



NC Teacher Licensure Proposal is Set to Prioritize Contractors Over Kids

By Kim Mackey
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A draft teacher licensure proposal soon to be considered by the North Carolina State Board of Education has been labeled “Pathways to Excellence.” It begs two questions: Where do the pathways lead? And for whom are they excellent?

Where do the pathways lead?

As the draft proposal is currently written, it appears the pathway leads to a revolving door.

North Carolina currently offers emergency teacher licenses to folks recommended by their districts, and onboards career changers and other interested candidates through residency programs (formerly known as lateral entry). While many of these folks have subject-area knowledge, typically they are not yet trained in pedagogy or childhood development prior to leading a classroom. Those who enter teaching through those alternative pathways have a 35% higher attrition rate than the state average for all teachers.

The draft licensure proposal would take these “emergency” paths to triage the pipeline and make them mainstream. It is as though North Carolina is throwing in the towel on expecting licensed teachers to have training in teaching before being responsible for the education of a community’s children. It’s an odd recommendation from the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC) who by law is tasked with “establishing high standards for North Carolina educators.”

PEPSC’s draft proposal overcorrects for mainstreaming a lower bar for initial classroom leadership by establishing arbitrary and problematic pathways to renew one’s license. The current draft proposal could send effective teachers on exit paths by refusing to renew their license.

The renewal pathways include a standardized test tool even a DPI official admits is “problematic,” teacher observation ratings beyond what State Board policy considers “effective” teaching, student surveys, and “other reliable and valid qualitative or quantitative methods can be identified or developed.” One would hope that a commission focused on “effectiveness” and tasked with creating standards for educator preparation would have these methods prepared to share before finalizing its proposal for consideration by the State Board.

Regardless of the proposal’s incomplete status, this proposal by design would revoke the license of a qualified teacher and replace them with someone with no previous classroom experience. Given the lack of response to concerns and feedback offered by subcommittee members and educators, it’s no wonder public school supporters are concerned that this revolving door design is one of the “sacred” or “non-negotiable” aspects of the framework.

For whom is this plan “excellent?”

A proposal creating a revolving door instead of a healthy pipeline of teachers certainly is not excellent for students, families, educators, or communities.

This proposal is excellent for contractors.

The proposal resurrects the stakes of EVAAS, a tool created by the Cary-based company SAS that uses student standardized test performance to formulate a teacher effectiveness score. Other states have rejected EVAAS as a faulty tool, and a previous NC State Board of Education removed its use as one of the standards on the teacher evaluation rubric.

SAS founder Jim Goodnight donates heavily to political campaigns in North Carolina so perhaps it’s no surprise that EVAAS has yet to disappear in this state. The PEPSC proposal may double down on using SAS tools. Apparently SAS is working on a version of EVAAS that would measure the effectiveness of “advanced role” teachers by assigning them an effectiveness score using the test scores of students in classrooms led by teachers advised by the “advanced role” teacher. The PEPSC proposal would be excellent for SAS.

The PEPSC licensure proposal also includes “micro-credentials.” DigiLEARN was founded by former NC Governor Bev Perdue and micro-credentials are a key project of that entity. While micro-credentials may be

appropriate to build upon a professional-level base of skills and knowledge, such as for license renewal, it's concerning that the role in the licensure proposal is as a potential substitute for robust educator preparation programs offered by colleges and universities. The inclusion of micro-credentials in the draft licensure plan looks like it could be excellent for DigiLEARN.

Where do we go from here?

Our state education policy leaders can choose to repair our pipeline by reinvesting in the recruitment and retention policies and pay that once made teaching in North Carolina attractive, and improve upon that baseline.

To recruit, we can restore all Teaching Fellows slots and expand the program to all HBCUs. We can also implement current beginning teacher support programs with fidelity to ensure they receive the time and support needed to be successful. Restoring the over 7,000 teaching assistant positions cut in the last decade would also contribute to the TA to teacher pipeline.

To retain, we can restore pre-Great Recession purchasing power on the salary schedule, longevity pay, and pay for a Master's degree. Restoring class size caps would also ensure we're setting teachers up to be successful by giving the students the personal attention they deserve and need to grow.

These policies would be an excellent start toward repairing North Carolina's pipeline with the qualified teachers that students, families, and communities deserve. They wouldn't be so excellent for contractors.

We'll find out soon who our State Board of Education prioritizes: Kids or Contractors?

Share your feedback on the draft teacher licensure proposal by sending an email to pathways.feedback@dpi.nc.gov

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