

## Item 9:

### Discussion of Certification for Early Childhood Education

#### DISCUSSION

**SUMMARY:** This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) an opportunity to discuss certification for early childhood education and consider the creation of a new prekindergarten-third grade (preK-3<sup>rd</sup>) certificate.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** Texas Education Code §§21.003(a), 21.031 (a)(b), 21.041 b(1)-(6), 29.1532, 29.165-29.169, and 29.172.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION:** The State Board for Educator Certification does not currently issue a stand-alone certification or endorsement for individuals to teach in early childhood education settings in public schools. Currently, a newly certified individual who wishes to teach prekindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade must earn the Core Subjects: Early Childhood-Grade 6 certificate. An experienced educator who already holds an elementary certificate to teach Grades 1-6 or Grades 1-8 must also take and pass the entire Core Subjects: Early Childhood-Grade 6 exam for issuance of that certificate and eligibility to then teach in prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms.

With 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade STAAR Reading passing rates at approximately 70%, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff feel that addressing teacher qualification and certification requirements is a critical need across the state. Commissioner Morath and Governor Abbott, as well as legislators with the passing of HB 4 for a High Quality Prekindergarten Grant program, have prioritized increasing outcomes in early childhood education.

To ensure the investment in high quality prekindergarten is sustained and leveraged through the elementary years, the TEA early childhood team is reviewing preK-3<sup>rd</sup> alignment of resources, curriculum, assessments, professional development and teacher training. As part of that system alignment, TEA would like to work with the SBEC to explore options regarding creation of a new preK-3<sup>rd</sup> educator certificate.

Effective instruction of young children in preK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade emphasizes multiple domains of development in instruction and interactions. These domains are interconnected and development in one area reinforces and stimulates development in the other. The primary domains of development are Literacy (reading and writing), Math (concepts and thinking), Physical (fine and gross motor), Social-Emotional, and Language and Communication.

Approval of a new early childhood education certificate will open a pathway to specialization and mastery of content and pedagogy for grades preK-3<sup>rd</sup>. Next steps in this important process will require the development and adoption into rule of specific standards focused on early learners, as well as test development activities that ultimately result in creation of a new certification test. The SBEC would need to adopt a new certificate into 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 233, Categories of Classroom Teaching Certificates and also make appropriate updates to 19 TAC Chapter 231, Requirements for Public School Personnel Assignments.

Based on the results of today's discussion, TEA staff is prepared to begin the work of gathering stakeholder feedback and return in March 2017 with proposed rule changes for review and action

by the SBEC. TEA staff recognize that within this process there will also be discussions on how a preK-3<sup>rd</sup> certificate may impact the other existing teacher certifications, including the continued existence of the Core Subjects: Early Childhood-Grade 6 certificate.

**PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT:** With creation of this certificate, educators will be able to intensely focus their studies to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively lead our elementary classrooms, differentiate instruction in critical content areas, and provide children with a solid foundation that will lead to long term success in school.

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**Attachments:** I. Statutory Citations

**ATTACHMENT I****Statutory Citations Related to Discussion of Certification for Early Childhood Education****Texas Education Code §21.003(a) Certification Required (excerpt):**

(a) A person may not be employed as a teacher, teacher intern or teacher trainee, librarian, educational aide, administrator, educational diagnostician, or school counselor by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate or permit issued as provided by Subchapter B.

(b) Except as otherwise provided by this subsection, a person may not be employed by a school district as an audiologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, physician, nurse, school psychologist, associate school psychologist, licensed professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, social worker, or speech language pathologist unless the person is licensed by the state agency that licenses that profession and may perform specific services within those professions for a school district only if the person holds the appropriate credential from the appropriate state agency. As long as a person employed by a district before September 1, 2011, to perform marriage and family therapy, as defined by Section 502.002, Occupations Code, is employed by the same district, the person is not required to hold a license as a marriage and family therapist to perform marriage and family therapy with that district.

**Texas Education Code §21.031 (a)(b), Purpose (excerpt):**

(a) The State Board for Educator Certification is established to recognize public school educators as professionals and to grant educators the authority to govern the standards of their profession. The board shall regulate and oversee all aspects of the certification, continuing education, and standards of conduct of public school educators.

(b) In proposing rules under this subchapter, the board shall ensure that all candidates for certification or renewal of certification demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the performance of the diverse student population of this state.

**Texas Education Code §21.041 b(1)-(6), Rules; Fees:**

(a) The board may adopt rules as necessary for its own procedures.

(b) The board shall propose rules that:

(1) provide for the regulation of educators and the general administration of this subchapter in a manner consistent with this subchapter;

(2) specify the classes of educator certificates to be issued, including emergency certificates;

(3) specify the period for which each class of educator certificate is valid;

(4) specify the requirements for the issuance and renewal of an educator certificate;

(5) provide for the issuance of an educator certificate to a person who holds a similar certificate issued by another state or foreign country, subject to Section 21.052;

(6) provide for special or restricted certification of educators, including certification of instructors of American Sign Language;

**Texas Education Code §29.1532. Prekindergarten Program Requirements:**

(a) A school district's prekindergarten program shall be designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.

(b) If a school district contracts with a private entity for the operation of the district's prekindergarten program, the program must at a minimum comply with the applicable child-care

licensing standards adopted by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services under Section 42.042, Human Resources Code.

(c) A school district that offers prekindergarten classes, including a high quality prekindergarten program class under Subchapter E-1, shall include the following information in the district's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) report:

(1) demographic information, as determined by the commissioner, on students enrolled in district and campus prekindergarten classes, including the number of students who are eligible for classes under Section 29.153;

(2) the numbers of half-day and full-day prekindergarten classes offered by the district and campus;

(3) the sources of funding for the prekindergarten classes;

(4) the class size and ratio of instructional staff to students for each prekindergarten program class offered by the district and campus;

(5) if the district elects to administer an assessment instrument to students enrolled in district and campus prekindergarten program classes, a description and the results of each type of assessment instrument; and

(6) curricula used in the district's prekindergarten program classes.

(d) Information required under this section to be included in a school district's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) report may not be used for purposes of determining a district's accreditation or a campus or district performance rating under Subchapter C, Chapter 39.

#### **Texas Education Code §29.165. High Quality Prekindergarten Grant Program:**

(a) From funds appropriated for that purpose, the commissioner by rule shall establish a grant funding program under which funds are awarded to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to implement a prekindergarten grant program under this subchapter.

(b) A school district may participate in and receive funding under the program if the district meets all program standards required under this subchapter.

(c) A program is subject to any other requirements imposed by law that apply to a prekindergarten program not provided in accordance with this subchapter, except that to the extent a conflict exists between this subchapter and any other provision of law, this subchapter prevails.

#### **Texas Education Code §29.166. High Quality Grant Program Funding.**

(a) A school district is eligible for half-day funding under the Foundation School Program for each student who satisfies eligibility requirements under Section 29.153(b) and who is enrolled in a program class.

(b) In addition to funding under Subsection (a), a school district is entitled to receive grant funding in an amount determined by the commissioner for each qualifying student described under Subsection (c) in average daily attendance in a program class. The commissioner may not establish an amount of funding per qualifying student in attendance for the entire instructional period on a school day that exceeds \$1,500.

(c) A student qualifies for additional funding under Subsection (b) if the student:

(1) satisfies eligibility requirements under Section 29.153(b); and

(2) is four years of age on September 1 of the year the student begins the program.

(d) A school district that receives the funding under Subsection (b) may use the funding only to improve the quality of the district's prekindergarten programs.

(e) The total amount of funding distributed to school districts under Subsection (b) may not exceed \$130 million for the state fiscal biennium ending August 31, 2017.

### **Texas Education Code §29.167. High Quality Curriculum and Teacher Requirements:**

(a) A school district shall select and implement a curriculum for a prekindergarten grant program under this subchapter that:

(1) includes the prekindergarten guidelines established by the agency;

(2) measures the progress of students in meeting the recommended learning outcomes; and

(3) does not use national curriculum standards developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

(b) Each teacher for a prekindergarten program class must:

(1) be certified under Subchapter B, Chapter 21; and

(2) have one of the following additional qualifications:

(A) a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or another early childhood education credential approved by the agency;

(B) certification offered through a training center accredited by Association Montessori Internationale or through the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education;

(C) at least eight years' experience of teaching in a nationally accredited child care program;

(D) be employed as a prekindergarten teacher in a school district that has received approval from the commissioner for the district's prekindergarten-specific instructional training plan that the teacher uses in the teacher's prekindergarten classroom; or

(E) an equivalent qualification.

(c) A school district may allow a teacher employed by the district to receive the training required to be awarded a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential from a regional education service center that offers the training in accordance with Section 8.058. Training may not include national curriculum standards developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

(d) A school district must attempt to maintain an average ratio in any prekindergarten program class of not less than one certified teacher or teacher's aide for each 11 students.

### **Texas Education Code §29.168. Family Engagement Plan:**

(a) A school district shall develop and implement a family engagement plan to assist the district in achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education. The family engagement plan must be based on family engagement strategies established under Subsection (b).

(b) The agency shall collaborate with other state agencies, including the Health and Human Services Commission, that provide services for children from birth through five years of age to establish prioritized family engagement strategies to be included in a school district's family engagement plan. A parent-teacher organization, community group, or faith-based institution may submit to the agency recommendations regarding the establishment of family engagement strategies, and the agency, in establishing the family engagement strategies, shall consider any received recommendations. The engagement strategies must be:

(1) based on empirical research; and

(2) proven to demonstrate significant positive short-term and long-term outcomes for early childhood education.

**Texas Education Code §29.169. Program Evaluation:**

- (a) A school district shall:
- (1) select and implement appropriate methods for evaluating the district's program classes by measuring student progress; and
  - (2) make data from the results of program evaluations available to parents.
- (b) A school district may administer diagnostic assessments to students in a program class to evaluate student progress as required by Subsection (a) but may not administer a state standardized assessment instrument.
- (c) An assessment instrument administered to a prekindergarten program class must be selected from a list of appropriate prekindergarten assessment instruments identified by the commissioner.

**Texas Education Code §29.172. Rules:**

The commissioner may adopt rules necessary to implement this subchapter.