

# Board of Education Agenda Item

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Date: February 17, 2011

**Topic:** Final Review of a Recommendation of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) to Approve the Criteria for Identifying Alternative Routes to Teacher Licensure as “Low Performing” or “At Risk of Becoming Low Performing” Required by Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act

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## Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by  
 State or federal law or regulation  
 Board of Education regulation  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested at this meeting     Action requested at future meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

## Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action  
date: January 13, 2011  
action: First Review of a Recommendation of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL) to Approve the Criteria for Identifying Alternative Routes to Teacher Licensure as “Low Performing” or “At Risk of Becoming Low Performing” Required by Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act

## Background Information:

In October 1998, the U.S. Congress enacted Title II provisions to the Higher Education Act (HEA) authorizing federal grant programs to improve the recruitment, retention, preparation, and support of new teachers. Title II also included accountability measures in the form of reporting requirements for institutions and states on teacher preparation and licensing. Section 207 of Title II reporting requirements mandates that the U.S. Secretary of Education collect data on standards for teacher certification and licensure, as well as data on the performance of teacher preparation programs. The law requires the Secretary to use these data in submitting its annual report on the quality of teacher preparation to Congress. In addition, states were required to develop criteria, procedures, and processes from which institutions would be identified as “low performing” or “at-risk of becoming low-

performing.” The following statement is an excerpt from the Title II “Reference and Reporting Guide for Preparing State and Institutional Reports on the Quality of Teacher Preparation,” April 19, 2000:

*To receive funds under this act, a state, not later than two years after the date of Enactment of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, shall have in place a procedure to identify, and assist, through the provision of technical assistance, low-performing programs of teacher preparation within institutions of higher education. Such state shall provide the U.S. Secretary an annual list of such low-performing institutions that includes an identification of those institutions at-risk of being placed on such list. Such levels of performance shall be determined solely by the state and may include criteria based upon information collected pursuant to this title. Such assessment shall be described in the report under section 207(b).*

On September 26, 2001, the Board of Education approved Virginia’s definitions for “low-performing” and “at-risk of becoming low-performing” institutions of higher education with teacher preparation programs, beginning with approved program reviews on July 1, 2003. The *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia*, effective September 21, 2007, separated the accreditation and program approval processes; therefore, revisions were needed in Virginia’s definitions for “low-performing” and “at-risk of becoming low-performing institutions.” On November 20, 2008, the Board of Education approved revisions to the definitions to align with the accrediting bodies’ designations.

Title II HEA, was reauthorized on August 14, 2008. Section 205 of Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act mandates that the Department of Education collect data on state assessments, other requirements, and standards for teacher certification and licensure, as well as data on the performance of teacher preparation programs. The law requires the Secretary to use these data in submitting an annual report on the quality of teacher preparation to the Congress.

New reporting mandates subsequently approved require states to report criteria identifying alternative routes to teacher licensure as “low performing” or “at risk of becoming low performing,” beginning in October 2011. The Career Switcher Alternate Route to Licensure Program is defined as the alternative route to licensure for Virginia.

The approval process requires that Career Switcher Programs must be certified by the Virginia Department of Education, verifying that the program meets all requirements set forth in the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*. Approved education programs offered at Virginia colleges and universities must have national accreditation or be accredited by a process approved by the Board of Education as stipulated in the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia*. The criteria to identify programs as “at risk of becoming low-performing” or “low-performing” have been developed to address the specific requirements and the approval processes of the programs.

## **Career Switcher Alternate Route to Licensure Program**

The Career Switcher Alternate Route to Licensure Program was created in response to a resolution of the 1999 General Assembly. The General Assembly requested the Board of Education to study alternative licensure programs and models in other states and develop an alternative pathway to teaching for individuals who have not completed a teacher preparation curriculum but have considerable life experiences, career achievements, and academic backgrounds that are relevant for teaching in pre-K through grade 12. During the 2000 session of the General Assembly, funds were appropriated to develop and pilot the first Career Switcher Program. In the summer of 2000, the Board of Education implemented the first Career Switcher Program for military personnel who were interested in becoming teachers. The program was later expanded to individuals in other professions interested in pursuing a career in education.

Currently, there are six Career Switcher Programs offered by the following program providers: George Mason University, Old Dominion University, Regent University, Shenandoah University, Virginia Community College System, and the Western Virginia Public Education Consortium.

The requirements for the alternate Career Switcher Program are set forth in the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*. This alternate route does not apply to individuals seeking a license with endorsements in special education. Programs are required to meet the requirements outlined in the regulations to be certified by the Department of Education. Prerequisites to applying for the program include: an application process; a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university; the completion of requirements for an endorsement in a teaching area or the equivalent through verifiable experience or academic study; at least five years of full-time work experience or its equivalent; and Virginia qualifying scores on the professional teacher's assessments as prescribed by the Board of Education.

The programs, including partnerships and matrices to ensure alignment with regulations, were reviewed and certified by the Department of Education in 2008. The programs have a 100 percent pass rate on licensure assessments as individuals are required to meet these qualifying scores before admission into the program.

### **Summary of Major Elements**

In order to comply with the new Title II reporting requirements, Virginia must define criteria to identify alternative routes to teacher licensure as “low performing” or “at risk of becoming low performing.” On November 15, 2010, the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure approved a recommendation to the Board of Education to approve the following criteria for identifying alternative routes to teacher licensure as “low performing” or “at risk of becoming low performing” required by Title II of the Higher Education Act.

- Programs shall be reviewed for compliance with Board of Education regulations and certified every seven years. [If regulations are revised within the seven-year period, the program must align the program with the new regulations.] For program certification, the following requirements must be documented:
  - alignment of program requirements and competencies with the regulations;

- capacity to offer each of the components of the program; and
  - structured and integrated field experiences in diverse school settings as specified in the regulations.
- Programs shall be required to submit the accountability measurement of partnership and collaborations based on PreK-12 school needs for review by the Department of Education biennially.
  - Programs must submit candidate progress and performance on prescribed Board of Education licensure assessments. [All candidates must meet all prescribed licensure assessments prior to admission into the program; therefore, the requirement is that 100 percent of program candidates pass licensure assessments prior to admission to the program.]
  - Programs must submit evidence of employer job satisfaction with candidates completing the program. The indicator of achievement of this standard shall include documentation that the Career Switcher Program has two years of evidence regarding candidate performance based on employer surveys.

An alternative route program (Career Switcher Program) shall be designated “at risk of becoming low performing” if the program is reviewed and found to meet certification requirements but has weaknesses, excluding the mandatory program entry requirements. The program provider must submit evidence of compliance within one year of notification of this finding.

An alternative route program that does not correct the weaknesses within one year of receiving the designation of “at risk of becoming low performing” will be designated as “low performing.” If a program fails to maintain certification, enrolled candidates shall be permitted to complete their programs of study. The Career Switcher Program shall not be allowed to admit new candidates. Candidates shall be notified of program approval status.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education approve the recommendation from the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure to approve the criteria for identifying alternative routes to teacher licensure as “low performing” or “at risk of becoming low performing” required by Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

**Impact on Resources:**

There is a minimal impact on resources.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

N/A