

Item 18:

Discussion of Special Education Forum Recommendations and Test Development Updates

DISCUSSION

SUMMARY: This item provides the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) with an opportunity to discuss the recommendations from the three-part special education policy forums held between November 2018 and January 2019 and provides an update on the upcoming educator certification test development process.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: The statutory authority for the classroom teacher class certificate structure is Texas Education Code (TEC), §§21.003(a), 21.031, and 21.041(b)(1), (2), and (4), 21.041(c), 21.044(a), 21.0441, 21.0418(a)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND JUSTIFICATION: At the October 5, 2018 SBEC meeting, staff discussed conducting three personnel forums to gain stakeholder feedback and discuss options to ensure a robust and qualified special education educator pool. The forums focused on topics of certification, continuing professional education, certification by examination, and personnel assignments as it relates to the quality and staffing of special education educators. At the December 7, 2018 SBEC meeting staff provided a list of forum participants to the Board. The recommendations from the three forums are in Attachment II.

Staff is seeking feedback from the Board regarding the forum recommendations and how to proceed around the following:

- Is the Board open to moving forward with the proposed four special education certifications and the deaf/blind supplemental? If so, staff will begin work convening the needed standards advisory committees.
- Are there recommendations that the Board would like staff to apply to the current EC-12 special education certification such as the recommendations for certification by examination?

Test Development Frameworks

As a continuation of the educator certification test development update presented to the Board in October, December, and February, the Educational Diagnostician framework was posted for public comment from January 23, 2019 through February 22, 2019. The Board adopted updates to the Educational Diagnostician standards in October of 2017. The assessment that aligns with the updated standards is slated to launch in the fall of 2020. There were no public comments received during this time period.

The Early Childhood-Grade 3 Content and Science of Teaching Reading frameworks were posted from February 15, 2019 through March 17, 2019. The Board adopted the Early Childhood-Grade 3 certification in August of 2018 and the educator standards in December of 2018. The assessments that align with the standards are slated to launch in the fall of 2020. A summary of public comments is provided in Attachment III.

PUBLIC AND STUDENT BENEFIT: The public and student benefit anticipated as a result of the recommendations and assessment frameworks would be more rigorous, relevant, and reliable requirements for the preparation, certification, and testing of classroom teachers upon entry into the profession, and retention of these qualified professionals for years to come.

Staff Members Responsible:

Grace Wu, Director, Educator Standards, Testing, and Preparation

Attachments:

- I. Statutory Citations
- II. Special Education Forum Process, Members, and Recommendations
- III. Summary of Public Comments and Responses

ATTACHMENT I**Statutory Citations Related to Classroom Teacher Certificate Structure and Appointment of Advisory Committees****Texas Education Code, §21.003, 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.

Texas Education Code, §21.031, Purpose:

- (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. Rules; Fees (excerpts):

- (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;
 - (4) specify the requirements for the issuance and renewal of an educator certificate;
- (c) The board shall propose a rule adopting a fee for the issuance and maintenance of an educator certificate that, when combined with any fees imposed under Subsection (d), is adequate to cover the cost of administration of this subchapter.

Texas Education Code, §21.044, Educator Preparation (excerpts):

- (a) The board shall propose rules establishing the training requirements a person must accomplish to obtain a certificate, enter an internship, or enter an induction-year program. The board shall specify the minimum academic qualifications required for a certificate.

Texas Education Code, §21.0441, Admission Requirements for Educator Preparation Programs:

- (2) if the person is seeking initial certification:
 - (A) has successfully completed at least:

- (i) 15 semester credit hours in the subject-specific content area in which the person is seeking certification, if the person is seeking certification to teach mathematics or science at or above grade level seven; or
 - (ii) 12 semester credit hours in the subject-specific content area in which the person is seeking certification, if the person is not seeking certification to teach mathematics or science at or above grade level seven; or
- (B) has achieved a satisfactory level of performance on a content certification examination, which may be a content certification examination administered by a vendor approved by the commissioner for purposes of administering such an examination for the year for which the person is applying for admission to the program.

Texas Education Code, §21.048, Certification Examinations (excerpt):

- (a) The board shall propose rules prescribing comprehensive examinations for each class of certificate issued by the board.

ATTACHMENT II**Special Education Forum Process, Members, and Recommendations****Executive Summary**

Texas public schools provide special education services to almost 500,000 students. Despite these services, students with disabilities perform significantly lower on state assessments in reading and mathematics than their same-aged peers. To address this discrepancy and improve both student outcomes and teacher preparation, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) developed a Strategic Plan for Special Education based on input from stakeholders across the state.

Two goals of the strategic plan relate, in particular, to preparation and staffing of special education teachers. From October 2018 to January 2019 TEA convened a series of forums comprised of diverse participants within the field of special education to provide a set of recommendations intended to strengthen Texas' special education certification process. In the following brief, we present (a) information on the content of the forums and the participants, (b) current certification requirements in Texas, (c) recommended changes to those requirements, (d) likely benefits of changing the requirements, and (e) points of concern.

The forum participants suggested the following recommendations for changing special education certification:

1. Currently, special education certification is offered in early childhood (EC) through Grade 12, excluding candidates in the areas of *visually impaired* and *deaf and hard of hearing*. The forum participants recommended that certification be offered through both grade-band and disability-specific pathways:
 - a. EC through Grade 8, mild/moderate support needs;
 - b. EC through Grade 8, high support needs;
 - c. Grade 6 through Grade 12, mild/moderate support needs; and
 - d. Grade 6 through Grade 12, high support needs.
2. Current candidates in special education seeking certification must pass two examinations to receive a license: *Special Education EC–12* and *Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR)*. Excluded are candidates in the areas of *visually impaired* and *deaf and hard of hearing*. Depending on the certification area, a content test may be required as well. The forum participants recommended the following changes:
 - a. Candidates would need to pass a *Special Education Foundations* exam, which would require, among other pedagogical competencies, a demonstration of foundational reading and mathematics skills.
 - b. Teacher candidates would no longer be certified by the passage of an exam alone. The forum participants recommended that teacher candidates seeking initial licensure be required to complete coursework in order to take the certification exam (i.e., *Special Education Foundations*). Candidates would also be required to pass a content examination that corresponds with their grade-band choice. Passage of both exams and corresponding coursework would provide the candidate with an intern license.
 - c. After intern educators have taught for a year, they would take the *Special Education Focus* exam, which would correspond with their desired grade-band and disability level of support. Successful completion of this examination would result in a standard teaching license.

- d. Teachers wishing to seek a supplemental special education certification would need to complete continuing professional education (CPE) and pass the *Special Education Foundations* exam, a content test that corresponds with their chosen grade-band, and the *Special Education Focus* exam.
3. Presently, candidates wishing to seek certification in the area of *visually impaired*, a supplemental certification, must complete two examinations. There were no recommended changes.
4. Currently, candidates wishing to seek initial or supplemental certification in *deaf and hard of hearing* are required to complete three examinations. The forum recommended only that candidates wishing to seek this certification would not do so by examination alone and would be required to complete either coursework (initial certification) or CPE (supplemental certification) as well.
5. Currently, there were no requirements listed for candidates wishing to seek certification in *deaf-blindness*. The forum participants recommended that *deaf-blind* be a supplemental certificate that would combine coursework and a required exam.



Background and Methodology

There are approximately five million students served by Texas' public schools. Of those five million, 9.23% are students with disabilities. The majority of students with disabilities fall into three disability categories: specific learning disabilities (32%), speech and language impairment (20%), and other health impairment (14%). Students with disabilities represent a diverse group of learners and are served both in the general education classroom through inclusion-based services and in resource rooms. However, the achievement gap continues to persist between students with disabilities and their same-aged peers in reading and mathematics and across grades. Compounding the problem is the low number of qualified special education teachers. While the numbers of students in special education increased by 5.7% from 2014 to 2017, the number of certified special educators decreased by 1% during the same period. TEA has identified teacher preparation as a possible lever to increase student achievement. A change in teacher preparation would, in effect, compel a change in licensure and certification. TEA, along with members of the Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), conducted a series of forums with stakeholders in special education to examine the current certification requirements in Texas. The forum participants were charged with reconceptualizing special education certification to better serve students, better prepare teachers, and respond to the teacher shortage in special education.

Participants

TEA reached out to several special education organizations and associations in order to recruit forum participants and ensure a diverse group of stakeholders to provide recommendations. TEA extended the invitation to the following organizations, associations, and stakeholders: TEA representatives; iTeach; education service center liaisons from Regions 5, 13, and 20; Sam Houston State University; Texas Tech University; Stephen F. Austin State University; the University of Texas (UT) Arlington and UT Austin; Texas A&M University; Texas State University; Huston-Tillotson University; teachers from Teach Plus, including special education teachers representing each of the disability categories (i.e., learning disabilities, emotional disorders, autism, deaf and hard of hearing/visual impairment, deaf-blind, intellectual disabilities, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder) and a representative from the preschool program for children with disabilities; Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education members,

including a paraprofessional, counselor, diagnostician, licensed specialist in school psychology, special education administrator, district special education administrator, district human resources director, superintendent, and school board member; and three parent representatives from advocacy groups. Overall, 31 participants were recruited, and they represented a diverse group of stakeholders, from superintendents to parents. (A full list of participants is shown on the last page of this report.)

Data collection

Data were collected from five forum sessions (three in-person and two virtual sessions) as well as from pre- and post-work that members completed. Post-work often included having forum participants engage with their school and community members to continue to gather more diverse stakeholder feedback.

Opening webinar. In the opening webinar, participants were introduced to each other and oriented to the current educational climate and certification requirements in Texas.

Forum 1. Forum 1 was in person and focused on special education certification. The guiding question that participants grappled with was: *What is the vision for the exemplar beginning special education teacher, and which certification options support that vision?* As part of their post-work, participants were asked to interview people from their school districts and communities about special education certification. A survey was sent out and collected to capture information related to the subsequent interviews.

Forum 2. From the post-work in Forum 1, the survey results revealed that 46% of respondents preferred a certification structure that allowed for both grade-banded and disability-specific certification. Forum 2 then asked participants to consider personnel and staffing issues in light of the proposed certification recommendations. The guiding questions were: *How do potential special education certificates affect personnel and staffing? After educators receive their initial certification, how can continuing professional education (CPE) be structured to ensure continuous development of best practices?*

Forum 3. Forum 3 asked participants to evaluate CPE and certification by exam. The guiding question for the in-person forum was: *How should the current rules for certification by exam be adjusted for the recommended SPED certification?* Post-work required forum participants to share the proposed certification recommendations with their home and school community members. As with the first forum, participants received a survey in order to capture information obtained through those interviews.

Closing webinar. In the closing webinar, the final list of recommendations was reviewed by the forum facilitators. Participants had the opportunity to discuss at length the potential benefits and unintended consequences of and unanswered questions about each set of recommendations.



Current Texas Certification Requirements

Initial teacher candidates in special education

Special education teacher candidates who wish to seek initial certification can do so by being admitted to an educator preparation program (EPP) or by passing a subject matter test called the *Pre-Admission Content Test (PACT)*. Once teacher candidates in an EPP have completed their coursework, they take the *Special Education: EC–12* certification examination. Candidates who pass receive an intern or probationary certificate, which allows them to be a teacher of record or case manager. Intern teachers must then take and pass the *PPR* examination to receive their

standard teaching certificate. This standard certificate allows teachers to educate students in special education in Grades EC–12.

Supplemental, alternative, or post-baccalaureate pathways

Educators licensed in other disciplines who wish to seek a special education certification as a supplemental certificate, alternative certificate, or post-baccalaureate can either pass the *Special Education: EC–12* or complete the appropriate coursework to be admitted. The teacher candidates are then required to complete the *PPR* examination. Teacher candidates who pass the *PPR* receive a standard certificate (if they have finished all the required coursework) or a probationary certificate (if they have not completed the coursework). If a special education candidate is already assuming a teaching position that requires a content test, the candidate will need to complete the corresponding examination as well.

Teacher candidates in *visually impaired*

Candidates wishing to seek certification in *visually impaired* must seek supplemental certification to be licensed and must complete two examinations: the *Visually Impaired Texas Examination of Educator Standards (TExES)* and either the *183 Braille TExES* or the *283 Braille TExES*.

Teacher candidates in deaf and hard of hearing

Candidates wishing to seek initial certification in *deaf and hard of hearing* are required to complete three examinations: the *181 Deaf and Hard of Hearing TExES*; the *072 Texas Assessment of Sign Communication (TASC)* or the *073 Texas Assessment of Sign Communication-American Sign Language (TASC-ASL)*; required for assignment but not for certification); and the *160 PPR EC-12 TExES*.



Proposed Certification Requirements

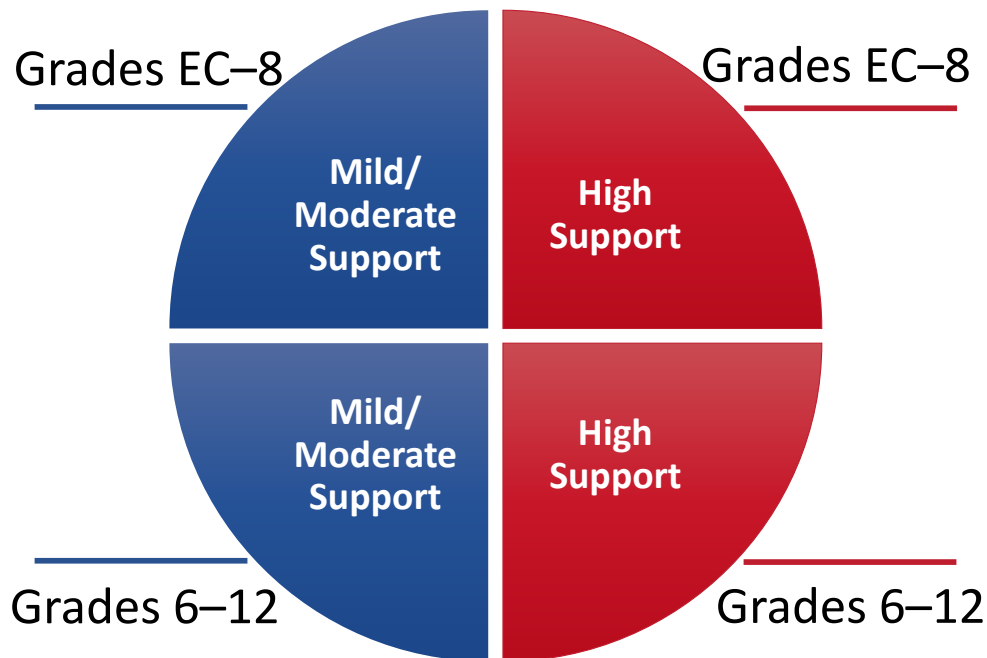
Grade banding and level of student support

Exhibit 1 provides an overview of the certification requirements proposed by the forum participants. Instead of the current certification for special educators (which covers Grades EC–12), the forum participants recommended that certification be offered in specific grade bands and disabilities, which would result in four certification areas. As noted in the summary, all certification areas (initial and supplemental) would require coursework or CPE and the passage of a set of required examinations.

Benefits of the proposed reconceptualization: grade bands and level of student support. After implementation of the recommended changes, special education teacher candidates

- will receive more specific preservice preparation for their grade band and level of student support and therefore will be better equipped to serve a student's needs and
- will receive professional development in their chosen area of certification by completing both coursework or CPE and a series of examinations, as a candidate's completion of an examination would no longer be sufficient for certification.

Exhibit 1. Proposed Certification Areas



Concerns about the proposed reconceptualization: Grade bands and level of student support. Forum participants noted the following concerns:

- More specificity in certification may unintentionally perpetuate the special educator teacher shortage.
- More specificity may lead to hiring challenges, especially in districts that historically struggle with finding qualified special educators.
- Forum participants felt that one *EC–Grade 12* certification could meet the needs of students who require a high level of support. This was recommended because of the similar academic needs of students who require high-level support.
- EPPs will need to deal with potentially smaller numbers in programs, which could be difficult given the institutional requirements for minimum enrollment numbers.
- Adjustments may need to be made to the Accountability System for Educator Preparation to incorporate flexibility and exceptions for EPPs.
- The current implementation timeline will not allow larger institutions sufficient time to develop and receive approval for new coursework.
- The state had seven certifications in the 1980s and 1990s, which were phased out in favor of the current *EC–Grade 12* certification. What reasons were given for this change, and what implications might they have for the current proposal?

“By narrowing the grade level certification, teachers will be able to put more emphasis on studies for the grade levels they want to teach. By being disability-specific certified it will allow teachers to be more knowledgeable in the various disabilities.”

– Forum participant

- The certification process might be simpler if, like other states, Texas required a master's degree for special education certification.
- CPE requirements and demand will largely increase. How will those be monitored?



Initial

Proposed Required Examinations

In addition to the proposed grade-band and disability-specific certification areas, the forum participants also recommended a new set of required examinations. Exhibit 2 displays the proposed changes. As noted, teacher candidates (excluding candidates in *visually impaired*, *deaf and hard of hearing*, and *deaf-blind*) would complete two tests before receiving initial certification:

- the Special Education Foundations examination and
- a core subject examination.

The Special Education Foundations examination is recommended to include foundational pedagogy for special educators as well as content knowledge of the science of teaching reading and the foundations of numeracy. Additionally, teacher candidates would need to complete a *core subject* examination for their area of certification. Examination choices would include these:

- EC through Grade 6 core subjects
- Grade 4 through Grade 8 core subjects
- Grade 7 through Grade 12 mathematics
- Grade 7 through Grade 12 English language arts
- Grade 7 through Grade 12 other core subject

After one year of initial certification, teachers would complete another examination (i.e., the *Special Education Focus test*). For this examination, teachers would choose the test that corresponded with their chosen area of assignment (EC–8 mild/moderate, EC–8 high needs, 6–12 mild/moderate, or 6–12 high needs).

For teacher candidates in both *visually impaired* and *deaf and hard of hearing*, there were no recommended changes to their examinations.

Exhibit 2. Proposed Examinations for Certification Areas

Before entering the classroom:	After entering the classroom:
<p>(Two tests)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education Foundation examination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Would have foundational components • Core subjects test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Must demonstrate knowledge of core subjects for area of assignment – Could be EC–6 core subjects, 4–8 core subjects, or 7–12 math or 7–12 English language arts 	<p>(One test)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education focus test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Teacher chooses one of the four foci <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » EC–8 mild/moderate » EC–8 high needs » 6–12 mild/moderate » 6–12 high needs

Supplemental

Teachers wishing to add a supplemental certification in any area (*special education, visually impaired, or deaf and hard of hearing*) would need to complete the appropriate CPE before taking the required examinations. For teacher candidates in *deaf-blind*, it was recommended that a new examination would be required that corresponds with the new recommended supplemental certification.

Benefits of new examinations

The forum participants saw several benefits of the recommended examination structure. First, they agreed that the *Special Education Foundation* examination should include foundational reading and mathematics skills content. This choice will undoubtedly encourage EPPs to educate all special education candidates, regardless of grade band, in essential reading and mathematics concepts, which the forum participants saw as directly correlated with the ability of educators to teach learners with special needs effectively. Additionally, participants saw the benefits of having teachers complete the *Special Education Focus* test after their first year of teaching. This would allow a teacher to be hired in any one of the grade-banded or specific disability categories before taking the specific foci examination.

Concerns about new examinations

The most prevalent concern about implementing the proposed new examinations centered around the expense of completing multiple examinations, which forum participants felt might dissuade candidates from entering the field and might adversely impact potential teachers from low-income and minority families. To a lesser degree, there were questions regarding already licensed special educators and how to ensure that they would be “grandfathered in” and not be required to complete the new examinations.

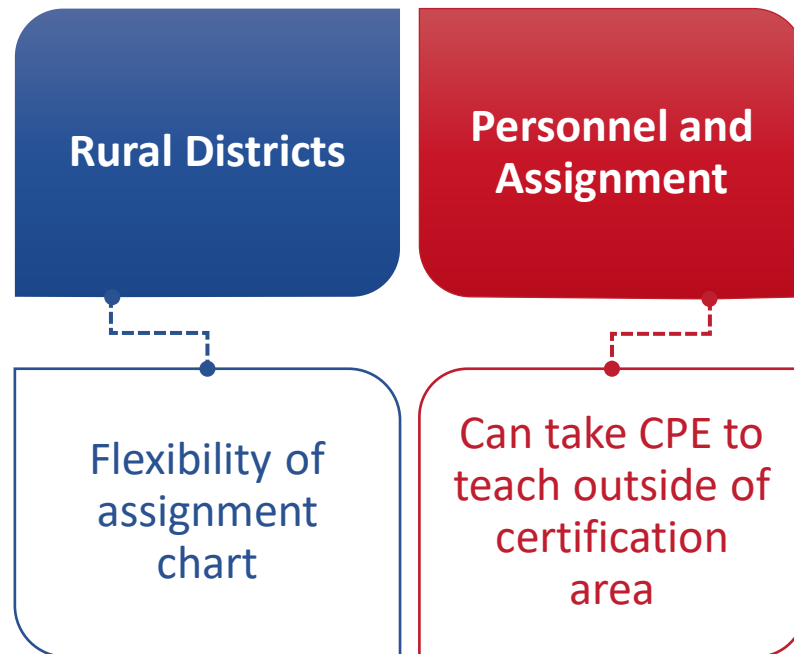
**Flexibility and Exceptions**

Forum participants recognized a need to allow flexibility and exceptions within the new certification structure to provide more targeted teacher preparation while providing districts the flexibility to hire the best candidate for any position. Exhibit 3 shows the two areas where flexibility was recommended: (1) rural districts and (2) personnel and assignment.

Flexibility is recommended for rural districts because they often

- have persistent teacher shortages in special education or
- do not have enough students in special education to necessitate educators with certification in specific areas.

Exhibit 3. Areas Where Flexibility Is Recommended



For rural schools, the forum participants recommended flexibility in the teacher assignment and hiring processes. They maintained that educators filling special education positions in rural schools should still continue to pursue proper certification and will be able to do so through both CPE and the passage of appropriate examinations.

The forum participants also recommended that districts be given flexibility when an educator does not possess the specific certification for a grade band and level of support that aligns with the current needs of the school. It was recommended that if a teacher's certifications do not apply to 80% or more of the students served, then that teacher would have one year to acquire the correct certifications through CPE and the required examinations.

Flexibility and exceptions will allow teacher certification requirements to be more specific while still meeting the needs of Texas' diverse districts. The forum participants also noted the need for a state CPE structure in order to maintain integrity and to efficiently respond to the needs of both teachers and districts.



Defining Mild, Moderate, and High Needs

The proposed certification structure allows for specificity not only of grade band but also of specific disabilities. Teacher candidates would choose their desired student support level, but significant discussion was given to how students would be categorized within this proposed structure (Exhibit 4).

The levels of support would not be based on federal definitions of high-incidence and low-incidence disabilities but would be student dependent and based on need. The forum participants recommended that the levels of support be determined by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee through the creation of a guidance tool or rubric.

A rubric could be created for each disability category to help synthesize a student’s needs and present level of functioning. Categories could include academics, behavior/social skills, physical ability, adaptive behavior, accommodations/modifications, and the instructional setting.

Although this rubric could be created for each disability category, it also could be used in conjunction with other tools to help guide the committee in determining the student’s level of support. Other data sources could include parent input, teacher input/observations, student self-assessment, level of services, full individual and initial evaluation (FIE), or functional behavior assessment (FBA) and behavior intervention plan (BIP) data.

Exhibit 4. Categories of Information for Determining a Student’s Level of Support

Rubric	Other Data Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academics • Behavior and social skills • Physical ability • Adaptive behavior • Accommodations and modifications • Instructional setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent input • Teacher input and observations • Student self-assessment • Level of services • FIE • FBA/BIP data

Benefit of guidance tool or rubric

The participants recommend that having a tool would provide structure and guidance in the decision-making process. The rubric or tool would consider many facets of the student’s life and require parent input.

Concerns about guidance tool or rubric

The ARD committee could misidentify the level of student support needed and provide a potentially adverse educational experience for that child. Additionally, the participants noted that students could have a spectrum of needed supports and may not clearly fit into the designations of mild, moderate, or high needs. Last, the participants feared that eventually the level of support could become tied to coding within the state and ultimately to funding.

Summary

Improving student outcomes in Texas will require changing how preservice teachers are prepared and thus how they are certified. The forum participants have provided a set of recommendations that aim to

- keep students first,
- prepare special educators for authentic practices to the greatest extent possible through specificity in certification,
- increase long-term retention of special educators,
- allow flexibility and exceptions when appropriate, and
- require new examinations that would impact how EPPs prepare teacher candidates.

There are several benefits to be gained from this new certification structure but also concerns and unanswered questions. The forum participants urge the State Board of Educator Certification to consider all the information in this brief before making a decision.

Special Education Policy Forum Participants

Name	Role	Organization	Region
James Anderson	Campus special education administrator	Magnolia ISD	6
Janie Baszile	Teacher 6–8	Galena Park ISD	4
Debra Bauer	Director of Special Programs	Goliad ISD	3
Jessica Beaty	Teacher EC–5	Cypress-Fairbanks	4
Brenda Benavides	Special Education Coordinator	United ISD	1
Glenna Billingsley	EPP	Texas State	13
Vicki Brantley	Human Resources director	Region 8 ESC	8
Beth Brockman	Assistant superintendent for employee services	Plano ISD	10
Leah Cloes	Teacher 9-12	Fort Worth ISD	11
Rachel Collins	Teacher EC–12	Round Rock ISD	13
Glenda Cook	Teacher EC–5	Poteet ISD	20
Nacona David	EPP	Region 20 ESC	20
Maria Faqrer	EPP	Relay	20
Kami Finger	District special education director	Lubbock ISD	17
Melissa Fogarty	EPP	Texas A&M University	6
Erica Garza	EPP	Region 13 ESC	13
Ambra Green	EPP	The University of Texas at Arlington	11
Demetrius Hicks	Teacher 6–12	Yes!Prep	20
Diann Huber	EPP	iTeach	11

Name	Role	Organization	Region
Jacqueline Light	Counselor	Ector County ISD	18
Heather Malcolm	Teacher 9–12	Northside ISD	20
Chris Masey	Parent	N/A	13
Toni Miller	Dyslexia coordinator	Kemp ISD	10
Vickie Mitchell	EPP	Sam Houston State University	6
Claire Romero	General education bilingual teacher EC–5	Austin ISD	13
Diana Serrano	Parent	N/A	19
Heather Sheffield	Parent	Eanes ISD	13
Abbey Smith	Teacher EC–2	Pflugerville ISD	13
Katie Tackett	EPP	The University of Texas at Austin	13
Debra Tridico	Teacher 9–12, higher education	Grapevine-Colleyville ISD	11
Annette Unger	Educational diagnostician	Pleasanton ISD	20
Lesley Zentz	Interventionist	Klein ISD	4

Note. EPP = educator preparation program; ESC = education service center; ISD = Independent School District.

ATTACHMENT III**Summary of Public Comments and Responses on Proposed Review of
19 TAC Chapter 292, Early Childhood: PK-3 Framework**

Comment: An individual suggests that the framework should include language regarding anti-bias and the development of a child's identity as it relates to race and ethnicity.

Response: TEA staff acknowledges the commenters' concern and suggestion and provides the following clarification. These points are critical and already addressed in the draft framework descriptive statements below. Further specificity will be incorporated into the test item specifications.

- Demonstrate knowledge of strategies and practices that acknowledge and respect diversity (e.g., cultural, economic, linguistic) and support inclusion in order to promote students' overall development and learning, including understanding of the benefits of primary and secondary languages and bilingualism to learning.
- Recognize the role personal bias plays in potential learning expectations for students in order to promote safe, positive, and supportive interactions and learning environments for all students.
- Demonstrate knowledge of activities, approaches, and resources that encourage and support exploration and engagement and promote a positive disposition toward learning for all students.

Comment: An individual suggests that the framework should specify that a teacher must be able to read simple graphs that represent quantitative data.

Response: TEA staff acknowledges the commenters' concern and suggestion and provides the following clarification. These points are critical and already addressed in the draft framework descriptive statement below. Further specificity will be incorporated into the test item specifications.

- Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of types of systematic observation and documentation (e.g., anecdotal notes, checklists, data collection) and the ability to use these processes and procedures to gain insight into students' development, strengths, needs, and learning

Comment: An individual suggests that Competency 003 Oral Language should strongly emphasize that vocabulary is an essential component of oral language.

Response: TEA staff acknowledges the commenters' concern and suggestion and provides the following clarification. These points are critical and already addressed in the draft framework descriptive statement. Further specificity will be incorporated into the draft framework descriptive statement as follows:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the essential role of vocabulary in supporting students' oral language development, reading comprehension, and ability to engage in self-sustained reading, including the interrelationships between vocabulary knowledge, reading achievement, and overall academic achievement.

Comment: An individual suggests that Competency 005, E. “Demonstrate understanding of the role of alphabet knowledge in reading development (e.g., recognizing that phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge are key predictors of early reading success)” be revised to clarify that phonemic awareness and letter-sound awareness are key predictors of decoding, not only early reading success. Additionally, the section on word-reading should emphasize that decoding and word-reading skills are critically important in early reading instruction.

Response: TEA staff acknowledges the commenters’ concern and suggestion and provides the following clarification. Further specificity will be incorporated into the draft framework descriptive statement as follows:

- Demonstrate understanding of the role of alphabet knowledge in reading development (e.g., recognizing that phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge are key predictors of early reading success because phonemic awareness skills, letter recognition, and letter-sound correspondence provide the foundation for decoding and spelling development).

Comment: An individual suggests that Competency 008 Reading Fluency clarify that reading fluency is about reading with speed and accuracy with little conscious effort (automaticity). The framework should also emphasize that fluency is necessary for reading comprehension.

Response: TEA staff acknowledges the commenters’ concern and suggestion and provides the following clarification. These points are critical and already addressed in the draft framework descriptive statement below. Further specificity will be incorporated into the test item specifications.

- Demonstrate knowledge of research-based strategies and best practices for promoting students’ reading rate and automaticity in order to enhance reading fluency and comprehension (e.g., engaging students whose decoding skills are not yet automatic in oral reading or whisper reading with teacher monitoring for accuracy and feedback; engaging students whose decoding skills are accurate and automatic in silent reading with accountability for comprehension).

Comment: An individual suggests that Competency 009 Reading Comprehension should emphasize that vocabulary is an essential component of reading comprehension. Additionally, the framework should mention that students’ knowledge (i.e., background knowledge, world knowledge) is linked to vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Response: TEA staff acknowledges the commenters’ concern and suggestion and provides the following clarification. Further specificity will be incorporated into the draft framework descriptive statement as follows:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the essential role of vocabulary in supporting students’ oral language development, reading comprehension, and ability to engage in self-sustained reading, including the interrelationships between vocabulary knowledge, reading achievement, and overall academic achievement.