

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

Maureen Prenn, President
maureen.prenn@mnsu.edu 507-389-5447

Karen Schmedding, Executive Assistant
schmed@hickorytech.net 507-388-9978

MACTE Statement about Middle School Specialty November 16, 2007

On your agenda today is the question of the 5-8 specialties for candidates working towards K-6 licensure. Soon you will face a decision on whether to decouple the two licenses, allowing candidates prepared in Minnesota to be treated in the same way as candidates prepared in some other states. This dilemma has been on the Board of Teaching radar for a few years. MACTE has really appreciated Karen Balmer's efforts to analyze the issues through the work of a task force last winter and through input gathered from constituents around the state through a series of panel discussions this summer. Middle school principals, teachers, and higher education representatives participated in the task force as well as the panels, carefully examining the issue under Karen's guidance. We appreciate the analysis that the staff has done to sift through the pluses and minuses of various alternatives in their report on the recommended action.

MACTE concurs with the recommendation to separate the K-6 and 5-8 licensures: moving the 5-8 license to an endorsement that could be added to any licensure area. This change would present higher education with opportunities to address several critical areas of need for K-6 students in our licensure programs. If this change is approved, institutions would likely respond in different ways to the opportunity to modify their K-6 teacher preparation programs. However, we expect many institutions would add content in critical need areas such as special education, English Language Learners, and reading.

Special education is an area that could be addressed in more depth in some elementary education licensure programs. We have heard recently about the increasing numbers of children with autism in Minnesota. We know that understanding Response to Intervention (RTI) is a critical area for general education teachers. Additional training that addresses these issues could be included in K-6 licensure programs.

Emphasis on preparing students to work with English Language Learners (ELL) could also be expanded in a revised K-6 licensure curriculum. Teacher candidates need to know more about English Language Learners and how to help them be successful. English Learners are with their classroom teacher for much of the day. That teacher has primary responsibility for their success in learning English while also meeting the state's academic standards.

Elementary teachers might also receive more instruction in teaching reading and writing—essential skills for which the foundation is laid in elementary school. These areas are currently being addressed through the standards and corresponding coursework, but the greater flexibility would allow some programs to expand instruction on reading and writing in their curriculums.