

## Q. Why is there a need to address teacher licensure and compensation?

---

**A:** The starting point for a conversation about reform begins with our state’s licensure system because licensure impacts every aspect of an educator’s career – their preparation, development, advancement, and compensation. Licensure and the ways teachers receive professional development and feedback should clearly signal that North Carolina values great teaching and aspires to help each teacher achieve professional success.

While our licensing system doesn’t allow for this currently, the state is seeking to change this through reform. This comprehensive approach – addressing both licensure and compensation – allows us to more cohesively address the long-term health of the teaching profession in North Carolina. This work is about providing better systems of support for educators, better pathways for advancement within the profession, better compensation for teachers, and better outcomes for students.

## Q. Why does this work around licensure reform matter?

---

**A:** Teachers are the difference-makers for students’ success. The single best thing we can do to improve education in North Carolina is to focus on keeping great teachers in the classroom and encouraging more to enter the profession.

If North Carolina can reimagine teacher licensure, professional development, and compensation, the state can:

- ▶ **OFFER** individualized professional growth opportunities to teachers at every phase of their career;
- ▶ **ENCOURAGE** the best teachers to lead from the classroom;
- ▶ **INCREASE** the opportunity for a more diverse population to enter the teaching profession;
- ▶ **PROVIDE** competitive compensation that allows a teacher to earn more earlier in their career so their pay grows substantially as they expand their professional impact; and, most importantly:
- ▶ **SUPPORT** student success

## Q. How does this plan help professionalize teaching?

---

**A:** As we look at the organizational structure of schools and the career options for teachers, they often do not look like what is offered to other high-skilled professionals. For example, in many other careers, there are internship or apprenticeship opportunities to gain experience before becoming wholly responsible for that position, e.g., residencies for doctors and internships for accountants and lawyers.

Most high-skilled professions also provide embedded professional support early in their careers as well as a lighter workload. Additionally, other high-skill professions offer career growth opportunities for employees to take on more work, more complex work, or leadership roles without having to stop doing the job they love, e.g., an accountant might specialize, take on more work, or mentor other accountants.

This proposal seeks to offer those same types of experiences, supports and opportunities to professional educators while also seeking to significantly impact their compensation.

## Q. Will it lower the standard for the teaching profession?

---

**A:** The proposal ensures that all teachers are supported throughout their career and held to a high standard of effectiveness while allowing them to demonstrate their work in different ways. In the current system, teachers without any pedagogical training are placed in classrooms as the official teacher of record. They are responsible for increasing student learning without the necessary skills to do so. In the proposed model, the state is still actively working to bring these candidates into the profession and focused on doing so in a scaffolded and supportive manner. Apprentice teachers and teachers with no demonstrated pedagogical skill work under the supervision and tutelage of experienced teachers. If anything, this model actively ensures that all teachers have met a standard of pedagogical skill before working independently with students.

## Q. Will it increase reliance on standardized testing?

---

**A:** No. Under this plan, teachers can choose from several options to provide evidence that they are qualified to teach. The development of multiple measures of teacher effectiveness opens up other opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their effectiveness beyond standardized testing. Further, in terms of a teacher's ability to progress and move through the licensure system: neither student testing nor student academic growth, also known as EVAAS, is a required pathway to advancement. For each level of licensure, there are other options for a teacher to advance outside of testing.

## Q. Will it create more work for teachers?

---

**A:** This proposal won't create more work for teachers; it finally pays teachers for the additional work and responsibilities they are already doing like mentoring, coaching, creating professional development, leading professional learning communities and other types of leadership responsibilities. There are countless teachers in all years of experience in schools across our state who today are creating positive outcomes for their students and who are not being sufficiently recognized, learned from, or compensated for their great work. This plan seeks to change that.

## Q. Will it encourage competition among teachers?

---

**A:** The proposal promotes collaboration not competition. This plan allows for greater support through all levels of a teacher's career so that there is collaboration among all teachers to accomplish what is needed for students. The Pathways plan encourages all teachers to share best practices with each other, thus collaborating to support teachers throughout their professional career. Under the plan, there is no limit to the number of teachers who can hold any of the licenses, just as there are currently no caps on the number of licenses issued.

## Q. Will this plan be fully implemented statewide over the next year?

---

**A:** No. The current conceptual plan is a work in progress. Continued design work will require partnership with the General Assembly, and will entail multiple phases over many years, including proof of concept, field testing, and a test-and-learn approach to refine the plan and test specific components.

Following the design phase, the implementation period will also take many years. Throughout this process, there will continue to be ample opportunity for all stakeholders to weigh in and contribute to building the final model.

Do you have any questions or ideas? Share them here: [pathways.feedback@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:pathways.feedback@dpi.nc.gov)

## Q. How can you ensure effectiveness measures are fair under this plan?

---

**A:** In the Pathways plan, teachers will be given autonomy and choice, empowering them to select which effectiveness measures they want to demonstrate. This means that if one of the options does not accurately reflect how students improved during the school year, teachers would instead have the ability to select another measurement option they feel is more representative of students' learning and growth.

These measurement options are in the process of being identified and developed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI).

## Q. How will the Pathways plan help address the specific teacher recruitment and retention challenges happening across many districts in the state?

---

**A:** This plan is meant to both recruit and retain more and better prepared educators while supporting current educators at all levels of their career. By creating professional systems of support and seeking additional compensation, this model will help to strengthen the pipeline. Lastly, the state hopes to retain effective teachers by providing them with career pathways that expand their professional reach and encourage them to lead and collaborate from the classroom.

## Q. Is this a merit pay plan?

---

**A:** There is a difference between a merit-based compensation model and a performance-based compensation model. The distinction is very important. In a merit-based model, employees are given a set of performance criteria and a bonus/salary incentive is assigned. Those who measure best on these criteria are awarded the highest bonuses and/or salary increases with the incentives decreasing down to the established cut score on the performance criteria. Merit-based compensation models are, by nature, highly competitive.

Contrast that model with a performance-based compensation model. The organization sets performance criteria for increased compensation and all employees who reach that level appreciate the raise in compensation. In the performance-based model, no teacher is disadvantaged by helping his/her colleague meet the performance criteria. Performance-based compensation models are much more collaborative in nature because teachers are not "competing" with one another—they are working toward a common goal that they can all "win".

## Q. Over time, what does improvement look like?

---

**A:** This plan looks to:

- ▶ increase teacher retention, especially amongst the state's highest performing teachers
- ▶ attract effective educators into hard-to-staff schools
- ▶ improve the quality of instruction of all educators through embedded professional development and support
- ▶ distribute instructional leadership, allowing principals to focus on other strategic needs
- ▶ and, ultimately, improve student outcomes

## Q. What are some of the highlights of the proposal?

---

**A:** One of the biggest improvements with this proposal is how this plan supports early career teachers by providing designated time for more experienced teachers or mentors to work directly with them. Additional benefits include paying student teachers while they are enrolled in an educator preparation program and planning to become a licensed teacher, as well as an opportunity to provide paid apprenticeships for those who are interested in becoming a licensed teacher but must first work towards obtaining a bachelor's degree.

Another important component of this proposal is that it allows teachers to choose how they want to demonstrate their effectiveness in the classroom in order to advance to the next licensure level.

Further, this proposal also suggests the elimination of the Praxis Exam as the only pathway to licensure, which is often a barrier for entry into the profession. Finally, this proposal advocates for annual pay increases for educators, in addition to higher base salaries across all licensure levels. By giving educators more control over their compensation, they are provided with the opportunity to earn additional income at a faster rate and receive more income over their career.