
Testimony
Senate Bill 2332
House Education Committee
March 15, 2021 9:00 a.m.
Education Standards and Practice Board
Dr. Rebecca Pitkin

Good morning Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Rebecca Pitkin and I am the Executive Director of the Education Standards and Practices Board. I am here today to provide neutral testimony on SB 2332.

During the 66th Legislative Assembly HB 1287 became law. Both in-state and out-of-state alternative programs are now permissible. I will first provide information on the results of the American Board, an online certification program available in 14 states. Applicants with a 4 year degree pay a fee of approximately \$1900.00, receive a packet of information to study, a book list or other materials that relate to the content on the test, take the test, and if they pass, receive an initial license from ESPB; there are no courses, no contact with students, and individuals upon completion receive an initial 2 year license. Unlike other states which have the American Board option, North Dakota has additional requirements listed in the bill. Since last session, 17 individuals have completed the American Board program (information attached). Information gathered through principal and superintendent interviews last spring indicates these individuals were successful and filled a need. An example is a South Heart parent, trained as a nurse who is currently teaching science. Many of the individuals who completed American Board were sought out by their district as they are already involved in the school and perhaps “missed their call” to teach. Data collection relating to this year’s American Board certified teachers is ongoing.

An in-state alternative program has also been developed, Certification Central. Certification Central completed all program approval requirements and last March received approval from the Program Approval Committee, after submitting extensive documentation of how the proposed program met North Dakota content standards. It became the first in state alternative program, offering a behavior intervention specialist endorsement as well as approval to offer special education (see enclosed letter of approval).

The addition of line 17, page 2 (e), program approval, is a requirement of all ND Teacher Education programs. All programs leading to licensure are approved, both traditional as well as Certification Central. All engage in the continuous improvement process, much like K-12, and provide annual updates on progress each year on a national and state level. Currently American Board has not undergone this process. Admittedly the accreditation of an online alternative program would look different given the fact there is not a foot on the ground program but it has been achieved by another alternative program at the national level.

There is a documented teacher shortage in our country and in our state as evidenced by a recent DPI presentation for ESPB as well as number of Alternate Access licenses granted in most content areas. Last session ESPB testified in opposition to the American Board alternative programs, yet we have seen American Board as well as Certification Central filling needs in our state. An ESPB non-negotiable is “doing what is best for kids” and removing potential barriers for those who may make excellent teachers leaves my testimony presented as neutral.

This concludes my testimony and I will answer any questions.

American Board 2019-2020 - 5 Total

Teacher	License #	Administrator	Location	Content
Lynette Silbernagel	428368	Calvin Dean	South Heart	Science
Sonja Tinjum	425637	John Gruenberg	Powers Lake	Elementary
Brandy Fliegel	428477	Steven Guglich	Missouri Ridge MS (Williston)	Elementary
Tabitha Schneider	423643			Elementary
Amy Jacobs	425486			Elementary

New 2020-21 American Board - 12 New

Teacher	License #	Content
Jared Obering	429663	History
Amanda Richardson	423342	Elementary
Mandy Cleem	427502	Elementary
Kallie Knutson	423697	Elementary
Lee Jacobson	424902	Science
Kortney Arnold	429952	History
Lester (Jay) Reinke	419352	English
Todd Selle	421752	Math
Shawn Alvarez	422794	Elementary
Laura Mastel	427854	Science
Angela Eckelberg	428656	Elementary
Shane Wetzel	426395	Biology

American Board Summary: 5 + 12 = 17 Total



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March 30, 2020

TO: Dr. Katherine Terras, Certification Central

FROM: Dr. Rebecca Pitkin, ESPB Executive Director

Congratulations! At the March 26, 2020 Program Approval Committee meeting, the committee motioned unanimously to approve both the Behavior Intervention Specialist Special Education Endorsement program of study and the Certification Central Preparation of Special Education teachers request. Congratulations on being the first North Dakota alternative licensure program.

We look forward to seeing how both the endorsement and the Special Education program are utilized. Thank you for your work on these and your continued efforts to prepare teachers with excellence, to benefit our North Dakota children.

Please contact me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Becky Pitkin