

# Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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## *Aligning K-12 and Teacher Education Standards*

Currently, there are many ideas for improving teacher preparation and K-12 schooling currently being discussed in the legislature. Among them, concerns have been raised about whether teacher education standards are aligned with student standards. In keeping with our status as a leader in education, Minnesota has set our standards for both K-12 students and teacher education to align primarily with national standards for professional specialty organizations in education. As national standards for students have been made more rigorous, Minnesota has revised standards for K-12 students. Assuming that the common core standards for math and language arts are adopted, new revisions to the K-12 standards will occur very soon. Revisions to student standards have been followed by revisions to teaching standards at both the national and state levels - in a continuous iterative cycle. Furthermore, professional standards for teaching recognize the need for teacher competence in content, general pedagogy, and content-specific pedagogy.

Some policymakers link teacher quality to content knowledge only, but teacher effectiveness is also closely associated with teaching practices. It is not enough to ensure that teachers know the content the kids need to know. Teachers also need to have the skills to help students learn. If students could sit passively absorbing content, we would simply look for people with strong content knowledge to become teachers. However, the skills to teach content effectively must be learned and practiced. Furthermore, some days students come to school not ready to learn, and some students require strategies that are different from their classmates in order to learn.

Pedagogical content knowledge and skills refer to how to teach a particular subject area. For instance, one would not expect English to be taught the same way as science or music. Recently, the Board made a change to the reading standards for teachers, including secondary teachers. These standards for reading are tailored to fit each content area. The new reading standards address pedagogical content knowledge and skills. General pedagogical skills address processes like organizing and managing a classroom, developmentally appropriate teaching, and how to assess students' learning.

MACTE members expect that the teacher education standards will be adjusted as K-12 standards change to ensure strong alignment remains in place. Higher education faculty participate in professional organizations and anticipate upcoming changes rather than waiting for them to be identified by the state. We view the updating of our curriculum as a professional responsibility. For example, currently many MACTE institutions include additional pedagogy in working effectively with English Language Learners or using data to design appropriate instruction for learners even though these go beyond the specific language of the current teaching standards.

MACTE looks forward to working with the Board of Teaching to revise current teaching standards. We encourage the Board to develop a sound framework for teaching Minnesota's students, a structure of critical concepts and core pedagogies. We encourage the Board to avoid lists of prescriptive detailed standards. That type of standard creates roadblocks for innovations in teacher preparation. Overly detailed standards are also subject to annual revision as research provides insights into new teaching strategies. MACTE is up to the challenge of updating our teaching standards in a reasonable and responsible way in collaboration with the other stakeholders in Minnesota's educational system.

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