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## Information/Action

### *Professional Services Committee*

## Responding to Issues Concerning the Education Specialist Credential

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**Executive Summary:** This report provides further information and proposed solutions regarding the issues and related work in the area of special education that may have implications for Commission policy relative to structure and authorization for the Education Specialist Credential.

**Recommended Action:** The Commission may provide direction to staff regarding the proposed solutions for Education Specialist Credential issues.

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**Goal 1: Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators.**

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation of professional educators.
- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the performance of credential candidates.



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# **Responding to Issues Concerning the Education Specialist Credential**

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## **Introduction**

At the February 1, 2006 Commission on Teacher Credentialing meeting, Commissioners were presented an agenda item which introduced major issues related to the current Special Education credential structure. Four policy questions were identified:

1. Should the authorization for some of the Education Specialist Credentials be changed to allow less flexibility or more flexibility for grade level and subject matter assignment?
2. Should the current Education Specialist Program Standards be adapted to include the necessary English learner (EL) content in order to qualify the holder for an English learner authorization?
3. Should candidates completing more than one basic credential have to complete more than one Induction Program? What requirements should candidates who are getting more than one basic credential have to complete to “streamline” the credential process?
4. Since they are all basic credentials, should the Education Specialist, Multiple Subject and Single Subject credential requirements be more consistent? If so, to what extent? Is the current structure for the Education Specialist Credentials the most appropriate for meeting the needs of the California public school system?

After discussion of the topic, the Commission directed staff to bring back further information on moving the issues forward. Two issues were identified for immediate attention (English learner authorization and Professional Level Induction issues) as well as developing a longer range plan for addressing the remaining special education credential issues. Following is a brief discussion of each policy issue with proposed solutions.

## **English Learner Authorization Issues (Related to Policy Question 2)**

Currently, the Education Specialist credentials in Mild/Moderate Disabilities, Moderate/Severe Disabilities, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Physical and Health Impairments, Visual Impairments, and Early Childhood Special Education do not include English learner (EL) authorization within the program standards as do the current Multiple and Single Subject credentials. Candidates earning the Multiple or Single Subject credential under SB 2042 standards are required to complete preparation to teach English learners as part of the program for both the preliminary and the professional levels. Because the content is built into the preparation program, the credentials include an authorization to teach English learners.

## **Statement of the Problem**

In order to gain an English learner authorization, candidates earning the Education Specialist Credentials must complete additional coursework or pass an additional examination after they complete their Preliminary Level I coursework.

Many employers are requiring the authorization to teach English learners for new special education teachers, or are requiring employed special education teachers to earn the authorization due to decisions related to the Categorical Program Monitoring (CPM) by the California Department of Education (CDE), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates and/or as a result of the Williams lawsuit settlement which states that teachers must have EL authorization before they provide instruction to students identified as ELs. Therefore, some Education Specialist candidates who are already employed are being told they may lose their jobs without the EL authorization. In addition, although many of the Education Specialist teacher preparation programs already contain EL content, Commission policies currently do not allow the EL authorization to be recognized as part of the Preliminary Level I Education Specialist credential preparation.

Staff reviewed the policies and options currently available to Education Specialist candidates who wish to obtain the EL authorization. At this time, candidates may obtain the EL authorization one of three ways:

- Crosscultural, Language and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate - completion of 12 upper division units of coursework which are recognized by the Commission.
- Successful passing of the California Teachers of English Learners (CTEL) examination.
- Certificate of Completion of Staff Development (through the process authorized by SB395 and AB2913).

The requirements for Multiple and Single Subject credential teacher preparation programs contains English learner content in the following places:

- Standard 7, Preparation to Teach Reading-Language Arts in the “Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Teacher Preparation Programs for Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject Teaching Credentials”.
- Standard 13, Preparation To Teach English Learners in the “Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Teacher Preparation Programs for Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject Teaching Credentials”.
- Standard 19, Teaching English Learners in the “Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Induction Programs”.

## **Proposed Solution**

As discussed at the February Commission meeting, there are a number of special educators and employers who support the idea of adding the content necessary for the authorization to teach English learners to the Education Specialist credential preparation programs.

As an additional way to allow Education Specialist teachers to earn the EL authorization, staff proposes that the Commission consider requiring all Education Specialist teacher preparation program sponsors to amend their programs by submitting evidence to the Commission as to how

they include the appropriate EL content in their programs in a similar manner to what is done for the Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credentials.

### **Professional Level Induction Program Issues (Related to Policy Question 3)**

Candidates for the Multiple and Single Subject Professional Clear Credential are required to complete a two-year induction program that includes an application of professional skills and knowledge, individualized induction plan, advanced content in technology, health education, English learners, special populations, and the completion of formative assessment. Induction programs are closely related to the candidate's employment. Currently, all approved induction programs are offered by school districts or coalitions of school districts with institutions of higher education (IHEs) as collaborative partners.

The Professional Level (Level II) program for the Education Specialist Credential is offered by approved colleges and universities and include an application of skills and knowledge, an individualized induction plan and two years of full time teaching experience toward completion of the Professional Clear Credential. For the Education Specialist Credential Level II there is also advanced content in special education, and the disability emphasis is an essential component at this level.

### **Statement of the Problem**

When candidates decide to earn both a Multiple or Single Subject Credential and an Education Specialist Credential, some of differing requirements of the Level II programs as described above become an issue. A number of questions are being asked including, but not limited to the following:

- Should a candidate be required to complete two induction programs?
- What requirements should candidates who are earning more than one basic credential have to complete to “streamline” the credential process?
- Do candidates who are completing both an Education Specialist and Multiple or Single Subject credential at the same time need to demonstrate competency for Standard 20, “Teaching Special Populations in the General Education Classroom” in the Multiple/Single Subject induction preparation program?
- Do candidates who participate in the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Induction Programs for their “up to 25% non-university activities” need to demonstrate competency for BTSA requirements for the following standards in the Professional Teacher Induction Program:
  - Standard 16: Using Technology to Support Student Learning.
  - Standard 18: Creating a Supportive and Healthy Environment for Student Learning.
  - Standard 20: Teaching Special Populations.
- Will Education Specialist candidates who have completed EL content in their Education Specialist teacher preparation program have to demonstrate EL competency in a Professional Teacher Induction Program if they are taking the coursework for both programs concurrently, or taking the Education Specialist then Multiple/Single Subject?
- Are BTSA induction programs able to provide services for both types of credentials?
- How do the BTSA Induction and university teacher preparation programs work together in helping the candidate clear both credentials?

- May a candidate complete the Level II requirements for one credential, while teaching on the other?

### **Proposed Solution**

The staff recommends that voluntary stakeholder meetings be held at the Commission offices to review Professional Level issues. The stakeholders representatives may include, but not be limited to, the Education Specialist teacher preparation program providers, BTSA Directors, the BTSA Leadership Team, the Internship Program Directors, the California Department of Education/Special Education Division and professional organizations commonly consulted by the Commission. Staff would return to the Commission with policy recommendations based on the advice of the stakeholders.

### **Subject Matter Preparation (Related to Policy Question 1)**

For the Multiple Subject Credential, candidates are required to pass the California Subject Examination for Teachers (CSET) to meet the subject matter requirement for the credential and are authorized to teach all subjects in the self-contained classroom. For the Single Subject Credential, candidates are required to complete an approved subject matter preparation program or pass the appropriate single subject CSET to meet the subject matter requirement for the credential. They are authorized to teach that subject in departmentalized classrooms (K-12). The subject matter preparation requirements for both of these credentials are closely aligned to the Student Academic Content Standards and are designed to prepare the candidates to be able to deliver appropriate content in the classrooms to which they are assigned. Multiple and Single Subject credential holders have been determined to meet the “highly qualified” teacher requirements under NCLB.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Currently, Education Specialist candidates are required to complete any approved subject matter preparation program or pass any CSET examination to meet the subject matter requirement for the credential. Although the subject matter preparation is aligned to the Student Academic Content Standards, the teaching assignment may not be directly related to the subject matter preparation of the candidate. Also, under the present credential structure, Education Specialist Credential holders may be assigned to serve students with special needs in a variety of settings grades K-12 (or birth-22 for some credentials). This presents a potential problem for compliance with IDEA/NCLB for some candidates, especially those assigned at the middle school and high school levels.

In addition, the California State Board of Education (SBE) is responsible for implementing the provisions of IDEA and interpreting the definition of “highly qualified special education teacher” for California. The SBE has already determined the definition of “highly qualified teacher” for NCLB. The CDE staff is interpreting this to be the same definition for “highly qualified special education” teacher under IDEA, although the IDEA regulations have not yet been released at the federal level. At this time, the regulations will likely not be disseminated until at least August or September 2006. Questions being asked include, but are not limited to:

- What happens for those Education Specialists who teach more than one subject at the secondary level? Should they be required to hold a Single Subject authorization in each area they teach?
- If teachers are required to hold a Single Subject authorization in each area they teach at the secondary level, will this add to the shortage of Special Education teachers?
- How will candidates meet elementary IDEA subject matter competency for those who teach elementary grades and subjects?
- Do itinerant teachers for low incidence students need to meet the same subject matter requirements for IDEA/NCLB as do those who serve in resource or self-contained classes?
- Should Education Specialist: Mild/Moderate candidates subject matter requirements be the same as the Education Specialist: Moderate/Severe and/or any of the Low Incidence credentials?

Some differences between the state credential requirements and IDEA requirements present potential conflict for Education Specialist Credential holders.

### **Proposed Solution**

The staff would like to further explore policy options for consideration by the Commission. The staff would gather information about subject matter preparation issues from stakeholders which may include but not be limited to representatives of the California Teachers Association (CTA), the California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education (CARS+), the California Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) Directors, the Special Education Administrators of County Offices of Education (SEACO), the Low Incidence Disability Advisory Committee (LIDAC), the California Association of Special Education Professors (CAPSE), the California Department of Education/Special Education Division, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and other related professional organizations commonly consulted by the Commission. Staff would then return to the Commission with recommendations for further policy work in this area.

### **Review of the Education Specialist Credential Structure (Related to Policy Question 4)**

The Commission adopted the current structure and requirements for the Education Specialist Credential in 1996. In 2001, the Commission adopted the current structure and requirements for the Multiple/Single Subject Credential. These types of basic credentials were defined with a two level structure that includes a preliminary credential as the first level and the professional credential as the second level. Although there are many similarities, there are some significant differences, as discussed previously. Historically, credential requirements have been reviewed about every ten years.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many changes have occurred in legislation, regulations and policy since the current Education Specialist credentials were approved and initially implemented. The requirements of these basic credentials have not been reviewed since that time to determine if the structure still meets the

needs of California schools. Due to the influence of these changes, a number of questions have emerged such as the following:

- Is the model for the credential structure developed in 1996 still appropriate?
- Do the current regulations/policies to meet subject matter competence for the Education Specialist credentials align with the subject matter for the new IDEA legislation?
- How do the current authorizations address the new models for service delivery under IDEA?
- Should a performance-based assessment be expected?
- Are there needed changes in the current Education Specialist Program Standards?
- Does the Education Specialist: Mild/Moderate Credential authorize teachers to serve children with autism in Mild/Moderate classroom settings?

### **Proposed Solution**

While the Commission and the SBE are waiting for the IDEA regulations to be disseminated and the SBE determines whether further action will be necessary to meet compliance of “highly qualified special education” teacher, it would be appropriate for the Commission staff to further define strategies for policy work with interested stakeholders to determine whether the current structure for the Education Specialist continues to be the most appropriate to meet the needs of California’s schools

### **A Summary of the Proposed Solutions**

This agenda item provides proposed solutions which the Commission may consider for immediate action as well as direct long range policy work related to Education Specialist credentials including:

- The Commission could require all Education Specialist teacher preparation programs embed EL content in their programs and respond to appropriate standards. Education Specialist programs would submit program amendments that include evidence of meeting these standards. Upon supplying the evidence and implementing the changes, graduates from these programs would receive an EL authorization. Upon Commission direction, staff will return with an action plan describing how this will be implemented at the next Commission meeting.
- The Commission could direct that voluntary stakeholder meetings be held at the Commission offices to review Professional Level issues. The stakeholder representatives may include, but not be limited to, the Education Specialist teacher preparation program providers, BTSA Directors, the BTSA Leadership Team, the Internship Program Directors, the California Department of Education/Special Education Division and professional organizations commonly consulted by the Commission. Staff would return to the Commission with policy recommendations based on the advice of the stakeholders.
- The Commission could direct staff to gather information about subject matter preparation issues from stakeholders which may include but not be limited to representatives of the California Teachers Association (CTA), the California Association of Resource Specialists and Special Education (CARS+), the California

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) Directors, the Special Education Administrators of County Offices of Education (SEACO), the Low Incidence Disability Advisory Committee (LIDAC), the California Association of Special Education Professors (CAPSE), the California Department of Education/Special Education Division, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and other related professional organizations commonly consulted by the Commission. Staff would then return to the Commission with recommendations for further policy work in this area.

- The Commission could direct staff to further define strategies for policy work with interested stakeholders to determine whether the current structure for the Education Specialist continues to be the most appropriate to meet the needs of California's schools.