

**Discussion of Issues and Options for Programs
in the 2020-2021 Academic Year
August 2020**

Overview

This agenda item presents a discussion about the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting need to move educator preparation programs to a virtual learning/distance learning model for at minimum the beginning of the 2021-21 academic year. The Commission will meet to discuss this topic at its August 6, 2020 meeting. This agenda item will be linked to the full Commission agenda item on this topic as soon as it is available.

Recommendation

This is an Information/Action item. Staff recommends that the COA discuss and provide some input as the Commission moves forward with plans for educator preparation programs and credentialing requirements for the Academic Year 2020-2021.

Background

A number of flexibilities have been put in place for credential holders, applicants, candidates, and program completers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:

- At the April 2020 meeting, the Commission acted, in two distinct agenda items, to identify modifications and options for credential candidates to support completion of preparation during school closures. These actions were summarized in a document posted to the Commission's website on May 5, 2020 titled ["Flexibilities Approved by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing at the April 2020 Commission Meeting in Response to COVID-19 Related School Closures"](#).
- On May 29, 2020 an Executive Order, N-66-20, was released that provided [additional pathways](#) for completing candidates and applicants for the 2020-21 year.
- The Budget Trailer bill provides additional flexibilities by extending the validity period for examinations from ten to 11 years between for individuals applying to credential programs between March 2020 and June 30, 2021. In addition, Pupil Personnel Services program completers may complete clinical practice in a single school setting through June 30, 2021.

Considerations for the 2020-21 Year

At the June 2020 meeting, an [agenda item](#) was presented that provided an update on the approved flexibilities, the Commission guidance that was developed and shared, and the support related to employers and educator preparation programs. That item pointed out that the flexibilities addressed candidates who had completed over half to almost all of their educator preparation program in the planned program delivery model during the 2019-20 academic year. Candidates enrolled in 2020-21 may not have the opportunity to complete the majority of their preparation as the program was originally designed, including completing clinical practice in the public schools. Although the majority of candidates enroll in educator preparation programs in summer or fall of the year, some candidates begin their program at different points in the calendar year.

With the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, and in accordance with the Governor's direction on July 17, 2020, many school districts have stated that the 2020-21 school year will begin with distance learning. The flexibilities that were appropriate for the 2019-20 program completers may or may not be appropriate for the 2020-21 candidates. With the knowledge that clinical practice may not be able to take place in school buildings for some or a majority of the 2020-21 school year, there may be specific skills that will be more challenging to find or create opportunities for candidates to practice in distance learning settings.

The Commission staff has worked with a few different groups of program leaders over the summer to identify aspects of educator preparation that need to be considered by the Commission in light of the current pandemic. At the time of posting this agenda item, staff was completing the agenda item to be considered by the Commission at its August 6 meeting. Once that document is available, this agenda item will be linked to the Commission agenda. Input from the COA will be helpful as staff prepares to discuss this item with the Commission and as programs gear up for the 2020-2021 academic year.