatment facilities?
- Can an approval process upfront satisfy some of the requirements for content delivery, thereby allowing more flexibility in teacher licensing?

Summary of Findings

There are dramatic differences in the need for flexibility in licensing and staffing in the types of schools mentioned: rural, small, charter, and alternative learning centers. These differences in turn make it difficult to find solutions that will assist all of these academic settings. Therefore, each type of program will be addressed separately in this report.

Minnesota licensure policy requires teachers to demonstrate proficiency in each core academic subject for which they seek licensure. Processes are in place that accommodate those teachers who may need exception from licensure policies. These include a variance that allows a teacher up to three years to teach in an area outside of his/her licensure field while working toward full licensure in the new area. There are also Board waivers, which are granted to individuals teaching in innovative or experimental programs in areas in which there is not an identified license.

The Federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) identifies specific requirements for teachers to meet ‘highly qualified’ teacher requirements. Teachers must demonstrate a certain level of content knowledge. NCLB requirements present major staffing challenges to small, rural, charter, and alternative learning centers. Prior to NCLB requirements, Minnesota was able to accommodate staffing needs through its waiver and variance processes.

(NOTE: Under the 2001 Federal No Child Left Behind Act, all teachers of core academic subjects must comply with the federal definition of a highly qualified teacher. The core academic subjects defined in NCLB and in Minnesota law are: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography.)

Findings for Small and Rural Schools

High School reform is focusing on the benefits of small schools and creating “small schools within large schools.” Rural schools already exist in this configuration and therefore policies that intentionally or unintentionally force them to look at closing or consolidation are working against what is known and being done nationally to create effective learning environments.

Some small and rural schools have difficulties in finding and hiring appropriately licensed teachers. In addition to the challenges presented by licensing requirements, small and rural schools often have to contend with challenges of recruitment of candidates who will consider residing in rural communities.

Often rural schools face declining student enrollment. In order to keep teachers on a full time contract, administrators often request a “variance” for a teacher to teach a subject for which they are not licensed. As of 2005, teachers must also meet the federal requirement for “highly qualified” in the new content area. The present variance permission, combined with a teacher using the HOUSSSE process to meet NCLB highly qualified teacher requirements, will grant a teacher up to three variances to teach “out of

field”. (HOUSSE means “high objective and uniform state system of evaluation” which is used for the purpose of determining if a teacher meets the federal criteria for “highly qualified”.)

The Minnesota Board of Teaching Non-renewable license (8710.1410), combined with the HOUSSE process, will allow a teacher who wants to become licensed in a new content area up to three years to obtain full licensure while teaching the new content area.

There is a perception that teacher preparation institutions are not accessible to teachers desiring to add areas of licensure. Teachers are looking for more courses offered online and at convenient times and locations. In addition, teachers desire alternatives for demonstrating their existing competencies, rather than being required to complete college coursework.

Findings for Alternative Learning Centers (ALCs)

Because of limited enrollment and the state school funding formula tied to numbers of students, many smaller ALCs find it is a constant challenge to match student needs and teacher licensure requirements in settings where teachers provide instruction in a variety of subjects for general education and special education students in the same classroom.

As is the case in all schools, goals for the students in alternative learning centers extend beyond academics and must be established to meet multiple needs of students. Meeting the personal, social, and emotional needs of students must occur if teachers are to promote specified goals that are attainable and measurable. When the schools or programs have determined the behavioral issues confronting students, and have successfully implemented strategies to change student behaviors, then students’ academic achievement becomes the primary focus. Some teachers in alternative learning centers feel constrained by the assumption that the first focus of an educational setting needs to be on student academic achievement. Minnesota licensure requirements, like the federal highly qualified teacher requirements, emphasize the demonstration of teacher competency in all core academic subjects in which a teacher provides instruction. Demonstration of competency in subject matter sometimes presents a serious challenge for teachers who teach multiple subjects in interdisciplinary settings. Thus, a program must often request special permission in the form of a waiver from the Board of Teaching for a teacher who is not licensed to provide instruction in a subject in which they are not licensed. A waiver may be granted to licensed teachers to permit them to provide instruction in subject areas for which they are not licensed in a program design that is considered innovative.

The number of students being serviced in alternative learning centers has doubled in the last seven years (approximately 145,000 students in K-12 settings during the 2004-05 school year.) This means that up to one-fifth of the student population in Minnesota now receives instruction in an alternative learning center setting. This data is somewhat skewed in that many summer school recovery and remediation programs are funded by

the local alternative learning center, and therefore total numbers will be higher than those actually attending during the school year.

Hiring appropriate staff for an alternative learning center requires looking for experienced teachers who are competent in understanding the ever-changing needs of the learners and who are skilled in ability to work with individualized instruction.

Findings for Care and Treatment Facilities

Care and Treatment facilities arose in the deliberations because of the uniqueness of the settings and the licensure issues created by this uniqueness. Teachers in Care and Treatment facilities work under conditions that provide many challenges for teachers and teacher licensing. Students are placed in Care and Treatment settings by the courts, parents, school districts and family services. The work group decided not to include recommendations for Care and Treatment settings in this report because of the other entities involved in their structure.

Recommendations and Rationale

- 1. The Board of Teaching should develop a monitoring system that examines and reviews the issuance of waivers so that a waiver does not become a way to be licensed without meeting the standards.**

Rationale:

Because a waiver has no time limit or restrictions, it is possible that a teacher could work on a waiver for an indefinite number of years. The Board of Teaching will develop a system to award and monitor waivers. This would include more staff time and consequently more funding.

- 2. Teacher preparation institutions should promote making programs more available to practicing teachers who want to add areas of licensure.**

Rationale:

The Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (MACTE) has posted on the Measures of Teacher Quality in Minnesota (MTQM) website a searchable database indicating licensure programs that are offered in non-traditional formats....online, weekends & evenings, fast tracks, etc. Additionally, some institutions have developed summer institutes to help licensed teachers add specific endorsements. The Board of Teaching will continue to encourage institutions to meet the needs of teachers wishing to add fields of licensure. The Board of Teaching will assist teachers in finding programs by referring inquiring teachers to the MTQM database.

- 3. Schools should also increase their access to current options, such as districts sharing teachers, education districts, or other type of cooperatives employing teachers to be shared with multiple districts; interactive two- way TV and online courses. Schools should consider creative ways to recruit teachers: scholarships for current faculty to expand their licensure areas, identify community members who wish to become teachers (“grow your own”), create loan forgiveness programs.**

Rationale:

Task force members and other stakeholders indicated that some teacher shortage problems and licensure issues could be resolved by creative staffing decisions.

4. Charter, alternative, small, and rural schools should continue to use the Waiver process in conjunction with the HOUSSE process to meet staffing needs.

Rationale:

Representatives from alternative learning center communities indicated that the existing waiver process is working for their programs. Combining the waiver permission with the federal HOUSSE process will allow teachers in alternative learning centers to meet both state and federal requirements.

5. The Board of Teaching should make all entities aware of the Non-renewable license that allows licensed teachers to teach out of field for three years while they work to become fully licensed in a new content area.

Rationale:

The new non-renewable license will allow already licensed teachers who are assigned to teach outside of their licensure field a means to teach the new content for up to three years, while working toward full licensure in that content area. This process will also allow the teacher to meet the federal definition of “highly qualified.”

The Board of Teaching will contact all school districts and charter school hiring agents to inform them of this new license so that all entities are aware of this staffing option.

6. The state should develop an acceptable definition of “innovative program.” The term “innovative program” should be changed to “specialized program” to encompass more types of programs.

Rationale:

Once the term “specialized program” is defined, then special educational settings/programs that experience challenges in having appropriately licensed teachers for each content area, could apply for program approval to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) for permission to operate as a “specialized program.” This would afford the program more flexibility and latitude in the area of teacher licensure requirements as long as student achievement goals were met. The MDE program approval process would require evidence of how student content standards would be delivered and assurance that the teacher has expertise in the content area(s). It is recommended that for initial approval, programs, at a minimum, would need to evidence including a teacher mentorship system, a formalized process for the utilization of community resources, and plans for continuing approval based on evidence of meeting student achievement goals

7. The Board of Teaching should heighten awareness of various options for individuals to obtain teaching licenses, such as the Licensure via Portfolio program, alternative pathway programs, post-baccalaureate programs, individual teacher credential reviews by institutions of higher education, and on-line teacher licensure programs offered by teacher preparation institutions.

Rationale:

There are a variety of options available and making prospective licensees aware of what they are, where they are, and how they can be accessed would help alleviate the problems encountered by teachers needing to become fully licensed. In addition, the Board will continue to explore alternative licensing processes, including the completion of the 9-12 General Science Rule and obtaining an additional science license via passing the PRAXIS II test for that content area.

8. The processes in place, in which the Care and Treatment facilities use waiver permissions to be in the classroom, should continue.

Rationale:

The processes in place work for the Care and Treatment facilities and therefore attempts at altering the structures could very well impose more difficulties on these institutions.

Appendices:

- A List of Task Force members in detail**
- B Invited Guests (experts)**
- C Meeting Dates of Task Force**
- D Legislation**

List of Task Force Members

APPENDIX A

Education Minnesota

Garnet Franklin

Board of Teaching

Deidre Kramer, Executive Committee member

Jim Bartholomew, Vice-Chair

Allen Hoffman, Executive Director

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals

Craig Olson, Principal, Prior Lake High School

Education Evolving

Bob Wedl

Minnesota Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

Linda Distad, Associate Dean, College of St. Catherine

Minnesota Department of Education

MaryAnn Nelson, Assistant Commissioner

Dan Bittman, Director of Educator Licensing and Teacher Quality

JoAnn VanAernum, Specialist

Minnesota Charter School Association

Eugene Piccolo, Executive Director

Invited expert guests

APPENDIX B

12 September 2005 task force meeting

Dr. Julie Kalnin, Professor, College of Education and Human Development
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Mark Vagle, Teaching Specialist, College of Education and Human Development
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

23 September 2005 task force meeting

David Greenberg, Director, El Colegio Charter School, Minneapolis MN

Bill Zimmewicz, Director, River Heights Charter School, St. Paul

Andrea Martin, Director, Avalon Charter School, St. Paul

Morgan Brown, Minnesota Department of Education

3 October 2005 task force meeting

Jon Schroeder, Coordinator, Minnesota Charter School Forum

31 October 2005 task force meeting

Dr. James Beane, Professor, Louis-National University (conference call)

14 November 2005 task force meeting

Jeri Watters, Minnesota Department of Education, Care and Treatment

Vernae Hasbargen, Minnesota Rural Educators Association

Bill Sprung, Curriculum Director, New Ulm Schools

Steve Allen, Director, ALC Director, Cambridge Minnesota

Brad Harper, Director, Pines School, Anoka Juvenile Detention Center

Glory Kibbel, Minnesota Department of Education



MINNESOTA BOARD OF TEACHING

APPENDIX C

Interdisciplinary License Task Force – Minnesota Board of Teaching – Meeting dates

23 August 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

12 September 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

3 October 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

17 October 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

31 October 2005 – 2:30 0 5:00

14 November 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

2 December 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

13 December 2005 – 2:30 – 5:00

4 January 2006 – 2:30 - 5:00

Minnesota Session Laws 2005, 1st Special Session - Chapter 5
ARTICLE 10 STATE AGENCIES

Sec. 3. [BOARD OF TEACHING REPORT.]

By January 16, 2006, the Board of Teaching, in consultation with the Department of Education and other education stakeholders, must prepare and submit to the house of representatives and senate committees having jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education policy and finance:

(1) proposed licensure requirements for teachers of interdisciplinary curriculum to facilitate learning in state-approved innovative schools and programs; and

(2) recommendations for accommodating the needs for appropriately licensed teachers in charter, alternative, small, and rural schools.