

A Message to IMEA Members

No doubt many of you have heard about the Proposed Rule Revisions for Educator Preparation and Accountability (REPA) that were presented to the Indiana Division of Professional Standards advisory board in late July. This message serves to inform you about this proposal, its implications for Indiana music education, and how IMEA will respond.

Current licensure to teach music in Indiana comes after a rigorous and extensive program of preparation. Acceptance into a Bachelors degree program is dependent on demonstration of musical skill, and pre-service teachers are accountable for a high level of musical knowledge and skill throughout their undergraduate training. But musical competence is just the beginning: throughout their program music education majors are challenged to begin "thinking like a teacher." In preparation for the K-12 music license, pre-service teachers have both training and extensive on-site experience with learners from early childhood through high school, from varied demographics, and of all ability levels. Our state's music teacher preparation programs are among the nation's best in enabling highly qualified new teachers to teach and inspire a diversity of students with a diversity of music.

The heart of the Proposed Rule Revisions reflects a basic misperception of the way content and pedagogy are connected in excellent teaching, as it is built on the premise that the "best qualified teachers" are those who are well-versed in their content area, while their pedagogical training and experience are considered much less important or relevant. Therefore, under the proposed revisions, a content area major would be required for new teacher licensure, and in-depth training and experience in methodology and pedagogy would be reduced in teacher training programs and not required in alternate routes to licensure.

Of great concern to us in music education are the alternative procedures by which individuals can become licensed music educators. There are three main points with which we take exception:

1. Adding content area to an existing license:

The proposal states that someone licensed in one content area can add another content area to the license by passing the content-area test. The Praxis II music content exam is a written test that includes no assessment of musical skill, so it appears possible that the high school math teacher with some intellectual knowledge of music but no documented ability to sing, play, or conduct, and no experience in a music classroom, could be licensed to teach a high school ensemble. The proposal also lists certification by the online American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence as an option for obtaining licensure; since the ABCTE does not offer certification in music, this route is not available to those seeking licensure in music.

2. Licensing professionals without adequate pedagogical training:

Another possibility suggested by this proposal is that anyone presently holding a Bachelors degree with a music major could add 15 hours of course work in Education and be considered as fully licensed as an individual with a Bachelor of Music Education degree. Theoretically, current music majors could also bypass their department's methods and pedagogy courses and obtain a teaching license.

3. Licensing fine arts teachers as Workplace Specialists:

Another facet of the proposed changes adds "Fine Arts" to the list of content areas that may be taught by individuals holding the Workplace Specialist license. This license allows an individual with documented hours of occupational experience to teach related classes in fields such as automotive repair, cosmetology, culinary arts, information technology, and now fine arts. No post-secondary education is required for this license. We have been told by the Division of Professional Standards that the Workplace Specialist license in the Fine Arts would only be recognized in Indiana's career and vocational schools, and would have no effect on licensing in "traditional" public schools, but we continue to be concerned with the underlying assumption that quality music education can be delivered to any Indiana students by individuals with no pedagogical expertise.

We have posted the REPA Summary document and FAQs about REPA here on the IMEA website rather than attach them to this already lengthy document. Both documents are accessible by clicking on the PDF links in the box at the top of this message. I encourage you to read these documents for further detailed information about the proposed changes.

This proposal (and it is still a proposal) is for a change in licensing rules, which are overseen by the Indiana Division of Professional Standards (formerly the IPSB). The target date for enactment of these changes is July 2010. It is not a law and will not be voted on by the legislature, nor is it the domain of the State Board of Education. Nonetheless, since the State Board of Education and the legislature are ultimately responsible for education in Indiana, you may want to copy them, as well as the governor, on your correspondence with the Professional Standards Advisory Board members. The DPS board is advisory, and it appears that the final decision will be made by the governor.

There will be a period of time when online public comments will be accepted, and I encourage you to check the DPS web site--<http://www.doe.in.gov/dps/>--and to respond using that forum. I will be writing on behalf of IMEA to the members of the DPS advisory board, whose names and email addresses are listed in the right sidebar on the DPS web site and would encourage IMEA members to let their opinions be heard in this way as well.

Barbara Resch, IMEA President
Michelle Oyler, IMEA President-elect
Lissa May, IMEA Past President
Gary Wishmeyer, IMEA Educational Director
JoDee Marshall, IMEA Executive Manager