



## Wisconsin Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

It was this time last year that the Wisconsin Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (WACTE) published a white paper titled, *The Teachers Our Children Deserve* outlining an argument for maintaining and elevating the quality of teachers completing Wisconsin preparation programs.

*Significant research indicates that the learning of all students is enhanced when schools are staffed with well-prepared teachers who collaborate and learn with one another to create a vibrant and stable learning environment. It is clear at this point that there are emerging teacher shortages in specific fields (e.g., technical and special education) and that some schools (e.g. high poverty urban and rural) have greater difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers than others. The teacher shortages is an equity issue that Wisconsin must address; in the process it is essential that decision makers keep in mind the importance of ensuring that all students and school communities have equal and consistent access to high quality teachers.*

<http://wiscteachereducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/TeachersOurChildrenDeserve.pdf>

Over the last year Wisconsin teacher preparation programs, the PK-12 community, and the DPI have worked together to propose significant changes in certification structure that will create flexibility in licensing (see reports by the Professional Standards Council, the State Superintendent's Working Group on School Staffing Issues, and the Leadership Group on School Staffing Challenges). These adjustments remove barriers to certification while maintaining the quality of teacher preparation, which in turn contributes to the overall quality of education for the children of Wisconsin. It is a positive collaborative step that many of these efforts are reflected in the omnibus education motion proposed for the state budget.

However, a number of other items in this legislation seem intent on circumventing the collaborative work of the education community and undermining the fabric of the state's education system by allowing underprepared "teachers" from across the country to become licensed educators in Wisconsin without meeting our high quality standards. In particular, the WACTE membership is concerned with **item 45 of the omnibus education motion** proposed for the state budget (see below).

#### ***45. Alternative Teacher Preparation Program-***

***Require the DPI to grant an initial teaching license to an individual meets the following requirements: (a) possesses a bachelor's degree; (b) he has successfully completed an alternative teacher certification program operated by an alternative preparation program provider that is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the internal revenue code, that operates in at least five states and has been in operation for at least ten years, and that requires the candidate to pass a subject area exam and the pedagogy exam known as the Professional Teaching Knowledge exam to receive a certification under the program and successfully completes a background check. Specifically that this license would authorize an individual to teach the subject and educational levels for which the individual successfully completed his program.***

The above language seems to open the door to a specific outside provider, the **American Board Certification for Teachers of Excellence (ABCTE)**. The American Board (<https://www.americanboard.org/>) is a yearlong, self-paced online program (that most people complete in 7-10 months) with no student teaching requirement (field experience is satisfied by substitute teaching or working as a paraprofessional). This legislation would allow American Board program completers to teach in Wisconsin **without meeting the same requirements as those who complete programs in the state.**

Requiring the DPI to certify those completing the American Board undermines Wisconsin's education system by equating underprepared educators with the well-prepared teachers who complete one of the state's many teacher preparation programs, including high-quality alternative programs. This strategy will perpetuate inequality in the state because our children will not have the teachers they deserve.

When contemplating the impact of item 45, consider:

- One of the great strengths of preparation of teachers in Wisconsin is the requirement that teacher candidates complete both a pre-student teaching experience and a full semester of full-time student teaching under the mentorship of a cooperating teacher. American Board's field experience requirements are very light - allowing candidates to become certified after only 60-90 hours of working as a paraprofessional or substitute teacher.
- Wisconsin already has an effective process for alternative licensure programs to be approved to prepare teachers. All alternative licensure programs currently operating in Wisconsin meet the same statutory requirements and continuous review expectations as every other licensure program in the state, therefore ensuring high-quality. Item 45 circumvents that process.
- Underprepared teachers from programs like American Board Certification for Teachers of Excellence (ABCTE), would end up teaching in high need urban and rural schools who are having a hard time recruiting teachers. The effect will be greater inequity in our schools and a perpetuation of the early career teacher "drop out."

WACTE encourage educators and community members to raise their collective voices to tell state legislators that we need to maintain and elevate the quality of the teachers in Wisconsin. Allowing a weak preparation program from outside the state to prepare teachers for our schools will undermine our education system and diminish the educational opportunities for Wisconsin's children. **All Wisconsin's children deserve a high quality teachers.**

Act now before the state budget bill passes next week.