

## **Frequently asked questions about Waivers for Douglas County Schools:**

*How will all of this impact the 3000 licensed and certified teachers currently teaching in the district?*

The district will continue to rely upon and embrace qualified, licensed candidates through the existing pathways via Higher Education and the Colorado Department of Education's licensure and endorsement processes. The Douglas County Federation of Teachers is working side by side with the Learning Center; to ensure that rights of current licensed and endorsed teachers are not compromised. This process has the support of the Board of Education, district Administrators and the Douglas County Federation of Teachers. A consensus was necessary from all of these groups prior to pursuing the waivers from the Colorado Department of Education.

*Doesn't the State already provide an Alternative Licensure Program?*

Yes, it does. However, the district's experience with this program is that it does not attract enough candidates to necessary positions. The cumbersome nature of the process, or a lack of clear understanding about the opportunities may be the obstacle. In the past several years, less than one percent of new teachers have joined our district through this program.

*What is the Learning Center and how does it fit with this Waiver Program?*

The Learning Center (TLC) is a newly formed group and an entity of Douglas County School District, designed to provide oversight, accountability and coordination for all district professional development. Its Board consists of twelve members from across the district, including the Douglas County Federation of Teachers, Learning Services, Human Resources, Instructional Support Services, Instructional Technology, Staff Development, Classified representation and the Superintendent's Chief of Staff.

The Learning Center Board has been granted oversight to the Waiver process by our Board of Education and the State's Board of Education, to ensure rigorous training and fidelity, as the pathways for licensure and endorsement are mapped out. Candidates will be screened first using existing Human Resources procedures. The Learning Center Board will then review successful candidates, and provide system and personnel checks and monitor training and progress of each candidate as they move forward.

Many district teachers, building and district leaders already teach part-time at various local colleges and universities. The Learning Center Board is extending a "call to arms" for those qualified and interested in assisting with The Learning Center's licensure and endorsement program. It is the Board's desire to put our own talented human capital in front of prospective candidates on our waiver path of licensure, endorsement and professional in residence credentials. To have our own teachers, teaching teachers is a proven way to inject key district perspectives and vision in early stages of training. Additionally, early exposure to the district's expert, proven, research-based practices to improve student achievement will undoubtedly prove beneficial.

## Douglas County Teacher Endorsement and Licensure Program FAQ

### *What is the District's relationship with Higher Education and the Waivers?*

Partnerships with Higher Education already exist within the Administrative Licensure Programs. These same partnerships will be enhanced and possibly expanded, allowing TLC to contract for training needs that the district may not be able to provide. Many of the same teacher education standards will be replicated, with an internal focus on district goals and initiatives. District expertise will be utilized to help train candidates who are in our DCSD licensure and endorsement program.

### *What opportunities will the Waiver process provide to building leaders?*

Too often building principals have to turn away extremely qualified candidates for positions, only to have few or no applicants for others. This district licensure and endorsement waiver program may provide principals the opportunity to offer alternative positions for the most talented candidates. With their agreement, the “best of the best” could still find their way into schools of choice through this alternative pathway. In other words, principals could approach candidates from one pool, and offer them other opportunities, provided they participate in The Learning Center’s process to gain the needed licensure or endorsement in the hard-to-fill area.

Additionally, this process opens up opportunities for external industry experts to teach. In the past, business/industry professionals, who have a desire to teach, have faced a bureaucratic and arduous process to gain “qualification”. Secondary principals, seeking reform efforts with an increased level of relevancy of teaching and learning, have found the pathway to attract specialists or experts too cumbersome. These State Board of Education waivers will allow school leaders to be more innovative, offering instructional programs in fields that working experts can provide. By reaching out to specialists in areas such as engineering, vocational technology and global languages, principals and leadership teams now have a pathway to think outside of the rational approaches to hire experts for our students to learn from.

### *So do the waivers mean anyone can become a teacher now?*

No, only highly qualified candidates will be considered for the alternative licensure and waiver program. Candidates will still have to meet No Child Left Behind “Highly Qualified” requirements. Professionals interested in exploring candidacy are required to have a bachelors degree or higher before pursuing opportunities in the waiver and licensure program.

### *What does this mean to me as a parent?*

Douglas County School District parents have high demands on the rigor and relevancy of the teaching and learning process. The Alliance for Quality Teaching states,

The research is clear: teachers are the single most important factor in improving student achievement. A variety of studies have shown that an effective teacher can be more important to student learning than a child’s race, family income, parents’ education, or any other external factor often thought to dominate school outcomes.

*State of Teaching in Colorado, Fall 2006*

## Douglas County Teacher Endorsement and Licensure Program FAQ

These waivers indicate that the district has gained the confidence and assurance from the Colorado Department of Education, to create its own customized program for specialized and “hard to fill” positions. This move allows the district to better serve the unique needs of its growing student population. If a student has a teacher that is participating in the program, the level of accountability will be as rigorous as any provided by accredited colleges and universities. More information for parents is forthcoming, and will be made available through the district website and the Learning Center’s communication.