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Special Issue: Focus on Teacher Licensure

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State board meeting highlights

Board gives approval to new teacher licensure regulations

A new performance-based method for licensing teachers was adopted unanimously by the Kansas State Board of Education during its meeting in July. The regulations for educator licensure are designed to align with the state's school improvement standards and will allow new teachers two years in which to demonstrate an ability to teach before being fully licensed.

The new regulations are viewed as the "next step" in the state's movement toward performance based accountability. Nine years ago the state implemented Quality Performance Accreditation, which measures K-12 school improvement based primarily on student performance. With the passage of the new educator licensure regulations, the state's teacher preparation programs will also be approved based in large part on how well their graduates perform.

Teacher licensing and the approval of teacher preparation programs have been linked in Kansas since 1982, when the state began certifying teachers based on whether they had completed approved programs in an accredited higher education institution. In initiating the redesign of teacher licensure regulations, the State Board sought to ensure that teacher preparation programs were aligned with state school improvement and curriculum standards, so teachers entering the profession would be prepared to teach the content that had been identified in state standards.

"In passing these regulations, we are taking another step toward helping more of our students attain the high standards we have set for them by ensuring our educators are well prepared to teach those things we consider important for our students to know," said Education Commissioner Andy Tompkins. "I see these regulations as ensuring that the focus of schooling in elementary and secondary classrooms, as well as in teacher preparation programs, is on student learning."

The new professional standards are based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Under the new regulations, individuals who complete an approved teacher preparation program and pass subject matter and teaching knowledge assessments will be granted a

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Work on teaching standards just beginning

It's been seven years since work began to redesign the way teachers are certified in Kansas. With the approval of new licensing regulations last month, many involved in the redesign process can heave a sigh of relief. But just as soon as the sigh has left their bodies, they'll have to turn around and get back to work again.

Now that the new regulations are in place, work must begin in earnest on developing teaching standards to support the endorsements included in the new regulations. The Regulations Committee of the Professional Advisory Standards Board has already issued invitations to individuals to serve on one of 28 Teaching Standards Committees that will be working to revise and develop new standards.

Of the 28 committees, 10 will be developing standards for new configurations of endorsement areas. The other 18 committees will work to revise endorsement standards that were developed in 1995-96.

In addition to the work of those 28 committees, the Regulations Committee will be reviewing and revising the professional education standards and the general education standards.

The teaching standards that will be developed will define what teaching candidates should know and be able to do at the point of initial licensure. To aid in the process of developing and revising the standards, each committee will be equipped with the standards adopted by the State Board for K-12 students in that given area, as well as any national standards that have been developed by professional associations, and the standards used for National Board certification.

It is anticipated the committees will begin meeting in September, with a first draft of standards available in December. Once a first draft is complete, public forums will be conducted to discuss the work of the committees. The current time line calls for those forums to occur during January, February and March. If all goes according to plan, the Professional Standards Board should receive the standards in April, and bring them to the State Board in May.

The goal is to have the teaching standards adopted in the summer of 2001, giving teacher preparation institutions two years in which to modify curriculum and prepare for the full implementation of the standards in 2003.

Other work that must be completed before full implementation of the new standards in 2003 is the development of a performance assessment that new teachers will undergo during the conditional licensing period and an assessment for accomplished teachers.

Team leader named

Dr. Martha Gage has been named team leader for certification and teacher education at the Kansas State Department of Education.

Dr. Gage has served as coordinator of teacher education with KSDE for the past three years. Prior to that, she was a professor of education at MidAmerica Nazarene University and at Ottawa University.

She earned her undergraduate degree at Ottawa University, and her master's degree and doctorate degree from the Univeristy of Kansas.

Dr. Gage can be reached at 785-296-8010, or by e-mail at mgage@ksbe.state.ks.us.

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Frequently Asked Questions about Licensure Redesign

Q: How will this impact me, a currently certified Kansas educator?

A: Most Kansas educators will see two changes, as reflected in 91-1-207:

- At the first renewal following July 1, 2003, you will be issued a document called a "license" instead of a "certificate. It will contain the same endorsements and levels that are on the current certificate.
- This first renewal will be based on your meeting the requirements that are printed as renewal requirements on the current certificate. When you renew this NEW certificate in the future, it will be renewed under the new renewal requirements established under the redesign. These renewal requirements are very similar to current requirements. However, future renewals cannot be submitted until six months before the expiration date, and renewal requirements must be completed during the term of the license you are renewing.

Q: Why the change from a certificate to a license?

A: A license is awarded by the State to indicate that the person is qualified to practice that particular profession. Doctors, engineers, architects, cosmetologist, etc, all must be licensed to practice. A certificate is recognition from the profession itself of accomplished practice by a licensed professional. The profession sets the standards and requirements for certification, which is voluntary. For teachers, certificates are awarded by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

Q: When is the new system going to take effect?

A: It will be phased in over several years, with all substantive changes effective July 1, 2003. As colleges and universities complete their own accreditation cycle, they will have to offer programs that meet the new system.

Q: What about the two renewals on experience only for people with advanced degrees?

A: This option remains in the Redesign. It allows educators who have an advanced degree to renew twice on accredited experience (three years during the professional license being renewed). It will be available to all those who hold an advanced degree conferred before July 1,2003. This does not give any additional renewals to people who may have already used this option once or twice. A total of two renewals only on the basis of an advanced degree plus experience are allowed for those whose degree was conferred prior to July 1, 2001.

Q: Where are the endorsement standards?

A: The standards that define what someone must know and be able to do to get a particular endorsement will be adopted by reference by the State Board of Education. It will thus no longer require the formal regulatory process when amendments are needed. New or revised standards will be written for all endorsement areas.

Q: Who developed the Redesign Regulations?

A: Redesign started in 1992, when the State Board of Education asked the Teaching and School Administration Professional Standards Advisory Board to be sure that teacher and administrator preparation programs reflected the skills and knowledge that professionals would need to work in the school of the 21st Century. At that time, the system in place was already 20-30 years old. Committees of teachers, higher education representatives, professional organizations and members of the public were involved during the original development of the Redesign, 1992-97. Those standards went through several revisions and were the subject of many hearings involving hundreds of Kansas citizens. The State Board of Education has worked over the last two years to revise the proposed Redesign, before approving the proposed Redesign of Licensure for Kansas Educators for public comment.

Q: What happens to me if I am one of those whose certificate will no longer be issued?

A: This would affect those who currently maintain dual licensure and individuals holding certificates issued under vocational regulations: employment will no longer be tied to holding a certificate or license from the State Board of Education. For those persons who are issued a license to practice by another state agency, employment criteria for your position within the accredited school system will be established. It is anticipated that the employment will be dependent upon maintaining the appropriate license to practice. Standards for employment for vocational instructors at area technical colleges and for instructors within special needs programs will also be established.

Q: What does the Redesign include?

A: The Redesign establishes regulations for the licensure and preparation of teachers, school specialists, and administrators who will be prepared in the future:

- Establishes a conditional two-year license after completion of a preparation program, and pedagogical and content assessments.
- A professional five-year license earned after successful completion of a performance assessment during the conditional licensing period.
- Licenses will continue to include what a person can teach and who they can work with. However, the specific number of endorsements available will be greatly reduced, and the level will include both grade level and developmental stage of the students.
- School specialist licenses will include library media, school counselor, reading, and school psychologist endorsements.
- School leadership licenses will be issued for program, building or district leaderships.
- An accomplished teaching license may be earned by achieving National Board Certification or be completing a performance assessment.
- Restricted teaching and district leadership licenses will be available to those with a content degree, under a mentorship program, through partnership with

a hiring district and a college/university, including a plan to complete full preparation requirements within 3 years.

- Provisional teaching and school specialist endorsements will still be available based on completion of half of the approved program requirements and a plan for completion of the full program.
- Redesign also establishes regulations for visiting scholars, out-of-state, and foreign applicants.

Q: What are the content, pedagogical and performance assessments?

A: The assessments have not yet been adopted and/or designed.