


MEMORANDUM

To: Deans of Education, Chairpersons, Program Directors
Mississippi's Approved Educator Preparation Providers

From: Dr. Cory M. Murphy, Executive Director 
Office of Teaching and Leading

Date: December 6, 2018

Subject: Proposed Teacher Licensure Pathways Pilot Studies

I hope this message finds each of you well. I'm writing to provide you details about the proposed teacher licensure pathways that will be piloted through the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) grant. Each pilot is connected to the Mississippi Department of Education's (MDE) work to diversify the educator pipeline. While we have partnered with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to champion this work, along with national collaborators and other state leaders, we believe our institutions of higher education are also invaluable to this initiative.

We know your commitment to preparing educators for our schools remains strong; but given the reduction in the number of candidates entering the teaching profession, we are compelled to create additional opportunities for teacher candidates to obtain licensure. Moreover, our students and school leaders are impacted by the 40% decline in the number of teacher candidates graduating in recent years.

To that end, we've launched the Mississippi Undergraduate Teacher Residency Pilot and the Performance-Based Teacher Licensure Pilot studies. As we strive to partner with you in these endeavors, I want to first take the opportunity to provide clarity around each of the pilot studies:

Mississippi Undergraduate Teacher Residency Pilot

The goals of this pilot study are as follows:

- Collaborate with Jackson Public School District, Biloxi Public School District, Ocean Spring School District and Sunflower County Consolidated School District to recruit 35 diverse teacher candidates who hold at least an associate degree or 60+ hours towards a bachelor's degree and a 21 or higher on the ACT.
- Assist candidates in enrolling in an undergraduate mixed-delivery teacher education preparation program as a dual elementary and special education major. The full cost of tuition will be covered by our WKKF Human Capital Highways Grant. The MDE will recruit academically talented, diverse individuals—e.g., men and women of color, veterans from the Armed Forces, and junior college graduates to participate.

- Place candidates in the classroom of a highly-skilled Master Teacher or National Board-Certified Teacher for two years as a “Teacher in Residence” and AmeriCorps Member. (Mentor teacher receives a \$5,000 yearly stipend)
- Issue candidates a three-year induction license at the completion of the Mississippi Teacher Residency (MTR) requirements and passage of the required licensure exams. Candidates will apply for a standard five-year license after completing MTR’s Teacher Induction Program.
- Place candidates in Jackson Public School District, Biloxi Public School District, Ocean Springs School District, and Sunflower County Consolidated School District for a commitment of three years at the conclusion of their residency program. This is a requirement for candidate participation.

Performance-Based Licensure Pilot

The MDE developed the performance-based teacher licensure pilot study in collaboration with school districts and focus groups to address the state’s critical teacher shortage by exploring alternative pathways to teacher licensure. Many education stakeholders requested a licensure pathway for teachers who are making a positive impact on student learning but are experiencing difficulty meeting requirements for obtaining a Mississippi teaching license.

Thus, the performance-based teacher licensure pilot study will use information gathered over a three-year period, beginning in school year 2019-2020, to inform policy recommendations to the Mississippi State Board of Education regarding criteria for establishing an alternative route performance-based teacher licensure pathway. During the three-year pilot study, MDE will learn from individuals currently serving in the role of teacher who hold at a minimum a bachelor’s degree with teaching experience (possibly as a long-term substitute, emergency, special non-renewable licensed teacher, or licensed out-of-content teacher) OR classroom experience as a teacher assistant. Candidates meeting eligibility will be issued a three-year performance-based pilot study special, nonrenewable license (pending state Board of Education approval) that will remain valid during the time of active participation in the pilot study. Throughout the study’s duration, its impact will be monitored based on evidence of student achievement on state assessments and candidates’ educator effectiveness scores using the Mississippi Educator and Administrator Professional Growth System.

Participation in the pilot study is voluntary, and while standard licensure will be pending policy recommendations for the State Board of Education based on student achievement and evaluation data collected during the study, candidates will be offered a teacher salary and the opportunity to engage in intense Praxis and/or ACT assessment preparation sessions during the study. Upon obtaining Mississippi’s qualifying score on required program entry and licensure assessments, teachers may also choose to enter one of Mississippi’s approved teacher educator preparation programs while remaining in the pilot. If performance-based licensure emerges as an effective complement to existing licenses based on student achievement and educator effectiveness data, we are also hopeful that this pathway could eventually support increased matriculation through colleges of education as candidates experience additional pathways to standard licensure.

Over the next few weeks, we will finalize the request for proposal for institutions to host the teacher residency. During this time, institutions will have the opportunity to develop a proposal to work with one of the pilot school districts to host the teachers-in-residence. The MDE will follow the state procurement guidelines process in selecting the host of the Mississippi Undergraduate Teacher Residency Pilot. Like performance-based licensure, we endeavor to learn from this experience to inform teacher education policies and practices.

Lastly, I wanted to share some exciting news. Based on your recommendation, the MDE will be working with lawmakers during the next legislative session to add a third option for program entry. As you know, currently, admission to an institution's program for teacher education preparation requires candidates to have a 2.75 undergraduate GPA **AND** a 21 on the ACT/SAT equivalent or pass all three components of the Praxis CORE exam: reading, writing, and mathematics. Our proposal for admission to an educator preparation program for teacher preparation would require candidates to have a 3.0 undergraduate GPA **OR** a 21 on the ACT/SAT equivalent or pass all three components of the Praxis CORE exams: reading, writing, and mathematics. Admittance based upon exam will be one criterion while candidates with high-level performance in the classroom may be admitted with increased GPAs of 3.0. Nine colleges of education have reported they would have been able to accept an additional 281 eligible candidates for admission had the third option existed.

These are exciting times, and we look forward to your continued engagement in ensuring all students have access to diverse and learner-ready teachers. Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at cmurphy@mdek12.org or telephone, 601-359-3631. As always, we value and appreciate the opportunity to serve and partner with you.

c: Dr. Paula A. Vanderford

