

Update on the Development and Implementation of the PK-3 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialist Instruction Credential January 2023

Overview

This agenda item provides the Committee on Accreditation background on and the opportunity to discuss elements of the updated PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction Credential (PK-3 Credential). The regulations for this credential were [approved by the CTC](#) at their meeting in December of 2022. Approved Institutions that want to offer the PK-3 Credential will apply to the Commission and potentially will come before the COA beginning this spring (2023) for program approval. The full text of the program preconditions, standards and teaching performance expectations (TPEs) can be found in [The PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Handbook](#).

Background

The Commission has had an intentional focus on transformative work in early childhood education (ECE) over the past several years. In October 2020, California's Health and Human Services Agency released the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care, establishing a vision of ensuring that all California children thrive physically, emotionally, and educationally in their early years through access to high-quality early learning and care resources; equitable opportunities for the workforce that advance equitable outcomes for children; and greater efficiencies through structures for continuous improvement. In addition, the Master Plan also called for establishing a PK-3 credential. The Governor's 2022 budget provided significant resources for implementing universal transitional kindergarten (UTK) to serve all four-year-olds as well as for moving forward towards implementing universal preschool (UPK) on a phase-in basis, potentially serving children as young as two years old in the future. These bold statewide initiatives will require an additional large number of qualified early childhood teachers, with estimates ranging from 7,000-16,000 additional teachers needed who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for all young children, working collaboratively in partnership with parents/guardians and classroom aides to support children's growth, development, and learning. The PK-3 Credential is specifically designed and purposefully intended to meet this new demand.

This credentialing structure is intended to help meet the unprecedented need for qualified ECE teachers representing a diverse workforce that reflects the children and families/guardians they serve in PK-grade 3. In addition, this will provide accelerated pathways for current Multiple Subject Credential holders as well as Child Development Teacher Permit (CDP) holders with a BA degree to earn the credential and begin serving as quickly as possible in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) settings. Although Multiple Subject Credential holders are already authorized by their credential to teach any of grades PK-12 in a self-contained setting, these teachers may also choose to add the PK-3 authorization to document specific expertise in early childhood education as an option for meeting apportionment requirements under EC 48000(g)(4) for serving in a Transitional Kindergarten assignment.

The establishment of the PK-3 Credential recognizes unique qualities of early childhood education, with an emphasis on child development and early childhood education at its core. As such, there are some key differences between the PK-3 credential and the other California general education credentials including how it addresses California Basic Skills Requirement (BSR), California Subject Matter Requirement (SMR), and Equivalency for Clinical Practice for current ECE educators. In addition, the PK-3 credential is the first to include three new standards addressing literacy, math, and equity, inclusion, and diversity.

[Appendix A](#) is provided below with additional resources and links to prior meetings.

Basic Skills

There is no Basic Skills Requirement (BSR) for this credential. Candidates are required to possess a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution of higher education. The CBEST and other BSR options are not necessary for candidates to employ to earn this credential.

Subject Matter

The Subject Matter Requirement for the PK-3 credential is focused on child development in contrast to the focus specific content area (i.e., science, math, social studies, etc.) knowledge found in the multiple subjects and single subject general education credentials. There are two ways in which candidates can meet the SMR for the PK-3 credential:

- Possession of a bachelor's or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education with a degree major in the field of child development or early childhood education.
- Completion of 24 semester units or the equivalent quarter units of non-remedial, degree-applicable coursework at a regionally accredited institution of higher education in early childhood education and/or child development. (There is no set list of courses required to meet the SMR, but they must be degree-applicable courses.)

Program Curriculum Design

The Commission adopted preconditions, program standards, and Teaching Performance Expectations for this credential in October 2022. Program sponsors will need to intentionally focus coursework and clinical practice on child development, early literacy and math instruction, play, social and emotional learning, developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), and learning to design culturally sustaining curriculum and learning spaces that support children's linguistic, literate, and cultural ways of knowing and being. These emphases require programs to develop with a focus on the whole child, centering children's funds of knowledge, validating and supporting community and family relationships. Program sponsors are encouraged to intentionally design programs to meet the new criteria, rather than attempt to 'retrofit' existing preliminary multiple subject programs. This gives program sponsors the opportunity to build new pathways to teaching via child development and early childhood education majors.

Those who currently hold a valid Multiple Subject Teaching Credential with an English learner authorization may wish to add the PK-3 credential. While these educators are already technically authorized to teach PK-3 in a self-contained learning space, they may wish to add this emphasis and can do so by meeting the SMR by completing any 24 semester units or the equivalent quarter units of non-remedial, degree-applicable coursework at a regionally accredited institution of higher education in early childhood education and/or child development. These candidates will apply directly to the Commission for their PK-3 Credential by submitting:

- Official transcripts verifying completion of the SMR, and
- A completed application with accompanying fee

These candidates will not be required to complete any additional clinical practice or TPA.

Clinical Practice

Candidates for the PK-3 Credential will need to complete 600 hours of clinical practice with at least 200 hours in a preschool (ages 3-5) or TK setting and at least 200 hours in a K-3 setting. Some of these experiences may take place in the candidate's California Early Childhood Education employment setting. Intern programs must establish a procedure to enable candidates to complete clinical practice.

Professional Preparation Program Equivalency for Clinical Practice

The Commission recognizes that candidates for the PK-3 credential may already be experienced early childhood educators. Commission approved professional preparation programs for the PK-3 credential shall recognize and grant equivalency for prior experience, as follows, and shall develop a clearly articulated process for granting such equivalency.

PK-3 Credential candidates who meet both the requirements outlined in subsections (A) and (B) below shall be granted equivalence for at least 200 hours of the required clinical practice experience in a PK or TK setting within the program of professional preparation. They may be granted equivalence for an additional 200 total hours of the required clinical practice experience in a PK or TK setting within the program of professional preparation. Such candidates must meet all other program requirements, including at least 200 hours in a K-3 setting.

- (A) Hold a valid Child Development Permit at the Teacher level or higher **or** verify employment as a lead teacher in a Head Start program or a childcare and development center serving preschool-aged children
- (B) Verify six (6) years or more of satisfactory, full-time teaching experience as a lead teacher in a public or private center-based childcare and development program serving preschool-aged children that is either a license-exempt childcare and development center pursuant to California Health and Safety Code section 1596.792(o) or holds a license as defined in section 101152(l)(1), Article 1, Chapter 1, Division 12, of Title 22.

Full-time experience shall be defined as classroom-based teaching for at least 3.5 hours per day, for at least 75% of the school year. Part time experience, or experience serving as anything other than a lead teacher, shall not be acceptable.

Lead teacher means an adult who has direct responsibility for the care and development of children from birth to 5 years of age in a center-based early childhood care setting and serves in a teaching capacity with 3 and/or 4-year-olds.

Satisfactory teaching experience shall be verified by the public or private center-based childcare and development center. Verification shall include a statement from the employer confirming that the teacher's performance was rated satisfactory or better in the following areas (must include all):

- The use of developmentally appropriate teaching strategies for preschool-aged children.
- The ability to establish and maintain developmentally appropriate standards and expectations for student behavior.
- A demonstration of deep knowledge of the early literacy, early mathematics, and other preschool subjects, and the use of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning approaches that engage students and promote student understanding.
- An ability to plan and implement a sequence of appropriate learning activities, both teacher and child initiated.
- An ability to evaluate and assess student learning outcomes.
- An ability to communicate effectively with young children and their families/guardians

Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) Requirement

A TPA for the PK-3 Credential is in development, however until it is fully operational in Fall 2025, candidates for the preliminary PK-3 Credential will need to complete the multiple subject TPA in a TK-3 placement. Program sponsors will need to factor this in when creating placements, ensuring that candidates will be able to complete their assessment.

New Program Standards

The adopted program standards for the PK-3 Credential mirror those of the Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject program standards as well as the Preliminary Education Specialist program standards in structure and format. However, there are three additional program standards and two additional TPEs that program sponsors will need to address in the PK-3 Credential. The standards include the following:

Standard 1: Program Design and Curriculum

Standard 2: Preparing Candidates Toward Mastery of the PK-3ECE Specialist Teaching Performance Expectations

Standard 3: Clinical Practice: Opportunities to Learn and Practice

Standard 4: Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

Standard 5: Monitoring, Supporting and Assessing Candidate Program towards Meeting Credential Requirements

Standard 6: Implementation of a Teaching Performance Assessment

Standard 7: Effective Literacy Instruction in PK-3 Settings
Standard 8: Effective Mathematics Instruction in PK-3 Settings
Standard 9: Induction Individual Development Plan

A summary of these three standards is included below.

Standard 4: Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity

This standard addresses the importance of preparing educators to navigate issues of identity, privilege, race, and power in order to create and support socially just learning spaces where all children feel they belong and can thrive. Multiple studies show that children learn better, persist, and are willing to take on academic challenges in spaces where they see themselves represented in their educators, curriculum, and classrooms ([Delgado Bernal, 2002](#), Delpit, 2012, [Gershenson, et al., 2016](#), [Kohli, 2006](#), Love, 2019), yet up to now, this issue has not been formally addressed in California’s credential standards. This standard calls for candidates being invited to reflect on their own understandings of these issues, practice identifying, analyzing, and addressing how structures, history, implicit, and explicit bias manifest in both individual and systemic ways in their classrooms and in the schools overall.

Although the teaching force in California’s public school system is showing signs of becoming more representative of the children it serves, over 60% of our teachers are White, while only about 20% of our students are White ([CDES, 2022](#)). This means that up to 80% of California’s students may be in learning spaces where their funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, language, and other core elements of their identities are not being addressed. Incorporating this standard into California’s teacher preparation will support all children as learners by preparing their teachers to better understand their lived experiences. Additionally, this standard could serve to increase the recruitment and retention of a more representative teaching force where teachers from all identities feel supported and valued.

While there is not an accompanying TPE for this program standard, staff is in the process of creating resources for programs to use in considering this standard. Staff is currently working on an evidence guide as well as a ‘crosswalk’ illustrating where the elements of the standard are broken down and how programs can weave this work throughout the coursework and clinical practice of the program.

Standard 7/TPE 7: Effective Literacy Instruction in PK-3 Settings

This standard and TPE directly address the implementation of [SB 488](#) and include detailed expectations for program sponsors and teacher candidates. It requires programs ensure that coursework and supervised field experiences encompass the study of effective means of teaching literacy to young children across all content areas based on California’s State Board of Education (SBE)-adopted [English Language Arts \(ELA\) and Literacy Standards](#), [English Language Development \(ELD\) Standards](#), and [Preschool Learning Foundations](#). Program coursework and supervised field experiences must be aligned with the current, SBE-adopted [English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework](#), including the crosscutting themes of Foundational Skills, Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, and Content Knowledge, as well as the [Preschool Curriculum Framework](#).

This standard calls on programs to ground their literacy instruction in asset-based pedagogies and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in order to prepare candidates to provide effective literacy instruction that is organized, comprehensive, systematic, evidence based, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and responsive to children’s age, grade, and prior literacy development. Programs must demonstrate that as they provide systemic literacy instruction that it follows specific elements of the [California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan](#) detailed in the [PK-3 Credential handbook](#)/regulations.

In addition to explicit expectations for the way programs provide literacy instruction, this standard also requires programs to incorporate the [California Dyslexia Guidelines](#) through both coursework and clinical practice.

Standard 8/TPE 8: Effective Mathematics Instruction in PK-3 Settings

This standard/TPE requires that program coursework and supervised field experiences include the study of effective means of teaching mathematics to young children, consistent with the State Board adopted [K-3 Mathematics Standards](#) and [Framework](#) and the [Preschool Learning Foundations and Curriculum Framework](#). Coursework and supervised field experiences must prepare teachers to model mathematical thinking, inquiry, practice, and processes in their classrooms and to engage in mathematics teaching and learning in a mutually respectful manner with students.

This standard and related TPEs ensure that candidates understand the importance of and practice drawing on children’s prior mathematical knowledge, understandings and capabilities, and using their knowledge and relationship with individual children to understand their current developmental level – differentiating instruction and embedding math experiences relevant to each child. This emphasizes inquiry and conceptual development and provides candidates with the experience of facilitating both collaborative and independent problem solving along with a range of other tools and strategies to help children develop constructive understandings and relationships with math.

Programs will need to emphasize the importance of observing, listening, and reflecting on children’s mathematical thinking and discourse and asking questions, posing new learning activities and opportunities, and providing a variety of tools to further surface and build on children’s mathematical thinking. Candidates learn to ask children questions to elicit children’s thinking and problem-solving processes as they engage in math activities.

Candidates are expected to be prepared to facilitate learning across five critical strands (number and operations, mathematical thinking and understanding relationships, algebra and functions, measurement and data analysis, and geometry). For all strands and across all grade levels PK-3, the program provides teachers with effective ways to both engage children in *thinking about* mathematics while they *do* mathematics, and help children develop confidence in their mathematical skills.

Initial Program Review (IPR)

Expertise in both ECE and literacy instruction is required in order to appropriately review PK-3 Credential program proposals. The IPR team is requiring each program sponsor proposing a PK-3 program to include at least one recommendation for a reviewer with expertise in ECE, which will ensure that all new programs for the PK-3 Credential are reviewed through this lens. Additionally, given the detailed requirements of Standard/TPE 7, a review of each proposal by literacy experts is necessary. This will become an element of the IPR process for this credential.

Timeline

The following table ([Agenda item 4B,10-22](#)) indicates next steps and associated timeline. It is the intention of the Commission staff to move these activities and processes forward as expeditiously as possible so that preparation program sponsors can begin applying for program approval with early adopters ready to begin preparing PK-3 Credential candidates in fall of 2023. In a survey conducted by Commission staff in late 2022, approximately 30 current and potential program sponsors indicated their intent to begin offering this credential in fall of 2023.

Staff continues to develop tools to facilitate program proposal development. The [PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction page](#) on the CTC website includes links to informational webinars and recordings, [The PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction Handbook](#), FAQs, office hours, and many other internal and external resources are available to support programs.

Appendix A

Resources

[PK-3 Early Childhood Specialist Instruction Handbook](#)

[SB488](#)

History of CTC agenda items

February 2022

https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2022-02/2022-02-3e.pdf?sfvrsn=4e5d24b1_5

April 2022

https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2022-04/2022-04-3h.pdf?sfvrsn=5afb27b1_3

June 2022

https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2022-06/2022-06-3a.pdf?sfvrsn=a09f27b1_3

August 2022

https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2022-08/2022-08-5a.pdf?sfvrsn=463327b1_3

October 2022

https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2022-10/2022-10-4b.pdf?sfvrsn=a1eb26b1_3

December 2022 – Regulations (consent agenda beginning on p. 20)

https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2022-12/2022-12-1c.pdf?sfvrsn=e4aa26b1_3