



Alberta Darling
Wisconsin State Senator
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
COMMERCE
Senate Bill 449
January 11, 2016

Thank you Chairman Gudex and committee members for holding a public hearing today on Senate Bill 449. As you know, this bill would expand the experience-based method to obtain a teaching license to include certain vocational education subjects.

Building on the success of Act 55's experience based teacher license, SB 449 empowers local schools to find qualified vocational teachers who are willing to share their experience and skill with students.

Last year, I worked with a group of school leaders to create an experience based licensure for technical education. The same group of school leaders came together again, with a few new faces, and they worked to create an experience based license for vocational education. The reason for getting back together was simple: they often face a small number of applicants for vocational subjects and sometimes they face situations with zero applications. Accordingly, schools often resort to hiring applicants through emergency licenses or they reduce class offerings.

As many of you know, the state of Wisconsin is experiencing a skills gap. My goal with this legislation is to increase the exposure of these vocational subjects to our students. The best way to do that is to increase the pool of teacher applicants who are both willing and capable of leading a classroom in these niche subjects. Giving our kids the opportunity to take these classes during their primary and secondary years of education will hopefully instill not only an interest but a passion for these subjects that will translate into a future career.

The process for obtaining a license is modeled off legislation we passed earlier this year for technical education subjects. Today, you will hear testimony from individuals who will give you first-hand examples of how the new tech ed licensing process enabled them to find great teachers in tech related subjects. So far 19 teachers are already helping students gain the skills they need for a family-supporting career in technical fields. I hope we can do more.

During the last couple months, I have been privileged to visit almost every school district in my senate district. Each district has mentioned the challenges they face when hiring for these subjects. It is my hope that this legislation will give them another tool to help attract great new teachers.

In closing, I want to thank Representative Knodl for his work as the assembly co-author and for the support he has shown for this piece of legislation. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 449. It is my hope that you will vote in favor of this legislation.

Teachers take new paths to hard-to-fill specialty jobs

By [Annysa Johnson](#) of the Journal Sentinel
Jan. 7, 2016

Brown Deer — Considering all the power tools, it's relatively quiet on the sprawling Brown Deer High School shop floor. Small crews of students — mostly boys, but a few girls — are stationed around the room, measuring pieces of wood, sawing, drilling.

Teachers Craig Griffie and James Peter move from post to post offering suggestions on technique or explaining the science behind a particular process.

Griffie and Peter arrived at Brown Deer on circuitous paths. College-educated with backgrounds in construction, they were brought in last school year under the state's emergency licensing procedure designed to help districts temporarily fill a critical vacancy.

Griffie has since received an "experience-based" license for technical education teachers approved by the Legislature as part of the 2015-'17 biennial budget, and Peter is awaiting his.

The state has issued 19 such licenses to date. Now school districts are asking lawmakers to expand that alternative to cover a host of other hard-to-fill vocational education subjects, from business and marketing to agriculture, child care and culinary arts.

Critics, including the state Department of Public Instruction, the state's largest teachers union and university schools of education have raised concerns, saying the measure will lower the bar on teacher standards and create an uneven licensing system across the state.

District officials point to the critical shortage of tech and vocational education teachers, saying they need the flexibility to lure experienced professionals to the classroom or discontinue popular courses that prepare young people for work or continued training at the state's technical colleges.

"Wisconsin has a job skills gap," said Emily Koczela, finance director for the Brown Deer School District who headed a consortium of districts that helped write the budget language and companion bills now pending before the state Senate and Assembly.

"If we can't get the teachers to get students into those jobs, then we've failed them," Koczela said.

Critics acknowledge that quandary but say what's needed is a comprehensive plan to address teacher shortages and not shortcuts to licensing.

"Effective teachers need a lot more than just the skills and knowledge of a specific subject area," Betsy Kippers, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council, told lawmakers at a hearing on the bill before the Assembly's Education Committee last month.

The teacher shortage, she said, "is a broad-based systemic issue and we cannot continue to use Band-Aids to fix it."

The bills would allow professionals with relevant experience — though not necessarily a college degree or the extensive methodology taught in schools of education — to qualify for a vocational education license if they meet criteria spelled out in a point system and fulfill a curriculum designed by the hiring school district. The point system weighs heavily college degrees in math, technology, science or engineering, but it would not preclude someone without a degree from obtaining a license.

Proponents say it's designed to get candidates like Peter and Griffie: smart people with the skills and an aptitude for teaching, who may not be in a position — financial or otherwise — to return to school for a technical or voc-ed license, according to Koczela.

Peter has two history degrees from Marquette University and taught at a Catholic school in Sheboygan before deciding he could earn more money rehabbing homes and managing a big box home improvement store. Griffie graduated from University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in economics and spent three years training high school volunteers to do home repairs in Appalachia.

To come in under the state's traditional tech-ed license, the two said they would have had to enroll at UW-Stout, the state's primary tech-ed program, for 60 or more credits at cost of \$15,000 or more.

The state Department of Public Instruction says it already has 11 alternative paths to licensure, including at least two less costly options for Peter and Griffie.

Both men had availed themselves of the state's emergency license, but those are for a limited time, and applicants must show progress toward a traditional license during that time.

"An emergency license works for someone who is close to getting all of their requirements," Koczela said. "But sometimes, it's too much to ask."

Shortage of specialists

Districts face similar issues trying to fill other voc-ed positions, according to school officials.

Few of the state's education schools even offer majors in such voc-ed specialties as agriculture, business and marketing, or family and consumer sciences, and those that do have seen enrollments decline.

Over the last three years, there were two to four times as many vacancies in voc-ed specialties as graduates available to fill them, according to data compiled for the consortium by Judy Mueller, human resources director for the Franklin School District.

At the same time, districts lose experienced vocational education teachers to the technical colleges and private sector, said Lisa Olson, superintendent of Hartford Union School District, about 35 miles northwest of Milwaukee.

"Two years ago, we had a business marketing instructor go to Kohl's Corp. And the same year a business and computer instructor left to go to Moraine Park Technical College," Olson said.

This year it lost two more teachers — one in agriculture and the other in family and consumer sciences — in August.

"We were luckily able to steal an ag teacher from a small rural district. They still haven't filled that

vacancy. And I feel really bad about that," she said.

West Allis-West Milwaukee schools lost both its business and family and consumer sciences teachers this fall. It covered the consumer sciences class with substitutes, and just hired a new business teacher this month.

"For high school positions, we usually get 60 to 100 applicants in any subject area," said Kristen Gurtner, the district's director of human resources. "For business, we had three applicants, and only one was certified."

Proponents of the bill say midcareer professionals with current industry experience have as much or more to offer students than traditional teachers with no or outdated industry experience. And they say the vocational courses provide students important exposure to career options at a time when many students are graduating from traditional four-year colleges with limited job options and no discernible career path.

"I have a doctorate. I love education and learning," Hartford Union's Olson said. "But I'm also realistic. We all have different strengths ... and we want people to contribute to the economy any way they can."

Critics argue such programs duplicate what's already offered in technical colleges and may pigeonhole students too early, before they can be exposed to other career paths. And they say skill-based licensing ignores the importance of pedagogy — the method and practices of teaching — that is emphasized in traditional schools of education.

"A teacher should be well-rounded, someone who is there for the purpose of educating the whole child. And that means understanding how your curriculum fits into the curriculum of the school. And how that intersects with how you become a good citizen," said Brian McAlister, an associate dean who heads the technology education program at UW-Stout.

"These are children and some people are treating them like they are human capital that needs to be molded into something that industry needs. And I have a problem with that," he said. "We should be educating kids and not training them to fit into someone's economic model."

TEACHER

LICENSING

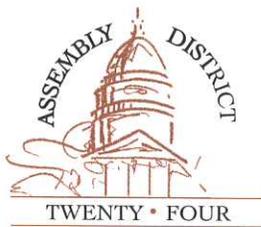
The Legislature approved **experience-based licenses** as part of the 2015-'17 budget. The state has issued 19 such licenses to date.

Now, school districts are asking lawmakers to **expand that** to cover other hard-to-fill vocational education subjects, from business and marketing to agriculture, child care and culinary arts.

Find this article at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/teachers-take-new-paths-to-hard-to-fill-specialty-jobs-b99639332z1-364581361.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



DAN KNODL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 24TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Chairman Gudex and members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my support of Senate Bill 449. This bill will provide much needed relief to school districts having difficulty hiring teachers for vocational subjects such as business, agriculture, healthcare occupations, and family and consumer education. It will also allow the state's school districts to more easily implement creative plans to help close the skills gap we currently face.

This bill is an expansion of the experience based licensure for technical education teachers included in the 2015 biennial budget. This pathway was developed by Sen. Darling and a large group of school districts. Brown Deer School District leadership who had spearheaded the budget motion approached Sen. Darling and myself about expanding the program during meetings we held with our school districts after the budget. Many of the other school districts who helped then have helped this time around as well.

This bill increases local control for our school districts and will benefit students across the state. In 2013 the legislature passed a bill requiring every school to implement academic and career planning services for students in grades 6-12. To do this effectively, and give the students every opportunity to succeed, our districts need to have the ability to hire qualified teachers. Currently there is a very small pool of applicants for these jobs, but the districts are finding there are many mid-career professionals with experience and connections that are ready to share their knowledge in the classroom.

Since the passage of the current budget, Brown Deer School District has been able to hire and license two technical education teachers that had abundant industry experience that they have now been able to bring to the classroom. One of the teachers, Craig Griffie, submitted written testimony during the assembly hearing in regards to how the new licensure pathway has helped him bring new and improved lesson plans to his classroom because he was no longer forced to spend nights and weekends studying for irrelevant classes. He has moved on to take classes that are immediately relevant to his work under this program. Teachers coming from the workforce to the classroom bring connections to industry and experience working in their respective sectors that traditionally trained teachers often lack. This bill is about filling jobs. Both the teaching positions we desperately need applicants for, and the positions of the future that current students will be able to fill if they have the proper experience that can now start in high school.

The biggest argument against the original experienced based tech ed licensure pathway was that we did not need it because of emergency licenses. I would also like to point out that this pathway requires stronger credentials than the emergency licensure does. It also requires a new teacher to complete a curriculum prescribed by the school district before being granted a permanent license. I feel that this bill will allow us to better serve the students of Wisconsin and help us close the skills gap by making it easier for our school districts to hire qualified and eager applicants that may not have otherwise been able to make the shift to teaching due to the financial and/or time commitments required by the current pathways. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

**Senate Committee on Economic Development and Commerce
January 11, 2016**

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
Senate Bill 449**

I want to thank Chairman Gudex and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today on Senate Bill 449 (SB 449). My name is Sheila Briggs. I am the Assistant State Superintendent of the Division for Academic Excellence at the Department of Public Instruction (the department) and with me today is Jennifer Kammerud, Policy Advisor. We are here to testify in opposition to SB 449. While we are supportive of flexibility, and certainly understand the desire to quickly expand a pool of potential applicants in the face of worries over shortages and the resulting market effects on salaries, we have concerns about the ultimate effects of the bill as it is currently drafted. One of the most important components of a student's success is an effective teacher. This bill would change the minimum qualifications for how Wisconsin defines the preparation to be that effective teacher.

Licensing Overview

Before moving into the bill, I think it is important to quickly review the many routes, or pathways, to becoming a licensed teacher.

At its basis, all routes to licensure should revolve around ensuring minimal expectations of high quality. We currently have 11 distinct pathways to becoming a licensed educator in Wisconsin, with the last three routes added in the last biennial budget. Our pathways include traditional routes through our colleges and universities to receive a bachelor's degree, routes for career changers, and routes for currently licensed teachers adding additional areas of licensure.

Pathways to Licensure

1. Bachelor's Degree
2. Post Baccalaureate
3. Alternative Route Program
4. License Based on Equivalency
5. Adding Additional License via Exam
6. Professional Teaching Permit
7. International & Guest Teacher
8. Trade Specialist Permit
9. Experience-Based on Technology Education
10. License Based on Reciprocity
11. Montessori

In Wisconsin, we have 33 Wisconsin colleges and universities that have educator preparation programs, 10 alternative route programs, and 2 license based upon equivalency providers. Please note that alternative route program providers can include school districts, CESAs, colleges, and private for profit and nonprofit entities. The department has a rigorous process of approving these programs, and then a yearly evaluation that is called the Continuous Review Process, to ensure quality and continuous improvement of these programs.

Wisconsin has always been known for our high-quality licensing system. Wisconsin has previously required all candidates for licensure to demonstrate that they both have the content and pedagogical knowledge needed to meet minimum state expectations to be an effective teacher. In the past, regardless of the route you took, everyone had to meet the same bar. This is no longer the case.

SB 449

In order to discuss this bill, we have to note what it is modeled on--the experience-based license for technical education created in the budget. This bill replicates issues with that license.

First and foremost, I think most parents assume that to be a teacher you have to have met some minimal state qualifications. This bill eliminates standard minimal qualifications for vocational subjects, which we call Career and Technical Education, and replaces them with a points menu districts can utilize. Some examples include:

- Anyone with a bachelor's degree in any subject can meet the points required to teach any vocational subject regardless of their major.
- Anyone who has worked full-time for 18 weeks and has earned at least 7 credits at a technical college in science, technology, engineering, math course, or in a subject related to the vocation can teach.
- Anyone who has ever received a teaching license in any subject or to teach as a substitute teacher can teach any vocational course.
- Anyone who has ever received a teaching permit, meaning they haven't met the qualifications to be a fully licensed teacher, can teach any vocational course.

As a result of this points menu, the licensing and renewal process is now based on qualifications determined by local school districts. There is no state process aligned to state standards. There are no requirements to pass the same tests everyone else has to in order to be a teacher. There is a loss of transparency here for parents and to the state. It is no longer true that all teachers have to meet the same bar to be fully licensed.

A second concern is whether this license is portable. While the school district must apply with the individual to get the license, once that individual has the five-year license can they apply to work anywhere on that license? The department has proposed rules that would clarify this for the technical education experience-based license, but until those rules are finalized, this remains a concern.

Additionally, the only quality control requirement is that the individual completes a local school district curriculum created by the district that initially hired them. There are no requirements as to what this curriculum should entail. There is no alignment with the existing state teacher standards and state renewal processes that apply to all other licensed teachers who want to renew

their license. What this creates are different licensing standards across 424 school districts.

This bill and the technical education experience-based license also create implications for the preparation of the teacher teaching core courses in English, mathematics, and science. The committee should be aware that school districts across the state have received equivalency for many courses. What I mean by that is many agriculture courses also count as science courses for purposes of graduation credit. Some business courses count for English credit. Technical education courses can count for science or mathematics credit.

Our experience with the technical education experience-based license created in the budget has given us a picture of how this bill will likely play out. The budget passed when many school districts already had staffing set for the 2015-16 school year. Even with this timeframe, however, 19 school districts applied with an applicant for one of these licenses and 19 were approved. You have the chart in front of you. As you can see there is a range of what is considered minimal preparation requirements.

SB 449 creates new issues as well. For instance, it creates a broad vocational license which appears to cover all career and technical education licenses and some areas we don't license currently. It is unclear if the department has the authority to give vocational education experience-based licenses by subject area to address this, but if we do, it should be noted that this will also increase the complexity of our licensing system by creating multiple new categories of licensure.

One last implication of this bill is the unknown effect on existing preparation programs, both traditional and alternative. Over time, if people are increasingly licensed through this alternative, there may be a point where some of these programs may cease to exist due to costs involved and tests that need to be passed by candidates that aren't present in this proposal.

The department has worked hard over the last five years to provide additional flexibility and add additional licensure pathways to fit almost any situation. We are prepared to continue to work with our stakeholders and the legislature to remove additional barriers that may exist, but we believe a deeper conversation needs to occur over what minimal expectations and qualifications are necessary before people are placed in front of students.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and at this time we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

TO: Senate Committee on Economic Development and
Commerce

FROM: John Forester, Director of Government Relations

DATE: January 11, 2016

RE: SB 449 – Licenses to Teach Vocational Education
Subjects

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue today. The SAA is testifying for information only on Senate Bill 449 (SB 449), relating to licenses to teach vocational education subjects.

This past year, the SAA convened a team of Wisconsin school administrators to identify an evidence based policy agenda that could provide Wisconsin with an effective path to improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps. We partnered with researchers at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to provide research and policy expertise. Regarding educator preparation, we found that the most important school factor determining whether students achieve academically is the knowledge and skills of the classroom teacher. Therefore, if our objective for education policy in Wisconsin is to improve student achievement for all students and close achievement gaps, it is critically important that we continue raising the bar for what our teachers know and are able to do.

The research was very clear on the importance of rigorous teacher preparation. Whether we are discussing traditional teacher preparation programs or alternative certification programs, high quality teacher preparation helps candidates to develop the knowledge and skills they need in the classroom. Both strong content knowledge and strong pedagogical content knowledge are important elements of high quality teacher preparation. While the research is inconclusive about many facets of teacher preparation, industrialized nations whose students outperform U.S. students tend to invest heavily in pre-service preparation. Compared to the U.S., these nations had very different teacher preparation criteria, marked by more extensive advanced coursework and specialization in content knowledge, more rigorous selection and admissions criteria, more pedagogical content and general pedagogical preparation, exit exams and certification and licensing programs.

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Wisconsin Council for
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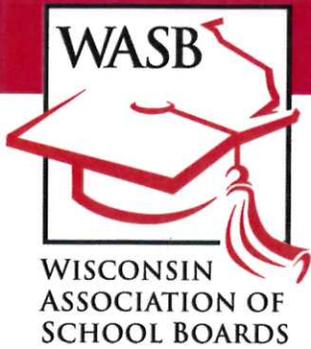
I think if given the clear choice, Wisconsin school leaders would hire candidates that are products of high quality, rigorous teacher preparation. Unfortunately, we have a big problem. The evidence demonstrates that in Wisconsin and in the nation there is a conflict between two key factors. While more rigorous, selective educator preparation tends to yield improved student outcomes, our current incentives and program structure do not entice the best and the brightest to enter and remain in education. In Wisconsin, we are witnessing declining numbers of candidates entering colleges of education, increasingly thin applicant pools in most if not all subject areas, and quality teachers leaving the state and even the profession. It is these factors that led the SAA to recommend to lawmakers and the State Superintendent that we convene a high level effort to focus like a laser beam on educator recruitment, retention and training and develop a comprehensive, long-term approach to attack this problem head-on.

Some school districts are currently facing a critical situation in which they have concluded they either get flexibility in the licensure of technical and vocational education candidates or they will have to close popular academic programs. It's not the loss of the program itself that is the travesty. Rather, the travesty is the resulting loss of educational opportunities for students in program areas they are enthusiastic about and that we as a state hold as an important priority. So we understand why some school administrators are supporting SB 449.

The concern we have about SB 449 is the "message" of the bill and its long term effects. "Professional teacher preparation and licensure is no longer necessary in Wisconsin" is not the message we should send in our education policy. School leaders in Wisconsin are concerned that if we continue to go down this road, in 5 or 10 years we will look back at the results and say, "What the heck were we thinking?" And do we want that to be our legacy?

Mr. Chairman, I understand that I am testifying for information only but, I would like to make a couple of recommendations. First of all, sunset the experience-based licensure approach for technical and vocational education subjects in 3 to 5 years, at which time the Legislature will consider the results and decide whether to keep it or not. Secondly, please support convening a high-level effort of all relevant PK-16 education stakeholders to develop a long-term, comprehensive approach to attack our recruitment, retention and educator training problems here in Wisconsin.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. If you should have any questions regarding the SAA's statement on SB 449, please call me at (608) 242-1370.



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John H. Ashley, Executive Director

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Economic Development & Commerce
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, Government Relations Director
RE: Position on Senate Bill 449, licenses to teach vocational education subjects.
DATE: January 11, 2016

Chairman Gudex and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about Senate Bill 449. My name is Dan Rossmiller and I am the government relations director for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), representing 423 school boards across the state of Wisconsin.

We have taken a neutral position on this bill. We recognize that those who worked to develop the bill raise legitimate concerns about the shortage of qualified vocational teachers and the need to address this problem.

However, upon closer inspection, we also recognize teacher shortages are a growing, nationwide problem and a long-term concern, a problem not likely to be corrected by piecemeal approaches such as this bill.

We call upon the Department of Public Instruction to convene a high level task force as soon as possible to examine best practices and evidence-based solutions addressing teacher shortages from around the country and recommend necessary changes. Such a task force should involve all stakeholders and have a clear emphasis on ensuring that schoolchildren receive high quality instruction that prepares them to succeed beyond high school and meet the needs of our state's economy and employers.

We also recommend that a Legislative Council study committee be convened to address the teacher shortage with a similar focus. This issue deserves a thorough examination.

We thank you for the opportunity to bring these concerns to your attention.