
2B

Information/Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Special Education Teacher Preparation Update

Executive Summary: This agenda item provides options for the preparation and credentialing of special education and general education teachers focusing on the recommendations from the Statewide Special Education Task Force recommendations. The Commission may give priorities for next steps to staff.

Policy Question: Does the Commission wish to consider ways to modify educator preparation and potentially educator licensure to align with the recommendations of the Statewide Special Education Task Force report?

Recommended Action: That the Commission provide further direction to staff to obtain additional guidance and feedback on issues raised within the agenda item relating to the NGA work and Task Force recommendations.

Presenters: William Hatrick and Sarah Solari Colombini, Consultants, and Teri Clark, Director, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

II. Program Quality and Accountability

- a) Develop and maintain rigorous, meaningful, and relevant standards that drive program quality and effectiveness for the preparation of the education workforce and are responsive to the needs of California's diverse student population.

December 2015

Special Education Teacher Preparation Update

Introduction

This agenda item presents information about the work associated with a National Governors Association (NGA) grant received by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The National Governors Association grant supported one segment of a larger body of work to improve educational services to all students in California, particularly those with disabilities. In addition to the Commission's work, the California Statewide Special Education Task Force produced the report, [One System: Reforming Education to Serve all Students](#), that contained numerous recommendations designed to improve services to California's TK-12 students. The convergence of these related activities supported an effort to gather stakeholder feedback on the recommendations contained in the Task Force report related to educator preparation and their potential impact of this work on licensure in California.

Background

Prior to 1996, Education Specialists had to obtain a general education license and teach in general education classrooms prior to receiving a license to teach students with disabilities. In 1996, in response to a growing teacher shortage in the area of special education, California eliminated this requirement and instead, the Education Specialist became the base credential for serving students with disabilities. As a result, preparation for general education teaching and special education differed in significant ways and focused on different knowledge, skills, and abilities. Education Specialists were no longer required to learn about general pedagogy, content standards, or whole class assessment, which in turn prevented individuals who obtained an Education Specialist credential from teaching in general education classrooms. This limitation, along with a number of other factors, contributed to the creation of a bifurcated education system which made it difficult for general education teachers and special education teachers to collaborate. Over time, numerous studies found that students identified as receiving special education services were spending less time in the general education classrooms and achieving well below the national average.

In recent years, numerous states have targeted strategies and initiatives in an effort to address the achievement gap between general education students and special education students. At the national level, CEEDAR (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center), a national technical assistance center, began its work in January 2013 to support states in their efforts to develop teachers and leaders who can successfully prepare students with disabilities to meet college and career ready standards. California and six of California's educator preparation programs received grant funds to create aligned professional learning systems that improve core and specialized instruction in inclusive settings. In May 2015, the CEEDAR Center, in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) issued "[Promises to Keep: Transforming Educator Preparation to Better Serve a Diverse Range of Learners](#)," a document of policy recommendations. The report encourages states to

create conditions that support educator preparation program providers to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners including students with disabilities.

The Statewide Special Education Task Force

In 2013, partly in response to the disparity between the achievement levels of California's students with disabilities in relation to the national average, the Commission joined the California Department of Education and the State Board of Education in establishing the Statewide Special Education Task Force comprised of a variety of stakeholder groups. The culminating work of the Statewide Special Education Task Force was the publication of a report including recommendations for policies and procedures at state and local levels.

The Task Force report was presented to the Commission in April 2015 (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2015-04/2015-04-3J.pdf>). The Task Force had a number of subgroups that worked concurrently and developed specific recommendations. The task groups and recommendation areas are identified here:

- Early Learning
- Evidence-Based School and Classroom Practices
- Assessment
- Accountability
- Family and Student Engagement
- Special Education Financing
- Educator Preparation and Professional Learning

The Statewide Special Education Task Force envisioned an educational approach in which general education and special education work together seamlessly as one system designed to address the needs of all students. In this proposed system all students would be considered general education students first and all educators, regardless of the students they are assigned to serve, would have a collective responsibility to ensure that each child receives the education and support needed to maximize his or her development and potential.

Teaching Performance Expectations

The strategies identified to improve educational services to students with disabilities includes not only improving the preparation for special education specialists but also general education teachers. The Commission's current work to revise the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) is an important step to ensure that all teachers are prepared to serve all students in California's TK-12 classrooms.

The purpose of this revision of the TPEs is to improve preparation for teachers in initial licensure programs that align to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). The proposed revised TPEs, which are presented in more detail in agenda item 2A, contain criteria that frame essential knowledge, skills, and abilities for beginning teachers. Since TPEs are foundational to educator preparation programs, the implementation of the revised TPEs support increased coherence and continuity between initial preparation, induction, and ongoing development over a teacher's career. The draft TPEs address many, if not all, of the

Statewide Special Education Task Force recommendations addressing general education teacher preparation.

Those working closely with the Commission to develop draft TPEs have included individuals who have also served on the Statewide Special Education Task Force and/or are experts in serving students with disabilities. This has allowed for proposed language to be developed that will strengthen the expectations around what all teachers should know and be able to do in order to serve all students. As the TPEs undergo a validity study, one of the issues that will be explored is if these TPEs are appropriate for the common trunk of preparation that all prospective teachers—both general education and special education—should complete.

The National Governors Association Grant

In May 2015, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing in collaboration with the State Board of Education and the California Department of Education applied to the National Governor's Association for a \$15,000 grant. The purpose of this grant was to bring stakeholders together to discuss the implications of California's Statewide Task Force on Special Education report and to consider the possibility of preparing all teachers to work effectively with both general education and special education students.

The first activity of the grant was completed with the identification of a leadership team and an initial meeting of this team in June 2015. The leadership team was composed of individuals representing a range of stakeholder groups and governmental agencies. (See Appendix A)

The leadership team met for two days in June 2015 to plan the regional stakeholder meetings. In addition, the team developed several sample teacher preparation and credentialing models that could potentially address a structure that would reflect the preparation for teaching all students for the stakeholder community to consider and discuss. An update from this meeting was provided to the Commission during the August 2015 meeting (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2015-08/2015-08-3F.pdf>).

The second activity supported by the grant consisted of stakeholder meetings for the purpose of gathering input about the future preparation and credentialing of teachers—both general education and special education teachers. The potential credentialing models were used not as proposals per se, but as vehicles with which to invite discussion about various components of possible preparation and licensure systems that may hold promise for the future. These meetings were held at regional locations (Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, San Diego, Sacramento, and Burlingame) so that opportunities were provided for the public across the state to provide feedback about the sample models as well as to possibly propose new options or models. Members of the NGA leadership team facilitated each of the stakeholder input meetings. Additionally, an online survey was developed and made available during September and October 2015 so that individuals who attended the stakeholder meetings as well as those who were not able to attend could provide additional feedback and/or other new ideas about ways in which the preparation and credentialing system can improve services to students with

disabilities. In addition, individuals could submit email responses or letters to the Commission sharing feedback and opinions.

Registration and attendance of the collective stakeholder meetings were as follows:

- Total number of registered meeting participants: 655
- Actual number of meeting attendees: 351
- Online survey responses: 269
- (See Appendix B for a detailed list of registrant affiliations)

In addition to the stakeholder meetings, the following groups provided input via one of their regularly scheduled meetings:

- Advisory Commission on Special Education meeting on August 13
- Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) Directors meeting on September 10
- Special Education Administrators of County Offices (SEACO) meeting on September 18

Discussion of Input Received from NGA Stakeholder and Leadership Team Meetings

Staff has analyzed the feedback received to date from all sources including the stakeholder meetings and survey responses and have identified some overarching themes. On November 6, 2015, the members of the NGA leadership team met at the Commission to review the summary of results from the stakeholder meetings, the online survey, and all other feedback received. The team discussed possible recommendations for the Commission's consideration on how to best move this work forward. A majority of stakeholders identified the themes below, with supporting details in the rationale section:

1. *Preparation programs and training are needed for all teachers in concepts and skills that are necessary to teach in inclusive classrooms.* The idea of identifying a common set of core concepts for working with general education students and special education students to address the knowledge, skills and abilities to teach all students in California was largely supported by various stakeholder groups and members of the NGA Leadership Team. Concepts included in the stakeholder meetings were knowledge and practice of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and other evidence-based practices.

Rationale: The idea of providing a common foundation to address the knowledge, skills and abilities to teach students in California was largely supported by various stakeholder groups and members of the NGA Leadership Team. Components of the initial preparation identified by stakeholders included: increasing knowledge and practice in Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Behavior Management and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, the IEP process, effective inclusion practices such as co-teaching and collaboration, communication and language, culturally responsive instruction, reading specialization and detection of reading disabilities, assistive technology, autism, child development, para-educator training and support for successful inclusive classrooms, transition especially for secondary teachers, English Learner instruction, curriculum design, instructional strategies, and various assessment strategies is key for all

teachers to obtain a working understanding as part of their initial preparation program. The level of expertise required in each of these areas still needs to be determined but the idea of a 'common trunk' for all prospective teachers is seen as the way to ensure that all teachers are well prepared.

2. *Credential candidates need early, diverse fieldwork experiences.* Stakeholders indicated their belief that focusing on educator preparation, incorporating evidenced based teaching practices and supports, increasing fieldwork hours, and allowing for more experiences with diverse student populations would be needed for success in the classroom.

Rationale: Inclusive instructional planning, proven instructional strategies and techniques, intervention, assistive technology, UDL, MTSS, RtI, early intervention, socio-emotional learning and supports, and positive behavioral intervention and supports were all identified as critical components to be included in the initial preparation of teachers. In addition, the feedback collected indicated that potential credential candidates needed earlier fieldwork experiences and/or exposure to the career of education to recruit potential teachers and allow them to fully vet the profession prior to enrollment in a program.

3. *Collaboration and collective responsibilities for all students in an inclusive manner should be a key concept included in educator preparation programs.* Stakeholders indicated the need for collaboration and communication at all levels of the system to foster an environment where all adults on campus support the learning of all students. Regardless of credentialing structure, the teacher of record should never be "alone" in serving their students but rather there should be a strong system of supports for teachers to meet the needs of each student.

Rationale: In addition to eliminating the "Us versus Them" mentality within educator preparation programs and the K-12 establishments, the collaboration and collective responsibility for students in an inclusive manner would be the guiding framework for all education institutions. Flexibility in placement, grades, and classes can be seen as a positive for districts looking to fill classroom vacancies, or a negative for teachers who may be placed into a classroom that is not their preferred choice. Additionally, participants identified that the credential structure needs to specifically identify who will be providing services to students with high-incidence disabilities to ensure that their needs are met.

4. *Teachers who work with students in the low-incidence disabilities need to maintain the depth of knowledge of the low incidence area while also participating in the common trunk of educator preparation that all teachers will receive.* Stakeholders identified that continued specialized training is needed for Education Specialists who work with students with Low-Incidence disabilities such as Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH), Visual Impairment (VI), and Physical and Health Impairments (PHI). Continuing to provide the continuum of services so that students are educated in the least restrictive environment was also identified as important.

Rationale: The importance of continuing to have Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Visual Impairments as preliminary credentials was emphasized at each of the stakeholder meetings and through survey results. Participants stressed the importance of keeping the current depth of training for this population, while expanding the common trunk required in the preparation program to be an effective teacher. Another constituency that voiced concerns about the maintenance of a specialized credential was for students with Physical and Health Impairments, and Orthopedic Impairments. These students often have unique learning needs that need to be considered moving forward. Continued specialized training is needed for Education Specialists who work with students with Low-Incidence disabilities including training for students who are medically fragile. Additionally, students with significant intellectual disabilities' needs must be addressed.

5. *It is important to consider both length and cost to educator preparation programs so as not to exacerbate the teacher shortage in California.* Concerns about adding significant length or cost to existing preparation programs were shared at the stakeholder meeting since either would increase the teacher shortage.

Rationale: Requiring Special Education teachers to take more classes than their General Education counterparts would require more money and time, thus exacerbating the already critical shortage in the field. Incentivizing the profession and increasing the pipeline of prospective teachers in high school, community college, and 4-year colleges and universities needs to be examined. Also, with a two-tier credential process such as the current system, it is important to delineate what is critical to learn and practice during pre-service and what can be incorporated in induction. Another potential solution is expanding the coursework options for undergraduates to provide an earlier exposure to the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of education professionals.

6. *Preparation cannot become too broad and lacking in depth of knowledge.* Stakeholders indicated the importance of examining the level of exposure versus expertise around the knowledge, skills and abilities a teacher should have upon receiving an initial credential.

Rationale: Having a credential for teachers of students receiving services through special education that covers birth – 22 years old is viewed as too broad. Retaining Early Childhood Special Education is important, and perhaps expanding the current age span for teachers obtaining this certification needs to be examined. All teachers should receive specific content knowledge regardless of the designation of their students. A “one size fits all” approach does not benefit any student.

7. *It is important that any improvements that are made by the Commission to teacher preparation in better preparing teachers to serve all students should be accompanied with complimentary improvements to administrator preparation.* Stakeholders noted that improvements to the system of supports for all students must include the wide range of adults within the educational system.

Rationale: Newly prepared teachers work in schools that are led by administrators and experienced teachers. A reform as important as this must not be limited to new teacher preparation. The preparation of school leaders must also be considered too.

There was general agreement that educator preparation programs need to move forward with the implementation of educator preparation that is more responsive to the needs of all TK-12 students. Some of the institutions that were represented at the NGA leadership team meeting have voluntarily begun the work of identifying and including those aspects that they believe are necessary for all teachers to know and be able to do into their programs.

The NGA leadership team recognized the importance of the concurrent work of revising the TPEs and the impact that implementation of those TPEs may have on better aligning the system of general educator and special educator preparation programs. Monitoring the impact of the implementation of the revised TPEs on programs and their effects on the system will provide additional information for the Commission as it considers possible future modifications to the current preparation and credentialing structure in California.

Additional Issues Raised at NGA Stakeholder Meetings

While there were numerous areas of agreement around strengthening the content of preparation programs so that all teachers are better prepared to meet the needs of all students, it is important to note that there is far less agreement on any specific changes to California's credentialing structure at this time. Stakeholder discussion included exploration of a variety of possible structures including a "stacked model" in which a general education credential would be required before an education specialist credential, a tiered model that might also include using the induction programs in a different manner than currently, and a developmental model.

Exploring ways in which to strengthen the focus of preparation programs on developmentally appropriate and specialized pedagogy by developmental level could yield significant improvements to services for student with disabilities. Multiple other states utilize a developmental preparation and credentialing structure, whereby teachers are trained to teach with a specific age range of students, such as Birth to Grade 3, Grades 1-6, and Grades 6-12. At this time, California's teaching credentials authorize teaching in grades TK-12 or an even broader age range. The ages and grade levels authorized are in statute for some credentials and in Title 5 regulations for others.

In addition, stakeholders discussed the possibility of more effectively using undergraduate programs to not only alleviate the teacher shortage in special education but to possibly improve quality preparation by providing more opportunities for individuals to acquire greater depth in the knowledge, skills and abilities required of effective teaching. Although California's Education Code prohibits a Bachelor's degree in Education, numerous stakeholders suggested consideration of undergraduate programs that could be focused on understanding the unique educational needs of students with disabilities or other similar programs.

Given the complexities of the current broader educational system and how any change in credentialing has a variety of impacts across the system, it is essential to carefully consider modifying the preparation and credentialing structures.

Credentialing in Other States

At the August 2015 Commission meeting, a question regarding what other states require for licensure was posed. Approximately 13 states require General Education licensure as a prerequisite for Special Education licensure while 17 states issue licenses with some age or grade differentiation for credentialing purposes. However, for Special Education credentials, the ranges of K-12 or PK-12 are still the most commonly issued across all states.¹ To gain a deeper understanding of specific licensing structures, staff collected information related to Special Education credentialing in 11 other states: Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington. (See Appendix C). Information on dual or blended credential pathways varies greatly by state and institution. Recent research showing the effectiveness of these various credentialing systems is lacking. Currently, California's education system relies heavily on federal disabilities categories for licensing, preparation, and the assignment of teachers.

Factors Contributing to the Complexity

The Special Education Task Force recommendations to move toward one coherent system that serves all students envision, by definition, much more inclusive classrooms than are currently the norm across California. The implications of this approach for service delivery and credentialing are complex and interconnected. Given that educator preparation and licensure is only one part of the larger educational system, stakeholders also raised a number of additional points for consideration that do not specifically fall under the purview of the Commission but would need to be considered with respect to any proposal to improve educational services to all students. To illustrate the complexity of any potential changes, below is a sample of some of these issues that have been identified:

Preparation Programs and the Public Schools

- How would candidates be provided the opportunity to teach in inclusive classrooms given the current structure of K12 classrooms?
- What would be the impact on the length of programs and availability of specialists?

Service Delivery Models in the Schools

- How would TK-12 local education agencies provide curriculum that is accessible for all learners?

¹ Geiger, W. L., Mickelson, A., McKeown, D., Barton, J., Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., & Steinbrecher, T. (2014). Patterns of licensure for special education teachers. In P. T. Sindelar, E. D. McCray, M. T. Brownell, & B. Lignugaris/Kraft (Eds.), *Handbook of research on special education teacher preparation* (pp. 30–46). New York: Routledge.

- What are the implications of change for class size, class make-up, and teacher workload?
- What level of resources (decreasing class size, providing additional paraprofessional support and technology) would be needed to insure that inclusion is successful?
- What would be the impact on case management, and who would be specifically responsible for the duties associated with that role?

Current Teachers and Other Staff

- What are the implications of change for teachers and leaders who are currently working in the schools across California, and would there be ongoing professional development provided?

By this list of questions that were gathered from the stakeholder feedback, it is clear that the topic of preparation and licensing is complex and the broad education community must be involved in planning for change.

Staff Recommendation

Given all of the important work that is taking place and is in alignment with the recommendations of the Statewide Special Education Taskforce recommendations, staff recommends that the Commission discuss and determine priorities for future work in this area.

Next Steps

Staff will implement direction from the Commission regarding moving this work forward.

Appendix A

NGA-Special Education Leadership Team

Name	Affiliation
Margaret Arthofer	Association of California School Administrators
Victoria Graf	California Association of Professors of Special Education (CAPSE/TED)/ Loyola Marymount University
Cynthia Grutzik	California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE)/ California State University, Long Beach
Christina Marcellus	California County Superintendents Educational Services Association
Noni Reis	California Teachers Association
Jane Robb	California Teachers Association
David Simmons	California County Superintendents Educational Services Association/Ventura County Office of Education
Rico Tamayo	California Federation of Teachers
Casey Carlson	California Federation of Teachers
Sarah Silverman	National Governors Association
Jim Alford	California Department of Education
Carrie Roberts	California Department of Education
Carolyn Pfister	State Board of Education
Kristin Wright	State Board of Education
Teri Clark	Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Sarah Solari Colombini	Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Katie Croy	Commission on Teacher Credentialing
William Hatrick	Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Joshua Speaks	Commission on Teacher Credentialing
Eli Gallup	Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) Directors

Appendix B

Stakeholder Meetings Registrants

Please choose the best descriptor. I am a/an

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
District administrator	7.9%	52
Credential counselor or analyst	2.6%	17
Parent or family member	5.5%	36
Teacher--General Education	3.8%	25
Teacher--Special Education	13.3%	87
K-12 Student	0.3%	2
College Student, undergraduate	1.2%	8
Credential Student	2.9%	19
School administrator	9.2%	60
College professor	27.2%	178
Teacher preparation program staff	13.1%	86
Advocate	4.7%	31
Other (please specify)	25.6%	168
	<i>answered question</i>	655

Other: BTSA/Induction staff
 California Department of Education
 California Teachers Association
 Human Resources staff
 Media
 Other Community-related
 Other Education Administrator
 Other Student
 Para educator
 Parent-related
 Program Specialist
 School Board
 School Psychologist
 SELPA staff
 Speech-Language Pathologist
 State-level education staff

Appendix C
Special Education Teaching Credential Structures in Other States

State	Initial Teaching Credential		Additional Authorizations*
	Developmental or Broad Grade Levels	Low Incidence Areas	
Colorado	Special Education Generalist (ages 5-21) Special Education Specialist (ages 5-21)* Early Childhood Special Education (Birth-age 8) Early Childhood Special Education Specialist (Birth-age 8)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Birth-age 21) Visually Impaired (Birth-age 21)	N/A
Connecticut	Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education (Birth-K) Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education (Nursery-K-Elementary 1-3) Comprehensive Special Education (K-12)	Blind (PK-12) Partially Sighted (PK-12) Hearing Impaired (PK-12)	N/A
Florida	Exceptional Student Education (K-12)	Hearing Impaired (K-12) Visually Impaired (K-12)	Autism Spectrum Disorders Orientation and Mobility Prekindergarten Disabilities Severe or Profound Disabilities
Illinois	Special Education Learning Behavior Specialist (PK-age 21)	Blind or Visually Impaired (PK-age 21) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PK-age 21)	Curriculum Adaptation Multiple Disabilities Behavior Intervention Deaf-Blind Bilingual Special Education Technology Transition
Kansas	High-Incidence Special Education: Early childhood (Birth-K, Birth-grade 3, or PK-grade 3) Early childhood through late childhood (K-grade 6) Late childhood through early adolescence (grades 5-8) Early childhood through late adolescence and adulthood (grades PK-12) Early adolescence through late adolescence and adulthood (grades 6-12)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Visually Impaired Low-Incidence Special Education	N/A
Massachusetts	Early Childhood: Students with and without Disabilities (grades PK-2) Moderate Disabilities (grades PK-8) Moderate Disabilities (grades 5-12)	Severe Disabilities (all grades) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (all grades) Visually Impaired (all grades)	N/A

State	Initial Teaching Credential		Additional Authorizations*
	Developmental or Broad Grade Levels	Low Incidence Areas	
New York	Students with Disabilities (Birth-grade 2) Students with Disabilities (grades 1-6) Students with Disabilities (grades 7-12)	Blind and Visually Impaired (all grades) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (all grades)	N/A
Pennsylvania	Special Education (grades PK-8) Special Education (grades 7-12)	Hearing Impaired (PK-12) Visually Impaired (PK-12)	Autism Spectrum Disorders
Rhode Island	Early Childhood Special Education (Birth-grade 2) Elementary Special Education-Mild/Moderate (grades 1-6)* Middle Grades Special Education-Mild/Moderate (grades 5-8)* Secondary Grades Special Education-Mild/Moderate (grades 7-12)*	Blind/Visually Impaired (PK-12) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PK-12) Severe Intellectual Disability (PK-12)	N/A
Texas	Special Education (Early Childhood-12)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (EC-12) Visually Impaired (EC-12)	N/A
Washington	Early Childhood Special Education Special Education	Deaf Education* Visually Impaired Education*	N/A
California	Mild to Moderate Disabilities/MM (K-age 22) Moderate to Severe Disabilities/MS (K-age 22) Early Childhood Special Education/ECSE (Birth-PK) Language and Academic Development/LAD (Preschool-age 22)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Birth-age 22) Visual Impairments (Birth-age 22) Physical and Health Impairments (Birth-age 22)	Autism Spectrum Disorders Deaf-Blind Emotional Disturbance Orthopedic Impairment Other Health Impairment Traumatic Brain Injury Early Childhood Special Education

*Denotes a prerequisite credential is required to obtain a license in this area.