REDESIGNING MASSACHUSETTS' EDUCATOR LICENSURE AND LICENSE RENEWAL SYSTEM

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2014

Submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education by The Keystone Center
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and project objectives

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE or “the Department”) seeks to develop a world class licensure and license renewal system that secures the most effective teachers and administrators for our workforce; will be feasible, sustainable and streamlined for candidates, educators, school districts, educator preparation programs and the Department; a system that is well-aligned with other educator effectiveness policies and with educator performance; a system that well-serves students and prepares them for college and career. To this end, the Department has been examining its policies and relevant regulations for alignment and to ascertain to what extent the policies support this vision. This work on licensure policy was catalyzed by Massachusetts’ participation in the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP), a network of seven states selected for this work by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

DESE committed to working with partners to explore possible development and implementation of a performance-based licensure and license renewal system to better align with the state’s current educator effectiveness policies. DESE asked TNTP to conduct research and assess available information to support the development, testing and refining of key elements of a performance-based system for licensure. DESE identified the need to engage with stakeholders as a key component of this work. TNTP engaged The Keystone Center (Keystone) to work with DESE and TNTP to design and facilitate a process of engaging stakeholders to ensure the perspectives and experiences of Massachusetts educators inform this effort.

This report summarizes the perspectives shared by Massachusetts educators regarding an effective state educator licensure system. Stakeholder engagement is the first phase of this initiative and serves as the first step in informing development of guiding principles and possible policy frameworks.

Major findings

Based on input from over 300 educators, including teachers, educator preparation program administrators and faculty, school and district leaders, school support personnel, and human resource officers, seven themes emerged most prominently. Notably, some of these themes are contradictory in terms of the implications for the policy direction.

1 In 2008, DESE established five focus areas, including educator effectiveness; curriculum, instruction and assessment; accountability and assistance; wraparound supports and the engagement of students and families; and school and classroom culture. The focus area of Educator Effectiveness is to ensure that every classroom in the Commonwealth is staffed by an effective educator, and that schools and districts are organized to support student achievement and success.
2 http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Network_for_Transforming_Educator_Preparation_%28NTEP%29.html
3 TNTP (www.tntp.org) is a national non-profit founded by teachers and a leader in a variety of educator effectiveness policy areas.
4 The Keystone Center (www.keystone.org) is an independent neutral 501(c)(3) facilitator whose mission is to bring together today’s leaders to create solutions to society’s pressing challenges.
1. A state licensure system should either set a minimum baseline of qualifications or ensure a high quality workforce.
2. Teachers entering the profession should complete a high quality preparation program, and demonstrate knowledge of content and pedagogy matching the subject and age level they intend to teach. Many stakeholders believe educators entering the profession should also demonstrate competency in essential skills (e.g., teachers should be “classroom ready”). Interestingly, there was no mention of effectiveness.
3. Educators should possess strong character, commitment to children and education, and strong interpersonal skills.
4. Requirements to continue in the profession should emphasize continuous growth and development. Professional development expectations should be relevant to an educator’s area of work, tailored to individual needs, and reflective of experience. Again, there was little mention of effectiveness.
5. In a performance-based approach to licensure, educator ability should be assessed using multiple indicators over time, and should incorporate self-reflection. Stakeholders most frequently suggested reviews (by peers, students, supervisors) and demonstration of essential skills (such as, for teachers, ability to differentiate instruction and manage a classroom) as key indicators of performance. Student success and achievement should be defined broadly in the context of performance-based licensure.
6. The system needs to provide alternative pathways for entry – e.g., for individuals with relevant professional experience or subject matter expertise, or who are not strong test-takers.
7. Stakeholders differed on whether licensure should be tied to educator evaluation. Many supported using the current Massachusetts Standards and Educator Evaluation Framework to inform licensure decisions. Many others raised concerns about the consistency of such ratings in the context of licensure.

Methods

DESE and Keystone obtained the perspectives of 322 educators throughout Massachusetts, primarily through focus groups. Key stakeholder groups identified for inclusion in Phase I were those categories of professionals expected to be directly affected by changes in licensure policy: teachers, principals and assistant principals, preparation program faculty, human resource officers, school committee members, superintendents and assistant superintendents, education collaborative representatives, professional support personnel, and associations supporting educators. Keystone recruited participants with the assistance of and in consultation with nearly two dozen entities, including educator professional associations and standing groups of educators advising DESE.

This first phase of the initiative sought to fundamentally reimagine the Commonwealth’s system of educator licensure. Rather than asking participants to react to new policy options or narrowly focus on shortcomings of the existing system, DESE, TNTP and Keystone encouraged

5 A total of 322 stakeholders contributed input via formal focus groups convened by Keystone (169 individuals) or DESE (20), the electronic questionnaire (39), a meeting convened by Teach Plus (66), and internal DESE focus groups (28).
innovative and aspirational thinking about the purpose, functions, characteristics and impacts of an effective licensure system. We asked participants to address five fundamental, open-ended questions. The questions and key themes are highlighted below.⁶

Overview of key findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT PURPOSE SHOULD A STATE EDUCATOR LICENSE SERVE?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two major, distinct schools of thought emerged from stakeholders:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensuring educators meet a <strong>minimum threshold</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensuring a <strong>quality workforce</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other themes mentioned often included:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Serving as a <strong>gatekeeper mechanism for the profession</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professionalizing education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enabling <strong>growth and development</strong> of educators</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT SHOULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS TO ENTER THE PROFESSION?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants <em>frequently</em> mentioned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Content knowledge</strong> that matches subject(s) of focus (e.g., demonstrated through tests, coursework, prior experience, and/or alternative assessments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Demonstrated pedagogical skills</strong>, preferably gained through a supervised practicum experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Appropriate disposition</strong> for the profession (e.g., love of children, belief that all students can learn), inquisitive nature, “life-long learner.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants <em>also</em> mentioned:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Knowledge of child psychology and development.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• “<strong>Soft skills</strong>” such as communication and interpersonal skills, adaptability, and ability to respond positively to feedback.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WHAT SHOULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS TO REMAIN IN THE PROFESSION?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participants <em>frequently</em> mentioned:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Ongoing professional development</strong> (relevant to subject and/or grade level, and aligned to experience level and areas of needed improvement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Appropriate disposition</strong>, including commitment to growth and improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants <em>also</em> mentioned:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrated <strong>evidence of student learning.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Satisfactory evaluation</strong> of the educator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Gradual increase in responsibility</strong> (formal leadership roles within the school or community).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

⁶ Respecting the qualitative nature of this initiative, this report notes the frequency and/or emphasis of mention in presenting major themes wherever possible. Items in a bulleted list are generally arranged in descending order of frequency unless otherwise noted. The report uses qualifiers such as “most,” “many,” “some,” and “a few” to indicate notable clusters of opinion and communicate a sense of relative frequency.
### WHAT DOES “PERFORMANCE” MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF PERFORMANCE-BASED LICENSURE?

#### General approaches to a performance-based licensure system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants frequently suggested:</th>
<th>Participants sometimes suggested:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Incorporate self-reflection as an important element</td>
<td>• Assess performance over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use multiple measures of performance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Potential indicators of performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants frequently suggested:</th>
<th>Participants often suggested:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reviews (potentially including reviews by peers, students, or supervisors, board review, and self-evaluation)</td>
<td>• Student success and achievement (e.g., test scores, behavior, emotional skills, student work samples, preparedness for future coursework or experience)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstration of skills (e.g., ability to differentiate instruction, classroom management ability)</td>
<td>• Student, family and community engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Portfolios (formative and summative)</td>
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#### Linking licensure and educator evaluation

Opinions differed sharply on whether and how to tie licensure to educator evaluation. Several stakeholders recommended incorporating the evidence collected through the evaluation process to help inform license renewal decisions. Several others argued – with approximately equal frequency and emphasis – that licensure should not be tied to or conflated with evaluation.

**Advantages mentioned:**
- The evaluation framework shows a teacher’s competency in the classroom, which is the most essential component of teacher effectiveness and quality.
- Using the indicators in the current Evaluation Framework for licensure would allow new teachers to better understand the skills needed to enter the profession and on which they will be evaluated as they continue in the profession.
- Evidence collected through the evaluation process could be incorporated into a portfolio to help inform licensure.

**Disadvantages mentioned:**
- Ratings may not take extenuating circumstances (e.g., high-needs students, or a personality conflict with a supervisor) into account.
- Teachers might earn high ratings without truly educating all students.
- Evaluators may be reluctant to rate someone as “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory” due to feared impact on careers.
- Those making licensure decisions may lack credentials or proximity to assess teaching.
- Certain indicators (e.g., student test scores) could be over-emphasized.
### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL SHORTCOMINGS—IF ANY—OF THE EXISTING LICENSURE SYSTEM?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants frequently mentioned:</th>
<th>Participants often suggested:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The system is unduly complex and confusing. The tiered approaches should be condensed to 1-2 licenses per field.</td>
<td>• The system should better enable reciprocity with other states (perhaps via regional alignment of test requirements).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication between DESE and educators is impaired by staffing levels and availability (complaints included wait times, slow response, lack of discipline-specific expertise, and confusing website).</td>
<td>• Too much weight is given to Professional Development Points in the licensure process.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The system places too much emphasis on passing tests and demonstrating content knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Alternative pathways to licensure are needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The cost of the licensure process to educators is excessive. License tiers should be consolidated or made more meaningful. The preliminary license for teachers in particular should be strengthened, shortened, or eliminated.</td>
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**Next steps**

The stakeholder perspectives presented in this report will inform DESE’s development of draft guiding principles and policy framework options. DESE will convene a second round of stakeholder meetings in the Fall of 2014 to solicit educators’ views about those principles and the advantages and disadvantages of draft policy options. DESE, with support from TNTP, will then develop a proposed framework for licensure and license renewal, informed by stakeholder input and by analysis of the existing research base.
BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

In 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE or “the Department”) established five focus areas, including:

1. Educator effectiveness;
2. Curriculum;
3. Instruction and assessment;
4. Accountability and assistance;
5. Wraparound supports and the engagement of students and families; and
6. School and classroom culture.

The focus area of educator effectiveness is to ensure that every classroom in the Commonwealth is staffed by an effective educator, and that schools and districts are organized to support student achievement and success. To this end, the Department has been examining its policies and relevant regulations for alignment and to ascertain to what extent the policies support this vision. This work on licensure policy was catalyzed by Massachusetts’ participation in the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP), a network of seven states selected for this work by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). As part of this work, DESE committed to working with partners to explore possible development and implementation of a performance-based licensure and license renewal system to better align with the state’s current educator effectiveness policies. DESE asked TNTP (www.tntp.org), a national non-profit founded by teachers and leaders working in a variety of educator effectiveness policy areas, to conduct research and assess available information to support the development, testing and refining of key elements of a performance-based system for licensure. DESE identified the need to engage with stakeholders as a key component of this work. TNTP engaged The Keystone Center (Keystone) (www.keystone.org), an independent 501(c)3 facilitator whose mission is to bring together today’s leaders to create solutions to society’s pressing challenges, to work with DESE and TNTP to design and facilitate a process of engaging stakeholders to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of Massachusetts educators could inform this effort.

This report describes the first phase of the initiative – Stakeholder Engagement, the first part of the two-year project. The project team conducted focus groups and issued an electronic questionnaire to gather perspectives from Massachusetts educators in higher education and K-12 on the Commonwealth’s licensure system as the first step to inform the development of guiding principles and possible policy frameworks for licensure.

METHODS

Keystone worked with DESE and TNTP to develop a focus group format as the primary means of gathering stakeholder input in Phase I. DESE sought responses to fundamental, open-ended questions to inform the development in Phase II of guiding principles and possible policy frameworks. Keystone convened 23 targeted focus group sessions around the state in addition to

7http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Programs/Network_for_Transforming_Educator_Preparation_%28NTEP%29.html
two focus group sessions led separately by DESE. Keystone obtained further information about stakeholder views through an electronic questionnaire that mirrored the questions posed in the focus groups.

This inquiry asked stakeholders to fundamentally reimagine the Commonwealth’s system of educator licensure. Rather than asking participants to react to new policy options or narrowly focus on shortcomings of the existing system, DESE, TNTP and Keystone sought to encourage innovative and aspirational thinking about the functions, characteristics and impacts of an effective system.

**Discussion design and moderation**

Keystone, TNTP and DESE developed an agenda designed to allow interactive discussion in which key stakeholders could express their opinions, perceptions, attitudes and values. (See Appendix A for the Focus Group Agenda.)

Keystone developed the agenda and moderator’s guide, moderated all discussion, took detailed discussion notes and wrote summaries of input from each focus group. Sessions were designed to last ninety minutes. Participants were seated either in an open square formation or at a conference table to allow for an interactive discussion.

The moderator introduced written protocols for the session, including:

- The expectation that discussion would focus on objectives and characteristics of an effective licensure system rather than on operational details or on the particularities of the existing system.
- Clarification that consensus among participants was not a goal of the discussion; rather, participants were asked to offer their own perspective and best advice on the basis of their individual expertise and experience.
- Assurance that viewpoints would not be attributed to individual participants; instead, all input would be synthesized and reported in the aggregate.

(See Appendix B for Focus Group protocols.)

Moderated discussion focused on the following five questions:

1. What purpose should a state educator license serve?
2. What should be the most important requirements to enter the profession (that is, to be licensed)?
3. What should be the most important requirements to remain in the profession (that is, to be relicensed)?
4. What does “performance” mean in the context of performance-based licensure?
5. In light of the conversation you’ve just had, what do you perceive to be the critical shortcomings – if any – of the existing licensure system?
Keystone used both prepared and spontaneous probing questions to elicit detailed viewpoints as well as the underlying values and – to the extent possible – participants’ explanation or rationale.

Moderators asked participating stakeholders to provide both verbal and written responses to Question 2 above. Participants used index cards to write down the most important requirements to enter the profession, as well as the most important requirements to continue in the profession. They distinguished between types of educators – e.g., teachers, administrators, superintendents – in describing preferred requirements. Participants shared and discussed their topmost answers.

Participants also received index cards for recording any viewpoints that they did not have time to raise or did not feel comfortable raising aloud. Keystone collected all written input at the close of each session. Keystone transcribed the index cards and synthesized the information along with verbal input.

**Role of DESE**

A DESE representative attended the beginning of most meetings to provide background information on the overall project rationale and objectives and to offer any needed clarification. The initial plan called for the DESE representative to depart after the opening session in order to maximize the likelihood of candor and spontaneity on the part of participants. However, after one early group expressed disappointment at DESE’s absence, the Keystone team recognized that at least some stakeholders (principally teachers) valued the opportunity to share their views directly with DESE. Thereafter a DESE representative attended the discussion portion of several meetings.

**Focus group locations**

From the start, DESE set the expectation that focus groups would be conducted across the Commonwealth. In identifying locations for focus groups, we placed a high priority on providing opportunities for educators throughout the state to provide input. Keystone convened focus groups in Boston and the surrounding area, as well as in the western, central, southern and northern parts of the state. Focus group meetings were made available in the following counties:

- **Week 1 (May 27-30):** Suffolk and Norfolk – *total of five focus groups*
- **Week 2 (June 16-20):** Middlesex, Worcester, Franklin, Berkshire, Hampshire, Hampden – *total of eight focus groups*
- **Week 3 (June 23-27):** Barnstable, Plymouth*, Bristol, Middlesex, Essex, Suffolk – *total of ten focus groups*

[* - The meeting scheduled for Plymouth County was canceled due to lack of registrants.]

We chose meeting venues on the basis of convenience to stakeholders as well as their identity as neutral or familiar settings. Sessions were typically held in local schools and community centers, with consideration given to ease of parking, open hours, and ease of transportation.
Stakeholder selection

During phase I, we sought input from individuals with relevant expertise and experience in the field. DESE, TNTP and Keystone identified key stakeholder groups to include in Phase I with categories of professionals expected to be directly affected by changes in licensure policy: teachers, principals and assistant principals, preparation program faculty, human resource officers, school committee members, superintendents and assistant superintendents, education collaborative representatives, professional support personnel (e.g., school nurses, school counselors, school psychologists), and educator professional associations.

While parents are essential stakeholders in education, we did not include parent-specific focus groups in Phase I. Parent engagement, particularly with an educational component focused on the content of proposed licensure system models, may become more important and feasible in Phase III of this initiative or beyond. Similarly, we did not seek to recruit legislators, current students in educator preparation programs, or business leaders in Phase I, but they should be important considerations in later phases of the project.

We set an official maximum of 12 stakeholders per focus group since our experience suggests that substantially larger groups would have made it difficult to hear sufficiently from all participants, especially those with more reserved personalities or trepidations about the objective. However, registration was not actually capped until 15, as long as meeting room size permitted slightly larger groups.

Recruitment process

Keystone worked with DESE and TNTP to design and execute a plan for extensive stakeholder outreach and recruitment of focus group participants.

Keystone maintained frequent contact with leaders or key personnel at membership associations, higher education organizations, and DESE advisory councils. In most cases, these individuals sent mass e-mails to their memberships with information provided by Keystone regarding the focus group opportunity and the overall initiative, with appeals to participate by registering and attending. These individuals also: forwarded the information to colleagues, peers and counterparts; forwarded the information to targeted specific individuals they thought should attend; and, in many cases, attended focus groups themselves. Organizations and entities with which Keystone worked in this fashion included:

- The American Federation of Teachers - Massachusetts
- The Boston Teachers Union
- The Consortium of Massachusetts Teacher Education Colleges
- The Diversity Task Force (the Massachusetts Advocates for Diversity in Education)
- Educator Personnel Advisory Committee
- The Massachusetts Association of Colleges for Teacher Preparation
- The Massachusetts Association of School Committees
- The Massachusetts Association of School Personnel Administrators
- Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
More direct recruitment efforts included the use of e-mail and telephone outreach. Using lists of
all of the principals, human resource (HR) directors and superintendents in the state (as provided
by DESE), Keystone created targeted lists of all of professionals serving in these roles within 10-
20 miles of each focus group location (approximately 975 people), and sent e-mails to those lists
with information on focus group opportunities and the overall initiative. In cases of focus groups
with low registration numbers, Keystone staff followed those e-mails with phone calls to those in
the immediate vicinity during the week prior. Keystone staff also reached out to personal
contacts in the state’s educator workforce who volunteered to help recruit colleagues and peers.
At focus groups meetings, Keystone asked engaged participants to help spread the word to their
colleagues and peers around the state. (In later focus groups many participants indicated that they
had been recruited via peer word-of-mouth.)

As a helpful supplement to Keystone’s recruitment efforts, DESE staff sent e-mails to numerous
key stakeholders and partners to inform them about the project, to provide introductions for
Keystone, and to encourage them to promote the focus group opportunity and/or to attend
themselves. DESE also posted information about all focus groups and the link to the registration
survey on DESE’s Licensure website landing page. The DESE licensure hotline also added a
voice recording that provided information about focus groups and referring callers to a toll free
number Keystone established for the purposes of recruitment and registration.

**Challenges and adjustments**

We experienced sporadic difficulty in recruiting to target numbers, particularly in Boston and the
northwest part of the Commonwealth, and especially in the ranks of superintendents and
principals. We also experienced high attrition among registered participants for a few meetings,
especially in the Boston area.

Both during recruitment and during meetings, Keystone received extensive feedback from
educators that the focus group meetings were occurring too close to the end of the school year to
be convenient for educators, at least without significantly more notice being provided. Fall was
sometimes suggested as a more feasible time to convene teachers, in particular, in greater numbers.

Due to challenges in recruitment, we canceled three focus group meetings during Week 1 and rescheduled them for Week 3 (both times in the Boston area). Two meetings were canceled during Week 2, and the time was used instead to talk more informally with area superintendents and school leaders.

Since we recognized the focus groups were scheduled at a time of year that is very busy for educators, we developed an electronic questionnaire which mirrored the key questions in the focus group agenda. We distributed the questionnaire to over 100 stakeholders, including all persons who expressed interest in a focus group but were unable to attend, and all registered no-shows. Thirty-nine recipients completed the questionnaire.

**Process for collecting and synthesizing data**

*Sources of data*

In-person focus groups facilitated by Keystone served as the primary data source. Outputs from these meetings included discussion summaries, index cards containing written input from participants, and Keystone’s raw discussion notes. As explained above, we used an electronic questionnaire to expand the number of key stakeholders able to provide input.

DESE staff facilitated two additional focus group sessions with key stakeholders: the Massachusetts NTEP (Network for Transforming Educator Preparedness) Stakeholder Working Group, educators tasked with providing input to DESE as the state pursues projects in the areas of licensure, preparation program approval and data systems; and the Teacher Advisory Cabinet. These sessions provided helpful supplemental information and allowed existing groups of key stakeholders to participate easily.

DESE also provided Keystone with information from two additional sources of stakeholder opinion: discussion at a Teach Plus event involving approximately 66 educators (including 46 active teachers and nine retired teachers), and five internal focus groups (three involving licensure staff, one with legal staff, and one with educator preparation staff). This supplemental data is characterized briefly in a separate section following the Results. These sessions varied somewhat in structure and protocol but helpfully provided additional information and allowed convenient participation by standing groups of key stakeholders.

*Data organization and analysis*

Keystone used the web application Dedoose to assist with analysis of stakeholder input, coding qualitative data into significant themes. Keystone labeled categories and subcategories of data consistent with emergent themes, and summarized all data for analysis by TNTP.

In summarizing the data we looked for response patterns within each major stakeholder category (e.g., teacher, administrator), and preserved the ability to sort by data source (i.e., Keystone-led
focus group, electronic questionnaire, DESE-led focus group). We could not disaggregate the data completely by educator category since several focus group meetings included individuals from different categories. Also, the fact that participants responded to open-ended questions rather than to survey questions limits the ability to generalize about the views of an entire professional category (e.g., “all participating teachers believe…”).

Respecting the qualitative nature of this effort, this report notes the frequency and/or emphasis of mention in presenting major themes wherever possible. Using qualifiers such as “most,” “many,” “some,” and “a few,” Keystone has at times indicated notable clusters of opinion, whether among stakeholders in general or among participants from specific fields of education.

The resultant codes can be displayed and explored, frequency counts can be generated (with a word of caution since this research is wholly qualitative in nature and the ability to generalize about the viewpoints of professional fields is limited on the basis of the data), and the total data file can be generated.

**How to read this report**

The vast majority of comments collected in this process focused on teacher licensure or, more broadly, educator licensure. The report notes instances where participants made specific references to other types of licensure (school administrator, superintendent, or professional support personnel licenses).

Major themes within a section are typically presented in rough order of frequency and emphasis of mention. Items in a bulleted list are arranged similarly (in descending order of frequency and emphasis) unless they are characterized as views or opinions of individuals, in which case no order is implied. Standard terms are employed to convey a relative sense of frequency or magnitude. Therefore, “frequently mentioned” > “often mentioned” > “also mentioned.” Similarly, “most” > “many” > “some” > “a few” > “an individual.” The terms “many” and “several” generally denote 20-35 participants, whereas “some” typically indicates a range of 10-20, and “a few” less than 10.

Wherever possible we indicate the stakeholder sectors from which a given view is expressed. In some cases an opinion appeared to be shared across sectors, and in some cases the origin cannot be identified due to the mixed professional populations in some focus groups.

**PARTICIPATING STAKEHOLDERS**

**Summary**

A total of 322 individuals engaged in Phase I, mostly through in-person focus group participation (led by Keystone or DESE) or through completion of an online questionnaire that mirrored questions asked in focus groups. K-12 teachers comprised the largest category of participants overall, followed by educator preparation program faculty. A substantial number of other licensed educators (district administrators, school administrators, and professional support...
personnel) and a smaller number of HR officers, school committee members, educator association staff, and education task force members also participated.

Using SurveyMonkey, an online survey and questionnaire software, Keystone collected demographic information (gender, age range, title, affiliation, and role category) for all focus group registrants and online questionnaire completers. (See Appendix C for a demographic summary of all participants in the process.) More participants were female (78%) and older (71 percent were 46 years of age or older); these tendencies reflect the characteristics of Massachusetts’ educator workforce and especially teacher workforce. When registrants or questionnaire completers selected their role, the survey prompted them to complete a supplemental set of questions that provided information about their route into the profession, the number of years they had been serving in that role, the type of license they held, etc. (See Appendix D for supplemental demographic information by role.) Within each sub-group, a variety of perspectives and experience levels are represented (i.e., charter vs. non-charter, private vs. public vs. alternative preparation program faculty, novice vs. veteran educators).

Focus groups

Keystone conducted a total of 23 focus groups in 19 unique locations across the state, with 169 attendees (all attended in person except for one, who participated via conference line). Twelve of Massachusetts’ 14 counties were represented in focus groups sites. Most focus groups involved a single category of educator (e.g., teachers, principals, human resource officers, or educator preparation professionals, but in some cases, participants represented a mix of categories. Focus group size ranged from two to 15 participants. (See Appendix E for focus group attendee details.)

As noted in the Approach section above, DESE conducted two additional focus groups: one with 10 Teacher Advisory Cabinet members and one with 10 members of the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation Working Group.

Online questionnaire

Keystone distributed the questionnaire to 110 stakeholders who represented three groups: (1) people who registered for focus groups but were unable to attend, (2) people who reached out to Keystone directly to express interest in attending a focus group but were unable to attend, and (3) educator preparation program faculty members recommended by DESE. Thirty-nine stakeholders completed the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 35 percent. (See Appendix E for online questionnaire completer details.) The questionnaire posed the same questions as those addressed in focus groups. The open-ended responses were then coded in Dedoose and synthesized as stakeholder input.

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Supplemental information

DESE provided Keystone with results from a discussion among 66 Teach Plus constituents (including 46 active teachers) regarding educator licensure. The structure and methodology for that event were markedly different than for the focus groups since the Teach Plus meeting occurred prior to development of the focus group methodology. As noted above, DESE also shared results from five internal focus groups with a total of 28 participants. Participants in these supplemental meetings are not accounted for in total numbers or overall demographic breakdowns (Appendices C-E) because they did not complete a standard registration survey. Appendix F provides available demographic information about participants in these sessions.

RESULTS

PURPOSE OF A STATE EDUCATOR LICENSE

Keystone asked participants about the purpose served by a state educator license. Participants identified two main purposes: some educators said that licensure should set a minimum baseline while others said that licensure should ensure high quality. These two approaches formed different ends of a spectrum, with many specific suggestions falling somewhere between them. These two principal themes – minimum baseline and ensuring a quality workforce – occurred with approximately equal frequency and represented distinct schools of thought. Other themes which surfaced often, and sometimes as complements to one or the other of the principal themes, included the license serving as a “filter for the profession,” helping to professionalize education, or enabling growth and development of educators.

Ensuring a minimum baseline or threshold

Many participants expressed the view that a state educator license should ensure that the licensed professional has met a minimum baseline or threshold of competency. This perspective surfaced in a majority of focus group meetings, expressed mainly by teachers, school support personnel, and some educator preparation professionals and HR officers. Typical of this view was the expectation that an educator possesses basic qualifications to enter the profession, including content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, professionalism (e.g., appropriate dress and action, sound time management, the ability to have difficult conversations), cross-cultural competency, and social/emotional intelligence.

Many participants – especially teachers, school support personnel and school committee members – indicated that a license provides assurance or confidence to employers and the public that minimum standards have been met, with the expectation that judging quality is left to an employer and training will continue on the job.

While focus group discussions about the purpose of a licensure system often began with the “minimum baseline” view, some participants dissented, indicating that the bar for entry into the profession should be set higher. Some stated that a preliminary license does not indicate a person can teach, but simply that the person possesses background information relevant to his/her
intended work. Therefore, the task of ensuring readiness to enter a career (for example, that a teacher is “classroom ready”) is left to prospective employers. The dissenting participants felt that an educator should have to demonstrate something beyond a minimum level of skill or knowledge to become licensed. Dissenting participants also expressed the view that qualifications for a license should ensure a higher standard of competency to help relieve some of the pressure on districts and schools to finish training licensed professionals once they have gained employment.

Many educator preparation faculty members suggested subject area knowledge, basic pedagogical skills and cross-cultural competency as indicators of readiness, but some also suggested that the state should require training that includes practical experience (a practicum) and time being observed.

**Ensuring a quality workforce**

Many participants – including individuals from all educator categories – emphasized that the primary purpose of an educator license is to provide assurance to the public and to employers that an educator’s knowledge, skills, commitment and character are of high quality. These stakeholders stressed that educators should be prepared through a training program that ensures content mastery but also demonstration of pedagogical skills (such as classroom management) and professionalism.

Many participants also suggested that the purpose of a teacher license is to indicate that the licensed professional has completed a supervised student teaching/practicum experience, will be able to use various education practices, and has acquired the tools needed for immediate effectiveness – i.e., is “classroom ready.” Participants across all educator categories (e.g., teacher, principal, superintendent) mentioned at some point that a purpose of licensure is to provide assurance that the licensed professional has met some predetermined meaningful standard and will be an effective teacher. Teachers, education preparation program staff and professional support personnel also mentioned that the state educator license should indicate high-level consistency in preparing educators with a set of foundational skills. Some participants commented that while defining the correct standards that the State expects educator licensure candidates to meet is vital, it is even more important to develop a system to measure those standards in a meaningful manner.

9 Currently, a preliminary license in Massachusetts is valid for five years of employment, designed for people who have not completed an Approved Educator Preparation Program, and requires a bachelor’s degree, a passing score on MTEL, and additional coursework in the case of some licenses.

(From [http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html?section=k12](http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html?section=k12), accessed on 8/1/14.)
School and district leaders suggested that for superintendents, a license ensures that the candidate possesses core competencies in areas such as finance, human resources, the law, and leadership.

**Serving as a gatekeeper mechanism for the profession**

Many participants mentioned that possession of a license should indicate a candidate’s readiness to serve in the profession. They characterized an effective licensure system as a “gatekeeper” or “filter” to remove or keep from the profession those individuals who “should not be in front of children,” who “have unhealthy perspectives on children and learning,” or who are “incompetent or unqualified.” Some stressed that the system should give employers confidence that a licensed educator has been adequately vetted and found to be “classroom ready.”

Some stakeholders suggested that the licensure process should also function as a final checkpoint for prospective educators, encouraging candidates emerging from preparation programs to make a final assessment as to whether the profession is a good fit for them.

**Professionalizing education**

Some teachers, principals, and superintendents, as well as educator preparation faculty members, suggested licensure should play a role in elevating the education profession. They believed that a system of licensure should indicate the existence of a code of professionalism and ethics to which all licensed professionals must adhere.

Others stated that licensure should help “elevate the profession” by uniting all people who hold that license under a set of uniform expectations – e.g., that people in the field share a broad skill set and have met specified criteria. Possessing a license should mean that the professional holds certain values, such as belief in public service, appreciation of diversity, and love of children. A few participants asserted that the license confers esteemed professional status on the licensee, similar to the fields of law or medicine.

A few participants noted that a state educator license may also help differentiate between candidates and attract needed talent into the profession and the Commonwealth. Different licenses could indicate types of preparation and levels of experience in the profession. A licensure system should help retain the most effective teachers through professional development, compensation, and recognition.

“[A licensure system’s purpose is] to set high, rigorous standards that uphold a level of professionalism and standards that are consistent across the entire state.”
Enabling growth and development of educators

Some participants indicated (across all stakeholder groups) that a license should serve as a starting point with a clear path for advancing throughout one’s professional’s career. Several teachers agreed that the licensure system should enable new teachers to understand their strengths and weaknesses. They said the system should not be “punitive,” but rather act as a guide to advancing in the educator’s career. For veteran teachers, respondents said, the licensure system allows an educator to keep up with current trends and practices; it should ensure proper training and be a guide for appropriate and relevant continuing education. Finally, some participants strongly supported the idea that licensure should create a level of personal accountability that professionals must meet to remain current in the profession.

“A teaching license should allow a good entering teacher to become an excellent teacher.”

ENTERING THE EDUCATION PROFESSION: SUGGESTED REQUIREMENTS

Earning a teacher license

Stakeholder comments about requirements to enter the teaching profession focused broadly on some variation on three main themes: content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and demonstrated character or disposition.

At a minimum, certain education requirements should be met, but flexibility and alternative pathways are critical for attracting and retaining quality individuals.

Members of all stakeholder groups agreed that teachers should hold at least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution to be eligible for a license, though there was not universal agreement that this degree should be in education or in the subject area taught. At one end of the spectrum, certain stakeholders (HR directors, principals, one assistant superintendent) indicated that having a bachelor’s degree and proving content knowledge should be enough to earn a license, with the decision to hire then left to local districts. Some participants (mostly teachers) indicated that a master’s degree was important to either enter or remain in the profession, but many disagreed with this view, citing the high cost of master’s programs and limited research showing a proven benefit for student learning. Some stakeholders (teachers and school committee members) indicated that educational requirements may need to be more flexible to take prior work experience into account, especially in high-need fields such as foreign language, computer science, and vocational education. Members of all stakeholder groups supported the completion of some sort of preparation program, with the caveat that standards should be consistently high across programs.
Individual perspectives shared included the following:

- Asking career changers to return to a preparation program might be unrealistic and/or burdensome, when they may have other relevant qualifications (such as experience teaching at the college level or working with youth in other professions, for example).
- The process to obtain a first license should remain flexible in order to attract and retain talented individuals who may be unwilling to complete coursework that is perceived as extensive and not sufficiently meaningful.
- There should be more flexibility in which entities are able to grant a license, including possibly local/district capacity to grant a one- or two-year temporary license.

Teachers must possess content knowledge that matches the subject they teach.

Members of all stakeholder groups expressed the opinion that teachers must have a fundamental understanding of the content they teach, and they also indicated that this knowledge should be shown through some combination of written tests, coursework at the undergraduate or graduate level, prior experience with the subject area (teaching out-of-state or in some other professional capacity), and alternative assessments. However, some stakeholders (educator preparation program faculty members, teachers, principals) indicated that there is often too much of a focus on content, which in many cases is not the deciding factor in assuring a quality teacher.

Individual perspectives shared included the following:

- There are strong candidates who are not able to pass the MTEL because they are not strong test takers, and candidates who might be deficient in many areas but are able to pass the MTEL.
- The MTEL is often a barrier, particularly for diverse and out-of-state candidates.
- If we differentiate instruction and assessment for children in education, we should do the same for adults by allowing alternative ways of proving content knowledge. In the case where a teacher candidate is not able to pass the MTEL, the endorsement of a principal or superintendent could serve as a substitute.

Teachers must possess knowledge of pedagogical skills, preferably gained and practiced through a practicum experience.

Members of all stakeholder groups noted pedagogical skills and some variation on “knowledge of child psychology and development” as a requirement to teach. More often than not, this requirement was framed as “knowledge of” (as opposed to “demonstration of”) pedagogy, and participants mentioned coursework in these areas frequently. A few preparation program faculty members indicated that a basic performance assessment could be used to collect evidence of competence in this area.

Some stakeholders, especially among teachers, principals, and educator preparation program faculty members, indicated that a practicum or some form of student teaching experience was the easiest way for teacher candidates to gain and practice pedagogical skills, and others indicated that the practicum experience itself should be the most essential requirement to enter the classroom – even more important than coursework in pedagogy. Suggested periods for the
practicum experience ranged in length from a period of months, to each semester of a four-year preparation program.

Individual perspectives shared included the following:

- Pedagogical skills indicate the ability to engage learners with different learning profiles and abilities and the ability to organize and manage the learning environment in positive ways (skills in classroom management are included).
- Preparation programs should include not just coursework, but experience in the field in different educational settings and with different student populations, under the tutelage of a highly-skilled mentor.

**Teachers must possess “soft skills” that indicate a certain disposition for the profession.**

Members of all stakeholder groups indicated that certain soft skills (defined by some as “professional disposition” or “social/emotional intelligence”) must be demonstrated to enter the profession. Mentioned most often was a consistent “love of children” and a belief that all students can learn. Other examples of soft skills mentioned frequently included: growth mindset; communication and interpersonal skills (with colleagues, students, and families); love of learning and inquisitive nature (the phrase “life-long learner” was used frequently); commitment to children and the profession (described alternatively as “heart,” “grit,” “passion,” and “drive”); appreciation of the community and cultural competence; flexibility/adaptability; and ability to respond positively to feedback. Participants often noted that these skills are difficult to measure through means other than observation and demonstration lessons, which lends importance to the practicum experience occurring before someone is a teacher of record.

“Teachers must have the inherent ability to connect with students on a human, personal level and have the demonstrated ability to be receptive to the social, emotional, and academic engagement of all children.”

**Other notable trends and themes**

- Ideally, participants said, teachers would gain practical experience with a variety of student populations (including special education students, gifted and talented learners, English language learners, and low-income students) before becoming teacher of record to prepare them for the changing populations in all districts.
- A few participants mentioned technological proficiency as another basic requirement for entering the classroom (including an understanding of how to utilize learning technologies for the benefit of students and the implications of social media in schools).

**Earning other educator licenses**

**Principals**

A majority of teachers who provided input on requirements for principals believed that an essential prerequisite for principals is previous experience as a teacher. Professional support personnel who attended in-person focus groups and a few superintendents who completed the online questionnaire also expressed this view. No principals who participated in focus groups
mentioned prior teaching experience as a minimum requirement (though a few did who completed the online questionnaire). Two rationales were given: teaching experience is most important for principals to have credibility with their staff, but it is also important for the skills required in recognizing and evaluating good teaching. Suggestions for time in the classroom ranged from one to ten years. There was not universal agreement that time in the classroom must be as teacher of record, however; an HR director expressed the opinion that time spent substitute teaching was also valuable. Similar to student teaching for teachers, many participants indicated that an internship or apprenticeship is important, with the caveat that educators must show something beyond just “putting in time” or “having someone sign off on hours” to advance to the school leadership role.

Several participants indicated that, at a minimum, principals should be required to complete coursework in areas such as the law and management, and demonstrate skills in program evaluation, leadership, and supporting and developing others.

Other requirements suggested by some stakeholders included:

- A working practical knowledge of regulations in the profession and of the standards and curriculum for all grade levels and subject areas in their school.
- Obtaining a master’s degree.

Superintendents

Opinions on entry requirements for superintendents were generally provided only by those serving as district administrators, though some teachers, principals and professional support personnel also weighed in. Superintendents must have a strong understanding of instructional leadership (though teaching experience was only mentioned a few times as a requirement for superintendents). In some cases, those who believed prior teaching or school leadership experience should be a prerequisite also provided time parameters for experience at each level, which ranged between three and ten years. Participants mentioned skills that superintendents must possess to enter the profession, which included skills in finance and budgeting, human resources, law, and leadership – noted by some teachers as similar to the skills needed in school leadership roles. Experience with labor negotiations and community partnerships were noted as helpful but not necessary. It was noted that many of the skills district administrators need to understand and demonstrate are learned through experience on the job.

Professional Support Personnel

Opinions on entry requirements for professional support personnel (including school nurses, counselors, psychologists, speech pathologists, and social workers) were provided only by focus group participants and online questionnaire responders serving in those roles, in many cases meaning a small sample size of one to five people. Participants in all roles suggested that a minimum requirement should be the appropriate undergraduate (and in some cases graduate) degree for the field and prior related experience. Several members of this stakeholder group raised the question of whether support personnel should even be required to possess a state educator license when they are licensed in their own profession, since their roles are strictly supportive and are not closely related to an educator’s criteria for licensure.
Suggestions regarding specific roles included:

_Nurses_
- School nurses should have prior clinical experience with children in a pediatric care and/or community health setting. They should hold a Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing and be licensed as a nurse by the state of Massachusetts.

_Counselors_
- Educator preparation is perhaps more important for counselors. A few participants suggested that counselors must possess a teaching license as a prerequisite. The rationale for this view was that, compared with other support personnel roles, it is most necessary for counselors to relate to issues students and teachers face on a daily basis in the classroom.

_Psychologists_
- Alternative pathways for school psychologists are not advisable. Standards should be consistent across pathways to entry.

_Speech pathologists_
- Speech pathologists working in schools should hold their master’s degree. Another suggested requirement was a Certificate of Clinical Competence from the American Speech Hearing Association.

CONTINUING IN THE EDUCATION PROFESSION: SUGGESTED REQUIREMENTS

**Renewing a teacher license**

_Requirements to continue in the teaching profession should focus on ongoing professional development, with an additional focus on continuous growth and improvement._

Members of all stakeholder groups mentioned ongoing professional development (PD) as a fundamental requirement to continue in the profession (for all roles – not just teachers). The general rationale for this view is that it is important for educators to “stay current” in their field and improve their practice over time. Two themes came up repeatedly in discussions about PD that distinguish the current system from what requirements should be to continue/renew a license: first, PD must be relevant to an educator’s subject and/or grade level, and second, it should distinguish between novice and veteran levels of experience (i.e., teachers in their fifteenth year should not receive the same PD as teachers in their second year, since their needs are probably significantly different). Furthermore, many stakeholders emphasized the difference between PD that is “forced upon educators” versus professional development that has been self-identified and pursued by an educator because it meets their needs and goals. Stakeholders (teachers, HR directors) agreed that there should be a clearer link between professional development and the state evaluation framework. PD should tie to an educator’s needs for improvement as identified in their evaluation, not just their interests.

The majority of stakeholders seemed comfortable relying at least partly on a requirement of acquiring Professional Development Points (PDPs) to renew a license, but some teachers
indicated that a portfolio including data and/or personal reflections could be compiled to show growth as well. Stakeholders disagreed on the merits of requiring completion of a master’s degree to continue in the profession. While some teachers indicated that they felt an advanced degree should be required after a certain number of years in the profession, other teachers and members of other groups stated the opinion that it was an unrealistic expectation given the financial burden, and that graduate-level coursework should be available but not mandatory.

Individual perspectives shared included the following:

- It is too easy for teachers to only undergo professional development for compliance purposes without ever observing another teacher or getting valuable experiences outside of the school building.
- Professional development should be competency-based, with educators able to demonstrate what they learn (as opposed to “sit and get” sessions for which PDPs are accumulated).

Disposition required to continue in the profession should also indicate a commitment to growth and improvement.

Expanding on the themes above of continuous growth and improvement, members of various stakeholder groups mentioned love of learning, a strong desire on the part of the educator to continuously improve, and the ability to act positively on feedback provided as minimum dispositional requirements. As in requirements to enter the profession, the phrase “life-long learner” was used a number of times. Teachers, association staff members, and preparation program faculty members suggested requiring some evidence of self-reflection: the ability to talk knowledgably about how curriculum or an educator’s practice is or is not meeting the needs of students and to set goals in areas where improvement is needed.

Continuing in the teaching profession should rely at least in part on demonstrated evidence of student learning and/or satisfactory evaluation of the educator.

Participants from a variety of stakeholder groups (teachers, principals, educator preparation program faculty, professional support personnel, MOEC members) often stated the opinion that the demonstrated progress of all students should be taken into account for re-licensure decisions. One participant stated emphatically that poor performance measurements of any kind should not be acceptable; another stated that evaluations should be at least “Needs Improvement,” if not Proficient or Exemplary.

At the same time they mentioned utilizing some measure of student achievement, several participants stated their reluctance to tie license renewal directly to the evaluation framework, and cautioned against the use of standardized test data or any one-time measure of learning. In addition to showing evidence of student learning, stakeholders indicated teachers should demonstrate the ability to use student data to make instructional decisions and improve their practice.
Some participants suggested that evidence of effectiveness – sufficient to continue in the profession – should include positive student outcomes, observations of well-informed evaluators, self-assessment, and feedback from parents, students, and peers.

Teachers should be required to assume a gradual increase in responsibility as they progress.

Stakeholders (teachers, preparation program faculty members) indicated that taking on formal leadership roles within the school or community should not just be encouraged but required to continue in the profession, thereby “giving back” to the field. Mentoring others was mentioned most frequently, but other options for assuming increased responsibility included sitting on parent committees and taking on instructional leadership roles.

The importance of collaboration skills was also cited often. One participant described taking on leadership roles and demonstrating collaboration with colleagues and families as “evidence of professional maturity.” Another suggested that teachers should be expected to serve and lead outside of their own classroom, meaning engagement in collaborative or distributive leadership at their school site.

Other notable trends and themes:
- A small number of teacher participants indicated that the license renewal process is meaningless and should not exist at all. These participants expressed frustration with a system that they see as an exercise in compliance and the payment of fees.
- A focus group of HR directors and an assistant superintendent agreed that superintendents and principals should be able to make executive decisions about whether to keep someone on staff, regardless of licensure status, when it is in the best interest of students.

Renewing other educator licenses

Principals

Like teachers, principals should be required to continue their education through professional development (though specific areas of focus were not cited). Citing principals who may fall out of touch with standards and the reality of the classroom, participants often suggested requiring school leaders to return to the classroom (to teach one course every five years or a certain number of hours per license cycle, for example). Diversity Task Force members agreed that school administrators must be able to show over time that they can learn from data to enhance the performance of all students in their building, and that any achievement gap is closing. Similar to teachers, demonstrated success relating to the evaluation system was mentioned a number of times (by teachers, principals, and professional support personnel) as a requirement to continue, including satisfactory ratings or evidence of growth in attaining the goals of a school’s improvement plan. Teachers and support personnel in particular supported the idea that surveys/reviews of “principals’ managers and those they manage,” including teachers and students but also the superintendent and school committee, should be taken into account to continue in the profession. Principals must have proven time management and distributive
leadership skills, meaning the ability to engage and develop their teachers for leadership roles. Participants did not indicate how this should be assessed.

Superintendents

In many cases, the requirements given to continue in the superintendency were the same ones given for the principalship, including ongoing professional development in administration-related topics, surveys of teachers, principals, and other district employees regarding their methods of leadership, and evidence that the district is making progress in teaching and learning based on formative and summative assessments of teachers and students and progress on district goals. For superintendents, evidence of continued classroom involvement was highlighted as proof of time spent in schools meeting with teachers and administrators.

Individual perspectives shared included the following:
- It is important to recognize the inherent difference in skill sets required to be effective in various districts (i.e., a large region versus a small town).
- Superintendents should be required to provide training to other administrators to be re-licensed.
- Superintendent re-licensure could incorporate the recommendation of the school committee and/or the requirement that district administrators demonstrate their competence, professional growth, and other core skills before a review board or panel.

Professional support personnel

Professional support personnel and HR directors were the only stakeholders to weigh in on the requirements to continue in professional support personnel positions. Ongoing PD was cited as an important requirement for school nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers, but several participants mentioned that PD opportunities should be much more readily available and tailored to their respective roles. Currently, support personnel often experience difficulty in getting release time to attend PD that they see as valuable; a few explained that they usually end up attending workshops or trainings on personal time. Similarly, many indicated that they receive PD credit for trainings that have nothing to do with their role, or that they are expected to provide training for teachers in their school, which does not help them to develop professionally.

One school counselor indicated that membership in the statewide association should be required, believing that increased association memberships would help elevate the professions. A few nurses suggested requiring nurses to maintain their state nursing license, complete continuing education courses that reflect the school’s health needs, and be active in school programs designed to improve the health and well-being of staff and students.

PERFORMANCE IN A PERFORMANCE-BASED LICENSURE SYSTEM

Participants were asked what “performance” should mean – how it should be defined, understood and measured – in the context of a performance-based licensure system. Stakeholder input included:
### MAJOR THEME

**Advice for linking educator performance with licensure**

- Assess performance over time, and use multiple measures of performance
- Incorporate self-reflection as an important element

**Suggested ways of measuring performance (or demonstrating ability)**

- Reviews (by peers, students, supervisors)
- Demonstration of skills (e.g., ability to differentiate instruction, classroom management ability)
- Student success and achievement (e.g., test scores, behavior, emotional skills, student work samples, preparedness for future coursework or experience)
- Student, family and community engagement
- Portfolios (formative and summative)

**Perspectives on the relationship of educator evaluation and licensure (whether and how to use evidence from Educator Evaluation to inform license renewal)**

- Educator evaluation can inform licensure
- Licensure should not be tied to evaluation

**Concerns about the potential role of performance in licensure decisions**

- Potential for the wrong indicators to be emphasized
- Difficulty in ensuring reliability of data and decisions

**Perspectives on who should make licensure decisions**

- Final calls on teacher readiness should be left to preparation programs
- Performance should be assessed by a team, not a single person
- Evaluators should be mentors, or otherwise familiar with the candidate

### Approaches to performance-based licensure

Participants recommended general approaches to defining performance or making use of performance information in licensure decisions, including measuring performance over time, making use of multiple measures and incorporating an element of self-reflection.

**Assess performance over time and/or use multiple measures of performance**

Many participants (especially educator preparation program faculty/staff and teachers, with a few administrators and others) strongly emphasized the need to evaluate performance over time and/or use multiple measures of performance so that ongoing competency can be demonstrated.
rather than relying on a “snapshot” such as the statewide assessment or a single classroom observation.

Each of the following rationales was supported by multiple participants:

- Multiple observations and assessments over a period of time increase the likelihood that the observer/evaluator has a clear understanding of the candidate or educator and the student dynamics in the classroom.
- Performance should include a progress measure as opposed to “flat” performance.
- Assessment of performance should happen periodically (one participant suggested weekly) in order to see the growth and development of the teacher and students.
- Performance should be measured over the course of many years, not just one year.
- Participants expressed the belief that it can take many years for someone to become a good teacher, thus, they said, evidence of constant improvement needs to be factored into the definition of “performance.”

Both teachers and individuals involved in hiring decisions stressed the value of using multiple measures of performance to achieve a more holistic understanding of student growth. For example, a teacher’s performance could be measured through video, multiple observations, peer assessment, and self-assessment.

**Acknowledge the importance of self-reflection**

The theme of educator self-reflection surfaced most often among suggested approaches to including performance in licensure, although it was not necessarily mentioned first or most emphatically. Many participants (mostly teachers and educator preparation program faculty/staff) suggested that a performance-based licensure system should incorporate the practice of self-reflection. In order to remain in the classroom, educators should demonstrate the ability to reflect on their own skills, practices and progress toward goals and adapt teaching practice accordingly.

While many participants indicated that some measure of self-reflection should be included as an element of performance, they did not offer a clear means of measuring self-reflection.

**Other suggested approaches**

Additional suggestions made by groups of participants within one or two focus groups, or by single participants, included the following:

- Some education collaborative representatives and teachers favored an approach to performance-based licensure that supports growth and development, identifying areas for improvement and targeted professional development. They opposed “punitive” uses of performance information.
Some educator preparation professionals and teachers suggested shifting to alternative
terminology such as “ability” or “practice,” believing that the word “performance”
suggests only student test scores. They noted that “practice” implies something more
sustained and variable over time, whereas “performance” can insinuate “dressing up and
putting on a show.”

A few educator preparation professionals suggested defining and measuring performance
differently for a new teacher than for a more experienced teacher.

**Potential indicators of performance**

Many individuals emphasized the need for objective measurements, evidence-based criteria or
“hard data” in assessing educator ability, but varied in their ability or willingness to identify
means of satisfying that need. Participants suggested a variety of ways to measure performance
and a number of factors to consider in assessing ability. They stressed reviews and
demonstration of skills most frequently, while student success or achievement, engagement of
students and families, portfolios, and professional development were also suggested often.

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<td>Reviews (by peers, students, supervisors)</td>
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<td>Exhibiting appropriate disposition/professionalism</td>
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<td>Content mastery</td>
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<td>Collaboration</td>
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<td>Reliance on existing standards (e.g., current educator evaluation tool)</td>
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<td>Achieving expected degree</td>
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**Reviews (by peers, students, supervisors)**

Many participants across educator categories spoke of reviews as a means of assessing
performance for purposes of licensure. Variations mentioned included a peer review process, a
board review process, self-evaluation, review by a supervisor within the same discipline, review
by an administrator, feedback from or surveys of students and families, and a school-wide stakeholder survey. Most participants who stressed review as a measure suggested more than one of these variations used together.

Individual suggestions regarding what exactly would be measured through a review included:
- Proficiency in teaching areas.
- What an educator has accomplished, completed, and left undone.
- Student well-being or happiness.

One teacher suggested that consistently good reviews should be expected of a licensed teacher; teachers consistently rated lower than proficient should be placed on an action plan and given a provisional license.

*Demonstration of skills*

Many participants – especially teachers, but also educator preparation professionals, education collaborative representatives and professional support personnel – stressed demonstration of professional skills (e.g., pedagogical skills for teachers, clinical skills for nurses) as an important or even essential factor in educator performance for purposes of licensure.

Participants most often suggested demonstration lessons (observable via video recording if not in person) as a means of demonstrating teaching ability. Some participants suggested lesson plan design as a means to demonstrate teaching ability, noting that the plans can be evaluated for content organization, pedagogy, higher order thinking skills, and tasks that match student age and ability.

Participants in a focus group of teachers noted the difficulty of statewide consistency in assessing performance through the practicum element in preparation programs, given the overall number of institutions. Others noted that teaching ability should be observed over time – even over the course of one or two years – by someone familiar with the teacher, students and content.

Participants also suggested that teachers should demonstrate:
- The ability to differentiate instruction – to teach a concept in a way that is understandable to the age, development level and other learning needs of children.
- Evidenced-based instructional practices driven by ongoing data collection.
- Effective classroom management, including the ability to create a conducive classroom environment.
- Application of baseline knowledge within the classroom.

*Student success and achievement*

A number of stakeholders (several teachers, preparation program professionals and some support personnel and education collaborative representatives) mentioned student success and achievement as an important element performance-based licensure. Some participants defined student success, achievement or growth broadly in advocating for them as part of educator performance, including grades and/or test scores but also behavior patterns, emotional skills,
attendance, student work samples, and student preparedness for future coursework or experiences.

Some teachers expressed strong concern that using student test scores or other quantitative measures of student achievement as a basis for licensure decisions would penalize and discourage teachers who serve students with developmental or socioeconomic challenges, or who serve in schools or districts with resource challenges. Nevertheless, some teachers suggested that evidence of student growth should be present in order for a teacher to remain in the profession.

*Student, family, and community engagement*

Many stakeholders – especially teachers, but also preparation program faculty/staff and education collaboration representatives – mentioned engagement of students, families, and/or the community as an important indicator of educator performance for purposes of licensure. Some teachers cited the difficulty of measuring the ability to engage students, but other individuals indicated it should involve the following:

- Creating a non-threatening environment for all students.
- Engaging with students outside of instruction, learning about their unique backgrounds and needs.
- Taking into account the fact that all students learn and engage differently.
- The ability to work with diverse students and their families.

Potential ways of measuring engagement included interactions with families, positive feedback from parents and the community, and making proper use of technology to connect with students, families and larger communities.

*Portfolios*

A variety of participants, including teachers and administrators, recommended use of a portfolio to help demonstrate ability over time as part of performance-based licensure decision-making. They suggested using portfolios to provide examples of accomplishment to inform judgments about the ability of an educator. Portfolios of work (possibly both formative and summative) could be used to show:

- Professional growth.
- Progress toward goals and benchmarks.
- Reflections on mistakes made and lessons learned.
- Planning and lesson plans created in response to student areas of strength and weakness.

*Professional development completion*

A number of educators – especially, but not only teachers – suggested completion of professional development coursework as an important performance indicator or evidence of demonstrated ability in making licensure decisions. More broadly, some participants suggested that:

- Licensing should be tied to credentials and continuing education only.
- Documentation of ongoing, in-depth professional development should be necessary for license renewal.
• Ongoing professional development should require long-term practice and coaching support for implementation.
• A PD workshop should be followed by proof of how what was learned in a workshop was implemented.
• PD should focus on one’s area of teaching.

Disposition / professionalism

Several participating stakeholders (especially teachers, educator preparation professionals and support personnel) stressed the importance of attitudinal factors, and character traits in assessing an educator’s ability. Terms used to denote the needed element included “professionalism,” “disposition,” “character,” “passion for teaching,” and “love of children.” Some participants acknowledged the difficulty of measuring such personal characteristics, especially outside of a practicum experience.

Content mastery

A few participants emphasized content mastery as a key performance indicator to ensure adequate subject matter knowledge, whether by passing a content test or simply completing coursework. One teacher suggested that the subject MTELs should be more challenging for purposes of licensure.

Collaboration

A number of participants (superintendents, teachers, preparation program professionals, and others) suggested that the ability to collaborate with peers and support a professional team should serve as an indicator of performance that should be demonstrated by educators. Some support personnel noted that nurses, counselors and social workers are all part of the educational team contributing to a child developing and performing in the classroom. More broadly, some superintendents suggested requiring district administrators to demonstrate skills such as collaboration and other hallmarks of professional maturity such as time management, the ability to have difficult conversations, and effective communication as part of performance expectations.

Reliance on existing standards

Some stakeholders (mostly teachers) suggested using existing indicators to measure performance for purposes of educator licensure. Participants in one teacher focus group, along with a principal who responded to the electronic questionnaire, agreed that DESE should use the current Educator Evaluation System to determine the indicators of performance. Alternatively, teachers in a different focus group agreed that definition and measurement of performance should be based on National Board Certification standards. A preparation program professional suggested drawing indicators from those identified in several recent DESE-convened focus groups on the Professional Standards for Teachers.
Achieving expected degree

A handful of stakeholders suggested candidates for licensure should possess a required degree (a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in liberal arts and/or a relevant educational field) as a contributing measure of adequate performance.

Relationship of licensure and evaluation

Opinions differed sharply on whether and how to use the educator evaluation in licensing and license renewal decisions, with several participants advocating for incorporation of evaluation results and several others arguing against linking the two, at least at this time.

Educator evaluation can inform licensure

A diverse range of stakeholders supported the use of evidence collected through the evaluation process to help inform license renewal decisions. Participants of three teacher focus groups generally supported this approach, as well as individual stakeholders from other sectors. Viewpoints expressed included the following:

• If executed correctly, DESE should use the current Evaluation Framework to determine the indicators of ‘performance’ in any performance-based licensure system.
• Evidence collected through the evaluation process could be incorporated into a portfolio to help inform licensure.
• Using the indicators in the current evaluation tool for licensure would allow new teachers to better understand the skills needed to enter the profession, and which skills they will be evaluated on once in a classroom.
• The evaluation framework can help show a teacher’s competency in the classroom.

“Performance is what teachers do in the classroom, and the best tool for assessing that is the evaluation framework.”

Licensure should not be tied to – or conflated with – evaluation

A similar number of educators (from a variety of sectors) argued strongly against use of the evaluation framework in licensure. Reasons given for the reluctance included the following:

• Educators could lose their licenses due to poor performance that is misconstrued, not considered in context, or not relevant to educator ability. A poor evaluation may be tied to the fact that a teacher is in the wrong setting for his or her skill set, or tied to a strained relationship with a school administrator.
• Teachers might earn high ratings without truly educating all students (due to the achievement gap in some classrooms).
• The State cannot discern adequately what is happening at the school level. Evaluation of an educator should be between the educator and the district of employment.
• The evaluation system, as designed, is not relevant to or appropriate for all educators (e.g., professional support personnel).
• The evaluation framework is not sufficiently mature or proven.
• The evaluation framework is not implemented uniformly across districts.
• Evaluators may be reluctant to rate someone ineffective due to potential effect on an educator’s license.

Who should assess performance for purposes of licensure?

Teachers, preparation program professionals, professional support personnel, and education collaborative representatives offered a range of views about who should assess performance for the purposes of licensure. Several preparation program professionals expressed strong concern about the prospect of outside or third party evaluators observing a licensure candidate, maintaining in some cases that final calls on teacher readiness should be left to preparation programs or other experts active in the profession. Some others in the same field suggested that performance should be assessed by a whole team that provides feedback, not just one person.

Individuals suggested that those assessing or evaluating performance for purposes of licensure should:

• Be neutral or objective.
• Hold a license in the field.
• Have a degree in education administration.
• Possess strong knowledge of the practice in question – e.g., teaching, nursing.
• Be knowledgeable about the child development level in question.

Concerns about linking performance measures with licensure

Some stakeholders (teachers, association staff, school committee members, and HR directors) expressed the opinion that performance is not an appropriate basis for licensure decisions. The most common rationale for this view was that evaluation of an educator should be between the educator and the entity that employs the educator or is considering employing the educator (district or individual school). Somewhat more narrowly, some educators specified that performance should not be measured for purposes of entry, preferring that licensing be tied to credentials and continuing education only.

Participants who were concerned about relying on performance information for educator licensure generally feared that the wrong indicators would be emphasized, or that ensuring reliability would be difficult.
Potential for the wrong indicators to be emphasized

Some participants (mostly teachers, some preparation program faculty/staff) expressed strong concern over the prospect of student test scores or other quantitative measures of student achievement being used as a primary basis for license renewal decisions. Participants said they were concerned because of the prospect of unduly penalizing teachers who serve challenged populations of students, the possibility of incentivizing teachers to avoid having certain children in their classrooms and the perception that attaching high stakes to performance measures could drive people out of the profession or discourage people from entering.

Difficulty in ensuring reliability of data and decisions

Many stakeholders (teachers, educator preparation program faculty/staff) raised concerns about how to reliably quantify performance, make appropriate decisions based on such data, or implement such an approach consistently. The most common concern expressed was about the ability of the State (and qualifications of its employees) to discern what is happening at the school level and assess teaching ability objectively. Other concerns included the challenge of measuring performance in some specialties such as the arts and special education, the importance of the observer being familiar with the subject area being taught and the expected role of a given educator, and the difficulty of standardizing and quantifying performance in a way that accounts for variables like educational setting, classroom size, and the economics of a school district.

“The concept of the state having a role in measuring teachers is faulty, because it is not their role or area of expertise.”

PERCEIVED SHORTCOMINGS OF THE EXISTING LICENSURE SYSTEM

Participants were asked to identify critical shortcomings – if any – they perceive in the current system of educator licensure in Massachusetts. They spoke frequently about the system’s complexity as well as communication challenges. They also shared other critical observations, including the need to establish alternative pathways, allow reciprocity for candidates from other states, enhance professional development, and ensure affordability for educators and candidates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently observed shortcomings</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The licensure system is unduly complex and confusing; the tiered approach should be condensed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communication between DESE and educators is hindered by low staffing levels and shortage of needed expertise at DESE.</td>
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<table>
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<th>Shortcomings often observed</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Alternative pathways to licensure are needed, especially for teacher candidates coming from STEM-related fields.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The system should better enable reciprocity with other states.</td>
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- Too much weight is given to Professional Development Points.
- The system places too much emphasis on passing tests and demonstrating content knowledge.
- The cost of the licensure process to educators is excessive (in terms of time and money).
- License tiers should be consolidated, or they should be more meaningful (with movement between them incentivized).
- The preliminary license for teachers should be strengthened, shortened, or eliminated.

## Complexity of the system

Many participants – especially teachers but also HR directors, education collaborative professionals, educator preparation professionals, and support personnel – characterized the existing system as too complicated or confusing, resulting in attrition and frustration among educators. Examples of excessive complexity included different requirements for those who entered the profession in some years versus others, and the requirements for adding a license/endorsement.

The most common suggestion offered was condensing the number of licenses to one or two for a given field of education. Other structural suggestions for improvement through simplicity included:

- Shift to a single license and attach a year to it as educators continue in the system (e.g., a fifth year teacher).
- Shift to a single license for all assistant principals, principals, and superintendents, allowing districts to identify the people they want for open administrative positions.
- Shift to a single license for all counselors, rather than differentiating for licensure purposes between school adjustment and guidance counselors.
- Reduce the number of requirements that educators must meet before adding new requirements.
- Add fewer new requirements in a given year.
- Develop a means for assisting educators with keeping track of license renewal steps.
- Increase the time between renewals to ten years, since educators are so highly trained to begin with.
- Eliminating redundancy between the MTEL and transcript review. (Having a bachelor’s degree in the field and/or attaining a certain score on the equivalent Praxis should supersede the MTEL.)

Participants frequently described the language employed in legislation and regulation as either too specific or not specific enough, and sometimes unclear so that educators are often unsure about licensure requirements. A few participants with initial licenses indicated they did not understand what they need to do to earn a professional license.

“It is very confusing and I got different answers from different people I asked. Too many changes mean that different people are grandfathered in with different requirements, which makes it even more confusing.”
**Need to strengthen the workforce**

Participants identified a number of ways to strengthen the education workforce, including providing alternative pathways to licensure, improving reciprocity with other states, diversifying the workforce, and elevating the quality of the current pool of Massachusetts educators.

**Need for alternative pathways to licensure**

Several participants (teachers, superintendents, preparation program faculty, association staff, and education collaborative professionals) suggested amending the licensure system to allow flexibility for entry into the profession.

Stakeholders most often stated that the licensure process should be easier for career changers, taking experience and/or subject matter expertise into account in cases of qualified, promising prospects. They suggested that a state licensure system should “cast the net wide enough” to allow multiple ways of demonstrating skills and allow a variety of talents to enter the profession. The criteria for professionals with relevant career experience or skills to enter the profession should become more flexible and the process should be more expeditious, especially for STEM-related fields, and the criteria should adapt to recognize the value of many emerging multidisciplinary/dual degrees.

Educators of different kinds noted that the MTEL may unintentionally prevent great teachers from entering the system (e.g., someone who is not a strong test taker, or who recently arrived from another country and wishes to teach a foreign language). Alternative pathways should be established for initial licensure, such as for teachers coming from out of state who are National Board-certified.

Some superintendents indicated that the system needs better processes for mentoring and coaching potential superintendent candidates that may not have central office or school leadership experience. Participants recognized that those who have experience as school leaders tend to catch on quicker than others, but that districts should not turn quality candidates away because of lack of prior experience. Superintendents also suggested the creation of opportunities for superintendents or principals to endorse an educator candidate in order for a first license to be granted, noting that the requirement of a one- or two-year program will act as a barrier for some talented candidates. They asserted that allowing an endorsement in such cases would not constitute a lowering of standards, but rather recognition that districts and teacher candidates have different needs.

Other perspectives shared included:

- People who do not follow a traditional path to a K-12 school are disincentivized from entering the profession. Achieving a professional license is difficult for individuals
working in certain settings (like collaboratives) that are highly specialized but not K-12 schools.

- The State should look to paraprofessionals to become full time teachers and assist them in obtaining a license.
- The Communication and Literacy MTEL should have a waiver process based on SAT or ACT scores, years teaching, and Praxis or other tests.
- Bonus points could be provided in the licensure process for a second language or other evidence of high cultural competence.

**Need for reciprocity with other states**

Stakeholders across sectors indicated a need for greater reciprocity for experienced educators coming from other states. Some cited the MTEL requirement as a barrier, along with time-consuming regulations. Suggested solutions included:

- Honoring out-of-state preparation and certifications (such as National Board) that have already been approved.
- Granting waivers in cases of successful completion of similar exams. (The Praxis and increased use of the edTPA were noted as examples.)
- Alignment of test requirements among neighboring states.

**Need for workforce diversification**

Several stakeholders stressed that insufficient diversity in the workforce is a systemic national problem and should be a priority, but that diverse candidates are not emerging from student teaching pipelines or educator preparation programs in sufficient numbers. Factors noted as working against sufficient diversity include the following:

- A critical lack of funding and support for minority candidates and other underrepresented groups to attain requirements.
- The high costs of preparation.
- Increased mandated educator preparation program selectivity, which assumes that one cannot be a successful teacher without having had a successful high school experience.
- The potential for standards to have a cultural bias.
- Requiring the MTEL, SEI endorsement, completion of the RETELL course, and a one-year temporary license for educators coming to Massachusetts from other states. (One participant observed that programs at historically black colleges and universities often require the Praxis, and therefore recommended that the Praxis should be accepted in more content areas.)
- Diversity is affected by the challenges facing educators who choose to work overseas to gain experience and then wish to teach in Massachusetts, where they find little support for growth and skill development.

**Need to improve quality of the workforce**

Educators across categories expressed the opinion that aspects of the existing system are responsible for lessening the quality of the educator workforce. Reasons given included:
• Mandating tests which are not good indicators of effectiveness, and/or that do not focus adequately on the substantively knowledge truly needed.
• Failing to provide accommodations for teacher candidates who do not “make the first cut” – that is, who do not pass licensure tests right away.
• Insufficient numbers of educators at the elementary and primary levels with a strong background in teaching reading, writing, and math.
• The number of educators who were “grandfathered in” and so never had to demonstrate adequate knowledge of the profession via a test.
• Carrying some educators who should be terminated.

Need to address professional development requirements and offerings

 Teachers, support personnel, and association staff identified areas of needed improvement in professional development (PD) expectations and opportunities pertaining to licensure. Concerns about Professional Development Points (PDPs) as presently required or offered included:
  • Giving too much weight to PDPs in the license renewal process – e.g., requiring only PDPs (or master’s level courses) to become a professional-level teacher.
  • Excessive number and specificity of required PDs (especially as it pertains to the required breakdown in content versus pedagogical PD).
  • Difficulty in finding meaningful, worthwhile, relevant PD that will improve practice.
  • Lack of research showing that attending conferences or mandated PD sessions translates to a change in practice, and lack of monitoring to ensure that PD helps develop excellent teachers.
  • Mandating courses that cannot be easily completed due to access (location and space) issues, short time frames, and cost.

Suggestions for increasing the value or lessening the burden of PDPs included the following:
  • Allow more flexibility in PD selection so educators can address areas of needed improvement, focus on areas of desired growth, or ensure content relevant to their core disciplines.
  • Establish lower PDP requirements for well-established teachers so their time and efforts may be focused on earning a leadership position or taking on other roles within the school.
  • Require educators to demonstrate they learned the skills presented in PD.
  • Provide State funding for all PD.
  • Set an expectation that professionals are accountable for their own PD and licensure status, rather than allowing accountability to be shifted gradually to the district and the State.

“[PD] does not reflect what I do as a nurse... [I]n terms of nursing licensure for professional practice with the DESE, the state requires way more than the current Board of Registered Nursing.”

Other suggested changes to PD – what it offers and to whom – included:

  • Special education should be a focus of ongoing PD since most classrooms now include at least one special education student.
• Substitute teachers (i.e., those not employed full-time by a district) should be included in PDP opportunities, including free professional development courses for recertification.
• More flexibility should be allowed for professional support personnel to attend PD opportunities. Due to the lack of substitute support staff, educators cannot always leave work to attend.
• There should be an increased focus on evaluating PD providers.
• PD expectations should ensure that educators are up to date with evolving technology used to communicate with students and their families.

**Licensure decisions should be made by educators**

Many stakeholders (especially school committee members, education collaborative representatives, preparation program faculty, teachers, and association representatives) strongly expressed the view that licensing and license renewal decisions should be made by educators with relevant expertise and experience. Participants perceived that such a shift could lessen the influence of “politics” and ensure that decision-makers possessed appropriate background and substantive grounding. They argued that members of the profession should set the criteria and award licenses, so that “teachers make decisions about teachers, nurses about nurses, etc.” Some participants called for governance of licensure by active members of the profession in the form of a “guild” or professional standards board for licensure composed of active or recently retired educators. Others suggested striking the current prohibition against the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education including current school committee members or active educators as members.

**Need to address licensure requirements and processes**

Participating stakeholders raised several concerns about licensing and license renewal requirements and processes affecting certain types of educators. Comments focused on teacher licensure, particularly the preliminary license, but participants also offered general thoughts about tiered licensure and more focused opinions regarding administrative and support personnel licensure.

*The preliminary teacher license does not guarantee qualified teachers*

Several participants – including some teachers, educator preparation program faculty, support personnel, and education collaborative professionals – raised concerns about the preliminary license, especially the lack of a required demonstration of pedagogical skills to receive one, the duration of the license, and the perceived insufficient levels of support provided to those who hold such licenses.

Many individuals stressed that a first license should only be awarded to someone with demonstrated skills who is “ready to teach,” not just someone who has “passed tests.” Participants suggested that the preliminary license should serve as more of an emergency license in place of a waiver, available only to those pursuing high-need positions, or eliminated entirely. Many participants suggested that the preliminary license should have a shorter duration. Most of those who expressed this view – including superintendents, HR directors, and preparation
program faculty, suggested that it should last only one year. One participant noted that the
current five-year window gives “too much time for a new teacher to develop (potentially) bad
habits.” Some stakeholders also suggested that teachers should receive more support during the
preliminary phase. Participants in one teacher focus group suggested that the preliminary license
allows someone to start teaching on an apprentice basis. Some
superintendents suggested that districts be required to provide
an intensive induction during the preliminary period, and
determine at the end of it whether or not to sign off on an initial
license.

“Need to strengthen and differentiate between certain license levels”

Stakeholders raised concerns and offered suggestions about other levels or types of teacher
licenses. Some participants suggested that the differences between the preliminary and initial
licenses, and between the initial and professional licenses, should be more meaningful and
performance-based.

Some educator preparation faculty suggested that:
• The professional license should require educators to show a greater skill set in teaching
  and leadership, not just content knowledge.
• Entering teachers should be granted a temporary license, which would become an initial
  license after a year or two of demonstrated performance with mentorship.

Individual perspectives included the following:
• Instead of requiring or encouraging a master’s degree in the first five years of a teacher’s
career, the focus should be on a multi-year induction program.
• The preK-8 special education license is too large of a span for quality preparation.
• Licensure grade levels should be reviewed and possibly adjusted, particularly the Early
  Childhood Educator license.

“The waiver process is complex or unreliable”

A few participants (HR directors, professional support personnel, and teachers) voiced concerns
about the current system of waivers – either the bureaucracy involved (DESE “second-guessing”
hiring decisions, districts and schools being asked to provide an “impossible” level of
justification), or the fear of allowing untrained or undertrained teachers in the classroom. One
participant suggested that waiver durations be shortened.

“Pressures on administrative licenses”

Some stakeholders (including school committee members, educator preparation professionals,
HR directors, teachers, and one principal) expressed specific concerns about the requirements for
administrative licensure. Some participants agreed that principals should be expected to
demonstrate understanding of child development, to avoid a current perceived phenomenon of
scripted curriculums. Some suggested that principals need to teach at least one year before
obtaining a principal license. A handful of teachers contended that school leaders should be special education- and ELL-certified with training by a master teacher in those content areas.

Participants in a focus group for professional support personnel shared the view that the regulations determining who can advance from support roles (such as counselors or special education directors) into administrative roles are currently too strict. They suggested looser rules for individuals who have been in school for a long time or who have other relevant qualifications.

One principal observed a disparity among Massachusetts districts in how some persons become principals or superintendents with no actual apprenticeship/experience in educational issues or teaching methods, but are “politically appointed.” Another participant shared the perspective that administrative licenses mainly focus on inputs/number of hours put in, which are not necessarily relevant.

**Perspectives on support personnel licenses**

Several participants (professional support personnel and a few teachers) raised concerns about licenses for support personnel. They suggested most often that school nurses should not be expected to obtain a second (educator’s) license beyond the requirements to be a registered nurse in Massachusetts. Participating nurses noted that nurses are already governed and licensed by the State Board of Nursing, and their work in schools is already governed by the State Department of Public Health. They indicated that school nurses should be subject to criteria separate from those of other education professionals, more accurately reflecting their work. Another common concern was the lack of an adequate required content test for school counselors; participants suggested that requirements regarding subject matter knowledge should be updated to reflect current pedagogy and practice.

Individually and in small clusters, participants also called for:

- Stronger DESE support for professionals working toward and continuing in professional support positions.
- A more meaningful way of assessing the performance of support personnel. (“Using a thank you letter from a parent as evidence, for example, does not seem valid.”)
- Reduction in the panel reviews and waivers that allow people to be licensed as school nurses and school psychologists without meeting a set of minimum requirements.
- More professional development opportunities (e.g., trainings, conferences, workshops) tailored to the needs of support personnel (rather than teacher-focused).
- Elimination of the adjustment counselor license since such professionals are already required to maintain a LICSW or LCSW, earn a master’s, take an advanced clinical test and renew every two years.

**Perspectives regarding tiered licensure**

Several participants (mostly teachers) expressed the view that the tiered licensing system is unnecessary and lends itself to undue bureaucracy. Most of these stakeholders suggested shifting to a single license, perhaps with the option to add different endorsements (e.g., special education,
reading specialist). However, a few superintendents voiced support for a tiered system of teacher licensure.

Some teachers and preparation program faculty suggested incentivizing educators (monetarily or otherwise) to move between licensure tiers. Some suggested that the tiered system should serve as a career “lattice” rather than a career “ladder,” with room for growth and development at each level.

**Over-reliance on educator tests and content knowledge**

A wide variety of participants raised strong concerns about the degree of emphasis the current system places on passing tests and demonstrating content knowledge. Specific perspectives included:

- Tests are not good indicators of potential educator effectiveness.
- For teacher candidates, more reliance should be placed on other factors, such as classroom performance and cumulative GPA from a preparation program. Teachers seeking license renewal should be assessed on the basis of effectiveness in the classroom or growth as instructional leaders.
- Content knowledge on the part of prospective teachers is measured on current licensure tests in ways that run contrary to the “current focal points in education.” (For example, the history test focuses on dates and isolated events rather than essential questions, connections across historical contexts, and critical thinking.)
- Many talented individuals, including plenty of good teachers, are not strong test-takers. Instruction and assessment should be differentiated for adults just as they are for children.
- The MTEL should align to the Common Core State Standards.

**Cost to educators of licensing and license renewal**

Many participants stressed the excessive cost of the licensure process to educators and candidates, in terms of both money and time. Educators across categories (especially teachers and preparation program professionals) identified ways in which they perceived the current system as financially burdensome and/or requirement-heavy. They cited the cumulative burden of the preparation program process, initial MTEL tests and often re-tests, license renewal, professional development, and the testing and time associated with transferring an out-of-state license to Massachusetts.

Participants expressed concern that these overall costs prevent experienced, highly-trained educators from entering the ranks of Massachusetts educators, reduce the quantity or quality of applicants for administrative openings, and burden both individual and district budgets.
Specific suggestions offered by individuals for reducing cost included:

- Educators should not be required to pay licensure fees.
- MTEL-takers should not be penalized financially for opting to take different components of the test on different days in order to improve their likelihood of passing.
- A registered nurse with years of professional experience prior to school nursing should not have to obtain another license to practice in a school.

**Perspectives on educator preparation / training**

Several teachers and preparation program professionals called for alignment among educator preparation programs, with consistent standards and expectations for licensure to help increase the likelihood that teacher candidates are prepared to enter the classroom and be effective. Some teachers and preparation program faculty stressed the need for greater rigor in preparation programs, to attract and retain strong candidates and to increase the likelihood that candidates will possess passion for working with children.

Additional stakeholder perspectives included:

- Aligning educator preparation standards with those standards educators are evaluated on once they are in the field.
- Assigning an identification number to teacher candidates entering preparation programs which follows them through the program and into the profession, to allow accumulation of data regarding “who survives” in the profession and their comparative effectiveness with students.
- Increasing child development classes required to obtain a license. Currently, in many programs only one child development class is required.
- Integrating courses in preparation programs so they are not just focused on a single content area.
- Establishing a teacher leadership endorsement as a step towards challenging preparation programs to develop leadership coursework and career pathways for educators.

**Needed partnerships**

Stakeholders – especially superintendents, education collaboration representatives and preparation program professions – called for new or stronger partnerships, specifically between educator preparation programs / universities and local school districts and practitioners.

Participants in a superintendent focus group commented that candidates can gain valuable and variable experiences as a result of development and maintenance of such partnerships and collaborations. Professionals in education collaboration and educator preparation suggested that regulations require more cooperation on the part of districts with educator preparation programs. They stressed the need for incentives or requirements to enable observers in classrooms and immersion of students in the field so that districts share more of the burden of developing
candidates. Some also noted that stronger connections could make it easier for principals to hire preliminary-licensed teachers instead of initial-licensed teachers who have completed a preparation program.

**Better support needed for educators**

The need for a practice of mentorship emerged as a cross-cutting theme in stakeholder input. Some superintendents stressed the importance of putting better systems in place to mentor and coach potential candidates who may not have central office or school leadership experience, agreeing that districts should not turn quality candidates away because of lack of prior experience. A principal suggested that school committees should be better informed or trained in how to support and mentor their principals and superintendents. Some teachers and educator preparation faculty suggested that new teachers should be mentored or supervised closely (for a minimum of five years, according to some). Some educator preparation faculty observed that mentorship is a requirement that is not enforced or funded properly.

**Need for improved communication between educators and the State**

Many participants – especially teachers, but also preparation program participants, professional support personnel, education collaborative representatives, and superintendents – expressed frustration over the experience of communicating with DESE about licensure needs. The most common criticisms involved DESE staffing levels and consequent challenges in staffing availability. Participants talked about long wait times in order to reach a staff member able to answer licensure questions, lack of support or feedback, perceived lack of staff dedicated to helping educators get through licensure processes (especially for professional support personnel), insufficient windows of time in which calls are received, limited hours of availability during summer, and unresponsiveness to e-mails.

Another common frustration was insufficiently clear or consistent communication of critical licensure related information to districts and educators. Some participants cited, as an example, learning about a policy change from a professional association but not from DESE directly. Some participants spoke about receiving contradictory answers to a given question; one superintendent noted that he advises teachers in his district to “take the best two out of three answers you get and try calling again.” Stakeholders particularly called for clarity and consistency in explanation of regulations, directions for moving to the next level of license, and any emerging requirements that affect license status. (A few participants highlighted the “ed prep e-mail” as an important step toward improved, helpful communication.)

Some participants expressed a desire for a more “user-friendly” website, stating that the current DESE website is difficult to navigate or presents the licensure process in a confusing way. One participant expressed interest in professional associations having the ability to upload files on behalf of its members to update logs of coursework and workshop attendance.
Other shortcomings mentioned

Some teachers and preparation program faculty voiced frustration over frequently changing mandates, noting that rapid policy changes result in lack of consistency and educators failing to keep up with professional development and licensure requirements.

Some participants noted the need for alignment among different parts of the overall system. Concerns included: inconsistency among schools in how performance is evaluated for purposes of licensure; lack of agreement on best practices between the State, districts and individual schools; and lack of synchronization between licensure requirements and district tenure requirements.

Echoing a theme expressed strongly in other areas of discussion, some participants (mostly teachers) noted an overemphasis on standardized scores at the expense of considering individual accomplishments. One school support professional suggested that considerations of student behavior and emotion are “being pushed behind the data-driven needs of measuring everything often and frequently.”

Additional perspectives offered included:
- DESE should consider aligning the existing licensure system to teacher preparation courses. Some licenses do not always match what a person can teach because the educator may not have specific content knowledge. Also, not all school structures match the current licenses.
- HR directors are accountable for teacher’s licenses, but often lack access to critical information about candidates. In addition, parents should have the ability to look up the licensure status of teachers.
- Teachers who received their certification years ago received a "lifetime certification" but are now required to be relicensed.

Positive elements of the current system

During the course of sharing input verbally or in writing, stakeholders volunteered observations about aspects of the existing licensure system they particularly valued. Such positive elements included:
- Student teaching (a necessary component for candidates to exercise skills, acquire knowledge and display disposition);
- The online re-licensure process;
- The improving speed of the licensure process;
- The commissioner’s hotline (from superintendents);
- The ability to upload licensure-related documents to the DESE website (from HR directors); and
- The five-year renewal cycle (from teachers).
DESE provided Keystone and TNTP with additional sources of educator opinion, from both external and internal stakeholders: a Teach Plus meeting involving 66 educators and a series of five focus groups involving 28 DESE staff members. These sessions largely reinforced major themes from the external focus groups and questionnaire data, but the DESE stakeholders also raised new perspectives regarding the “customer service experience” of the licensure system, as well as the potential need for regulatory change.

Teach Plus meeting

Teach Plus, a non-profit organization working to improve outcomes for urban children by ensuring that a greater proportion of students have access to effective, experienced teachers, convened a discussion among Massachusetts educators on April 30 about aligning teacher licensure with teaching excellence. Participants included 46 teachers, 9 former teachers and 11 “other educators.” This session varied in structure and protocol from the external focus groups since it occurred before finalization of the focus group methodology, involved a larger group of stakeholders, utilized live-polling technology to gather quantitative data from most participants, and used a different agenda. The event provided helpful perspectives from active and retired teachers on high-level questions about the qualifications that should be required to obtain, maintain and renew a license; and the ideal relationship between licensure and educator evaluation.

Entering and continuing in the profession

The majority (approximately two-thirds) of participants agreed that performance and/or demonstrated ability in the classroom should be a factor in decisions to grant or renew a license.

Most participants also agreed that:

- Teachers entering the profession should demonstrate content mastery, passing a written test such as the MTEL to earn an initial license.
- Incoming teachers should need to demonstrate teaching ability before earning an initial license (perhaps through a performance assessment such as the edTPA).
- Candidates should be subject to consistent requirements regarding level of classroom experience.

Many participants indicated that:

- Teachers should demonstrate effectiveness before receiving a professional license.

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10 Participants in these supplemental meetings, while accounted for in total numbers, are not accounted for in demographic breakdowns of other participants because they did not complete Keystone’s registration survey. Forty-one out of 66 participants in the Teach Plus meeting did complete a separate pre-event online survey. See Appendix F for available participant details.

11 [www.teachplus.org](http://www.teachplus.org)
• Alternative pathways to teaching should be provided, with professional experience and expertise valued in such a way that career switchers are not treated the same as novice teachers.
• The system should provide new teachers with long-term, trained mentors (who, according to some participants, should be accountable for the teachers’ performance).

Relationship between licensure and educator evaluation

Participants generally supported linking licensure with teacher evaluation. Many teachers suggested that a licensure system should reflect abilities and effectiveness in the classroom. They indicated that procedures should require teachers to demonstrate effectiveness before receiving a license, presuming the existence of an effective evaluation system.

Participants stated a need for rigorous evaluations, based on objective observations by expert observers, and measures of student performance and growth, teacher commitment to professional learning, and teacher effectiveness at community engagement.

Shortcomings of the existing system

Many teachers favored more rigorous requirements for content knowledge. Specifically, they suggested a need for greater math knowledge among elementary teachers, and a need for more specialized content on the part of special education teachers (e.g., state laws and requirements pertaining to serving special needs students).

Many teachers stressed the importance of greater consistency and accountability in preparatory programs, thereby ensuring that student teachers who cannot demonstrate competency do not enter the profession.

Some teachers indicated a need for interstate reciprocity, explaining that Massachusetts’ current specialized requirements create a barrier to excellent, already-certified teachers entering the system from other states.

DESE internal focus groups

DESE convened and moderated five internal focus groups – three involving licensure staff, one with legal staff, and one with educator preparation staff – posing the same questions used in the external focus groups and relying on a similar agenda.

These internal discussions reinforced many of the major themes articulated by external stakeholders. Key similarities included:

• The emergence of distinct approaches to the purpose of an educator license – setting a bar of minimal preparedness, versus guaranteeing quality to families and to the public.
• The most important criteria to attain a license (e.g., commitment to teaching, content mastery, demonstration of interpersonal and pedagogical skills, and cultural competence)
and retain a license (e.g., staying current with evolving content knowledge and pedagogical practice).

• Receptivity among many participants to the idea of a performance-based system, with the caveat that “performance” should be understood broadly – measured over time and using multiple indicators.

• Concerns about relying heavily on student performance data in licensure.

• Divergent views regarding utilizing performance assessments or educator evaluation in licensure.

• Belief that districts are responsible for more nuanced hiring decisions, while the State’s role is to assure a minimum degree of knowledge or skill.

However, two entirely new themes emerged from this internal source:

**Barriers to optimal customer service**

Participants expressed concerns about limitations of current technology capabilities and general operating processes which make high quality customer service difficult. A new system should take into account the customer service experience.

**Legal implications for licensure regulations**

Current regulation language is too broad to enable state action when teachers are engaged in misconduct. Additionally, participants in the focus group of legal experts expressed interest in gaining subpoena authority and whistleblower protection as part of changes to the licensure system.

**NEXT STEPS**

The stakeholder perspectives presented in this report will inform DESE’s development of draft guiding principles and policy framework options. DESE will convene a second round of stakeholder meetings in the Fall of 2014 to solicit Massachusetts educators’ views about those principles and the advantages and disadvantages of policy options. DESE will then develop a proposed framework for licensure and license renewal, informed by stakeholder input and by analysis of the existing research base, supported by TNTP.
Appendix A: Focus Group Agenda

Focus Group on Educator Licensure and License Renewal
For the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions .................................. 5 minutes

Project Overview and Rationale ............................ 15 minutes

Focus Group Questions and Discussion ................. 65 minutes

Next Steps and Timeline .................................... 5 minutes

Adjourn
Appendix B: Focus Group Protocols

Focus Group on Educator Licensure and License Renewal
For the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Discussion Protocols for Focus Group Participation

1. Focus on the objectives and characteristics of an effective licensure system, rather than on the details of its operation.
2. Please share your individual perspective and best advice, and allow other participants to offer theirs. Consensus is not a goal of focus group discussion.
3. Please participate actively and speak concisely, so that others can both hear you and be heard.
4. Please be respectful of differing points of view, and assume good intentions on the part of fellow participants.
5. Please be mindful of the presence of multiple professional and personal backgrounds; watch the use of acronyms and jargon.
6. Please be respectful regarding use of smart phones and other technologies.
7. Please do not make personal attributions of discussion comments outside of the meetings.
8. Please allow the facilitators to facilitate.
Appendix C: Summary of Participant Demographics

SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th># Engaged**</th>
<th>% of Engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Program Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Higher Education Programs</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Higher Education Programs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Programs</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Support Personnel</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents/Asst. Supts.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Support Personnel</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Collaboratives Staff (MOEC)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals/APs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR officers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association Staff (MTA, MASC, MASS)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Committee Members</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Diversity Task Force members, NTEP External Stakeholder Group)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PROCESS PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>~100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This section provides information about stakeholders who participated in external focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire. Other contributing stakeholders are noted in appendix F.

**Note that this table shows all unique participants by the primary role identified, though some participants filled multiple roles (i.e. teachers who also serve as school committee members, HR directors and association staff who serve as Diversity Task Force members, etc.).

Roles of Participants

- Teachers: 35%
- Preparation Program Faculty: 27%
- Superintendents/Asst. Supts.: 8%
- School Support Personnel: 8%
- MOEC Staff: 5%
- Principals/APs: 5%
- School Personnel Administrators: 4%
- Association Staff: 3%
- Other: 3%
SUMMARY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: ALL FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Gender of Participants

- Male: 22%
- Female: 78%

Age of Participants

- 21-25: 71%
- 26-30: 6%
- 31-35: 4%
- 36-40: 3%
- 41-45: 2%
- 46+: 14%
Appendix D: Supplemental Demographic Information

SUPPLEMENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: TEACHERS
*Survey data available for 67 of 70 teacher participants (who attended Keystone-moderated focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire)

### Grade Levels Taught
- Pre-K/ECE: 1%
- 1st-5th: 6%
- 6th-8th: 36%
- 9th-12th: 27%
- Pre-K-12th: 30%

### Method of Preparation
- Traditional undergraduate program: 4%
- Traditional graduate level/post-baccalaureate program: 18%
- Alternative teacher certification program: 15%
- Have not yet completed a formal preparation program: 63%

### Type of Teaching License
- Temporary: 2%
- Preliminary: 5%
- Initial: 19%
- Professional: 67%
- N/A (teaching on waiver, etc.): 7%
- Not sure: 0%

### Years of Teaching Experience
- 0-3 years: 19%
- 4-7 years: 18%
- 8-10 years: 21%
- 11-15 years: 12%
- 15-20 years: 11%
- 21+ years: 19%
SUPPLEMENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: PRINCIPALS/ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

*Survey data available for 7 of 9 school administrator participants (who attended Keystone-moderated focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire)

### Years of Teaching Experience Before Becoming Administrator

- 8-10 years: 57%
- 15-20 years: 29%
- 21+ years: 14%

### Method of Preparation for Principal License

- Graduate level/post-baccalaureate program: 86%
- District-based administrative apprenticeship/internship: 14%

### Type of Principal License

- Initial: 57%
- Professional: 43%
SUPPLEMENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS

*Survey data available for 74 of 79 educator participants (who attended Keystone-moderated focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire)

**School Structure**
- Charter: 5%
- District: 8%
- Vocational Technical School: 8%
- Other: 7%
- District: 80%

**School Descriptors**
- Level 4 or Level 5 School: 49%
- Title I School: 40%
- Neither: 11%

**Preparation Location**
- In Massachusetts: 78%
- Out of state: 18%
- Have not yet started formal preparation: 4%
SUPPLEMENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: SUPERINTENDENTS/ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS

*Survey data available for 17 of 17 superintendent participants (who attended Keystone-moderated focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire)

### Method of Preparation for Superintendent License

- 41% Administrative apprenticeship/internship in the superintendent/assistant superintendent role with a trained mentor
- 47% Post-baccalaureate program including a supervised practicum in the superintendent/assistant superintendent role
- 12% Other

### Type of Superintendent License

- 70% Professional
- 18% Initial
- 6% Preliminary
- 6% Not Sure

SUPPLEMENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

*Survey data available for 17 of 17 professional support personnel participants (who attended Keystone-moderated focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire).

### Role within the Profession

- School Guidance Counselor: 6%
- School Psychologist: 6%
- School Social Worker/Adjustment Counselor: 29%
- School Nurse: 6%
- Other: 53%

### Years of Experience in a School Setting

- 4-7 years: 18%
- 8-10 years: 35%
- 11-15 years: 18%
- 15-20 years: 6%
- 21+ years: 23%

*All professional support personnel participants currently have a Professional license except for one, who holds an Initial license.*
SUPPLEMENTAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: PREPARATION PROGRAM FACULTY

*Survey data available for 61 of 62 educator preparation program faculty participants (who attended Keystone-moderated focus groups or completed the electronic questionnaire)
Appendix E: Breakdown of Focus Group Participants and Questionnaire Respondents by Profession

**Keystone-Moderated Focus Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location (Municipality/County)</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed, 5/28</td>
<td>Belmont/Suffolk</td>
<td>School committee members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, 5/29</td>
<td>Dedham/Norfolk</td>
<td>MOEC members</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwood/Norfolk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri, 5/30</td>
<td>Boston/Suffolk</td>
<td>MA Teachers Association staff</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester/Worcester</td>
<td></td>
<td>MACTE members</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon, 6/16</td>
<td>Marlborough/Middlesex</td>
<td>Superintendent Advisory Council</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marlborough/Middlesex</td>
<td>Teachers and principals</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues, 6/17</td>
<td>Fitchburg/Worcester</td>
<td>Preparation program faculty members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenfield/Franklin</td>
<td>Teachers and principals</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, 6/19</td>
<td>Amherst/Hampshire</td>
<td>Preparation program faculty members</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Springfield/Hampden</td>
<td>Teachers and superintendents</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri, 6/20</td>
<td>Southbridge/Worcester</td>
<td>Professional support personnel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malden/Middlesex</td>
<td>Diversity Task Force members</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon, 6/23</td>
<td>Hyannis/Barnstable</td>
<td>Teachers and principals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues, 6/24</td>
<td>Fall River/Bristol</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed, 6/25</td>
<td>Bedford/Middlesex</td>
<td>COMTEC members</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedford/Middlesex</td>
<td>Superintendents and HR directors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lawrence/Essex</td>
<td>Teachers and principals</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, 6/26</td>
<td>Malden/Middlesex</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salem/Essex</td>
<td>Preparation program faculty members</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bedford/Middlesex</td>
<td>District and professional support personnel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri, 6/27</td>
<td>Boston/Suffolk</td>
<td>Professional support personnel</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boston/Suffolk</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL KEYSTONE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS** 169

**DESE-Moderated Focus Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues, 6/3</td>
<td>Malden/Middlesex</td>
<td>Teacher Advisory Cabinet</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs, 6/5</td>
<td>Malden/Middlesex</td>
<td>NTEP External Stakeholder Group</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL DESE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

**Online Questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th># of Respondents</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation Program Faculty</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Support Personnel</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals/APs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents/Asst. Supts.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR officers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL RESPONDENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>~100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Breakdown of Participants in Supplemental Meetings

Teach Plus Meeting*

*Partial demographic data on Teach Plus participants available from an online pre-event survey completed by 41 of the 66 participating educators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Type of Teaching License</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3 years</td>
<td>Temporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 years</td>
<td>Preliminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>Initial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 19 years</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years</td>
<td>N/A (teaching on a waiver)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Preparation</th>
<th>Type of School in Which Educator Teaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional undergraduate program</td>
<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate level program</td>
<td>In-district charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative teacher certification program</td>
<td>Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal prep program</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DESE moderated internal focus groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed, 6/25</td>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>Licensure Team</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon, 6/30</td>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>Educator Preparation Team</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues, 7/1</td>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>Licensure Team</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed, 7/2</td>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>Legal Team</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed, 7/2</td>
<td>Malden</td>
<td>Licensure Team</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>