

Douglas County Teacher Endorsement and Licensure Program:

Waivers give consent to
provide expert training and
endorse qualified applicants
in hard-to-fill and
specialized areas.

A White Paper

By: Mike Lynch

Douglas County Teacher Endorsement and Licensure Program: Waivers give consent to provide expert training and endorse qualified applicants in hard-to-fill and specialized areas.

Abstract:

In Douglas County School District, we recognize recruiting, training and retaining the most qualified teacher candidates is vital to student success. Great teachers can inspire Douglas County School students to continually emerge as competitive leaders in a constantly changing and increasingly diverse world.

As we work towards meeting our Board of Education's vision and embrace continuous improvement, critical components for student success must include continual professional development for all staff, school improvement, and accountability in processes and procedures. Through it all, we must ensure the recruitment, retention and development of the best and brightest for Douglas County Schools.

To this end, hiring quality teachers with current licensure and endorsement practices works well for the majority of district teaching vacancies. But, with changing demands, some shortages cannot be addressed using the Colorado Higher Education archetype, which often leaves gaps in areas including Special Education, Trade and Industry Education, Foreign Language, Technology Education, Math Education and Science Education.

A lack of qualified candidates, combined with restrictions which inhibit hiring professionals to fill these specialized vacancies, prompted the District to take action. With approval from the Colorado State Board of Education, Douglas County School District has created the Learning Center Board. This board will direct a rigorous, internal district licensure and endorsement program. This document is intended to help explain our work in progress, for teachers, administrators, and other interested stakeholders.

In November 2006, the Colorado State Board of Education voted 7-1, to allow Douglas County School District (DCSD) several policy waivers and the authority to create our own internal licensure and endorsement program for positions that are unique and considered "hard to fill." The recruitment and retention of our "human capital" in Douglas County Schools has consistently taken center stage, as our district continues to grow by almost three thousand students annually.

The district is constantly seeking out ways to meet the demands of preparing its students for a competitive and global marketplace. The waiver application to the Colorado Department of Education was a big step towards addressing those demands, since it will allow the district more agility than the current State Alternative Licensure path provides. Human Resources hiring data shows that DCSD has received almost five thousand applications for employment in each of the past five years. The district has hired for and filled almost five hundred positions from this pool of candidates in each of those years. Despite these statistics, the district still begins each conventional calendar year with a

Douglas County Teacher Endorsement and Licensure Program: Waivers give consent to provide expert training and endorse qualified applicants in hard-to-fill and specialized areas.

shortage of teachers. In the 2005-2006 school year, more than twenty-three Special Education positions were unfilled ten days into the conventional calendar school year. Additionally, some Math and Science positions, Foreign Language, and highly specialized positions for secondary programs in engineering and vocational technology were either unfilled or very difficult to fill.

Simply put, district leaders believe, by taking control of the training process for specialized and hard to fill positions, we can more successfully attract and retain qualified candidates in these areas of need. Training blueprints for candidates will be highly customized and needs driven for both content and pedagogy. Currently, The Learning Center (TLC) Board, along with content specialists appointed from within the district are building these learning pathways. This work is a priority of TLC, as we build capacity to train, endorse, and license some of our select candidates to meet our needs.