

# PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Credential *Responses to Questions at the June 3, 2022, QCC Higher Education Meeting*

This document provides responses to questions submitted to the panel discussion during the Quality Counts California (QCC) Higher Education Faculty Group quarterly meeting on June 3, 2022, regarding the proposed PK-3 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialist Credential. Responses in this document have been formulated by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and other education partners. This document is intended to provide information and bring clarity to common questions and concerns as part of the collaborative work to create a path forward. All responses are current as of June 10, 2022. Please note that the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential is still in development and must first be approved by both the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Office of Administrative Law before its requirements are finalized and it is available.

## **1. Why is the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential an important opportunity right now?**

California is making historic investments that will increase access to transitional kindergarten (TK) for all four-year-old children in the state. Recent estimates from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at UC Berkeley indicate a need for between 8,000 and 11,000 new teachers in a K-12 system that is already struggling with critical teacher shortages across the state. The proposed PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential is specifically designed and intended to meet this demand for a qualified, diverse workforce of ECE teachers to serve children and their families/guardians from three years to third grade. The proposed credential will provide accelerated pathways for current Multiple Subject Credential holders as well as for Child Development Teacher Permit holders with a bachelor's degree. The PK-3 ECE Credential is an opportunity to advance best practices in child development in the current TK-12 education system. The PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential is a unique opportunity that has not been available in California for decades and may not be again.

## 2. Who needs to get the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential?

Current early childhood educators who want to work in TK classrooms and those teachers and teachers-to-be who want to teach preschool to grade 3 in public schools are potential candidates for this credential. While Multiple Subject Credential holders are already authorized to serve in grades PK-3, this credential will be available to help them meet a requirement that they complete 24 units of child development or ECE coursework required to teach in TK. This credential will also be an option for Child Development Teacher Permit holders as well as other individuals interested in a career in teaching in ECE who want to teach in grades PK-3.

## 3. How can we do this right within the time we have to support children and families?

As documented in Commission agenda item [3A](#) for the [June 15, 2022 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing meeting](#), Commission staff have been meeting for more than two years with content experts and other agency and organizational members in the ECE field to gather input and feedback on the development of and proposed requirements for this credential. Initial discussions around this issue date from at least 2015 when California formed a multi-agency and organizational partnership with the major interested parties in the ECE field around the landmark [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through 8](#) national report. The 2020 state [Master Plan for Early Learning and Care](#) has also helped guide these efforts to be responsive to the needs of the children and families to be served in grades PK-3. This credential will focus on developmentally appropriate practices in all aspects of teaching and learning within grades PK-3. The shared goal is to ensure that TK classrooms are staffed by well-prepared educators. Current collaborations are focused on building relationships and bridges within institutions of higher education (IHEs) to both create pathways to the credential and streamline the credential process to be achievable within a reasonable timeline. Education partners from a variety of backgrounds will have opportunities for ongoing discussion throughout the process.

## 4. How do we mitigate and manage the barriers for the ECE field?

The proposed pathways for earning the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential include multiple options for candidates that provide alternatives to taking examinations, more internship opportunities, and recognition and value for prior experiences and existing knowledge. In addition, pathways such as the [Teacher Residency Program](#) and intern preparation models provide financial assistance to help candidates enroll in and complete teacher preparation. Further, candidates may also apply for [Golden State Teacher grants](#) (managed by the Student Aid Commission).

Building alliances within and between IHEs is critical for the success of the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential. IHEs need to work together to support transfer between two- and four-year degree programs (2+2), create more accessible and flexible course offerings, and increase clinical/practicum hours in as many courses as possible. Another crucial element is having ECE/child development undergraduate programs and post-baccalaureate Multiple Subject/Specialist Credential programs work together to support pre-credential coursework and clinical practice in ECE. There is much work to do by college deans, administrative leaders, and faculty to ensure the PK-3 credential is robust and meets the needs of the children and families in California.

The need for consistent clear communication is evident, though where to locate this information is still being determined. The way to manage and mitigate barriers is through open channels of ongoing conversation.

**5. How does the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential support culturally and linguistically appropriate practices?**

The proposed Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) for the job role of a PK-3 ECE Specialist address culturally and linguistically appropriate practices within PK-3 teaching and learning. [Agenda item 3B](#) for the June 2022 Commission meeting provides the draft PK-3 TPEs for information. Programs in higher education will be responsible for implementation of the PK-3 TPEs.

**6. How is the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion being included?**

The proposed Program Standards for the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential—which all programs seeking Commission approval must meet—contain a separate standard focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The draft Program Standards are provided in [agenda item 3B](#) for the June 2022 Commission meeting.

**7. What will count for the 600 proposed clinical hours?**

The Commission has not yet adopted Program Standards, including standards addressing clinical practice. It is intended that a wide variety of clinical practice experiences will be applicable to the required number of hours, should these standards be adopted by the Commission.

**8. What faculty supervision will be required for approved clinical hours?**

[Proposed Program Standard 3](#) addresses the requirements for faculty supervision for clinical practice. The standards would require orientation for faculty supervisors to their role in the process and observation of each candidate a minimum of four times per quarter or six times per semester.

**9. How will currently employed teachers (in either Pre-K or K-3) get experience with children they don't currently work with?**

Clinical practice experiences would be facilitated by the teacher preparation program in which the candidate is enrolled.

**10. Does the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential require TPEs and Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs)?**

The [PK-3 TPEs](#) describe the expected competencies for the job role of a PK-3 ECE Specialist and are included in the requirements for this credential. Teacher preparation programs are required to provide multiple opportunities for candidates to learn, practice, be assessed on, and receive feedback on their progress toward mastering the TPEs. Teacher preparation programs have an appropriate TPA embedded and assist candidates in preparing for this assessment. An ECE TPA is currently under development. The Commission would determine whether the TPA will be required to earn this credential if the credential is enacted in regulations.

**11. Why are the PK-3 TPEs built using the six standards of the TPEs for K-12?**

The six standards that frame the TPEs are part of the statutory requirements for a California teaching credential in the education code. The [California Standards for the Teaching Profession](#) represent accomplished practice in teaching and learning across all teaching credential areas and thus serve as the organizing framework for all TPEs. The TPEs are written at the level of a teacher just ready to begin their professional practice and are tailored to the credential for which they apply. The proposed TPEs for the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential focus specifically on all aspects of developmentally appropriate teaching and learning for working effectively with young children in grades PK-3 and their families/guardians. They are not the same as the K-12 TPEs but address the same domains of teaching and learning that all credential areas share.

**12. How will California ensure that faculty with experience and education in ECE will be teaching the 24 units of ECE required by the PK-3 Credential?**

Each IHE has specific qualifications for faculty to teach in various disciplines. The Commission does not have authority over hiring and assignments by IHEs. However, the [Commission's Common Standards](#) for all approved teacher preparation programs require that

“The institution employs, assigns, and retains only qualified persons to teach courses, provide professional development, and supervise field-based and clinical experiences. Qualifications of faculty and other instructional

personnel must include, but are not limited to: a) current knowledge of the content; b) knowledge of the current context of public schooling including the California adopted P-12 content standards, frameworks, and accountability systems; c) knowledge of diversity in society, including diverse abilities, culture, language, ethnicity, and gender orientation; and d) demonstration of effective professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service.”

**13. Will a student with an AA in ECE/Child Development but a BA in Liberal Studies be able to satisfy the subject matter requirement for both the PK-3 and the Multiple Subject Credentials?**

The Commission has not yet adopted requirements for the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential.

**14. Will professionals holding a master’s degree in ECE/Child Development be required to get the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential?**

The Commission has not yet adopted requirements for the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential.

**15. Can a person with a Child Development Teacher Permit or higher work with children in the TK programs within the district/state?**

A person with a Child Development Teacher Permit or higher may serve as the second adult or support position in a TK classroom. See the guidance provided by the California Department of Education on their [TK website](#).

**16. How will California state systems and stakeholders intentionally support IHE implementation of the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential?**

The Commission will provide a series of ongoing technical assistance webinars for the field to help support IHEs interested in offering preparation for the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential if and when this credential is established in regulations. In addition, the Commission will continue to hold bimonthly office hours as a further support to interested IHEs when the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential is established in regulations.

The need for support for IHEs to implement the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential has been communicated to state leadership, specifically guidance around ECE/Child Development and Education departments or colleges working collaboratively. Conversations to address support for IHEs are needed across state systems.

**17. What will the career ladder be for those with a PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential? Will they be able to be principals? What will they need to do to qualify to teach grades 4-5?**

The PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential is not yet established in regulations. If it is approved by the Commission and completes the regulatory process, the credential could, in the future, serve as a prerequisite credential for candidates seeking an Administrative Service Credential. Holders of the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential will not be authorized to teach grades beyond third grade unless they earn a Multiple Subject Credential.

**18. What is being done to bridge the communication and language gaps between K-12 and ECE?**

Please see the California Department of Education's [TK webpage](#) for information on the series of webinars offered to foster understanding of ECE across the grade spectrum. When the PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential is established in regulation, the Commission will also develop and hold informational webinars for IHEs interested in offering preparation for this credential to help bridge any language or communication gaps that may exist.

In an effort to build shared language and terminology, teacher preparation stakeholders are developing a crosswalk of the terms frequently used in ECE and EDU. The ECE/EDU Common Language Crosswalk workgroup is meeting weekly this summer on Thursday afternoons from 1:30-2:30 p.m. The weekly meeting is intended to allow for summer flexibility, in anticipation that participants will drop in when available. To join the workgroup, please email Rachel Johnson (ECE Community of Practice lead) at [rajohnson@vcccd.edu](mailto:rajohnson@vcccd.edu) for the meeting invitation. The ECE/EDU Common Language Crosswalk is intended to be a living document; once further along, it will be shared with the field. If you have any questions, please reach out to Rachel Johnson ([rajohnson@vcccd.edu](mailto:rajohnson@vcccd.edu)) or Renee Marshall ([education@renee-marshall.com](mailto:education@renee-marshall.com)).

**19. How can higher education faculty continue to be part of important conversations that affect the field?**

All higher education faculty are welcome to join the QCC Higher Education Faculty Group Quarterly Discussions to share ideas and to hear updates on specific QCC projects and state initiatives. Join the [QCC Higher Education Faculty Group email list](#) to receive updates and invites to the quarterly meetings. Interested faculty may want to bookmark the [QCC Higher Education Faculty webpage](#) for resources, updates, and announcements.