

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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NEWS RELEASE

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Teacher Quality Report Card

In its report Quality Counts 2004 Education Week gave Minnesota a grade of D+ on its efforts to improve teacher quality. That certainly would be alarming if that grade accurately reflected the quality of the teaching force and teacher preparation in Minnesota. Some understanding of the data that was compiled and interpreted to arrive at this grade is essential to interpreting this report.

Many of the measures that were used focused on what the state mandates as minimum requirements for teacher licensure and teacher preparation. Minnesota teachers and teacher preparation programs meet and exceed the minimums posed in the report though licensure rules do not state the requirements in ways that match the questions on the report card.

The report card states that Minnesota requires a minimum of 10 weeks of student teaching and no minimum number of hours for other clinical (in school) experiences. Students in the 29 Minnesota teacher preparation programs actually spend 10-16 weeks student teaching. All teacher preparation programs require candidates to engage in early field experiences prior to student teaching. Students preparing to be teachers spend an average of 700 hours in classrooms with P-12 children before they graduate. All programs maintain partnerships with P-12 schools to assure effective clinical experiences for all teachers in preparation.

The Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice that all teachers must meet to be licensed to teach in Minnesota and that the 29 college and university teacher preparation programs approved by the Minnesota Board of Teaching must assure are met establish high content and skill standards. For each license teachers must demonstrate content knowledge and teaching skill.

Teacher knowledge and performance is assessed in a broad range of ways throughout the teacher's preparation including but not limited to the required state tests teachers must take to be licensed. Future teachers are observed, video-taped and measured on a portfolio of indicators demonstrating competence of each of the Standards of Effective Practice.

Minnesota teacher preparation programs recognize how crucial the support and development of new and veteran teachers is to the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. In 2002-03 over half of the faculty in teacher education programs directly supported new teachers in Minnesota schools through mentoring or other systems and networks spending an average of 47 hours in schools to provide support. Teacher preparation programs offer mentoring, coursework, workshops, consultation, degree programs and specialized programs to meet the needs of teachers for ongoing professional development.

Minnesota does not demonstrate the shortage of licensed and qualified teachers so prevalent in other states that federal legislation is focused on the issue. In Minnesota nearly all teachers are fully licensed and highly qualified.

For more information on the measures of quality of Minnesota's teachers, go to <http://mtqm.mnteacherred.org/index.shtml>

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