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Information/Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Possible Pathways for Current Education Specialist Credential Holders Interested in Earning the New Education Specialist Credential

Executive Summary: This agenda item opens a discussion regarding the development of a bridge for interested current Education Specialist credential holders seeking to earn the equivalent authorization under the new Education Specialist standards and Teaching Performance Expectations (2018). A bridge process will ensure that current credential holders interested in obtaining the new authorization meet the 2018 Teaching Performance Expectations that were not addressed in their original preparation program.

Recommended Action: That the Commission discuss the questions and direct staff as appropriate.

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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.

Possible Pathways for Current Education Specialist Credential Holders Interested in Earning the New Education Specialist Credential

Introduction

This agenda item introduces for Commission discussion the concept of a bridge option for existing Education Specialist credential holders interested in updating their credential to acquire the new authorization under the new 2018 Education Specialist standards and Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs). While current Education Specialist credential holders are not required to earn the new authorizations, some may want to hold an authorization equivalent to the most current credential. This agenda item identifies the specific additional/modified TPEs that would need to be addressed in order to bridge the two credentials and explores ways in which they may be addressed by current credential holders interested in obtaining the new authorization.

Background

The Commission has been engaged in a multi-year, cross-agency effort, inclusive of multiple stakeholders, to address needed changes in the way students with disabilities are served in California public schools. This work was launched following the report of the Statewide Special Education Task Force in 2015, and has led the Commission to restructure its Education Specialist teaching credentials and develop new program standards and TPEs for the preparation of both general education and special education teachers in a manner consistent with the state's vision and expectations. A set of universal TPEs, ensuring a common base of knowledge and skills, serve as the centerpiece for the preparation of all teachers, with the expectation that general education and special education teachers will learn the fundamentals of teaching through coursework and fieldwork applied and adapted to their prospective credential area. As new credential candidates move through their general preparation and into their specialized credential areas, they will encounter and master TPEs specifically tailored to the credential they are seeking.

In addition to adopting new program standards and TPEs, the Commission adopted a new structure for the Preliminary Education Specialist teaching credentials that will take effect in summer/fall 2022. This credential structure is designed to support the vision of "one system for all" called for by the Statewide Special Education Taskforce. It was redesigned to provide more flexibility to meet the needs of students with disabilities while complying with federal guidelines relating to disability categories. The seven Education Specialist credential areas that previously existed were reorganized to five, eliminating the separate credentials for Language and Academic Development and Physical and Health Impairments while building preparation for these areas into the remaining five credential areas. The five new credential areas are:

- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE),

- Visual Impairments (VI),
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH),
- Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN), and
- Extensive Support Needs (ESN).

Historically, when credentials have been modified or expanded, the Commission has developed a way for existing credential holders to obtain the new authorization without having to complete an entire preparation program. Of these five new credentials, only three will have modified/expanded authorizations and, thus, would require existing Education Specialist credential holders to complete additional coursework and/or clinical practice if they are interested in obtaining the new authorization. These three credential areas include: ECSE, MMSN, and ESN. The Visual Impairment and Deaf and Hard of Hearing credential authorizations will remain the same, therefore no bridge process will be necessary; the current Education Specialist teachers will have the same authorization as the newly prepared teachers.

The MMSN and ESN credentials reflect a shift in focus from preparing teachers to serve students based on their primary disability to preparing teachers to serve students across a range of disabilities based on the intensity of their designated support needs. This means the new authorizations that accompany the new credentials are not solely limited to the federal disability categories – as the current credentials are – and are somewhat broader and more flexible than the authorizations associated with the current credentials.

As the Commission moves forward with these changes, holders of current Education Specialist credentials will continue to be authorized to serve the populations of students they are currently serving, without interruption and without a requirement that they must earn the new credential. Some holders of these existing credentials, however, may want to earn the broader authorization that accompanies the new credentials.

Comparison of Current Credential Authorizations and New Credential Authorizations

The Statewide Taskforce for Special Education published a comprehensive report with wide ranging recommendations for multiple agencies, reflecting the complexity of the TK-12 educational system. Recommended changes in credentialing led the Commission to revise educator preparation standards and TPEs in ways that would transform how teachers are prepared, and to redesign the credential structure to support the development of a less siloed TK-12 educational system. This redesign of credentials was in direct response to the recommendation that our system allow the appropriate flexibility in teacher assignments to create a more seamless learning experience for students with disabilities and better serve the staffing needs of schools and districts.

As illustrated in the chart below, the new Education Specialist credentials are no longer restricted by federal disability categories, thereby allowing the focus to be on meeting the needs of students. Currently, the Mild to Moderate Education Specialist credential holder may only serve students with one of the following primary disabilities: autism, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, other health impairment, or a specific learning disability.

Under the new credential structure, the Mild to Moderate Support Needs credential holder will not be restricted to those disability categories. The Mild to Moderate Support Needs credential holder will have a broader scope of preparation which will be reflected in the authorization statement on his/her credential. This broader base of preparation will allow the MMSN credential holder to work with a variety of students at their need level. The changes for these two specialty content areas are shown in the table below

Federal Disability Categories addressed by the Current Mild/Moderate and Moderate/Severe Credentials and the New Mild to Moderate Support Needs Credential and the Extensive Support Needs Credential *	MM (Current)	MMSN (New)	MS (Current)	ESN (New)
Autism	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deaf/Blindness			✓	✓
Emotional Disturbance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Intellectual Disability	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multiple Disabilities		✓	✓	✓
Orthopedic Impairment		✓		✓
Other Health Impairment	✓	✓		✓
Specific Learning Disability	✓	✓		✓
Traumatic Brain Injury		✓		✓

MM = Mild/Moderate Disabilities

MMSN = Mild to Moderate Support (Needs)

MS = Moderate/Severe Disabilities

ESN = Extensive Support (Needs)

*The list of federal disability categories is not inclusive of all federal disabilities. Visual Impairment and Deaf and Hard of Hearing credential holders meet the requirements associated with the requisite disability categories.

Purpose of a Bridge Option for Existing Credential Holders

Currently in many TK-12 special education programs, students are assigned to classrooms based on federal disability categories and the teachers are authorized to teach students in specific disability categories. The new credential structure enables Education Specialists to continue serving students who are sorted according to their disabilities, and supports the vision that districts move towards a model where students receive services based on the level of support necessary. Therefore, current Education Specialist Mild to Moderate credential holders would not be able to have a student with orthopedic impairments in their classroom because these credential holders have not been prepared to teach students with orthopedic impairments and are not authorized based upon the limitations of their credential. A student who has an orthopedic impairment and needs mild to moderate support would be able to be served by the new Mild to Moderate Support Needs Education Specialist credential holder but not by the

current Mild to Moderate Education Specialist credential holder. This is because, under the new credential structure, credential candidates are prepared to teach across disability categories and this will be reflected in the authorization statement on the credential they are issued. The TPEs and program standards in the new credential structure include a broader base of preparation that includes the development of knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the needs of students identified within each of the federal disability categories.

In a case such as the one described in the paragraph above, an educator may want to add the new authorization to their existing credential. By creating a bridge option between the current Education Specialist credentials and the new Education Specialist credentials, interested credential holders would have the opportunity to obtain the expanded authorization. This would thereby allow them to serve students beyond the federal disability categories to which their credential is currently limited and instead allow them to serve a broader spectrum of students as authorized by the new MMSN, ESN or ECSE credentials. This flexibility would grant Education Specialists the opportunity to focus on the needs of students with disabilities as opposed to the limitation of placement as directed by the authorization accompanying an educator's credential.

Possibilities for a Bridge Pathway

As indicated earlier in this item, three of the new Education Specialist credentials, *Mild to Moderate Support Needs (MMSN)*, *Extensive Support Needs (ESN)*, and *Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)*, have broader authorization statements that reflect the modified TPEs now included in the preparation of new Education Specialist credential candidates. As the Commission moves through the regulatory process to finalize the new authorization statements, staff has identified the specific TPEs that were added/modified along with the preparation content that helps candidates learn, practice, and master these TPEs. These TPEs are provided in the [Appendix](#) of this item.

Staff has identified three possible bridge pathways that a current Education Specialist credential holder could use to demonstrate mastery of the additional TPEs - coursework, professional development, and/or prior knowledge and experience as verified through demonstrated competence. Any one of these three routes, or a combination of these routes, could be used to verify that existing Education Specialists have mastered the additional/modified preparation content, as reflected in the applicable updated TPEs.

Coursework

Taking coursework to meet the additional knowledge, skills and abilities in the identified TPEs would be one way to earn the new authorization statement. Approved educator preparation programs would possibly need to develop unique course(s) aligned to the additional preparation content for existing Education Specialists to allow them to demonstrate their mastery of the additional TPEs.

Professional Development

Education Specialists who have participated in professional development that is aligned to the additional preparation content could potentially use this as another route towards

meeting the additional preparation content. The local education agency would be responsible for verifying that the content of the professional development provides the Education Specialist the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of his/her knowledge, skills and abilities related to the additional TPEs.

Prior Knowledge and Experience/Demonstrated Competence

Education Specialists who have had experience with students with the identified disabilities may be able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities in the additional preparation content. With the verification of their employer/local education agency, they could prepare evidence that shows that they have demonstrated competence with the additional TPEs.

Example of Options Provided Above

To illustrate the possible ways in which the bridge options may work, one could consider element 6.4 of the Early Childhood Special Education TPEs which involves developing and implementing transition plans (more detailed TPE language is included in the [Appendix](#).) An existing Education Specialist could demonstrate mastery of the element of this TPE through:

- Completion of appropriate coursework;
- Completion of professional development targeting transition plans that support ongoing learning and development as children enter different learning settings; or
- Through demonstration by submitting transition plans they have developed to their local education agency that demonstrate mastery of this element of the TPE.

Current Education Specialists Credential Holders Seeking the New Education Specialist Credential

When a current credentialed Education Specialist teacher has provided evidence of the identified TPEs for the new credential, the teacher would be eligible for the new credential with its accompanying authorization once the authorization has been developed through the regulatory process.

Questions for Consideration

Some questions for Commission consideration are:

1. What approaches should the Commission consider for current Education Specialists seeking to update their credential to address the new TPEs?
2. What entities will be eligible to verify that a current Education Specialist has met the new content represented in the expanded authorization?

Staff Recommendation

That the Commission discuss the questions and direct staff as appropriate.

Next Steps

Based on the Commission's discussion and potential staff direction, staff will develop a plan for a bridge process to identify the way(s) that interested current Education Specialist credential holders would be able to earn the new credential with its accompanying authorization statement.

Appendix

TPEs that are not addressed in the Current Education Specialist Program Requirements but are Addressed by the New Standards and TPEs (2018)

Mild to Moderate Support Needs (7 TPE elements):

- MM 2.2 Demonstrate the ability to support the movement, mobility, sensory and specialized health care needs required for students to participate fully in classrooms, schools and the community. Organize a safe environment for all students that include barrier free space for independent mobility, adequate storage and operation of medical equipment (as appropriate) and other mobility and sensory accommodations.
- MM 2.3 Demonstrate the ability to address functional limitations of movement and/or sensation for students with orthopedic impairments who may have a co-existing health impairment and/or intellectual disability but have difficulty accessing their education due to physical limitations.
- MM 2.11 Demonstrate the knowledge, skills and abilities to understand and address the needs of the peers and family members of students who have sustained a traumatic brain injury as they transition to school and present with a change in function.
- MM 3.3 Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of atypical development associated with various disabilities and risk conditions (e.g. orthopedic impairment, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy), as well as resilience and protective factors (e.g. attachment, temperament), and their implications for learning.
- MM 4.5 Demonstrate knowledge of core challenges associated with the neurology of open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments and adjust teaching strategies based upon the unique profile of students who present with physical/medical access issues or who retain a general fund of knowledge, but demonstrate difficulty acquiring and retaining new information due to poor memory processing, as well as neuro behavioral issues.
- MM 5.2 Each candidate utilizes assessment data to: 1) identify effective intervention and support techniques, 2) develop needed augmentative and alternative systems, 3) implement instruction of communication and social skills, 4) create and facilitate opportunities for interaction; 5) develop communication methods to demonstrate student academic knowledge; and 6) address the unique learning, sensory and access needs of students with physical/orthopedic disabilities, other health impairments, and multiple disabilities.
- MM 6.6 Possess the knowledge that the diminishment or loss of previous abilities (learning, social, physical) may have significant, long-term effects on the self-concept and emotional well-being of the student who acquires a traumatic brain injury as well as on their family members, requiring the provision of appropriate supports and services to address these issues.

Extensive Support Needs (7 TPE Elements):

- EX 2.6 Demonstrate the ability to support the movement, mobility, sensory and specialized health care needs required for students to participate fully in classrooms, schools and the community. Organize a safe environment for all students that include barrier free space for independent mobility, adequate storage and operation of medical equipment (as appropriate) and other mobility and sensory accommodations.
- EX 2.7 Demonstrate the ability to address functional limitations of movement and/or sensation for students with orthopedic impairments who may have a co-existing health impairment and/or intellectual disability but have difficulty accessing their education due to physical limitations.
- EX 2.14 Demonstrate the knowledge, skills and abilities to understand and address the needs of the peers and family members of students who have sustained a traumatic brain injury as they transition to school and present with a change in function.
- EX 3.5 Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of atypical development associated with various disabilities and risk conditions (e.g. orthopedic impairment, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy), as well as resilience and protective factors (e.g. attachment, temperament), and their implications for learning.
- EX 4.6 Demonstrate knowledge of core challenges associated with the neurology of open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments and adjust teaching strategies based upon the unique profile of students who present with physical/medical access issues or who retain a general fund of knowledge, but demonstrate difficulty acquiring and retaining new information due to poor memory processing, as well as neuro behavioral issues.
- EX 5.3 Each candidate utilizes assessment data to: 1) identify effective intervention and support techniques, 2) develop needed augmentative and alternative systems, 3) implement instruction of communication and social skills, 4) create and facilitate opportunities for interaction; 5) develop communication methods to demonstrate student academic knowledge; and 6) address the unique learning, sensory and access needs of students with physical/orthopedic disabilities, other health impairments, and multiple disabilities.
- EX 6.7 Possess the knowledge that the diminishment or loss of previous abilities (learning, social, physical) may have significant, long-term effects on the self-concept and emotional well-being of the student who acquires a traumatic brain injury as well as on their family members, requiring the provision of appropriate supports and services to address these issues.

Early Childhood Special Education (8 TPE Elements):

- 2.5 Identify, acquire, and implement assistive technology for individual children and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for all children, including those with low-incidence disabilities, physical/orthopedic, and other health impaired, to promote access, learning, and participation across learning environments, including using augmentative and alternative strategies and interventions for the development of communication and social skills.
- 3.1 Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the Early Start Personnel Manual, Infant/Toddler Learning and Developmental Foundations, Preschool Learning Foundations, and state-adopted Kindergarten Student Standards, including the principles of Universal Design for learning.
- 4.2 Apply knowledge of the Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations, Preschool Learning Foundations, California Preschool Curriculum Frameworks, and state-adopted student standards for Kindergarten, as well as principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), to effectively plan and design learning experiences for all children that incorporate recommended, evidence-based practices.
- 4.3 Apply knowledge of early development (birth through Kindergarten) when identifying and selecting developmentally appropriate strategies, culturally and linguistically relevant and appropriate materials, and designing effective sequencing interventions to engage children in learning across developmental and curricular domains.
- 4.6 Gather and use evaluation and assessment data on an ongoing basis to inform learning experiences for young children with disabilities, including children with low incidence, physical/orthopedic disabilities, and other health impaired, and young children who are dual language learners.
- 6.4 Develop and implement effective transitional plans to support the ongoing learning and development of children entering different learning settings (e.g., home-based services to preschool, preschool to kindergarten).
- 6.6 Demonstrate knowledge of professional standards and all applicable laws and regulations governing service provision for children with disabilities from birth to kindergarten and their families.
- 6.8 Facilitate effective collaborative transitions between the stages of schooling and educational settings (e.g., infant/toddler to preschool, preschool to kindergarten, kindergarten to elementary).