



autism society of minnesota

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Dear Autism Community Partners,

If you were unable to attend the hearing on Monday, September 19, please submit your written comments ASAP, they must be received within 5 working days (from the close of the hearing yesterday). They do not have to be lengthy, just state that you support an Autism Spectrum Disorders License and why. Please focus on why it will benefit students with ASD. MASE had many members (Special Ed Directors) speak against the ASD License so we need everyone to send comments. For those concerned about the excellent teachers we have making the transition I will quote from the Statement of Need and Reasonableness from the Board of Teaching. "The Board of Teaching clearly recognizes that the establishment of an ASD License will have significant impact on those teachers and seeks to provide reasonable means for these teachers to transition to the new ASD license." Education Minnesota did testify supporting the ASD License. If you have questions or would like more info please contact our office.

Comments should be submitted to the Administrative Law Judge at:

Office of Administrative Hearings  
PO Box 64620  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0620

Comments may be faxed to [651 361-7936](tel:6513617936) or emailed to [rulecomments@state.mn.us](mailto:rulecomments@state.mn.us)

State agency staff using the state email hub should email comments to [rulecomments.oah@state.mn.us](mailto:rulecomments.oah@state.mn.us)

As outlined below by retired AuSM Executive Director, Mary Powell, this has been a long process, after many stakeholder meetings and three years of work, the Board of Teaching is ready to have an ASD License, We need to make our voice heard.

Dawn Steigauf  
AuSM President

September 15, 2011

The Minnesota Board of Teaching is conducting a hearing on Monday, September 19, on the proposed rules for teacher certification in special education. This hearing is the culmination of advocacy that began at the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) ten years ago. At that time several parents expressed concern regarding the preparation of their childrens' teachers. The primary issue was that teachers with licenses to teach students with emotional /behavioral problems were teaching students with ASD. The behavioral methods, employing consequences and punishment, were detrimental for students with ASD. There was a general consensus among the parents and teachers at AuSM that this issue required action.

First, the membership and special education directors throughout Minnesota were surveyed. ASD competencies, developed by the Minnesota State Network of ASD teachers, were evaluated. ASD certificate program curricula were compared. A rationale was developed to support a formal request to the Board of Teaching to establish a license specific to ASD. The rationale was supported by the rising child count and the research that described strategies to improve the learning of students with ASD.

In 2007 the Board of Teaching responded by establishing stakeholder meetings to explore the need for a license in ASD. Over 60 people participated and agreed that something should be done. In 2008 the Board of Teaching, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Education, conducted a comprehensive review of the licensure structure for special education. AuSM was invited to participate in Phase 1 of this work. These meetings analyzed data on trends, practices from research, and models from other states. Phase 2 was the writing and revision of disability specific licenses.

Phase 1 participants reconvened to look at the revisions and writings and to consider the overall implications of the work. The review concluded with recommendations in the core skills, revisions in disability specific licenses, and two new licenses: one in ASD and one general license for teachers teaching multiple disabilities. This license is now called the Academic and Behavior Strategist (ABS). This was a compromise to address the concerns of special education directors who found it difficult to employ teachers with disability specific licenses.

These licenses can be viewed at <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/BoardTeach/documents/LawStatute/021669.pdf>. Note that a teacher with an ABS license can teach students with ASD who have mild or moderate impairments.

AuSM was very pleased with the decision to establish an ASD license but acknowledged the concern of existing teachers who needed to transition to a new license to continue teaching students with ASD. After hearings last fall The Board of Teaching determined that teachers have 3 years to meet the requirements for an ASD license or an ABS license. There will be recognition of the coursework in certificate programs and an analysis to determine how programs like the MN Autism Symposium, workshops and conferences meet the license standards.

We hope this history will help you understand why your support is needed. AuSM has been committed to the education of children with ASD through the improvement and support of teachers for 20 years. Your participation in the hearings will reflect AuSM's strong leadership in Minnesota education. Please submit your support for the proposed rulings in writing or attend the hearing on Monday, September 19 starting at 8:30 am. See our web site ([www.ausm.org](http://www.ausm.org)) for details.

Sincerely,

Mary Powell  
Retired Executive Director of AuSM