

CONNECTIONS

News from the Association of Metropolitan School Districts

November 2023

Volume 21

Number 2

Wayzata is Connecting the Dots for Preschool Families



November 3, 2023

Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

November 9, 2023

Annual Conference

8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Minneapolis Marriott
Northwest

Register here:

<https://www.amsd.org/conference2023/>

November 17, 2023

Executive/Legislative Committee Meeting

7:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Anderson Center
Bethel University
Arden Hills

December 1, 2023

Board of Directors Meeting

7 a.m. - 9 a.m.

Quora Education Center
NE Metro 916
Little Canada

Wayzata Public Schools is working hard to connect with its youngest learners and their families, both those who attend the district's popular Early Learning School and those who don't. The district estimates that about 40 percent of its incoming kindergartners and 4-year-olds attend the Early Learning School; only 20 percent of residents who are five-years-old and younger go there.

According to Director of Community Ed Jenni Ebert, there is a waiting list of families who want to get in. "Just because we don't have space for them in our school, doesn't mean we don't have the capacity to get to know them in some other way," explained Ebert. Community Ed oversees all the early learning programs.

Michelle Bedor is the director of the Early Learning School. She explained, "We want all families in the district with 3- and 4-year-olds to feel connected to and cared for by our district. We want them to know about and participate in social and learning opportunities available to them through our district."

This past summer, the district started promoting Connect at 3, an inclusive, community-building initiative for district families with preschool students. One of the primary goals is to encourage families to register their children for Early Childhood Screening, a free developmental assessment that helps parents and the district understand and support a child's learning and development needs. But that's just the beginning. The district wants to keep talking to, supporting and learning from its preschool families.

All families who sign up for Connect at 3 will receive regular emails about up-

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If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to register for the AMSD/BrightWorks conference on Nov. 9. It promises to be a great day of learning and networking with your colleagues as we explore the intersection of student-centered learning and artificial intelligence. **The deadline to register is Friday, Nov. 3.** Further details, including registration information, can be found [here](#). And, of course, Election Day is next Tuesday, Nov. 7. There are many school board elections and [19 AMSD member school districts have important referendum questions on the ballot](#). Best wishes to school board members up for reelection and to AMSD members with a referendum on the ballot!

From the AMSD Chair, Marcus Hill, West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Board Member

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Reframing, Re-introducing and Improving Early Childhood Screening

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coming classes, workshops, social events and more. Early learning outreach specialists also plan to visit families at community gathering places like libraries and parks, preschools and daycare centers and other places where preschool families come together. This is especially important for families who are new to the country, the state or the school district, a population that is growing every day.

“Connect at 3 will help us better understand and prepare for students who will be coming to our elementary schools. We’ll have a relationship with them long before they start kindergarten, and we hope that relationship will make them feel like they belong here,” said Bedor.

Early Childhood Screening

Connect at 3 is a way of reframing, re-introducing and improving Early Childhood Screening — a free service all Minnesota school districts have offered since the 1970s. “We realized that the language we’ve used to talk about Early Childhood Screening is dated, bureaucratic and confusing. We used to tell people to make a screening appointment. Now we say, meet with us so we can check in on your child’s development. We want to talk with families about developmental milestones and hear from them about their child,” she said. She continued, “We’re also finding ways to make the meetings more convenient and family-friendly. We’re looking at everything from when and where meetings take place, building signage, meeting room decor and how families are welcomed to an appointment.”

It’s early in the process, but response has been positive.

Wayzata School Board member Bonita Lucky is excited about the initiative and the opportunities for creating an environment of “honesty, inclusion and respect for all.”

Katie Shepherd, director of client experience at Interfaith Outreach and Community Partners (IOCP) agrees. “The district is putting families at the center, and that is clear in how they’ve gone about their early childhood work. They are considering cultural differences, family strengths and systems barriers to opportunities like Early Childhood Screening. They’re working to remove barriers and welcome all families into the school community,” she said. IOCP is a human services nonprofit that serves families in the Wayzata School District.

The district will be monitoring and evaluating the pilot program throughout the year and seek feedback from families and staff to find out what’s working and what needs improvement. The process will continue to evolve.



This month's member feature was submitted by Amy Parnell, Director of Communications and Community Engagement, Wayzata Public Schools.

2023 Education Bill Includes Changes to Teacher Licensure

Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) Executive Director Yelena Bailey and Licensing Supervisor Emily Busta shared an [overview](#) of changes to the teacher licensing system with the AMSD Board of Directors last month. The amendments to the tiered licensing system are the most significant changes since the tiered system was adopted in the 2018 session.



Yelena Bailey, Executive Director of PELSB, at right, and Emily Busta, PELSB Licensing Supervisor, outlined the legislative changes to PELSB's tiered licensing at the October 2023 AMSD Board of Directors meeting.

The 2018 legislation followed a [report](#) from Minnesota's Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) calling for an overhaul of the state's teacher licensure system. The report was highly critical noting, "Minnesota's teacher-licensure system is broken and needs significant changes." The report urged the Legislature to consider a tiered-licensing system that provides transparency, consistency, and flexibility.

The report also warned of a crisis on the horizon: A teacher shortage was coming, and the state's complicated licensure process — then co-regulated by the Board of Teaching and the Minnesota Department of Education — was inhibiting schools' abilities to recruit and retain teachers. The OLA further noted the state was already challenged by a shortage of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers.

The prescient report — which also forecast an increasing demand for non-traditional licensed professionals, such as CTE instructors, and needs in the areas of emotional and behavioral disorders and learning disabilities — highlighted the need for action. In 2018 the Legislature and then Gov. Dayton created PELSB — as well as a four-tiered licensure system for teachers to be certified to teach in Minnesota.

The [2023 Teacher Supply and Demand Report](#) shows significant work remains to address the teacher shortage and diversify the workforce. The report notes: "Minnesota continues to lag significantly in the ability to hire and retain racially and ethnically diverse teachers even close to the proportion of students of color and Indigenous students in the state." Specifically: In 2022, just under 6 percent of Minnesota's nearly 113,000 licensed working teachers self-identified as teachers of color, compared to 37 percent of the student population.

While that disparity is disheartening, there is encouraging data that suggests efforts to recruit teachers of color are working — albeit slowly. The report notes that the candidates completing teacher preparation in Minnesota are more diverse than Minnesota's existing teacher workforce. In fact, 11.14 percent of teacher candidates who completed teacher preparation in Minnesota are of color or Indigenous. Furthermore, 17.14 percent of all enrolled teacher candidates are people of color or Indigenous people.

Not surprisingly, the Supply and Demand Report also notes that districts are increasingly challenged by a growing teacher shortage, with a majority of school districts being "somewhat significantly" or "very significantly" impacted by the teacher shortage (84 percent) and substitute teacher shortage (89 percent).

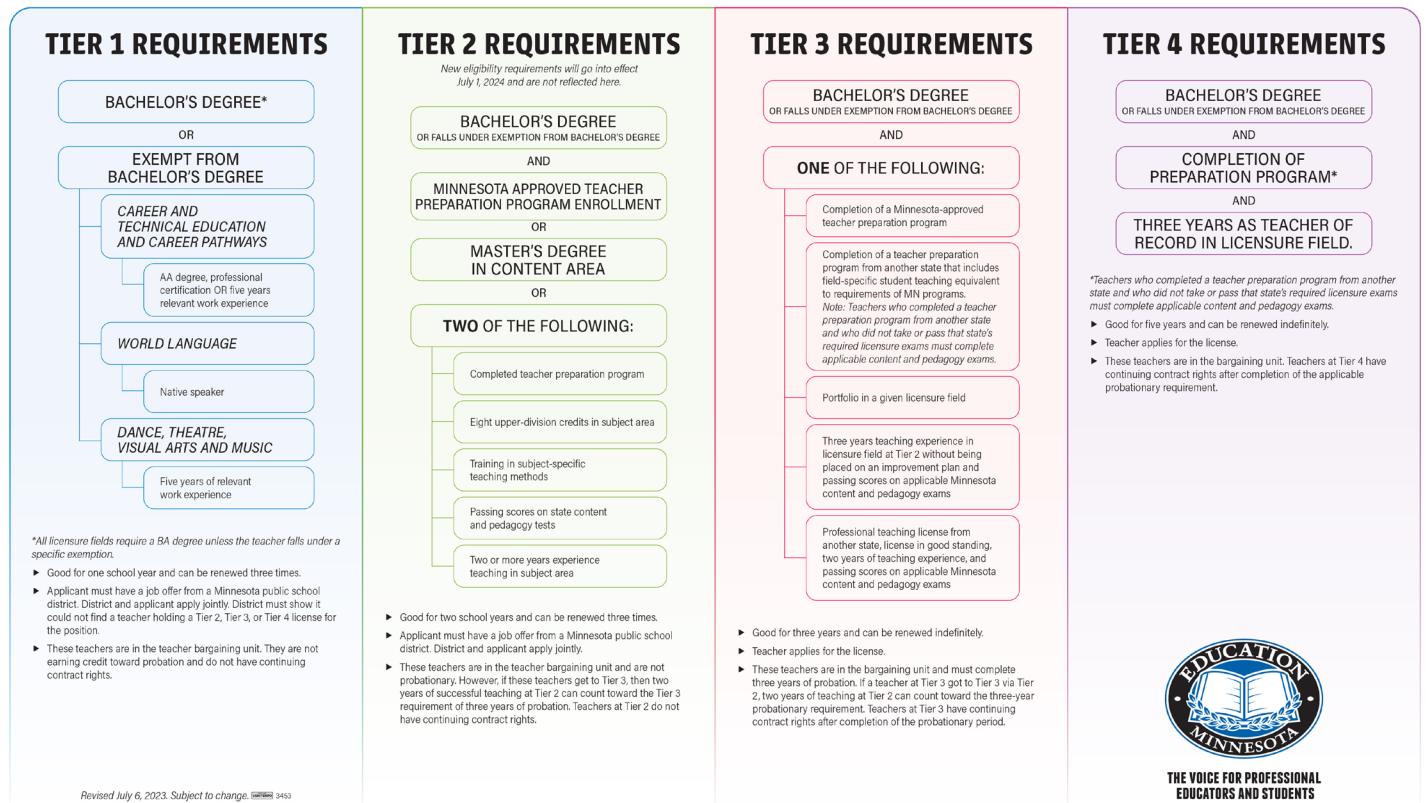
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Some Tier 2 Pathways Eliminated

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The graphic below outlines the tiered licensure system that is in place through June 30 of 2024. The significant changes adopted in the 2023 session are noted below the graphic.

Licensure Requirements in MN: August 1, 2023-June 30, 2024



[LINK: Download and View the Full-Size Tiered Licensure Graphic on the PELSB Website](#)

The 2023 Education Bill made some significant changes to the tiered system including:

- For Tier 4:
 - The new legislation eliminated the requirements for the Minnesota-specific teaching experience, a Basic Skills Examination, and a Summative Evaluation effective Aug. 1, 2023.
- For Tier 3:
 - The new legislation exempts a teacher from content and pedagogy exam requirements if the teacher has completed a teacher preparation program in Minnesota or another state (and completed that state's exams, if applicable), or completed licensure via portfolio effective Aug. 1, 2023.
 - In addition, changes to Tier 2 licensure that went into effect July 1 will limit the teachers moving through the pathway allowing for three years of teaching experience on a Tier 2 license.
- For Tier 2:
 - The ability to use "two of the following" from the original legislation requirements will no

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Bill Includes Grants to Recruit and Retain Teachers of Color

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- longer be an option to qualify for Tier 2 licensure;
- Teachers who received their Tier 2 license based on the "two of the following" option will be able to use their Tier 2 licenses through the 2025-2026 school year;
- Allows time to move to Tier 3 using the "Tier 2 to Tier 3 experience pathway."

The 2023 legislation also makes additional exemptions for BA requirements for licensure including:

- Exemptions for World Language & Culture/Native Speakers (with attestation from hiring school district);
- Exemptions for five years of work experience in Music, Visual Arts, Theatre, & Dance;
- Exemptions in Career & Technical Education (CTE) and Career Pathways including for professional certification, Associate Degrees, or five years of work experience.

The 2023 Education Bill also included a new grant program to address the growing need for substitute teachers in school districts by creating a "Pilot Short Call Substitute" program that lowers requirement thresholds for experience to qualify Paras/ESPs within school districts, as well as allowing applicants with Associate Degrees. Districts must provide training, process background checks, and provide compensation of either \$200/day or their regular rate of pay, whichever is higher. The \$200 per day minimum compensation requirement has created a significant barrier for many districts.

In addition, the 2023 Education Bill invested additional funding to aid the recruitment and retention of teachers of color through [several grants](#) administered by PELSB:

- More than \$5 million in Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color grants;
- More than \$3 million in Teacher Mentorship & Retention grants; and
- \$400,000 into Preparation Pathway grants.

EMBRACING STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Minneapolis Marriott Northwest

Thursday, Nov. 9

Deadline to register: Friday, Nov. 3

[LINK: Register for the 2023 Conference](#)

