

2020-21 Guidance for School Districts and Charter Schools Regarding Teacher Licensure and Permissions

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The COVID-19 pandemic has brought innumerable challenges to our education system. As Minnesota plans for the 2020-21 school year, the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), in partnership with the Department of Education and the Governor's Office, provides the following guidance for school districts and charter schools in Minnesota regarding how to navigate insufficient teachers licensed for their assignments and a general lack of licensed teachers.

Ways to support districts

Every student in the state of Minnesota must continue to receive an equitable education and have equal access to learning and instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the 2020-2021 school year, PELSB can support districts and charter schools in using creative options to maintain this high-quality education.

Insufficient teachers licensed for their assignments:

In scenarios where licensed staff are needed to quickly move into positions outside of their licensure area or scope, PELSB will not enforce administrative rule requirements in two areas to support districts for the 2020-2021 school year:

Out-of-Field Permissions (OFPs): A teacher must hold a license aligned to the scope and field of their assignment (often referred to as "position"). If a school district needs a Tier 2, 3, or 4 licensed teacher to teach outside of the licensure field or scope, the board may issue an OFP.

- During the 2020-21 school year, in situations where there is not sufficient time to post the position, PELSB will not enforce the requirement that the school district post the position for at least 15 days (for the first time the position is open) or at least 60 days (for renewal) prior to offering the position to a teacher who would require an OFP. This will expedite the hiring process for school districts.
- PELSB will not count OFPs used during the 2020-2021 school year towards a teacher's total allotted OFPs (generally speaking, a teacher is limited to five OFPs in their lifetime). This will allow school districts and teachers additional flexibility to fill needed positions without long-term limitations for the teacher.¹

Navigating a lack of licensed teachers:

There are several options to consider when facing a shortage of licensed teachers for a particular assignment or position.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 licensed teachers: In scenarios where there are not sufficient licensed teachers to cover in-person or distance learning, a school district may hire an individual who has not completed teacher preparation under a Tier 1 or Tier 2 license. More information about Tier 1 and Tier 2 licenses can be found at <https://mn.gov/pelsb/aspiring-educators/apply/>.

¹ Board action required.

Substitute teachers: Licensed teachers, retired teachers, and individuals with bachelor's degrees can serve as a substitute teacher. More information about substitute teaching licenses can be found at <https://mn.gov/pelsb/aspiring-educators/apply/>.

Paraprofessionals: While a licensed teacher must remain responsible for primary instruction, design and implementation of lesson plans, and assessment of students, paraprofessionals and other non-licensed staff can provide the following support:

- Supervise and provide support to small groups of students (in both an in-person or hybrid model).
- Monitor and support students through distance learning through regular virtual one-on-one and small group check-ins with students.

Additionally, paraprofessionals and other non-licensed staff with a bachelor's degree may be issued a Tier 1 license, allowing them to work as teacher of record.

Ongoing partnership and guidance

PELSB is invested in partnering with schools, administrators, and teachers to explore new ideas for ensuring Minnesota's children have equitable access to high-quality education.

PELSB seeks to partner with all stakeholders in the coming weeks to explore innovative ways to strengthen and diversify the teaching workforce, including new opportunities to support paraprofessionals in obtaining the training and financial support necessary to become fully licensed teachers.

More updates from PELSB will be made available on <https://mn.gov/pelsb/covid19/>.