

I. Introduction

The teacher shortage is a serious problem effecting schools across Wisconsin. Students need and deserve highly trained, culturally skilled professionals to help them reach high academic standards and realize their full potential. Based on the work of the American Institutes of Research, The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has identified 5 goals aimed at addressing the Wisconsin teacher shortage: 1) attract more teacher candidates, 2) revamp teacher preparation programs, 3) revise licensing rules, 4) develop, support and retain teachers in the profession, and 5) improve data collection.

The DPI has released suggestions to the 3rd of the 5 goals – revising licensing rules – in the form of repealing and recreating PI 34. The DPI has invited public input in writing and/or at [5 hearings](#) scheduled around the state in January. The full proposed changes can be found [here](#).

II. Teacher Licensing

Expectation of Assurance

WEAC seeks assurance from the Department of Public Instruction that all current license holders are grandfathered *or* given the option of expanding licensure in any or all forms as outlined in proposed PI 34 changes.

WEAC believes the consolidation of licenses into 4 tiers simplifies educator licensing. Streamlining the number of licenses clarifies ambiguity. However, drastically expanding the grade levels one can teach contradicts the body of research around developmentally appropriate practice. Further, the creation of broad field licenses in science, music, ELA, and social studies diminish concentrated expertise in these subject areas.

WEAC believes out-of-state license reciprocity and the acceptance of National Board Certification are acceptable indicators qualifying a teacher for licensure in Wisconsin.

WEAC believes license reciprocity for speech and language pathologists and audiologists holding a clinical license is a logical step to address the educator shortage. This proposed change further illustrates that the Educator Effectiveness matrix does not fit every educator license category.

WEAC believes internships and residencies are an effective method to address the teacher shortage. The proposed changes appear to reflect current statewide practice.

WEAC believes increased flexibility proposed around testing requirements for preservice educators puts a positive focus on core teaching methods courses.

WEAC calls upon the DPI to develop and promulgate rigorous protocols and procedures for assuring that any district sponsored license be implemented in an objective manner with fidelity. Without criteria that assures that stringent quality control measures are in place WEAC stands opposed to the district sponsored licensure proposal. This includes, but is not limited to,

direct involvement by a master educator holding such a license or an Institute of Higher Education that has a teacher preparation program approved by the DPI. Without the requirement candidates for licensure demonstrate comprehensive training in subject matter content and pedagogy, Wisconsin's students are at risk of being provided educators who are inadequately prepared.

III. Teacher Rights

The DPI has proposed a series of sweeping changes that directly impact teacher rights associated with potential disciplinary action. WEAC believes DPI has overstepped its authority with this extensive overhaul that reaches beyond license revocation.

Teaching license revocation. The rules create a very broad category called boundary violations as aggravating factors that could cause a license to be revoked. Examples of violations are defined as things like discussing a teacher's personal life or talking with a student for a non-educational purpose.

Informing against other teachers. A teacher facing revocation who reports another teacher for Boundary Violations could get a lesser penalty, similar to criminal informants.

Teacher suspension. Currently DPI only has revocation available as a penalty. Under the proposed rules, DPI will suspend a teacher's license for specified conduct and the teacher will then need to prove to DPI that her license shouldn't be suspended. Also, the DPI can suspend a license if a teacher presents an "imminent threat," until the teacher demonstrates she is no longer a threat. That seems to open the door for teacher license suspension without proof until the DPI completes the revocation process.

Mandatory revocation. The overhaul creates categories of offenses in which the DPI may revoke a license, and when it must. Instead of felonies being the reason a license is revoked, there are new vague offenses, such as revocation for a teacher who engages in more than one boundary violation – which covers a wide scope of arbitrary judgments, like showing favoritism.

License reinstatement. A teacher who has her license revoked would have to prove her case by "clear and convincing evidence," a higher standard than the DPI must use to revoke the license in the first place. Additionally, a teacher who has her license revoked would have to wait five years before applying for reinstatement.

IV. Summary and Recommendations

Whether looking at the [national research](#) or asking a Wisconsin educator, the reason for the teacher shortage is clear: teaching and learning conditions. Recruiting and retaining the *right* number of teachers who possess the *right* qualifications is not enough to ensure Wisconsin's

public-school students are well served. Teachers must also have the *right* working conditions in place to teach effectively and for students to learn at the highest levels rooted in critical thinking, inquiry, and problem solving.

In recent years Wisconsin Educators have experienced decreased professional autonomy as seen in scripted curricula, state mandated SLOs, and highly prescriptive employee handbooks. Teacher workload is excessive with tasks that do not promote student learning such as data entry, and excessively assigned duties.

Perhaps the most under acknowledged reason for the teacher shortage is the downward trend in teacher salary and benefits in Wisconsin. The erosion of relative teacher pay has fallen heavily on the most experienced teachers and many early career educators do not have the ability to accurately project future earnings making it difficult to make decisions enabling one to maintain a middle-class standard of living.

Recommendations to address the teacher shortage:

- Implement a statewide minimum base teacher salary for Tier 3 (\$50,000) and Tier 4 (\$72,000) licenses.
- Provide statewide minimum planning and preparation time.
- Hold building administrators accountable for school climate.