

# coNCepts

*Using what we know to improve education*



**James B. Hunt, Jr.**  
Foundation Board Chairman

**Judith A. Rizzo, Ed.D.**  
Executive Director and CEO

**Elizabeth Grovenstein**  
Senior Education Policy Analyst  
egrovenstein@hunt-institute.org

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Background and Authority	1
Licensure Process	2
North Carolina Licensure System	3

For additional copies of *coNCepts*, or to receive a copy via e-mail, please call 919.962.4296.

1000 Park Forty Plaza  
Suite 280  
Durham, NC 27713  
p: 919.962.4296  
f: 919.843.3113  
www.hunt-institute.org

## Teacher Licensure in North Carolina

*by Elizabeth Grovenstein, Senior Education Policy Analyst*

Every state regulates, through some method of teacher certification, the qualifications of teachers.<sup>1</sup> North Carolina's state teacher licensure system requires any person employed by a local education agency (LEA) in a professional educator position to hold a professional educator's license. The licensure system used by the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) has been updated to make the current licensure process more efficient.

### Background and Authority

In general, licensure is designed to ensure a minimum quality or skill among individuals who have been granted a license. In the case of teacher licensure, the goal is to ensure teacher quality. Authority for teacher licensure in North Carolina is governed by *General Statute 115C-296* and the power it affords to the NC State Board of Education. The NC DPI licensure section is responsible for ensuring that all NC professional educators are appropriately licensed according to federal and state regulation as well as NC State Board of Education policy.

As with most states, North Carolina requires at least a bachelor's degree and minimum score on a standard examination(s) for most license areas. State law also sets a requirement that students who are seeking admission into a teacher education program must attain a passing score on a preprofessional skills test or attain a defined minimum SAT or ACT score. The NC State Board of Education determines the minimum score necessary "to ensure that each applicant has received high-quality academic and professional preparation to teach effectively."<sup>2</sup> This licensure screening device is important because a teacher's performance on a licensure exam is positively correlated with the teacher's ability to improve student achievement.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Licensure Process

State law establishes initial licensure (standard professional 1 license, valid for three years) and continuing licensure (standard professional 2 license, valid for five years) standards. The teacher license indicates the grade level (elementary, middle, secondary, or K-12), content areas, and specialization in which the individual is eligible for employment, and the level of preparation (bachelor's, master's/advanced, advanced/specialist, or doctorate).

The following tables lay out the process for educators entering North Carolina to achieve initial and continuing licensure:

Teachers with Less than Three Years of Experience (Standard Professional 1)		
I	Complete a state-approved teacher education program	<b>or</b> 1. Complete another state's approved alternative route to licensure; 2. Meet the federal "highly qualified" designation; and 3. Earn a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college.
<b>AND</b>		
II	Obtain the minimum score for the content area on the required licensure exam:	
	1. Pearson Test for North Carolina: Foundations of Reading and General Curriculum (Elementary Education and Exceptional Children: General Curriculum Only). <b>or</b> 2. Praxis II (middle grades, secondary, K-12).	

Teachers with Three or More Years of Experience (Standard Professional 2)	
I	Be fully licensed and "highly qualified" in another state.
<b>AND</b>	
II	Obtain the minimum score for the content area on the required licensure exam:
	1. Pearson Test for North Carolina: Foundations of Reading and General Curriculum (Elementary Education and Exceptional Children: General Curriculum). <b>or</b> 2. Praxis II (middle grades, secondary, K-12).
<b>OR</b>	
III	Have National Board Certification.

A NC educator with a standard professional 1 license can convert to a standard professional 2 license by: completing three years of teaching experience; obtaining an overall rating of proficient or better on the state-approved evaluation instrument in the third year; completing any professional development activities prescribed by the employing NC LEA; and achieving satisfactory scores on NC State Board of Education required tests. Continuing licensure requires at least seven and one-half continuing education credits (eight effective credits for licensures with an expiration date of June 30, 2016) to achieve licensure renewal (along with evidence of no criminal convictions and/or license revocations) every five years.

There are a number of routes to teacher licensure. While approximately half of the teachers employed in North Carolina are from the traditional route of teacher education via a public or private NC institution, the remaining NC teachers enter via out-of-state or alternative entry methods. State law encourages skilled individuals to enter the teaching profession via the alternative pathways, called lateral entry and/or career and technical licensure.

The following table lays out the process for lateral entry licensure:

Lateral Entry Teachers (Lateral Entry Professional Educator's License)					
I	Employment by a local school system and recommendation for a lateral entry license.				
II	Have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college ( <i>see note</i> ),	and	1. A relevant degree or 2. 24 semester hours in core area, or 3. Minimum score for the content area on the required licensure exam.		
III	Five years of relevant experience	or	2.5 GPA	or	Minimum score on Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators
or					
	1. SAT score of 1100 or ACT score of 24 and GPA of 3.0 in major.				
or					
	2. GPA of 3.0 in the senior year.				
or					
	3. GPA of 3.0 in 15 semester hours completed in last five years after the bachelor's degree.				
IV	In conjunction with a college, university, or Regional Alternative Licensing Center, develop a plan of study with a minimum of six semester hours per year. The plan of study provides a list of required course credits, including pedagogy competencies and content area competencies.				
V	Complete the plan of study and obtain the minimum score for the content area on the required licensure exam within three years.				
NOTE: Three career and technical areas — health science, technology education, and trade and industrial education — permit less than a bachelor's degree if the candidate has sufficient industry-related work experience. Many career and technical areas also require industry-specific credentials or training.					

### North Carolina Licensure System

NC teachers and teacher candidates historically utilized a manual process to obtain, renew or update a license by completing and mailing various required paper forms, transcripts, and/or test score reports. However, the NC DPI has developed a new online licensure system that will enable the entire licensure process to be automated. The new licensure system went live for all users on August 1, 2015, and is available on the NC DPI Online Licensure System website at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/licensure/>.

According to NC DPI, there are two key features of the new online system:

- 1) The new system will automate the collection of the license application, supporting documentation, and payment, which will eliminate the time-consuming, manual process that has been in place (ranges from approximately 16 to 35 business days).
- 2) NC DPI has estimated the new system will produce a savings of at least two weeks per application.

The new system will provide an informative and easy-to-navigate user interface that will allow an applicant to check the status of his/her application and monitor its progress through the approval process. With the new features that the system offers, NC DPI's licensure section expects a significant reduction in turnaround times for all applications and an improvement in customer service capabilities. Ultimately, a more efficient licensure system should facilitate a timelier hiring process for NC LEAs.

NC DPI will report to the NC General Assembly by October 15, 2016 about the new licensure system. The report will include: 1) the processing time of each category of licensure as compared to processing time prior to August 1, 2015; 2) the schedule of licensure fees; 3) any backlog of licensure applications by category of licensure; and 4) data from the prior year, including numbers of: applications received and completed, renewals, newly licensed educators, licenses by area and type, demographic information of currently licensed educators, and initial licenses by specific categories (graduates of educator preparation programs, lateral entry, international educators, out-of-state educators). This data will enable the state to determine whether goals for the new licensure system have been met, and state policy makers can consider if any state licensure policy changes are needed.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Walsh, K. (2001). *Teacher certification reconsidered: Stumbling for quality*. The Abell Foundation. [http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher\\_Certification\\_Reconsidered\\_Stumbling\\_for\\_Quality\\_NCTQ\\_Report](http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher_Certification_Reconsidered_Stumbling_for_Quality_NCTQ_Report).
- <sup>2</sup> General Statute 115C-296(a)
- <sup>3</sup> Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., and Vigdor, J. L. (2007). *How and why do teacher credentials matter for student achievement?* (Working Paper 2). Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.
- <sup>4</sup> Goldhaber, D. (2007). *Everyone's doing it, but what does teacher testing tell us about teacher effectiveness?* (Working Paper 9). Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research.
- <sup>5</sup> Chapman, Alisa (2015). *Preparing More, Higher Quality Teachers and School Leaders for North Carolina's Public Schools*. University of North Carolina. Presentation to the May 5, 2015 North Carolina State Board of Education meeting. <https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/ViewMeetingOrder.aspx?S=10399&MID=1846>.

*A part of the nation's first public university – The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – The Hunt Institute is a recognized leader in the movement to transform public education. Marshaling expertise from a nationwide partner network, The Institute brings together people and resources that help build and nurture visionary leadership and mobilize strategic action for greater educational outcomes and student success.*



1000 Park Forty Plaza | Suite 280 | Durham, NC 27713 | p: 919.962.4296 | f: 919.843.3113



[www.hunt-institute.org](http://www.hunt-institute.org)



[/Hunt\\_Institute](https://twitter.com/Hunt_Institute)



[/huntintersection.com](http://huntintersection.com)



[/TheHuntInstitute](https://www.youtube.com/TheHuntInstitute)



[/thehuntinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/thehuntinstitute)