



Frequently Asked Questions about the Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS) License

In January 2012 the Minnesota Board of Teaching approved a new Special Education license: the Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS) license.

The purpose of the ABS license is to prepare Special Education teachers to work across multiple disability areas. A teacher holding the ABS license is authorized to provide evaluation and specially designed instruction to eligible children and youth with disabilities from kindergarten through age 21 who have a range of mild to moderate needs in the areas of academic, behavior, social/emotional, communication and functional performance. These students may be eligible for special education services in the primary disability areas of autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental cognitive disability (DCD), emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD), other health disorders (OHD) and specific learning disabilities (SLD).

The ABS license allows districts more flexibility in terms of staffing and providing services for students. Districts may serve a broader range of students utilizing staff with this ABS license, thus avoiding the previous need to seek personnel variances for some of their teachers from the Board of Teaching (BOT).

Who is required to have an ABS license?

No one is required to hold an ABS license. Rather, the ABS license is an option that allows a teacher to serve students with mild to moderate needs across multiple disability areas.

What else is required for a teacher who has an ABS license?

The 2017 Omnibus Education Bill repealed the requirement that the candidate hold or be recommended for licensure in another licensure field when seeking to renew their Academic Behavioral Strategist (ABS) license. Based on the Laws of Minnesota 2017, First Special Session, chapter 5, article 3, section 32, the Board of Teaching completed rulemaking on July 24, 2017, to amend [Minnesota Rule 8710.5050, Teachers of Special Education: Academic and Behavioral Strategist, subpart 4](#).

What are the options for acquiring an ABS license through a Minnesota Institution of Higher Education?

Many Minnesota institutions of higher education (IHE) are approved by the Board of Teaching (BOT) to offer an ABS licensure program. The approved ABS licensure IHE programs may be contacted to ascertain what requirements are necessary to obtain the ABS license. For teachers holding current special education licensure, the IHEs will conduct a transcript review to determine what requirements have been met by previous course work and plan a course of action for the courses required for the ABS license. If your district allows, some institutions will allow you to complete a clinical practicum on the job.

For a list of approved programs, [see the document titled “State Approved Special Education Teacher Licensure Programs,”](#) which is [kept current on the Board of Teaching’s \(BOT\) website](#). To view the list, begin at BOT’s homepage, click on “Becoming a MN Educator” (in the blue band at the top of the window). Next, choose “Teacher Preparation Programs.”

What does this mean for teachers coming to Minnesota with a special education license from another state?

Beginning January 1, 2013, the Minnesota Department of Education’s Licensing Division began issuing ABS licenses to out-of-state teacher applicants who hold the same or similar mild-to-moderate cross-categorical or multi-categorical licenses from other states.

Can a teacher be grandfathered into the ABS license if s/he holds one or more of the four disability-specific licenses and experience teaching in one or more of the disability areas?

No. Teachers with one or more of the four disability-specific licenses—Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Developmental Disabilities (DD), Emotional or Behavioral Disorders (EBD), or Learning Disabilities (LD)—should contact one of the institutions of higher education with an approved ABS licensure program. These institutions are prepared to conduct an analysis of prior coursework and credentials to determine what requirements remain.

Does the rule regarding the ABS license specify a definition for “mild to moderate needs?”

The rule ([8710.5050 Teachers of Special Education: Academic and Behavioral Strategist](#)) regarding the ABS license does not specify a definition for “mild to moderate needs.” The IEP team determines whether or not the student has mild to moderate needs in the areas of academic, behavior, social/emotional, communication and functional performance.

The rule [3525.1333 Developmental Cognitive Disability](#) distinguishes between mild to moderate and severe and profound range in Subpart 2. Criteria. B. (1) and (2).

Does the rule regarding the ABS license specify the Federal Settings in which a teacher with an ABS license can teach?

The rule ([8710.5050 Teachers of Special Education: Academic and Behavioral Strategist](#)) regarding the ABS license focuses on the ability to meet a student's mild to moderate special education needs, rather than a student's current placement or Federal Setting. Any decisions about limiting the Federal Settings in which teachers with an ABS license may teach occur at the District level.

For questions regarding the ABS teacher workforce, please [contact Becca Jackson](#) at rebecca.jackson@state.mn.us or 651-582-8409.

For questions regarding ABS licensure, please [contact Sue Koehler](#) at sue.koehler@state.mn.us.