



Commission on Teacher Credentialing

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Office of the Executive Director

Date: March 6, 2020

From: Mary Vixie Sandy, Executive Director, Commission on Teacher Credentialing

To: California TK-12 Districts and County Offices of Education

Re: Partnering with Educator Preparation Programs to Implement New Education Specialist Program Standards and Teaching Performance Expectations

Letter to Employers of Education Specialist Interns:

The purpose of this letter is to inform agencies that employ intern special education candidates of the significant upcoming changes to the California credentialing system for the preparation of special education teachers in California. These changes will impact employers in important and positive ways. Not only will candidates be prepared differently, but the credentials being issued to candidates will be different as well. These changes to the credentialing system now more than ever will require a close partnership between educator preparation institutions and their local employers.

Changes to the Credentialing System

By fall 2022 all educator preparation programs that prepare candidates for an Education Specialist credential will have transitioned to meet new program standards and prepare their candidates to meet the new [Education Specialist Teaching Performance Expectations](#). California's credentialing system will reflect these significant changes to candidate preparation with the new authorization statements that accompany the new credentials which candidates will receive upon successful completion of an Education Specialist preparation program. While this new credential structure will impact candidates who begin a preparation program as of the summer or fall 2022, it does not impact individuals who currently hold an Education Specialist credential. Existing Education Specialist Credential holders still hold valid credentials with authorization statements that state which students they are authorized to serve.

There will be five preliminary Education Specialist credentials issued in California after the summer/fall of 2022 when educator preparation programs are required to implement the new standards. Until appropriate regulations are approved, the existing Education Specialist credential structure consisting of seven credentials will continue to be granted to those who complete preparation programs.

Beginning in Fall 2022, and after approval of the associated regulations, the five new credentials will be:

- Mild to Moderate Support Needs
- Extensive Support Needs
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Visual Impairments

The significant changes identified above impact three of the five credentials listed. Both the Mild to Moderate Support Needs and the Extensive Support Needs credentials serve as cross-categorical credentials whereby candidates are prepared to serve students in all Federal disability categories with the exception of students who are deaf-blind. The idea is that it is the level of an individual student's need as determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that would dictate the services needed and the appropriate individual to provide those services. This means that both Mild to Moderate Support Needs candidates and Extensive Supports Needs candidates will be prepared to work with students identified with a range of disabilities. With respect to the changes to the Early Childhood Special Education credential, the authorization for this credential has been expanded so that holders of this credential will now be able to serve in a Kindergarten classroom. Given the larger scope of preparation for these candidates, employers of interns seeking education specialist credentials will want to partner with teacher preparation programs so that their employees/intern candidates are able to successfully meet the new program requirements and teaching performance expectations to complete the program and obtain their credential. Some of the specific changes to the program requirements will be explained further in this letter.

Clinical Practice/Field Experience Requirements for Candidates (including Interns) Seeking an Education Specialist Credential

In an effort to better prepare teachers for today's classrooms, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing has been revising the requirements for the Education Specialist credential. Part of this revision included expectations around the types of fieldwork that candidates would need to experience as part of their preparation. With the adoption of the new Preliminary Education Specialist Program Standards (2018), there are more stringent requirements around fieldwork for all candidates, including interns. The new program standards require that all candidates, including interns' "early field experience would take place in experienced mentor classrooms in both general education and special education settings." As the employing agency, local education agencies (LEAs) will want to have a reciprocal partnership with the institution (most often an institution of higher education) that has the approved teacher preparation program and is preparing the candidate (employee) to ensure that both the program and candidate requirements are fulfilled.

How the Commitment of District and County Offices of Education Assists in Candidate Completion of Credential Requirements

In accordance with the Commission's adopted Education Specialist Program Standards, "Candidates must have a range of experience that reflects the diversity of age and grade levels, the range of federal disability categories, and the continuum of special education services." As part of their fieldwork requirement, all candidates must have the experiences outlined above. Since intern candidates are employed by an LEA, it is critical to an intern's successful completion of the credential program that the employer assist the teacher preparation program to make the appropriate fieldwork obligations available to the intern either through

appropriate placements or by providing interns with sufficient release time so that they can meet their credential requirements.

Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) for Education Specialist Credential Candidates

Another significant change to the educator preparation system in California for candidates seeking an Education Specialist credential is the requirement for each candidate to pass a teaching performance assessment, when it becomes available. The Commission has appointed a Design Team, with practitioners, teacher education faculty and other experts participating, to design a TPA appropriate for Education Specialist candidates. Opportunities to engage in a pilot year and field test year will be offered. This Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) will require that Education Specialist credential candidates work with TK-12 students in classrooms across California, and to document these interactions by developing lesson plans, teaching and assessing students, (recording teaching practice and annotating the video as appropriate), collecting samples of student work, and reflecting on their practice. By the summer/fall of 2023, education specialist candidates will be required to complete and pass a CTC approved performance assessment to earn their preliminary teaching credential. Program supports will be offered through weekly office hours, monthly online learning communities, and in person trainings throughout the next two years. To learn more about the details for these supports, please see the PSD news published by the CTC every Friday online.

For more specific information about how programs in your area will be changing and how those changes will impact the new teachers and candidates employed by your district, we encourage you to meet with the Education Specialist teacher preparation programs in your area.

We look forward to strengthening and developing deeper collaborative relationships between Commission-approved teacher preparation programs and California schools, districts, and county offices of education. The shared commitment and responsibility of teacher preparation program sponsors, TK-12 school districts, county offices of education, and the Commission will lead to the successful implementation of mandatory credential requirements for candidates. The readiness of the incoming teaching workforce depends on the quality of these collaborative relationships. Thank you for your continued support.