

Licensure Reciprocity in SREB States

Summary of State Requirements

As state leaders address teaching shortages, they should consider whether licensure reciprocity policies deter out-of-state educators from seeking licensure in their state. Table 1 displays requirements for obtaining an initial teaching license in SREB states, including:

- Earned bachelor's degree (all 16 states)
- Valid, unexpired license issued by another state (13)
- Passing scores on standardized licensure tests (11).

The relative consistency in these three requirements disguises an important fact — that requirements vary significantly based on the experience level of the teacher applying for a license. SREB found that 13 member states provide exemptions from licensure assessment requirements if teachers meet a certain experience threshold. The minimum experience level varies from one to four years, with three the most common threshold.

Barriers to Interstate Transfer

Only two SREB states — Florida and Mississippi — provide full reciprocity, meaning educators with a valid out-of-state license are eligible for professional certification without completing additional requirements. In the other SREB states, some out-of-state educators must take required assessments or produce passing test scores if they do not meet certain experience thresholds.

While additional assessments could discourage out-of-state educators from applying for a reciprocal license, three other factors likely have an equal or greater impact on interstate transfer:

- Holding an unexpired license but not meeting the experience threshold to exempt from assessment requirements
- Not wanting to complete required coursework or professional development
- Not interested in applying because of complex and unclear processes

What Will State Leaders Be Able to Do After Reading This Briefing?

1. Make sense of common measures used to determine out-of-state teachers' eligibility for licensure
2. Pinpoint teacher characteristics that facilitate or hamper interstate transfer
3. Learn how to address a critical gap in state policies related to interstate transfer

This brief was written by SREB Research Associate Matthew Smith, adapted from research for SREB Education Human Capital Roundtables.

Several SREB states have addressed the first barrier by issuing provisional licenses or initial professional licenses for teachers who need more time to complete the testing requirements.

Table 1. Requirements for Out-of-State Teachers to Obtain a License

State	Basic Requirements for Out-of-State Teachers to Obtain License					Exemptions from Some or All Requirements		
	Earned Bachelor's Degree	Complete Preparation Program	Valid, Out-of-State License	Minimum Years of Experience	Passing Scores on Licensure Tests	Through Minimum Experience Level	Via National Board Certification	Assessment Exemptions
Alabama	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Arkansas	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Delaware	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Florida	✓		✓				✓	
Georgia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Kentucky	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Louisiana	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Maryland	✓					✓	✓	✓
Mississippi	✓		✓				✓	✓
North Carolina	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Oklahoma	✓		✓		✓			
South Carolina	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Tennessee	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
Texas	✓		✓		✓			✓
Virginia	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
West Virginia	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
TOTAL	16	8	13	1	11	10	12	14

*Out-of-state applicants may exempt some or all tests depending on experience level, advanced licensure or another criterion.

An Emerging Opportunity

The above requirements apply to teachers who have completed their pre-service training and hold a valid out-of-state license. SREB state policies are less clear on how recent graduates of out-of-state preparation programs apply for a license if they do not hold an out-of-state credential. Clarifying the requirements for these teachers could help facilitate interstate transfer.

State Policy Descriptions

Alabama

Out-of-state applicants may satisfy licensure assessment requirements in one of three ways: (1) verification of a passing score on the content knowledge test required in another state, (2) proof of at least three years of experience or (3) meeting the current state content knowledge test requirements.

Arkansas

Applicants may receive a one-year, nonrenewable provisional license if they have not met state professional development or licensure assessment requirements.

Delaware

The state awards initial or continuing licenses based on the experience level of the out-of-state applicant. Applicants with under one year of experience must pass state-required licensure assessments within the first two years of receiving an initial license. Out-of-state applicants with a valid, unexpired license and more than one year of experience are exempt from licensure assessment requirements. The state issues continuing licenses to out-of-state teachers with more than four years of experience who demonstrate instructional effectiveness.

Florida

Out-of-state teachers with valid, unexpired licenses or National Board Certification are eligible for professional certification. Applicants without an out-of-state license are subject to the same requirements as in-state candidates for temporary and professional certification.

Georgia

State rules require out-of-state applicants to meet or exempt from five Special Georgia requirements. The state issues induction certificates (a provisional license) to applicants if they have not passed all required content and pedagogy assessments.

Kentucky

State rules require the completion of university coursework within five years of receiving a Kentucky certificate. Out-of-state applicants are exempt from testing requirements if they can document two or more years of teaching experience in another state.

Louisiana

The state awards a three-year, nonrenewable certificate for out-of-state teachers who have not met licensure test requirements. Teachers who have not taught within the past five years must also complete six semester hours of university coursework. Those with more than four years of teaching experience who have met all licensure requirements except those related to Praxis Subject Assessments may receive a professional certificate.

Maryland

Out-of-state applicants might need to take additional coursework if the licensing agency's transcript analysis finds deficiencies. Out-of-state teachers with at least three years of teaching experience are exempt from licensure requirements. Applicants who do not meet the experience requirements or do not hold an out-of-state certificate are subject to state testing requirements.

Mississippi

Teachers who document passing scores on the licensing state's assessments are exempt from testing requirements. Teachers who cannot document passing scores must meet Mississippi requirements within two years of receiving their initial license to remain eligible for a renewable credential.

North Carolina

Starting July 1, 2019, educators with three or more years of experience can apply for a continuing professional license if they hold a valid out-of-state license, pass exams comparable to North Carolina's required tests, and submit evaluation data demonstrating instructional effectiveness. Comparability means that out-of-state applicants satisfied the testing requirements in the licensing state and passed the assessment as determined by the test developer(s). Teachers with less than three years of experience and a valid out-of-state license are eligible for the initial professional license.

Oklahoma

Out-of-state applicants are exempt from state testing requirements if they hold a valid license and produce passing scores on a "competency examination used in the majority of other states or comparable customized exam." The state issues provisional certificates to all out-of-state applicants. Teachers may apply for a five-year, renewable certificate after one year of teaching in Oklahoma.

South Carolina

Out-of-state applicants submit passing scores for content and pedagogy assessments required by the license-issuing state. Teachers with a valid out-of-state license and less than three years of experience must submit passing scores on the state-approved pedagogical assessment.

Tennessee

Teachers must produce passing scores on required assessments, but the state exempts some applicants if they hold an active educator license from a reciprocal state, are employed by a district in the licensure area, and meet a threshold in the educator evaluation system in the first two years following the initial award of a license.

Texas

Out-of-state applicants must pass Texas assessments, present passing scores on "similar" or "at least as rigorous" assessments from other states or qualify for exemptions from testing requirements. The state issues a one-year certificate that allows teachers one year to pass required tests.

Virginia

Out-of-state license holders with three or more years of experience are exempt from licensure assessments. Out-of-state applicants may qualify for initial licensure by completing a state-approved teacher preparation program or by holding a valid, unexpired license.

West Virginia

Out-of-state teachers with three years of experience within the last seven years are exempt from testing requirements.