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DATE: September 7, 2018  
TO: Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board  
FROM: Michelle Sandler, Teacher Education Specialist  
RE: Reading Renewal

### **Background information**

The reading statute has been a licensure requirement [since 2002](#). Over the years, the wording of the statute has been amended several times, most recently [in 2017](#).

The board's policy is to require Minnesota programs to evidence that candidates recommended for licensure have completed an approved reading course that addresses "how to teach reading" in the respective content areas or under certain circumstances, evidence of reading standards in content area as demonstrated through other reading courses or a mini-portfolio ([June 28, 2018 Approved Reading Policy](#)). To that end, MN programs submitted their reading courses for approval (twice since 2005) to assure the courses addressed the intent of the statute.

In 2010 (and in 2012 for special education fields) most licensure programs had additional content-specific reading competencies added to the required teacher content standards. Subsequently, the formerly approved reading courses in MN preparation programs were amended to show evidence that the new, content specific reading standards were being taught. Since 2010 (for special education fields since 2013) all candidates in MN programs were expected to have taken the newly approved reading course(s) for their intended field of licensure.

For candidates prepared in other states seeking MN licensure, it was past practice (prior to 2015) to issue licensure based on evidence of their program addressing the same licensure standards in board rules and statutes, which included training in "how to teach reading." If they did not evidence meeting the intent of the reading statute, they were issued an initial one year license with a requirement to complete one of the board approved reading methods courses to obtain a MN professional five year license. This practice ceased in 2015 with the legislature adopting [Minn. Stat. 122A.23](#) exempting out of state applicants from meeting specific licensure standards. The 2017 [Minn. Stat. 122A.183](#) similarly exempts out of state applicants from the requirement of evidencing reading standards. Since 2015 licensing executives have no longer required applicants from out of state to show evidence of preparation in "teaching reading."

## **Current Need and Rationale for Recommendation**

[Minn. Stat. 122A.187](#), Subd. 5 requires professional development in the area of reading in the content area for Tier 3 and Tier 4 licensure renewal, which includes teachers who received training in their Minnesota approved programs and teachers from out of state who may not have received any training in reading.

Furthermore, Minn. Stat. 122A.187 states that the requirements be consistent with [Minn. Stat. 122A.06, Subd. 4](#).

The present system requiring teachers to check a box to show evidence of professional development in reading does not meet the requirements set forth in Minn. Stat. 122A.06, Subd. 4. First of all, not all professional development is “scientifically based” as mandated by statute. Second, many professional development opportunities touch on one aspect of reading or a reading strategy, which is far from “comprehensive.”

Given the significance of reading, we must require that the reading preparation for teachers be meaningful and effective. According to [the Learning Policy Institute](#), effective professional development incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models and modeling of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers opportunities for feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration. In addition to providing a learning opportunity, professional development needs to include practice and reflection. In the absence of practice and reflection upon the new learning, there is no new learning.

Moreover, reading preparation should also be standards-based. The reading standards for teachers should be a guidepost of what they are expected to do, so teachers should be expected to refer to them throughout their careers. The standards also provide greater specificity on what is expected than statute does.

Board staff recommends that all teachers subject to this renewal requirement have professional development in reading assessment. Minn. Stat. 122A.06, Subd. 4 states that the reading instruction must include “assessing, evaluating and communicating the student’s reading progress and needs in order to design and implement ongoing interventions so that students of all ages and proficiency levels can read and comprehend text, write, and apply higher level thinking skills.” Although our current teacher standards only require that teachers of special education, elementary education, communication arts and literature, and middle level communication arts and literature assess and evaluate reading, within most teacher preparation programs, there is one “reading in the content course” where all K-12 and secondary teachers learn how to assess and evaluate reading. Keeping in mind the intent of Minn. Stats. 122A.187 and 122A.06 that all teachers are teachers of reading and the fact that not all teachers will have had a “reading in the content course,” the board staff recommends that all Tier 3 and 4 teachers who provide direct instruction have professional development in the area of reading assessment.