
Educator Licensure and Preparation Policies & Rules

The Background:

Educator licensure, a state function, is designed to ensure that educators meet minimum standards of practice. The current educator licensure policy and process is too complex and disconnected from educator performance to effectively serve teachers, students or the public. Currently, Tennessee issues more than 20 types of educator licenses, which is unnecessary and confusing for new candidates. In the past, it has taken up to four months to process a license. Additionally, the licensing process is not systematically tied to educator performance. In an effort to improve the licensure system, and moreover, the effectiveness of teachers licensed to teach in Tennessee, the state needs to streamline license types, introduce more rigorous entry requirements and tie advancement and renewal to a minimum level of performance.

The items proposed streamline the current licensure policy and make appropriate connections to teacher effectiveness while recognizing the role of licensure with respect to other state, district and school level personnel functions.

Additionally, the state's current educator preparation program approval process is similarly disconnected from educator performance and impact on student growth. In its current form, it does not adequately focus on outcomes, but rather places the entirety of the approval decision on standards and inputs that are not reflective of graduates' performance in the classroom or school. In an effort to improve the educator preparation program approval process, Tennessee needs to explore new processes and metrics more focused on program impact. These changes begin with the proposed general rule and will continue over the course of the coming months as the state explores partnership with a new accrediting body as well as impact metrics unique to Tennessee.

1. Professional Assessments (5.105)

The proposed policy adopts revised cut scores for Praxis exams. Research staff at ETS, through two multi-state standard setting studies for each exam, determined the recommended cut scores. The studies involved two expert panels, comprised of teachers, administrators, and college faculty. The recommended cut scores are provided to help state departments of education determine appropriate cut scores. The enclosed chart identifies the new cut scores. These scores represent a significant increase in the cut scores proposed in the past.

2. Educator Licensure (Rule 0520-02-03)

The proposal repeals current language in Chapter 0520-02-03 of State Board of Education rule and replaces it with the text included herein. The new language clarifies and streamlines teacher licensure requirements in Tennessee. In doing so, initial licensure, renewal and advancement determinations are informed by effectiveness data.

Effective Date: August 1, 2015.

3. Educator Licensure Policy (5.502)

The proposal stipulates educator license types and performance expectations for advancement and renewal of teacher licenses in Tennessee. These changes represent a more streamlined approach with clear performance criteria outlined at every stage of the licensing process.

Effective Date: August 1, 2015.

4. Review of License Renewal or Advancement Policy (5.503)

This policy outlines a process for review of license eligibility determinations within a specific set of parameters related to the performance data itself.

Effective Date: August 1, 2015.

5. Educator Preparation (Rule 0520-02-04)

The proposal repeals and modifies current language in Chapter 0520-02-04 of State Board of Education rule and replaces it with the text included herein. The new language focuses rule on the broad purposes and authorities related to the preparation of Tennessee educators. Information related to specific components of preparation, such as requirements related to clinical practice, will be included in revised policy regarding educator preparation that will be introduced as we explore a new relationship with a national accrediting body. In addition, that policy will offer new metrics related to measuring the effectiveness of educator preparation programs.

Effective Date: August 1, 2015, with the exception of Rule 0520-02-04-.14, which will be effective immediately. This particular provision relates to licenses that expire prior to August 1, 2015, and provides for the renewal of such licenses under current rules.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.