MINNESOTA
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR
LICENSING AND STANDARDS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board

From: Yelena Bailey, Executive Director

Date: January 23, 2026

Subject: Special Education Advisory Group Update – ACTION

Background

The 2024 Legislature created a work group to address streamlining special education licensure. The work group consisted of special education teachers, administrators, teacher preparation providers, and a representative from Education Minnesota. The group met over the course of several months to review current special education licenses, Minnesota statutes and rules related to special education, Minnesota special education data, and other states' special education licenses. On February 1, 2025, the work group made a final report to the legislature.

In addition to the report to the legislature, the group also presented to the Board and made the following recommendations:

1. Create a moderate-to-severe/profound, cross-categorical special education license (similar to the ABS license).
2. Explore the option of Minnesota joining the Interstate Teacher Mobility Contract (ITMC).

At the January 2025 Board meeting, the Board created a Special Education Licensure Subcommittee made up of board members who work in special education to review the Special Education Work Group's recommendations. The group met and determined more information was needed, so the Special Education Advisory Group was created.

The Special Education Advisory Group has been meeting since September 2025 with the charge of reviewing policy and research related to special education licensure and making a recommendation on the creation of a new moderate-to-severe, cross-categorical license. Like the previous groups, members represent special education practitioners and administrators. The group reviewed the February 1 legislative report, current special education data, and heard from other states with a similar cross-categorical license.

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Summary

Licenses discussed with recommended changes:

Current Licenses	Scope	Potential Licenses
Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS)	K-21	Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS)
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)	Birth-21	New Moderate to Severe Cross-Categorical License
Development Disabilities (DD)	K-12	
Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD)	K-21	
Learning Disabilities (LD or SLD)	K-21	
Physical and Health Disabilities (PHD)	Birth-21	Physical and Health Disabilities (PHD)
Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI)	Birth-21	Blind or Visually Impaired (BVI)
Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)	Birth-21	Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)
Developmental/ Adapted Physical Education (DAPE)	PreK-21	Developmental/ Adapted Physical Education (DAPE)
Oral/Aural Deaf Education	Birth-12	Oral/Aural Deaf Education
Early Childhood Special Ed (ECSE)	Birth-6	Early Childhood Special Ed (ECSE)

At the work group's January meeting, they drafted the following recommendations:

- The group was split on the recommendation. 4 out of 8 people do not want changes to the license.
- Of those 4 people, 2 people recommend the Board pursue 2 cross-categorical, moderate-to-severe licenses (behavioral and developmental) if the Board decides to combine licensure areas. 2 people recommend 1 cross-categorical, moderate-to-severe licenses.
- The majority recommend not replacing the Physical and Health Disabilities License.

- 4 members recommend not replacing the Learning Disabilities License.
- If the Board pursues a cross-categorical license, renewal requirements should include specialized training.

In addition to the recommendations above, the work group would like the Board to consider the following concerns:

- Several group members did not attend meetings, limiting input.
- Too much of the burden may fall on districts. What if they don't have the resources?
- While surveyed ABS teachers feel they are more prepared than their colleagues think they are, about half of do not feel adequately prepared.
- Unclear this will address retention or shortage concerns.
- What would the scope of new licenses be?

Options

1. Direct the Board's rulemaking attorney to pursue the creation of a moderate-to-severe, cross-categorical special education license in alignment with the Board's rulemaking calendar.
2. Table for further consideration.
3. Do nothing (keeping recommended licensure areas the same).