



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share a revised set of Guidelines for the Pre-Practicum for Teachers. Last fall, we received public comments on the draft policy proposals from over 400 respondents in educator preparation and PK-12, including representatives from 45 Sponsoring Organizations and 58 school districts. We reviewed these comments carefully and made several important changes based on this feedback.

The guidelines are supported by mounting evidence that shifting teacher preparation towards authentic, supported field-based experiences helps bridge theory and practice for teacher candidates and results in new teachers who are more effective, feel more prepared, and remain in the classroom longer.

Based on feedback received during public comment, we made several shifts to reinforce our shared focus on outcomes over inputs. Most notably, we removed the explicit requirement for minimum hours as well as the more prescriptive policies around specific activities. Instead, the guidelines address three key components of pre-practicum: **intended outcomes, observation and feedback, and gateway assessments**.

We have chosen to focus on these policy areas because of their importance in ensuring candidate readiness for the practicum and their connection to several [program approval criteria](#), including:

- Candidate Domain Criterion 4: Candidates at risk of not meeting standards are identified early and receive necessary supports and guidance to improve or exit the program; and
- Continuous Improvement Criterion 1: Sponsoring Organization oversees and has systems in place to monitor all individual licensure programs to ensure each is effective.

According to our analysis of current practices, pre-practicum candidates are currently formally observed and provided with feedback in only 52% of Sponsoring Organizations. In addition, while 89% of survey respondents reported that their organization requires the administration of gateway or benchmark assessments during pre-practicum, these gateways are often input-based and only loosely connected to candidate's performance in authentic teaching experiences. While we recognize that there may be logistical hurdles to overcome in implementation, the majority of respondents during the public comment period agreed that these policies will **significantly** or **moderately** improve teacher candidate readiness (87% of PK-12 and 57% of Ed Prep).

In support of these changes, the guidelines are again being released for public comment through March 4, 2018. To provide public comment, please visit this link: <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/4138107/Public-Comment-Pre-Practicum-Guidelines>.

Knowing that new teachers do not yet consistently enter their classrooms “fully ready,”¹ and that these new

¹ Based on the 2015-16 [survey](#) of hiring principals, only 27% reported that candidates were fully ready and immediately impactful with students.

teachers are disproportionately assigned to our highest-need students,² it is imperative that we shift expectations for practice and demonstration of readiness earlier in preparation in order to close the “experience gap” for new teachers and ensure full readiness on day one. We look forward to your feedback on our proposed changes and remain committed to partnering with you in support of effective implementation of the final set of guidelines.

Sincerely,

Heather G. Peske, Ed.D.
Senior Associate Commissioner for Instructional Support

² On average, students in high poverty and high minority schools have twice as many first year teachers as do students in low poverty and low minority schools. See MA’s [Equity Plan](#) for more information.