

# Interview with National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education & Certification (NASDTEC)

## Introduction

*The Department of Education recently published new federal regulations that require institutions to disclose whether their licensure programs meet the educational requirements for professional licensure in a student's State. This new requirement has created a need for significant research into state professional licensure requirements. Part of this research requires an understanding of the national professional licensure compacts and agreements that impact mobility for new graduates and certified professionals.*

*The SAN Special Interest Team for Professional Licensure Disclosures started a project to shed light on the licensure compacts and agreements, outlining practical implications of the compacts on professional licensure research. Part of this project involved interviews with leaders of the licensure compacts and agreements. These interviews provided the framework and context for the agreements and how they impact the mobility of professionals from State to State. We hope that these interviews will be helpful to institutional professionals who are beginning licensure research for their programs and communicating licensure information to students.*

*Our first interview was with Phillip S. Rogers, Ed.D of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). The NASDTEC Interstate Agreement facilitates the mobility of teachers among states and jurisdictions that are members of the Agreement. For more information on the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement, read the white paper, [Professional Licensure Compacts: Myth v. Fact](#). Phillip Rogers, Ed.D., became the executive director of NASDTEC in 2012. He has worked on evaluation and research projects for Kentucky and national educational organizations.*

## Interview

**Emily Woods:** Thank you so much for your willingness to do this interview. To give our readers a context for the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement, what needs was the Agreement trying to address in the beginning?

**Phillip Rogers:** Well, the NASDTEC is a very high-level agreement. For some states that have signed the Interstate Agreement, a teacher can walk right in and get a certificate, just like reciprocity. For other states, not so much. But the Agreement is a high-level agreement on what the requirements are for an initial teaching certificate, an advanced certificate, and an administration certificate. The Agreement establishes the minimum standards for certification. If the State signs the Agreement, the State is saying they agree at the minimum level that an initial teacher certificate has these essential components. Signing the Agreement doesn't mean a

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state cannot add other things. These additions are called jurisdiction-specific requirements (JSRs). For example, in Arizona, a teacher applicant is still going to have to take the Arizona constitution test. Some states have those specific laws mandated by statutes and their state requirements.

NASDTEC provides a [public website with the data map](#) so people can click on a state and see what that state requires. If you are a teacher who has enough experience, you qualify as an experienced teacher in that state. For most states, it's three years of continuous teaching experience in a public school. For some states, it is five, but across the board, it's pretty consistent with three years. If you're a secondary math teacher, you've been teaching for five years in a public school, and you go to any state in the country, they're going to give you a certificate. Basically, for the experienced teacher, the process acts like reciprocity.

The problem is primarily related to teachers who are considered inexperienced because they have fewer than three years of teaching experience. We particularly run into this issue with spouses of the military, where they move around so much. Or someone who did their program in another state and then went back home and applied for a certificate. The way most states get around this problem is if you are going to the University of Kentucky and you're going back home to Missouri, the thing to do is get your teaching certificate in Kentucky before you go back to Missouri. Then Missouri will look at that Kentucky teaching certificate and decide based upon the Interstate Agreement.

**Woods:** That's helpful. At our institution, our advisors tell students that if they are thinking about going to another state after graduation, they should go ahead and get certified in Kentucky. Don't risk coming out of the program and going straight back to another state to get certified there. The out-of-state application process gets tricky, and it can be tough to advise students when they're so new to all of this. What are some of the most common misunderstandings about the Agreement that you've heard?

**Rogers:** The number one misunderstanding is that the Agreement is reciprocity. Reciprocity does not exist in education. NASDTEC recently surveyed our members. All 50 states are what we call our "jurisdiction members," and these are our voting members. The members are made up of the agency in each state that has the responsibility for licensure. So, in Kentucky, it would be the Kentucky Professional Standards Board. In Tennessee, it is the Department of Education. So whatever agency has that responsibility, they're the ones that are members of NASDTEC. When we surveyed them a couple of years ago, we had 27 states indicate that they consider themselves a "full reciprocity state." But yet, you have to take that with a grain of salt, because they still have some minimum Jurisdiction Specific Requirements (JSRs) that they throw in the mix that are located in their regulations or their statutes. But many of those JSRs can be waived. So we have a waiver process, and many states now allow teachers to get around some JSRs that have been in existence.

The second common misunderstanding is that the Agreement has no teeth. It's just a handshake. That states agree to sign it, but it's not a contract. That signature merely says the state wants to be listed as a signatory, so other states know they are participating in the Interstate Agreement. However, the Agreement has gone a long way to helping pull the states together. I mean, before the Interstate Agreement, not only was there no agreement, but there was no cooperation. States didn't even talk to one another about these issues and the teachers were just on their own. So, the Interstate Agreement has, I guess you could say, sort of softened this approach. A state in the past may have said, "If the state next door raises their practice score to 176, well by George, we're going to raise ours to 199. We're going to have the best seat, you know, with no consideration about the consequences or anything," which can hurt teachers. You have to remember that the teaching profession is not only the largest profession in the country, but it is also the most heavily regulated profession

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in the country. On top of that, the profession has continuously changed regulations. A state may get a new governor, a new Commissioner of Education, new members on the board, a new chair of the course, education committee, a new Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and that incoming person can turn everything upside down.

So, the Agreement was meant to help guide states along so that the people in the state office could say to that new chair of the House, "Our state has the most stringent standards. Well, our state has this Agreement, and we signed it, and all these other states have signed, so we need to follow the requirements of this Agreement." The NASDTEC agreement gives the state office some leverage in being able to navigate the constant churn in regulations and statutes that govern education.

**Woods:** So we've talked a little bit about the Jurisdiction Specific Requirements earlier. I've had some people ask me why the NASDTEC agreement allows state members to put additional JSRs or additional requirements in place?

**Rogers:** We didn't allow them to do anything. The states do their own thing. You've got to remember where the profession was, you know, 20 years ago when this Agreement came into effect and how vicious the states were about protecting their independence and control over education. And they were not going to give that up to another state. However, the severe teacher shortage had some impact upon that. In 2008, the economy began to tank, and teachers were being laid off and things of that nature. Teaching had become a different profession, and there wasn't this unlimited supply of people who were interested in committing to teaching. So, states began to think about reciprocity, of course, as I shared with legislators and discussed compact work. Reciprocity is a two-way street. Teachers can come into your state, but they can also leave your state. So, it's good for the profession, but it's terrible for the state people who are trying to pay the bills because then the state is now in competition with the state next door. The additional state requirements allow states some leverage in this competition.

**Woods:** Are there specific state legislatures that have been difficult to convince about the merits of NASTEC?

**Rogers:** No. Almost all states belong now, and we still pick up a state very now and then. Sometimes a state will call me, "Why isn't our name on the Interstate Agreement?" I respond, "Probably because whoever was in your position 15 years ago didn't want to do it." But for some that were not on there, particularly New York, some states had made a mistake. When the state passed the first edition of the Interstate Agreement, they put it in their statutes, rather than referencing the Agreement and future renditions in the language. So, New York technically told me they don't want to go through the process of legislative process of getting that resolved. If you remember, New York was really torn up about the teacher evaluations and Common Core, so this seemed like a small issue. New York does use the Interstate Agreement, and they comply with it; they just haven't signed the current version.

**Woods:** So, my next question is also on this topic of changing agreements. This current version is from 2015-2020. We're a little way out from the new version, and I've received questions about any changes in future agreements.

**Rogers:** Not in this Agreement. I'm going to recommend to the board in January that we continue to use the current Agreement because we are in a lot of conversations and meetings now regarding the Interstate compact agreements between states on teacher certification.

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We're working with a large national organization headquartered in Lexington, KY, [the Council on State Governments](#). It's a large organization that represents all three branches of state government, and they have a Center for Interstate Compacts. They have a staff that is dedicated to the issue; In the past, most Interstate compacts have been about interstate trucking, waterways boundary issues, etc. A compact is a binding agreement that's passed by the legislature and signed by the governor. The Committee on State Government helps facilitate the creation of these agreements.

The federal government's very interested in the development of interstate agreements. This is the only issue I think the Obama administration and the current administration agreed on. In the Obama administration, I worked with Jill Biden, Joe Biden's wife, and Michelle Obama's office. Both of them were very involved in this issue as it relates to spouses of military personnel. The Department of Defense and the Department of Labor are very interested in the whole topic of interstate reciprocity of occupational license. So that includes teachers, nurses, EMTs, psychologists, and all of those groups. The process of creating interstate compacts is under review now by the Feds. The Feds have no control over it because compact work is a state thing, but they are trying to facilitate these interstate compacts. As of now, some compacts are really active. Nurses have one, EMTs have one, psychologists have one. The Council on State Governments manages all of these compacts. And so they're managing ours as well.

**Woods:** What a fantastic insight into the background of compacts! I was not aware of any of that work going on. Is there anything else in national education policy that impacts the Agreement or have you seen any national trends over the last few years?

**Rogers:** Number one, you're asking about national education policy. "States" is in our name and we've talked so far about interstate agreements, not national agreements. And I very loosely refer to our clearinghouse as a national database, but I will never say that in front of my members. It's an interstate database. Words are important.

So, I know the Northeast had their last compact, which came apart when No Child Left Behind came into existence because each state could not agree on the definition of a qualified teacher. So that was the last effort at what we would call a compact or reciprocity across state lines. And it was basically killed because of national education policy. So, when the Feds get involved in education policy, it usually does not end well. They have good intentions, but it just does not end well. So, we're hoping that the Interstate Compact will sort of set up a wall that the Feds will recognize and leave alone. But you just never know.

**Woods:** We've talked about some of the benefits of the Agreement, but what would you say is the most significant benefit you've seen come from this Agreement?

**Rogers:** Certainly, the benefit to teachers if they are going to another state, particularly new teachers if they're going to a state that recognizes the Interstate Agreement and checks to see which state the teacher is coming from. The Agreement is about processing already certified teachers. It is about people who are already in the profession, ready to go to work, and wanting to step into a classroom.

**Woods:** For a university trying to find all of the licensure requirements and advising their students regarding licensure, how would you suggest researching teaching licensure?

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**Rogers:** If you go to the [NASDTEC website](#), you will find resources that you can share with students or that you can use regarding Jurisdiction Specific Requirements. We try to keep that up to date and get our states to update that information every two years. The biggest problem is you're going to have the constant churn in regulations, requirements, tweakings of assessment numbers, those kinds of things. It's not a static field, and it's going to be constantly changing every year. There's going to be new requirements, and some will be taken away. So, it just depends on what the state is doing.

**Woods:** Thank you again so much for your time in doing this interview. I know that this information will be a helpful picture to professionals researching state licensure requirements and communicating that information to future teachers.

*This interview was conducted on November 5, 2019, by Emily Woods, Distance Learning Compliance Coordinator at the University of Kentucky. Nothing in this interview is to be taken as legal advice. Institutions should contact their legal counsel when determining future courses of action or interpretation of regulations and laws.*

*Thank you, Emily Woods and Phillip Rogers, Ed.D., Executive Director, NASDTEC for this valuable information.*



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