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NCTQ Databurst

Licensure Requirements for Out-of-State Teachers

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State policies can make it difficult for public school teachers to qualify to teach in another state. From a teacher's perspective, meeting another state's licensure requirements can feel bureaucratic and time-consuming. This process also may appear largely irrelevant as to the most important consideration: Will a teacher likely be successful in the classroom?

On the other hand, a state has a paramount obligation to protect the integrity of its licensure system. State requirements for out-of-state teachers enable states to withhold licenses from an applicant who may pose a risk to a state's students or who does not meet its standards.

One of the primary reasons why states may maintain requirements that appear burdensome is that there is such significant variation among their teacher licensing requirements, causing some states to be leery of the requirements of other states. There appears to be little consensus among states as to what matters most when teachers are applying from out of state. Nevertheless, every state has an obligation to balance the burden on out-of-state teaching applicants, while simultaneously maintaining high standards for teacher quality and student safety.

What We Found

PRIOR PERFORMANCE

Too few states look to the most relevant feature of an out-of-state teaching applicant's history: their job performance. [Sixteen states](#) maintain policies that require candidates to provide evidence of successful prior job performance. Among these 16, only four states — the **District of Columbia**, **New Jersey**, **New York**, and **North Carolina** — explicitly require out-of-state applicants to demonstrate evidence of success in increasing student learning and growth.

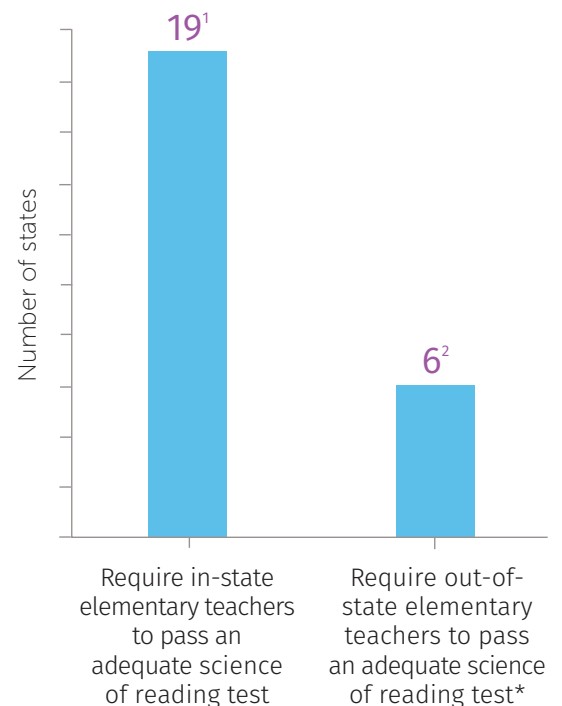
CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

States struggle to figure out whether to ask for evidence that applicants meet their standards for subject matter knowledge and, if so, how that can be determined. [Twenty-one states](#) look to the most straight-forward method, allowing applicants to demonstrate that they passed a suitable test. Unfortunately, 14 states maintain content knowledge requirements that may discourage experienced and effective teachers from pursuing in-state licensure, by requiring all out-of-state teacher applicants to take additional coursework, without providing a test-out option.

KNOWLEDGE OF EARLY READING INSTRUCTION

When it comes to an elementary teacher's most important job, teaching reading, only six states require specific evidence that out-of-state applicants know the science of reading. This is particularly surprising given that [19 states](#) recognize the importance of employing a teacher corps that knows how to teach reading by requiring that all in-state applicants for an elementary license must demonstrate knowledge of scientifically-based reading instruction.

Knowledge of Early Reading Instruction



1 AL, AK, AR, CA, CT, IN, MD, MA, MS, NH, NM, NY, NC, OH, OK, TX, VA, WV, WI

2 MA, MS, NH, NC, OH, WI

* MI requires coursework in the science of reading, but does not allow teachers to demonstrate knowledge by taking a test. OH requires coursework in the science of reading and requires teachers to pass an adequate science of reading test

PATHWAY INTO TEACHING

[Many states](#) (19) still have requirements making it harder for an out-of-state applicant to qualify for a license if they were prepared to teach in a non-traditional, or alternative, route. In some cases, these requirements consist of a transcript review that could result in additional coursework requirements, or subject alternatively-trained, out-of-state applicants to additional scrutiny, by requiring them to submit their case to a licensure review committee. In other cases, states maintain recency requirements for alternatively-trained, out-of-state teachers or impose additional student teaching or internship requirements, which may negatively impact out-of-state applicants prepared via alternate routes.

KNOWLEDGE OF CONTENT UNIQUE TO A STATE

There are seven states that have specific requirements that out-of-state applicants master content that is unique to their state, such as Alaska studies and multicultural education in [Alaska](#), or South Dakota Indian studies in [South Dakota](#).

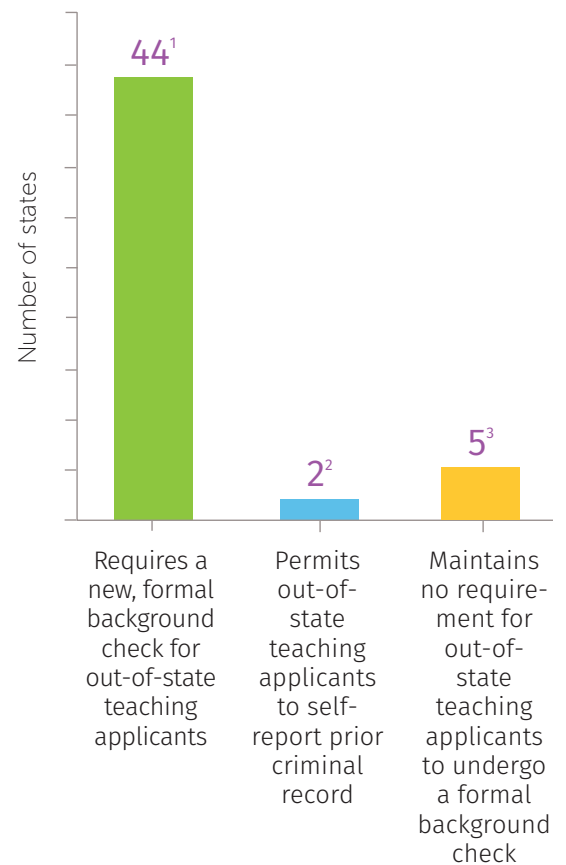
CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

It is hard to argue against the importance of this requirement. Although every state in the nation requires a criminal background check for a new in-state teaching applicant, there are [seven states](#) that do not explicitly require out-of-state applicants to undergo a full background check as a condition for licensure, no matter how long ago their previous background check was conducted.

Why Does Real Portability Matter?

A significant number of teachers move from one state to another each year. For example, nearly a quarter of the new teachers placed in recent years in both California and South Carolina were teachers who had moved from other states or countries. Licensure requirements for out-of-state teachers may also disproportionately impact highly-mobile populations, such as military-connected families.

Safeguarding Students



1 AL, AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, DC, FL, GA, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MN, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NM, NY, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI, WY

2 NJ, RI

3 IN, IA, MI, MS, NC

Best Practice: District of Columbia

The [District of Columbia's](#) licensure requirements for out-of-state teachers are among the nation's strongest. The District:

- Considers whether out-of-state teachers were effective in their prior position by requiring out-of-state applicants to submit evidence of two years of effective teaching experience within the past five years, as measured by an overall evaluation rating that includes objective measures of student learning;
- Requires teachers who hold valid out-of-state credentials to provide evidence of content knowledge by way of passing content test scores from their prior state of service; teachers who did not pass appropriate licensure tests in their originating states must pass the District of Columbia's adopted assessments to obtain full licensure;
- Eliminates unnecessary barriers for out-of-state applicants by treating teaching applicants equally regardless of whether they were prepared in traditional or alternative settings, and not requiring out-of-state teachers to meet additional coursework requirements; and
- Requires all out-of-state teaching applicants to complete a full criminal history background check prior to certification.

STATE	Evidence of successful prior job performance	A passing score on any relevant content knowledge test	No additional coursework	Provides a test-out option if state requires additional coursework	Treats out-of-state teachers equally regardless of route into teaching	Full background check ²	GOAL SCORE
AL	NO	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
AK	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
AZ	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	●
AR	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
CA	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
CO	YES	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
CT	YES	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
DE	YES	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
DC	YES ¹	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
FL	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
GA	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
HI	YES	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
ID	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
IL	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
IN	NO	YES	YES	N/A	NO	NO	●
IA	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	NO	○
KS	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
KY	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
LA	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES ³	●
ME	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
MD	YES	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES ³	●
MA	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
MI	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	○
MN	NO	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
MS	NO	YES	YES	N/A	YES	NO	●
MO	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
MT	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	●
NE	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	●
NV	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
NH	YES	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
NJ	YES ¹	NO	YES	N/A	YES	NO ⁴	●
NM	YES	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
NY	YES ¹	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	●
NC	YES ¹	YES	YES	N/A	YES	NO	●
ND	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	●
OH	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	●
OK	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
OR	NO	YES	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
PA	YES	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
RI	NO	YES	YES	N/A	YES	NO ⁴	●
SC	NO	YES	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
SD	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES ³	●
TN	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES ³	●
TX	NO	YES	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
UT	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
VT	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
VA	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
WA	NO	YES	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
WV	NO	NO	YES	N/A	YES	YES	●
WI	NO	NO	YES	N/A	NO	YES	●
WY	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	●

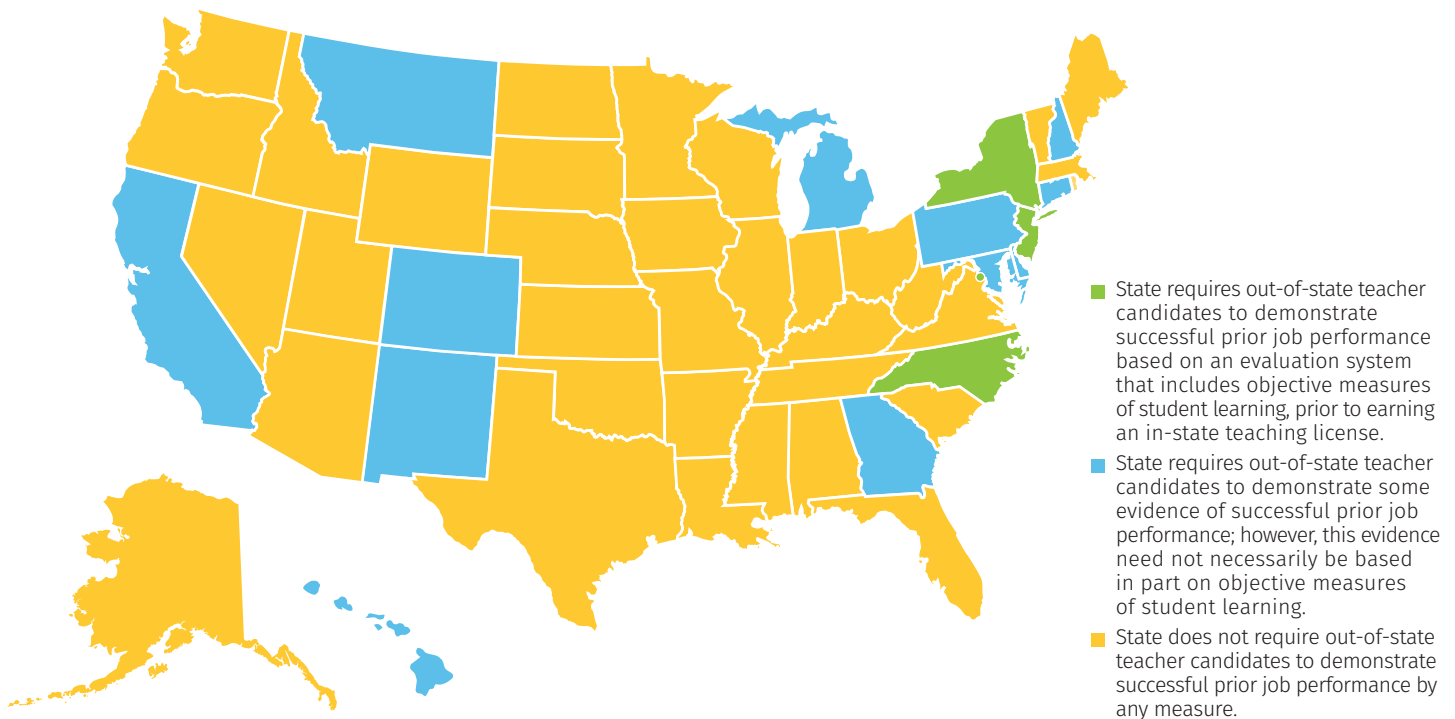
1 Evidence of student growth is required.

2 The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) compiles an "Educator Identification Clearinghouse," whereby NASDTEC maintains a database of all disciplinary actions (i.e., certificate/license denied, suspended, and/or voluntarily suspended) reported by its members and disseminates this information to all participating NASDTEC jurisdictions. The NASDTEC Clearinghouse serves as a valuable resource for member states; however, it should not replace a requirement for a formal background check of out-of-state teachers applying for certification.

3 State requires districts to conduct background checks prior to hiring.

4 Out-of-state candidates must answer questions on the application about criminal history. If any are answered in the affirmative, then candidates must submit additional documentation.

Do states require out-of-state teacher applicants to demonstrate success in prior teaching placements?



Recommendations

Require evidence of successful prior job performance. To facilitate the movement of effective teachers between states, all states should require that evidence of teacher effectiveness, as determined by an evaluation that includes objective measures of student growth, be considered for all out-of-state teaching applicants.

Eliminate unnecessary barriers for out-of-state teachers. States should not discriminate against teachers based on whether they were prepared through a traditional or alternate route; instead, all certified out-of-state teachers should receive equal treatment. State policies that discriminate against teachers who were prepared in an alternate route are not supported by evidence, and in fact, research has failed to discern differences in effectiveness between alternate and traditional route teachers. Additionally, states should allow a test-out option for any state-specific coursework requirements. Coursework requirements without a test-out option may deter experienced, effective teachers from seeking licensure within a state.

Require out-of-state teachers to demonstrate sufficient mastery of the content knowledge they will be teaching. States should insist that out-of-state teachers meet their own testing requirements or provide evidence of a passing score on an applicable content test from the originating state. This ensures that out-of-state teachers have demonstrated the content knowledge necessary for the license they seek, instead of relying on a generic requirement like recent teaching experience.

Ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to maintain student safety and well-being. As a condition of licensure, states should ensure that all out-of-state candidates pass a complete criminal history background check. Because of differences in state statutes regarding the scope of teacher criminal background checks, a clear criminal background check from another state would not necessarily indicate that a teacher would pass an incoming state's criminal background check.