



## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009

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### **Commission Approves New Autism Authorization for Teachers**

SACRAMENTO – At its January 29, 2009 meeting, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing approved six new add-on teaching authorizations, including one for teaching students with autism spectrum disorders. The new authorizations can be added to an existing special education teaching credential to expand the scope of instruction for current teachers.

The Commission's decision comes at a time of severe teacher shortages in the area of special education, and an increase in students who need specialized instruction. In a report to the Legislature, the Commission's Special Education Workgroup noted national trends in the increased need for services for students who are medically fragile or who are affected by traumatic brain injury. The report also noted an 88% increase over the last five years in students requiring services for autism spectrum disorders.

The six new added authorizations are:

1. Autism Spectrum Disorders
2. Deaf-Blind
3. Emotional Disturbance
4. Traumatic Brain Injury
5. Orthopedically Impaired
6. Other Health Impaired

Based on the recommendation of its Special Education Workgroup and input from hundreds of California teachers, administrators, parents and others, the Commission chose to expedite the methods available for Education Specialist credential holders to add expertise in areas of special education that are not part of their original credential authorization. Prior to Thursday's decision, teachers were required to complete an entire additional credential program in order to expand their teaching authorizations beyond the original special education credential. For example, a teacher with an Education Specialist credential in the area of Mild/Moderate Disabilities was not previously authorized to teach students with autism spectrum disorders. Now, by completing a Commission-approved program of about 12 semester units, the teacher can be assigned to teach these students.

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At a previous meeting, the Commission endorsed a plan that includes preparation to teach students with autism spectrum disorders across all Education Specialist credential types.

Also at the January 29, 2009 meeting, the Commission approved revised credential standards for three specialization areas:

1. Speech-Language Pathology
2. Clinical or Rehabilitative Services: Orientation and Mobility
3. Clinical or Rehabilitative Services: Audiology

The programs are expected to be available beginning next fall and will continue to roll out over the next two years.

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