

DATE: April 3, 2020

TO: Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board

FROM: The Teacher Preparation Committee

RE: Recommendations for variance requests related to clinical experiences impacted by COVID-19

The Teacher Preparation Committee met on Tuesday, March 31, and Wednesday, April 1, 2020, to continue reviewing variance requests from twenty-nine (29) providers from across the state who have expressed major concerns with their candidates' abilities to complete the student teaching requirements, as well as other program requirements, as set forth in administrative rule, given the state-wide school closures and other efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19.

The Teacher Preparation Committee continued to wrestle with the intent of the rules; a desire for candidates to have comprehensive, meaningful clinical experiences; and the unanticipated and unprecedented situation in which candidates, providers, schools, teachers, and students find themselves. When reviewing variance requests, the Committee considered:

- Whether application of the rule(s) would result in hardship or injustice;
- Whether a variance would be consistent with the public interest;
- Whether a variance would negatively impact the legal or economic rights of others;
- Whether a variance protects the public health, safety, and the environment; and
- How the Board has responded to similar variance requests.

The Teacher Preparation Committee has prepared recommendations for the full Board's consideration on the following topics:

- The teacher performance assessment (edTPA);
- Student teaching for candidates seeking initial licensure;
- Student teaching for candidates seeking a middle level endorsement; and
- Field experiences for candidates seeking initial licensure in Parent and Family Education.

The Teacher Preparation Committee also has identified next steps to ensure all variance requests related to candidates impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic are reviewed thoroughly and in a timely manner.

The teacher performance assessment (edTPA)

State regulations require that a teacher candidate enrolled in a teacher preparation program for initial licensure complete a state-approved teacher preparation assessment during student teaching.

Minnesota Rule 8705.2100, subpart 2 (d)(4)(e). Evaluation of candidates seeking an initial teaching license includes the completion of the state-approved teacher performance assessment during the student teaching placement

In 2011, the Board of Teaching adopted the edTPA as its performance assessment. Completion of the edTPA is not a licensure requirement in Minnesota. That is, the state does not require that a candidate meet “cut scores” to be recommended for licensure, but instead holds preparation programs accountable for their edTPA pass rates.

The edTPA is a national, performance-based, research-based, standard-based, subject-specific assessment to “emphasize, measure and support the skills and knowledge that all teachers need from Day 1 in the classroom.”¹ The edTPA is made up of three tasks: planning, instruction, and assessment. For the first task, candidates plan three (3) to five (5) consecutive lessons demonstrating how they are supporting students’ strengths and needs. In the second task, candidates submit unedited video recordings and analyze their teaching and students’ learning by responding to prompts. For the third task, candidates choose one assessment from the learning segment to identify patterns, summarize whole class learning, provide feedback on a few focus students, and plan for next steps.

Pearson has released guidance to providers to have candidates complete the edTPA in a virtual learning environment. Some providers are considering this option.

While some candidates have completed the edTPA, are on track to complete the edTPA, or have finished the first or second task of the edTPA, many providers have indicated that completing the edTPA will be a challenge, if not impossible, for many candidates.

While several providers requested the Board waive the edTPA in its entirety, the Teacher Preparation Committee recommends the Board deny these requests.”²

Rather, the Teacher Preparation Committee recommends that for all providers seeking a variance from the teacher performance assessment for student teachers in the spring of 2020, including those seeking a full waiver, that the Board approve a variance for the following providers to complete a locally-determined, summative teacher performance assessment in lieu of the edTPA:

- Augsburg University
- College of St. Scholastica
- Concordia College Moorhead
- Gustavus Adolphus College
- Martin Luther College
- Metropolitan State University

¹ More about the edTPA is available at http://www.edtpa.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_AboutEdTPA.html.

² The following providers requested the edTPA be waived in its entirety: Augsburg University, College of St. Scholastica, Concordia College Moorhead, Gustavus Adolphus College, Martin Luther College, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University Mankato, Southwest Minnesota State University, University of Minnesota Crookston, University of Minnesota Duluth, University of Minnesota Morris, University of Minnesota Twin Cities, University of Northwestern, Walden University, Winona State University

- Minnesota State University Mankato
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- St. Catherine University
- St. Cloud State University
- St. Mary's University of Minnesota
- St. Olaf College
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- University of MN, Crookston
- University of MN, Duluth
- University of MN, Morris
- University of MN, Twin Cities
- University of Northwestern
- University of St. Thomas
- Walden University
- Winona State University

The assessment must include the components of planning, instruction, and assessment. The provider must use this assessment to give candidates feedback on each component due to the loss of feedback in the face-to-face classroom.

Student teaching for candidates seeking initial licensure

State regulations require that a teacher candidate enrolled in a teacher preparation program for initial licensure complete 12 continuous weeks of face-to-face student teaching.

Minnesota Rule 8705.1000, subpart 3G. For initial licensure, each program requires a student teaching period of a minimum of 12 continuous weeks, full time, face-to-face, which could be split into two placements, and in compliance with program-specific field experience and student teaching requirements set forth in parts 8705.2000 to 8705.2600 and parts 8710.3000 to 8710.8080.

On March 27, 2020, the Board approved a number of variance requests related to student teaching, including:

- Ten (10) weeks or more of face-to-face student teaching;
- Six (6) to nine (9) weeks of face-to-face student teaching supplemented by online or distance learning student teaching for a total of ten (10) weeks of student teaching (weeks do not have to be continuous); and
- Six (6) to nine (9) weeks of face-to-face student teaching supplemented by replacement experiences or verification of preparedness (weeks do not have to be continuous).

The Teacher Preparation Committee, as well as the full Board, wrestled with variance requests that included five (5) or fewer weeks of face-to-face student teaching. After reviewing each variance request on a case-by-case basis, the Teacher Preparation Committee recommends the Board approve the following variances:

Bethel University:

Nineteen (19) candidates have completed three (3) weeks of face-to-face student teaching and will continue student teaching in an online or distance learning format for at least seven (7) additional weeks. Additionally, the provider will create alternative assignments to ensure candidates are prepared to teach.

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends Bethel University's variance request specific to these nineteen candidates be approved.

Gustavus Adolphus College:

Twenty-four (24) candidates completed five (5) weeks of face-to-face student teaching. Candidates will continue student teaching online for at least five (5) additional weeks. The provider will have supports and evaluations for candidates during the online student teaching experience.

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends Gustavus Adolphus College's variance request specific to these twenty-four (24) candidates be approved.

St. Catherine University:

Four (4) candidates completed five (5) weeks of face-to-face student teaching. Candidates will complete another five (5) to nine (9) weeks of student teaching in an online or distance learning format. The provider will have supports and evaluations for candidates during the student teaching experience. The provider will also have alternative learning experiences.

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends St. Catherine University's variance request specific to these four (4) candidates be approved.

St. Mary's University of Minnesota

One (1) candidate has completed 3 weeks of face-to-face student teaching. The candidate will continue to work with the cooperating teacher for the remainder of the school year to plan and provide online instruction. The candidate has years of experience as an instructional coach. The provider has created alternative learning experience as well.

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends St. Mary's University of Minnesota's variance request specific to this candidate be approved.

St. Olaf College:

Four (4) candidates have completed four (4) weeks of face-to-face student teaching and twelve candidates completed five (5) weeks of face-to-face student teaching. Candidates will complete, including online or distance learning, at least ten (10) weeks of student teaching. Candidates completed robust practica experiences. The provider will use various assessments to verify competencies have been met.

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends St. Olaf College's variance request specific to these fourteen (14) candidates be approved.

Walden University:

Twenty-seven (27) candidates have completed three (3) weeks of face-to-face student teaching. Additionally, candidates will complete at least seven (7) weeks of simulated student teaching (videos, avatars (four (4) weeks) and then flexible (three (3) weeks).

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends Walden University's variance request specific to these twenty-seven candidates be approved.

Student teaching for candidates seeking a middle level endorsement

Many candidates have not completed any face-to-face student teaching yet in the scope and content of the endorsement sought.

Minnesota Rule 8705.2100, subpart 2 (D)(4)(g). For middle level endorsement fields, the program requires a student teaching period of a minimum of four continuous weeks, full time, face-to-face.

The Teacher Preparation committee recommends approving variances to allow for online or distance learning student teaching for candidates seeking middle level endorsements for the following providers:

- Bethany Lutheran College
- Bethel University
- St. Catherine University
- University of St. Thomas
- Winona State University

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends approving variances to allow for alternative experiences to prepare and evaluate candidates in the content and scope of the licensure area sought for the following providers:

- Bemidji State University
- College of St. Benedict and St. John's University
- Concordia University, St. Paul
- Crown College
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- St. Mary's University of Minnesota
- University of Minnesota, Morris
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- University of Northwestern

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends the requests to fully waive this requirement be denied.³

Field experiences for candidates seeking initial licensure in Parent and Family Education

Candidates seeking preparation to teach Parent and Family Education must complete at least one hundred (100) field experience hours.

Minnesota Rule 8710.3100, subpart 3 (D)(5). A teacher of parent and family education must understand adult development and how to apply the standards of effective practice in teaching adult students through a series of formal observations and directed instructional experiences with adults participating in early childhood and family education programs totaling at least 100 hours and including two written evaluations by supervisors.

Initial licensure candidates are exempt from student teaching requirements.⁴

³ The College of St. Benedict and St. John's University and St. Mary's University of Minnesota requested full waivers of the student teaching requirements for candidates seeking a middle level endorsement.

⁴ [PELSB Resolution 2018.03](#).

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities:

The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities requests the ability to recommend the eight (8) candidates based on individual candidate review in lieu of completing the 100 field experience hours. Many of the candidates have been teaching in assignments aligned to this license with a Tier 2 license and have significant experience working with families and in schools. Candidates have completed between thirty-seven (37) and eighty-three (83) field experience hours.

The Teacher Preparation Committee recommends the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities' variance request for these eight candidates be approved.

Next steps

The next Teacher Preparation Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7, 2020. At that time, the Teacher Preparation Committee will review the remaining variance requests related to student teaching, as well as remaining requests related to field experience hours, documented feedback and triad meetings, experience in full scope of license, additional license field experience, and diversity experience. Additionally, the Committee will review Minnesota Rule 8705.1000, subpart 9 (I), which requires the unit leader to administer all licensure programs as approved and to notify the board of any changes to approved programs through the biennial program reporting process as it relates to changes made to clinical experiences based on COVID-19 disruptions.