

Emerging Trends: The Future of Education

Session 2: Alternative Pathways in Teacher Preparation

Background and Context:

The history of our approach to teacher licensure in Minnesota is a dynamic one, with significant shifts driven by legislative intent and evolving educational needs. Alternative pathways to teacher preparation in Minnesota and across the nation are a prominent topic of discussion, driven by concerns about persistent teacher shortages, particularly in high-need areas like special education and rural schools, and the vital desire to diversify the teaching workforce to better reflect our student population.

This session will explore how legislative changes have shaped these pathways over the past two decades, continually striving to balance accessibility with rigorous quality standards. We will provide an overview of the current alternative pathways to licensure available in Minnesota today, with insights provided directly from program providers and PELSB/MDE staff who are at the forefront of these initiatives.

Join us as we explore how alternative pathways are responding to current education needs in Minnesota.

Facilitators/Speakers:

Erin Doan, Director of Educator Preparation and Pathways
Emily Busta, Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Specialist, MDE
Tyra Nelson-Reck, Teacher Education Specialist
Michelle Sandler, Teacher Education Specialist
Melissa Miller, Alternative Pathways Specialist
Stacy Jeffrey, Licensure via Portfolio, Specialist
Grant Boulanger, Heritage Language Specialist

Key Terms and Definitions:

Alternative Licensure Pathways: A broad category of non-traditional routes to teacher certification that do not require completion of a conventional undergraduate teacher preparation program.

Licensure via Portfolio: An alternative application pathway involving the submission of a collection of evidence demonstrating how a candidate has met licensure standards (pedagogy, content, core skills), especially if they haven't completed an approved traditional preparation program.

Apprenticeship: A structured program combining paid on-the-job training under a master teacher with related academic instruction, leading to licensure. In MN this is a newer, growing model, often integrated with "Grow Your Own" initiatives.

Residency: Preparation program including an intensive, year-long clinical experience where a candidate works alongside an experienced mentor, typically while completing coursework towards a master's degree and/or licensure.

[Comparison of Teacher Residencies and Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Programs](#)

Key Issues for Discussion:

- Looking ahead, how can Minnesota best balance the need for quality assurance (ensuring all teachers meet high standards, regardless of pathway) with the need for increased accessibility to the profession and the growing demand for district led "Grow Your Own" programs?
- Are there legislative or PELSB procedural updates (e.g., funding, licensure flexibility, rule making) that can be identified currently to support accessibility to the profession in tandem with maintaining high quality teacher preparation?
- Considering the projected growth of apprenticeship and residency models and the ongoing need to retain teachers in Minnesota, how can the state ensure robust, consistent, and funded mentorship and induction support for all new teachers, regardless of their licensure pathway?