



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

February 23, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT Discussion Regarding the Requirement That Secondary Teacher Candidates Pass Both Their Major and Minor Michigan Test for Teacher Certification Subject Area Examinations

Recently, the issue of requiring Michigan secondary teacher candidates to pass both their major and minor subject area Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC) examinations in order to be recommended for certification has been raised. In accordance with Rule 390.1127, a secondary Provisional teaching certificate can only be issued when the candidate has completed a major of 30 semester hours or a group major of 36 semester hours and a minor of 20 semester hours or a group minor of 24 semester hours. Section 1531 of the Michigan School Code establishes the teacher testing requirements.

Section 1531 states in part

- (2) Except as otherwise provided in this act, the superintendent of public instruction shall only issue a teaching certificate to a person who has passed appropriate examinations as follows:
- (a) For a secondary level teaching certificate, has passed both the basic skills examination and the appropriate available subject area examination for each subject area in which he or she applies to be certified.

Since the Administrative Rules were not revised after the teacher testing requirement was added to the School Code, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has required secondary teacher candidates to pass both the major and the minor test in order to be recommended for certification. The staff of the Office of Professional Preparation Services (OPPS) is in the process of revising the Administrative Rules and one of the recommendations is to allow

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secondary teacher candidates to be recommended for certification with an endorsement in their major only, provided they have passed the appropriate MTTC subject area examination. Passage of the MTTC minor subject area examination would be optional and candidates would have five years from the date of completion of their program to pass the test and be recommended for endorsement by the teacher preparation institution.

Many secondary teacher candidates seeking certification in Michigan from other states only hold an endorsement in their major subjects. Because the MDE has reciprocity with other states, these teacher candidates are not required to have a minor nor test in the minor unless they are seeking an additional endorsement. While multiple endorsements on a secondary teaching certificate may be more marketable to a school district, the emphasis that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act places on deep content knowledge supports allowing candidates to test in, and be recommended for, certification in their majors only.

The rules revision process is extremely time consuming and would not address the immediate needs of current teacher certification candidates. In the interim, I have directed the Department's Office of Professional Preparation Services to (1) review individual requests and recommend waivers to Rule 390.1127 if it is determined to (a) be in the best interest of children, (b) produce high quality teachers as defined by NCLB, (c) and help in meeting Michigan's goal of providing highly qualified teachers; and (2) convene a forum of the educational community to discuss the impact of changing the minor testing requirement by the end of April 2004. In accordance with Section 1531, the Superintendent of Public Instruction is authorized to determine the requirements for, and issue all teaching certificates for teachers.

I have asked OPPS staff to provide a report on the number of waivers and the outcome of recommendations made by the forum of educators by no later than the June 2004 State Board meeting.