



Learning from How Five States Designed Tiered Teacher Certification: What To Do and Not To Do

Tiered teacher certification policies have been emerging in the U.S. for several years. A key reason the tiered licensure system is growing in popularity is the connection with teacher retention efforts. The focus of a tiered system is to give educators a career advancement path that does not require them to completely leave their classrooms or enter administrative or district management roles. The scaffolded advancement inherent in tiered licensure mirrors what attracts candidates to other career fields — a clear vision of development across the course of a career. Along with a career path, these systems can tie in a more robust support system for beginning teachers with the addition of mentorship, residency, and induction requirements for early licenses.

SREB is not advocating for all states to implement tiered educator licensure. Yet there are many lessons to be gleaned from various state policies and structures. Our goal is to help our states re-examine their systems and modify their policies with the end in mind. The following outlines information and requirements for tiered certification from five states — Arkansas, Georgia, Maryland, Ohio and Wisconsin. This brief aims to highlight both what works in these systems and what might require more thought, while suggesting that states recognize what their licensure system values and how ideas from these examples may help facilitate and codify what is most important for a teacher’s career.

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While tiered certification can seem overwhelmingly beneficial to states, there are some avoidable pitfalls policymakers need to be aware of when advocating for licensure change, whether in a tiered system or not:

1. Avoid using non-research-based measures for a license's requirements.
2. Avoid using too many inputs verses outcomes. The use of research-grounded output measures over input measures is a crucial step towards providing each classroom with an effective educator.
3. Include a state-based incentive system tied to the licensure model. Without clear and enticing incentives, educators may not attempt to apply for advanced roles, even if they already meet the requirements for the role.

Tiered licensure is not the path for every state. SREB provides this information to policymakers to consider both the positive and negative aspects of each licensure system outlined below while keeping in mind their state's licensure system's values. It is important to provide a licensure system that offers each teacher with support, the chance for career advancement, and satisfaction in their responsibilities as an educator.

Arkansas Tiered Certification Policy

The Arkansas State Board of Education adopted an Educator Career Continuum in October 2018 based on licensure changes outlined in [Act 294](#) (2017). The regulations require the state department to issue four licenses. The **early-career** and **career professional educator licenses** are similar in scope to Georgia's induction and professional certificates. Teachers may apply for the **lead professional educator license** after documenting one of the following: passing score on a state-approved assessment, completion of micro-credentials or graduation from a recognized teacher-leader program. To be eligible for the **master professional educator license**, teachers must receive a certain award, receive National Board Certification, or complete an advanced degree or state-recognized micro-credentials.

Arkansas has developed seven domains of [Teacher Leader Model Standards](#) to codify, promote and support teacher leadership. While the state is only in its first full year of statewide implementation of the tiered certification model, already it is seeing increasing interest in advancement from teachers. However, incentives and compensation for advanced roles are currently left up to local districts.

The following graphics are found on the [Arkansas Department of Education website career continuum page](#).

TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN ARKANSAS

Educator Career Continuum

CHOOSE A CAREER PATHWAY THAT FITS FUTURE GOALS

THREE PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATORS

WHY IS TEACHER LEADERSHIP IMPORTANT?

1. Extending the reach of effective teachers can directly impact students, teachers, and the culture of a school.
2. Teachers deserve differentiated roles, incentives, and support.
3. In order to meet ADE's vision of transforming education in Arkansas, teacher leaders should be utilized.

THREE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

1. Teachers can choose a pathway and advocate for new roles.
2. Districts have freedom to personalize: incentives, roles, and/or supports.
3. Teacher voice is a part of this work! Teachers advised the continuum development and the criteria for each designation.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Early Career Professional Educator is a first-time standard license. The licensee may renew the license or seek another designation (see below).

Career Professional Educator designation - an educator who has documentation of three (3) years of licensed teaching experience, which may include teaching with a provisional license; and verification from the applicant's last employer that the applicant has performed at the level of an Effective Teacher as evidenced by the applicant's most recent summative evaluation completed before applying for the license.

Lead Professional Educator designation - an educator who aspires to serve in a leadership role without leaving the classroom. Lead teachers lead adults and meet the Teacher Leader Model Standards. Districts should provide protected time for leadership.


Master Professional Educator designation - an educator who has been recognized in the educational community as a high achiever in the field of education. He or she makes contributions to education outside of the school environment at regional, state, and national levels; and elevates the teaching profession through recruitment, teacher support, and advocacy.

ADE'S ROLE: SUPPORT

1. Growing teacher leaders through micro-credentials, professional development, and networking opportunities.
2. Training districts on how to utilize, support, and compensate teacher leaders.
3. Providing stories of districts using teacher leaders in various roles with various incentives.
4. Developing partnerships that will encourage the utilization of teacher leaders around the state.







TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN ARKANSAS

Educator Career Continuum




LEAD PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR DESIGNATION

The Lead Professional Educator designation allows an educator who aspires to have a leadership role to do so without leaving the classroom. Districts should provide protected time for leadership. A lead teacher...

-  Promotes the use of assessments and data
-  Uses research to improve practice and student learning
-  Collaborates with families and the community
-  Promotes professional learning to improve instruction
-  Advocates for the profession
-  Fosters a positive school culture

Visit the Teach Arkansas webpage at <https://bit.ly/2PgNFVM>.
Access the Teacher Leader Model Standards at <https://bit.ly/2QeHLIS>.




How do I qualify?

- Documentation of three (3) years of licensed teaching experience, which may include teaching with a provisional license; and
- Verification from the applicant's last employer that the applicant has performed at the level of an Effective Teacher as evidenced by the applicant's most recent summative evaluation (within the previous four years); and documentation of one of the following:
 1. Official score report on a performance assessment approved by State Board of Education or
 2. Successful completion of the ADE recognized micro-credential(s) for Lead Professional (Pilot fall 2018) or
 3. Graduation from an ADE-recognized/approved teacher-leader academy, teacher leader institute, teacher-leader higher education program






TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN ARKANSAS

Educator Career Continuum




MASTER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR DESIGNATION

The Master Professional Educator designation recognizes educators who are high achievers in the field of education. A master teacher...

-  Obtains a high level of academic achievement in the field of education
-  Elevates the teaching profession
-  Makes contributions to education at regional, state, and/or national level
-  Advocates for students, colleagues, and the profession
-  Serves as a master of their content and pedagogy

Visit the Teach Arkansas webpage at <https://bit.ly/2PgNFVM>.
Learn more about National Board Certification at <https://bit.ly/2p1NXNi>.
Learn more about ATOY, Milken & Presidential Awards at <https://bit.ly/1MybAf5>



How do I qualify?

- Documentation of three (3) years of licensed teaching experience, which may include teaching with a provisional license; and
- Verification from the applicant's last employer that the applicant has performed at the level of an Effective Teacher as evidenced by the applicant's most recent summative evaluation (within the previous four years); and one of the following:
 1. Receipt of an award- ATOY, Milken, Presidential Award for Math and Science; or
 2. NBCT Certification; or
 3. Successful completion of a master's, specialist, or doctoral degree in the applicant's content teaching area; and successful completion of the ADE-recognized micro-credential(s) for Master Professional

Georgia Tiered Certification Policy

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission created a [four-tier licensure system](#) in 2014. The commission issues the **pre-service certificate** to candidates participating in clinical internships or residencies. Educators graduating from a qualifying educator preparation program and candidates enrolled in alternative certification programs receive an **induction** or **provisional certificate**. After meeting experience and effectiveness criteria, teachers may apply for a **professional certificate**. The fourth tier recognizes teacher leadership in two ways. Teachers who are experts in improving student achievement and professional practice may apply for the **advanced professional certificate**. Teachers who demonstrate leadership in mentoring and supporting their colleagues may apply for the **lead professional certificate**.

The tiered certification structure consists of the following types of certificates:

1. [Pre-Service](#) — For teacher candidates during their training
2. [Provisional](#) — For new teachers to teach while completing the requirements for an induction or professional certification
3. [Induction](#) — For educators with less than three years' experience
4. [Professional](#) — Standard professional credential
5. [Advanced Professional](#) — To recognize teachers with recognized expert classroom practice, professional growth and positive impact on student learning
6. [Lead Professional](#) — To promote, support, and expand opportunities for teachers holding an advanced professional credential

| Table 1. Georgia Certificates | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Certification | Eligibility | Validity |
| Pre-Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admitted to an EPP that leads to Induction certification Criminal Background Check Complete GACE Educator Ethics – Program Entry assessment | 5 years, nonrenewable |
| Provisional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor’s degree or higher - Passing score on GACE Program Admission Assessment or exemption - Passing score on appropriate GACE content assessment - Passing score on Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment | 3 years, nonrenewable |
| Induction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passing score on appropriate GACE content assessment Passing score on Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment – Program Exit Completion of a course in identifying and education exceptional children Out of state educator certificate, if applicable | 5 years, nonrenewable |
| Professional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 3 years of successful experience within the last 5 years in a Georgia school, as outlined by the statewide evaluation system | 5 years, renewable |
| Advanced Professional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 10 years of acceptable educator experience, at least 3 of which must have been earned on a Georgia certificate within the last 5 years Meet Georgia’s Standards of Conduct One of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced degree in teaching field beyond initial preparation program (OR) - Certification in Curriculum & Instruction or Instructional Technology (OR) - NBPTS certification | 5 years, renewable |
| Lead Professional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 10 years of acceptable educator experience, at least 3 of which must have been earned on a Georgia certificate within the last 5 years One of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher Leadership certification (OR) - Advanced degree in teaching field beyond the initial preparation program and a Teacher Leader, Coaching, or Teacher Support & Coaching endorsement (OR) - Certificate in Curriculum & Instruction or Instructional Technology and a Teacher Leader, Coaching, or Teacher Support & Coaching endorsement (OR) - NBPTS certification and a Teacher Leader, Coaching, or Teacher Support & Coaching Endorsement | 5 years, renewable |

Source: gaPSC

Maryland Tiered Certification Policy

Maryland has instituted a tiered licensure system composed of six certificates, of which one pertains solely to alternative preparation routes and one pertains to candidates who do not meet all professional certification requirements. The certificates are as follows:

Professional Eligibility Certificate (PEC)

- Valid for 5 years
- Issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and is not currently employed in a MD local school system or a publicly funded nonpublic school

Standard Professional Certificate I (SPC I)

- Valid for 5 years
- Issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and
- Is employed by a Maryland local school system or a publicly funded nonpublic school

Standard Professional Certificate II (SPC II)

- Valid for 5 years
- Issued to an applicant who completes the SPC I, is employed by a Maryland local school system or publicly funded nonpublic school, and submits the following:
 1. Verification of 3 years of satisfactory school related experience
 2. Six semester hours of acceptable credit**; and
 3. A professional development plan for the Advanced Professional Certificate (APC)

Advanced Professional Certificate (APC)

- Valid for 5 years
- Issued to an applicant who submits the following:
 1. Six semester hours of acceptable credit**
 2. Verification of 3 years of satisfactory school related experience; and
 3. Meets one of the following standards:
 - a. Earned a master's or higher degree from an IHE in a certification area directly related to public school education, including 6 semester hours related to the teacher's specific discipline or the specialist's specific assignment
 - b. Earned at least 36 semester hours of approved content or professional education course work directly related to public school education, earned after the conferral of the bachelor's or higher degree, including at least 21 graduate credits, of which at least six credits shall be related to the teacher's specific discipline or the specialist's specific assignment or
 - c. Obtained National Board Certification and earned a minimum of 12 semester hours of approved graduate course work, earned after the conferral of the bachelor's or higher degree and related to the teacher's specific discipline or the specialist's specific assignment.

Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC)

- Valid for two years, and
- Issued to an applicant who has been selected by a local school system to participate in an alternative teacher preparation program


Conditional Certificate (CDC)

- Valid for two years
- Issued only to an applicant employed in a local school system or publicly funded nonpublic school who does not meet all professional certification requirements

Maryland also offers [incentives for their teachers](#), but they are not directly tied to the tiered licensure system. There are incentives, such as fee support and stipends tied to National Board Certification for teachers who work in schools with comprehensive needs, as well as lesser stipends for those teachers who have National Board Certification but do not work in schools with comprehensive needs. Maryland also offers tuition tax credits, up to \$1,500, to offset graduate tuition expenses necessary to maintain teaching certification.

Ohio Tiered Certification Policy

The Ohio Department of Education moved to a [four-tiered educator licensure system](#) in 2011. The department of education issues either a **Resident Educator License** or an **Alternative Resident Educator License** to new teachers going through the required four-year Resident Educator Program. Once the Resident Educator Program is complete, educators can apply for the Professional Educator License. The **Professional Educator** is a five-year renewable license that, after a total of nine years with at least five years under a permanent license, can lead to a **Senior Professional Educator License**. In order to obtain this five-year renewable license, teachers must obtain a master's degree or higher, as well as successfully complete the Master Teacher Portfolio. The last license in the Ohio system is the **Lead Professional Educator License**, which requires a master's degree or higher, nine years under a standard teaching license with at least five years under a permanent license, and either National Board Certification or a combination of the Teacher Leader Endorsement and successful completion of the Master Teacher Portfolio. Ohio gives local districts the ability to determine [incentives for teachers](#) but does not have any specific incentives tied to the license tiers. Along with a lack of tier-based incentives, Ohio's model relies heavily on input measures that have [not been directly tied to effective teaching](#) rather than outcome-based measures such as student growth measures.

|  | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| Four-Tiered Teacher Licensure Structure | | | | | |
| Resident Educator License / Alternative Resident Educator License – 4-Year Renewable/Extendable | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Resident Educator License Requirements</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Alternative Resident Educator License Requirements</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree, an approved program of teacher preparation, pass examinations prescribed by State Board of Education, and 12 semester hours of reading coursework for early childhood, middle childhood, intervention specialist and early childhood intervention specialist licenses, OR Bachelor's degree, GPA of 2.5 or higher, pass an examination in the subject area to be taught, successfully complete the summer training institute operated by Teach For America, and be assigned to teach in Ohio as a participant in the Teach For America program. </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><i>Designated Subjects, World Languages & Intervention Specialist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree; Cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher; Content area examination(s); and Completion of Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute (IPTI) or Summer Training Institute. <p><i>Career-Technical Workforce Development (CTWD)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of a high school diploma; 5 years of full-time work experience in the career field to be taught; and Completion of a Summer Training Institute. <p><i>Montessori</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree; Completion of an American Montessori Society affiliated teacher education program; or Hold a certificate from the Association Montessori Internationale. </td> </tr> </table> | Resident Educator License Requirements | Alternative Resident Educator License Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree, an approved program of teacher preparation, pass examinations prescribed by State Board of Education, and 12 semester hours of reading coursework for early childhood, middle childhood, intervention specialist and early childhood intervention specialist licenses, OR Bachelor's degree, GPA of 2.5 or higher, pass an examination in the subject area to be taught, successfully complete the summer training institute operated by Teach For America, and be assigned to teach in Ohio as a participant in the Teach For America program. | <p><i>Designated Subjects, World Languages & Intervention Specialist</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree; Cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher; Content area examination(s); and Completion of Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute (IPTI) or Summer Training Institute. <p><i>Career-Technical Workforce Development (CTWD)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of a high school diploma; 5 years of full-time work experience in the career field to be taught; and Completion of a Summer Training Institute. <p><i>Montessori</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree; Completion of an American Montessori Society affiliated teacher education program; or Hold a certificate from the Association Montessori Internationale. | |
| Resident Educator License Requirements | Alternative Resident Educator License Requirements | | | | |
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| Professional Educator License – 5-Year Renewable | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">Requirements</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree (except CTWD) Successful completion of the Ohio Resident Educator Program (except CTWD – must teach under alternative CTWD Resident Educator license four years and successfully complete performance based assessment) Alternative license advance/renewal/extension requires successful completion of all additional requirements for professional license </td> </tr> </table> | | Requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree (except CTWD) Successful completion of the Ohio Resident Educator Program (except CTWD – must teach under alternative CTWD Resident Educator license four years and successfully complete performance based assessment) Alternative license advance/renewal/extension requires successful completion of all additional requirements for professional license | | |
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| Senior Professional Educator License - 5-Year Renewable | | | | | |
| A + B + C | | | | | |
| A | B | C | | | |
| Degree Requirement | Experience | Demonstration of Practice at the Accomplished/Distinguished Level | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master's degree or higher from an institution of higher education accredited by a regional accrediting organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nine years under a standard teaching license with 120 days of service as defined by Ohio law, of which at least five years are under a professional/permanent license/certificate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful completion of the Master Teacher Portfolio | | | |
| Lead Professional Educator License - 5-Year Renewable | | | | | |
| A + B + C | | | | | |
| A | B | C | | | |
| Degree Requirement | Experience | Demonstration of Practice at the Distinguished Level | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master's degree or higher from an institution of higher education accredited by a regional accrediting organization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nine years under a standard teaching license with 120 days of service as defined by Ohio law, of which at least five years are under a professional/permanent license/certificate or a Senior Professional Educator License | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn the Teacher Leader Endorsement AND successful completion of the Master Teacher Portfolio, OR Hold active National Board Certification (NBPTS) | | | |
| (Professional, Senior and Lead license RENEWAL require 6 semester hours/18 CEUs, as approved by the Local Professional Development Committee of the employing school or district, to be completed after issue date of license being renewed and before September 1 of license expiration year) | | | | | |
| Jan. 2018 | | | | | |

Wisconsin Tiered Certification Policy

Wisconsin has a [four-tiered educator licensure system](#) with a focus on bringing in a broad spectrum of teaching candidates. Wisconsin offers multiple pathways to meet the requirements to become a Wisconsin licensed teacher, pupil services professional, or administrator.

- A bachelor's degree is the minimum degree requirement for most Wisconsin teaching licenses.
- A master's degree, education specialist degree (EdS), or doctoral degree is required for most Pupil Services and Administrator licenses.

Wisconsin's initial tier encompasses **the One-Year License with Stipulations**, the **Three-Year License with Stipulations**, and the **One-Year Administrator License**. The second tier is the **Provisional License** which is given to new educators and can be renewed if the license holder has not yet obtained six semester hours of successful experience. This license is also available for educators who return to the profession after an absence of five or more years.

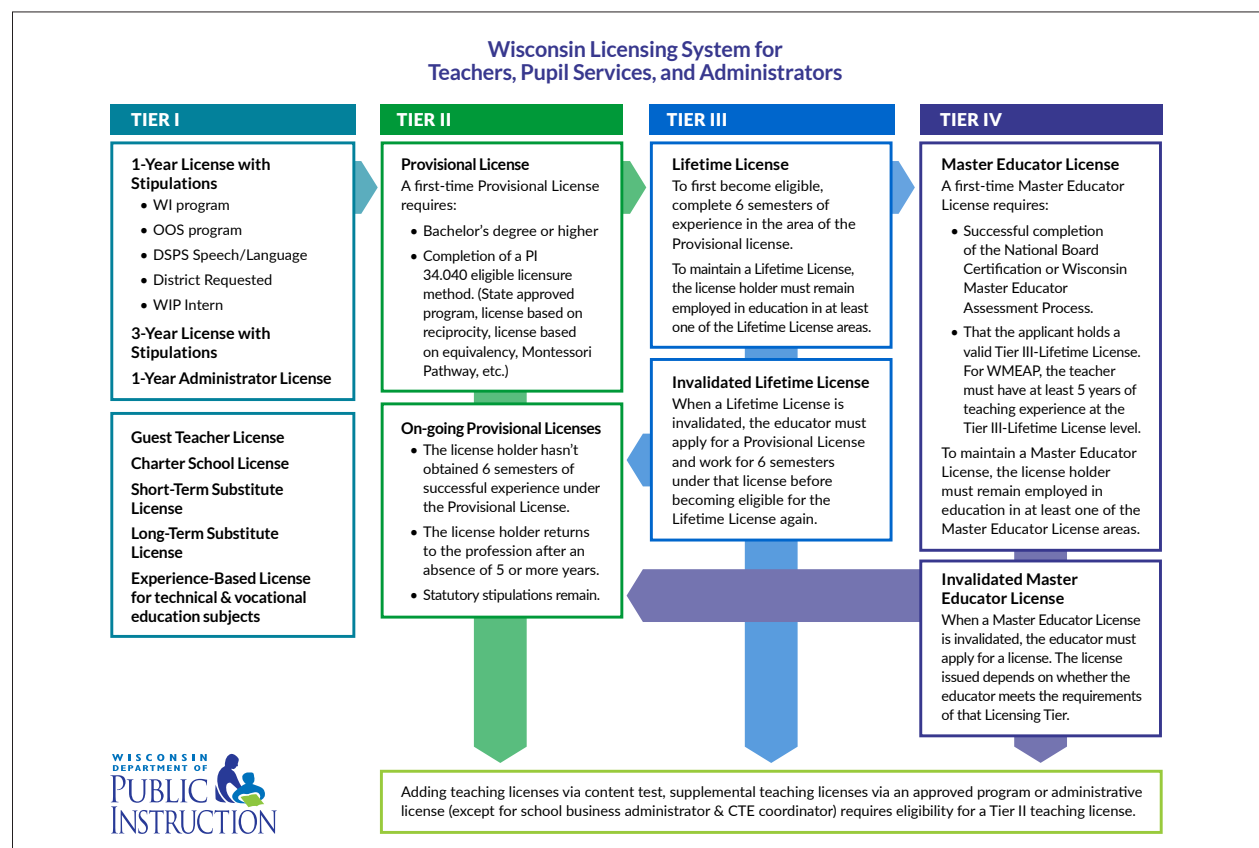
The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction recently revised content-knowledge requirements for candidates seeking an initial teaching license. This is the first innovation in initial content licensure requirements in the nation in recent years. Starting with the 2018-19 academic year, candidates may demonstrate subject-matter competence in one of three ways:

- **Option 1:** Pass relevant Praxis Subject-Area Assessments. Applicants for elementary or special education certification must pass the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test.
- **Option 2:** Complete content-area courses with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- **Option 3:** Submit a content portfolio. Preparation programs define the portfolio requirements and rate candidates' demonstrated competency level.

Tier three is the **Lifetime License** which is given to those who complete six semesters of experience in the area in which their Provisional License was issued. In order to maintain the Lifetime License, the educator must remain employed in at least one of the Lifetime License areas. The highest tier is Wisconsin's **Master Educator License** which is given to those who successfully complete either National Board Certification or the Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process. Educators must also hold a valid Lifetime License for at least five years if they want to complete the Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process.

Wisconsin Pathways to Licensure

- [Initial Teacher Pathways](#)
- [Administrator Pathway](#)
- [Pupil Services Pathway](#)
- [Additional Subject Area Certification Pathways](#)
- [School District Support Pathways](#)
- [Out-of-State Pathways](#)
- [Montessori Pathway](#)
- [Teachers Outside U.S. Pathways](#)
- [License Based on Equivalency Pathway](#)
- [Trade Specialist Pathway](#)



Lessons to Learn from Tiered Certification Policies

While tiered licensure can facilitate the advancement, support and incentives that teachers desire if set properly in policy, it is not the only way to implement such a framework. It is most important for states to decide what the licensure system communicates about the value of their teacher workforce. Decisions on redesigning license requirements and structures should be based on the needs and values of the state in order to help recruit, reward and retain the high-quality teacher workforce that serves its specific student populations.

Support and Advancement

One of the lessons that can be gleaned from these five examples is that advancements in licensure (e.g., tiers) need to be clear and easy to understand. Clarity in license requirements is not strictly tied to a tiered system. For educators to navigate advancement options, they must understand exactly what is required to move from one step to another and they must be supported, especially in the early years. Incorporating induction and mentoring supports into the licensure system is one of the key state strategies to [support new teachers](#) that account for the success of several of the examples above. The mentoring role is added to many tiered systems so that highly skilled and qualified teachers can continue to teach while coaching new colleagues. But the system must also provide flexibilities to allow for innovation in pathways into and through the teaching profession.

State-Level Incentives

A second lesson common across licensure systems is the need for a state incentive strategy incorporated into the structure of the licensure system. Many states with tiered licensure have reported low requests for advanced tier certifications because teachers do not see any direct incentive, reward or employable role for applying, even if they already meet all or most of the requirements. And incentives when left up to local school districts can exacerbate inequality across the state. Georgia is one example — three years after implementation, the state has had only a few dozen applications for the advanced professional and lead professional licenses because these advanced licenses are not rewarded or required for increased work. In this regard, tiered certification is failing to incorporate the values of advancement and retention for our most skilled and effective teachers.

Equitable Application

Licensure systems should create access into and through the teaching profession in an equitable manner. Therefore, flexible paths need to exist in the system. But just as important is the principle that standards need to apply equally to teachers prepared in different ways, with different education and life experiences.

Outcomes-Centered Approach

When states consider redesigning their licensure system, they should look at the requirements for the available licenses and whether they are dependent upon inputs — such as attaining a degree or passing an assessment like many of the tiered systems above — or outcome measures such as content mastery, instructional skills and effectiveness in the classroom. While content or pedagogical exams are currently required by every state in the nation for non-emergency certification as a proxy measure for mastery or competency, research shows that these input measures do not guarantee a teacher has the skills necessary to be a minimally effective teacher. If states value increased instructional skills and student growth, they should be measuring competency and effectiveness and incorporating these outcomes into professional licensure.

[SREB stands ready to assist](#) states with [holistic teacher licensure redesign](#) that effectively communicates the value of the teacher workforce and of educating every student; provides intuitive pathways and options to teachers; incentivizes, rewards and retains the highest-quality teachers; and ultimately reduces the teacher shortages that plague most states today.