

Your Question

You want examples of state legislation that provide greater flexibility in teacher licensing.

Our Response

In recent years, many states have altered licensure requirements to expand the pool of qualified teacher candidates. This includes 1) revising existing requirements for initial licensure, 2) creating new license types, 3) filling vacancies through licensure exemptions, 4) expanding access through alternate routes and 5) limiting barriers to out-of-state teachers. Examples from the 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions are provided below.

Revising Requirements for Initial Licensure

States continue to reconsider and revise their preparation, coursework and assessment requirements for new teachers. In 2018 and 2019, several states reduced requirements to make the path to licensure easier. Examples include:

- **Michigan [S.B. 889](#)** (2018): **Removes the general requirement that teachers pass the SAT** for licensure. **[S.B. 727](#)**: **Removes the requirement that alternate route teachers pass the SAT** for licensure. Modifies GPA requirements to require that programs have a **cohort grade point average** of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (instead of the previously required individual GPA of at least 3.0).
- **Virginia [H.B. 2037](#)** (2019): Permits candidates to demonstrate proficiency — in the relevant content area, communication, literacy and other core skills for educators — by achieving a qualifying score on professional assessments or by **meeting alternative evaluation standards** as prescribed by the state board. Removes the requirement that the state board prescribe an **assessment of basic skills for individuals seeking entry into an approved education preparation program**. Requires the state board to issue a license to an individual with a provisional license **who cannot pass the required assessments** if the individual is currently employed as a teacher, obtains superintendent recommendation and has obtained an evaluation score of “efficient” or above.

Creating New License Types

Some states are creating new content area licenses, especially in shortage subject areas, while others are reconsidering and revising their licensure grade spans. Examples include:

- **Illinois [S.B. 2838](#)** (2018): Establishes credential requirements for approved **instructors of dual credit courses** and a professional development plan for those who do not meet the faculty credential standards.
- **Indiana [H.B. 1399](#)** (2018): Requires the state board to adopt rules to establish one or more **elementary school teacher content area licenses**, including an elementary mathematics specialist license and elementary mathematics and science teacher license.

- **North Dakota [S.B. 2171](#)** (2019): Permits the superintendent of public instruction to adopt rules governing the issuance of credentials for teachers of **computer and cyber science**.
- **Pennsylvania [H.B. 1386](#)** (2018): Combines current **special education licenses** (Special Education PK-8 and Special Education 7-12) into one category. Extends **early childhood certificates** to include grades 5 and 6 for candidates who pass an approved assessment. Requires a study that examines 1) the appropriateness of the fields of licensure, **including grade span and age level limitations**, in improving student outcomes; 2) the creation or elimination of teaching licenses or endorsements; and 3) national trends regarding grade span and age limitations of licensure.
- **Virginia [H.B. 1156](#)** (2018): Requires the state board to provide licensure for teachers with an endorsement in **dual language instruction** pre-K through grade 6.

Filling Vacancies Through Licensure Exemptions

In response to ongoing shortages, some states have also created exemptions to licensure requirements for certain candidates. This has included creating 1) “subject-matter expert” and “career specialist” permits (for individuals with professional expertise in a particular subject area, but without much or any teacher education training); and 2) temporary waivers to allow individuals who have not completed the required training (and in some cases, have not obtained a bachelor’s degree) to teach in a classroom, under certain conditions and for a limited period of time.

Examples include:

Subject-matter expert and career specialist permits

- **Indiana [S.B. 387](#)** (2018): Establishes eligibility requirements for a career specialist permit for individuals who have a minimum of **6,000 hours** over the previous five years of occupational experience in the content area OR **10,000 hours** over the previous seven years, if education requirements are not met.
- **North Carolina [H.B. 92](#)** (2018): Authorizes an individual to **teach Cherokee language and culture classes without a license**, subject to meeting certain requirements.
- **North Dakota [H.B. 1531](#)** (2019): Permits an individual with a high school diploma who possesses at least **4,000 hours** over five years of relevant work experience AND a certificate, license or degree in the subject area OR a passing score on the Praxis content test to teach in any subject — except elementary education, special education, mathematics, science, English language arts and social studies — for one year (up to a maximum of three) in a school that is unable to locate a qualified applicant.

Temporary waivers

- **Colorado [H.B. 18-1309](#)** (2019): Creates a two-year teacher of record license for applicants **who have not completed their bachelor’s degree or required field work**. Allows school districts to implement a one- or two-year teacher of record program to fill critical shortage positions for which there are no other qualified teachers.
- **Virginia [S.B. 349](#)** (2018): Permits any division superintendent to apply to the department of education for a biennial waiver of the licensure requirements for any individual whom the local school board hires or seeks to hire to teach in a **trade and industrial education program** and meets certain criteria.

Expanding Access Through Alternative Routes

Quite separate from licensure exemptions, many states are expanding more permanent, nontraditional routes into the teaching profession through alternative pathways. Examples include:

- **Connecticut [S.B. 455](#)** (2018): Requires the department of education to develop or review and approve a **new, alternative route to certification**, leading to initial licensure for people in certain professions to be teachers — including paraeducators, charter school teachers, veterans and others.
- **Delaware [H.B. 433](#)** (2018): **Expands the pathways to entering an alternative route** for teacher licensure and certification, in order to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates into the field of education.
- **Oklahoma [S.B. 217](#)** (2019): Requires the state board to implement a **pilot program focused on creating alternative pathways** to teacher certification in school districts identified by the state board.

Limiting Barriers for Out-of-State Teachers

A [growing number of states](#) are removing barriers for qualified, out-of-state candidates to address ongoing shortages. For more information on this topic, see [this 2017 report](#). Examples include:

- **California [A.B. 2285](#)** (2018): Eliminates — as a condition for an out-of-state applicant to be issued a clear multiple subject, single subject or education specialist teaching credential — the requirement to complete 150 clock hours of activities that contribute to competence, performance and effectiveness in the education profession, or to earn a master’s degree or higher in a field related to the credential, or the equivalent semester units, from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.
- **Connecticut [S.B. 232](#)** (2018): Directs the state board of education to issue military spouse teacher permits. Permits can be issued to any person who is a spouse of a member of the armed forces who received orders to be placed in the state and can demonstrate that they have taught for two or more years with a certificate issued by another state. Holders of the military permit are exempt from the teacher education and mentoring program. Permit holders are required to take a special education course or provide proof that they have equivalent knowledge. The permits are valid for three years and can be renewed by the commissioner of education upon the request of a school superintendent. **[S.B. 455](#)** (2018): Allows any person who has achieved a satisfactory evaluation on an equivalent competency examination or subject area assessment required for educator certification in another state to be exempted from having to achieve a satisfactory evaluation on the Connecticut competency exam or subject matter assessment, as long as the state board determines that the other state’s requirements for the exam or assessment are at least equivalent to those prescribed by the state board.
- **Virginia [S.B. 349](#)** (2018): Permits teachers with a valid out-of-state license, with full credentials and without deficiencies, to receive licensure by reciprocity without passing additional licensing assessments. **[S.B. 103](#)** (2018): Requires the department of education to receive any spouse of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States or the Commonwealth, who has obtained a valid out-of-state license, with full credentials and without deficiencies, that is in force at the time of application for a Virginia license.