



Wendy Zdeb
Executive Director

Jim French
President

March 8, 2017

Brian Whiston, Superintendent
Michigan Department of Education
PO Box 30008
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Superintendent Whiston:

On behalf of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), I am writing to express support for the proposed teacher certification structure put forward by the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) Office of Professional Preparation Services (OPPS). We particularly appreciate the collaborative process that went into developing these recommendations and the inclusion of partner organizations like MASSP and experts from the field.

However, given Michigan's current teacher shortage and the increasing challenges that districts are facing in finding qualified candidates, MASSP would urge that the implementation of this new structure be delayed. In particular, while the new grade bands have advantages, they could also exacerbate existing shortage issues by limiting flexibility in teacher placement.

In reviewing the proposed restructure, MASSP members identified two important advantages at that this proposal would have at the secondary level:

- An intentional focus on the middle level would give teachers more specialized preparation to better serve the needs of these students, something that is lacking in Michigan's current certification structure.
- A middle-level specific grade band helps ensure that middle-level core subject teachers have a greater depth of content knowledge. This will help ensure that students have the core content knowledge they need to succeed in high school and is of particular importance given that an increasing number of students are earning high school credit through middle-level classes.

However, the smaller grade bands proposed in the new structure would also limit district and teacher flexibility when it comes to placement at a time when such flexibility is more important than ever. Tighter budgets are shrinking the size of district teaching staffs across the state. At the same time, declining enrollment and population shift mean that teaching assignments often vary year by year. This is a particular challenge in small districts or those with non-traditional building structures. A statewide teacher shortage means smaller pools of qualified candidates and difficulty in filling positions, especially in critical shortage fields. Finally, MASSP members also raised questions about how the new structure would impact reciprocity with teachers coming in from other states, which is of particular concern to districts along Michigan's borders.

And so, while MASSP supports the proposed teacher certification restructuring and views it to be pedagogically sound, we would urge MDE to delay the implementation until concerns about Michigan's teacher shortage have been resolved.

Sincerely,

Wendy Zdeb
Executive Director

The Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals advances learning through educational leadership.

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