Florida Educator Certification

Overview

*Draft – Not Official*
Licensure Structure

**Florida Approach:** K-12 non-categorical license for ESE teachers.

### Specifics

**Additional Certification Options**
- Hearing Impaired (grades K-12)
- Speech-Language Impaired (grades K-12)
- Visually Impaired (grades K-12)

### Special Notations

- Endorsements on to an existing ESE certification: *Autism Spectrum Disorders, Orientation and Mobility, Prekindergarten Disabilities, or Severe or Profound Disabilities.*

### Stakeholder Identified Pros

- The certification allows flexibility with job opportunities
- The certification coincides with a Bachelor’s degree rather than requiring a Masters’ degree
- The specialization requirements cover a wide variety of students with disabilities
- It’s good to have an autism endorsement as so many children being identified as being on the spectrum
- ESE K-12 offers school employers flexibility in assigning special educators in a variety of settings
- The broad ESE K-12 certification structure seems to be in alignment with the fact that most students with special needs are now assigned to general education classes
- The four ESE endorsements (ASD, Severe/Profound, PreK, Orient/Mobility) allow for specialization in special needs

### Stakeholder Identified Cons

- The certification is too broad. Teachers are generalists and not specialized in specific areas
- ESE K-12 Subject Area Examination competencies and skills focus on special education strategies and do not include academic area subject content
- Qualification for Elementary classroom teachers requires certification in both Elementary Education K-6 and ESE K-12
- Qualification for middle school teachers requires certification in content area/s and ESE K-12
- Qualification for high school teachers requires certification in content area/s and ESE K-12
- ESE specialization is not assessed by exam for endorsements, endorsements attained only by course completion
- Too many HQ requirements for ESE teachers: There is already a
Disciplines.

- Flexibility of moving teachers to where the need is K-12, inclusion or self-contained.
- Teachers can choose to transfer to work with different populations if they want.
- Specific certifications in physically handicapped requiring specialized knowledge: (i.e., Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired)
- Specific endorsements (i.e., Pre-Kindergarten Disabilities) which require additional courses.

- Easy to obtain ESE certification
- Process for achieving ESE certification is well delineated
- Present programs are producing teachers for a wide range of District needs.

Shortage of ESE teachers and with added certification requirements the need for ESE teachers is becoming critical. State certification ESE or the ESE “umbrella” of areas is really not a valid stand-alone certification for teaching ESE areas because, based on current state and federal requirements, ESE by itself doesn’t allow an ESE teacher to be eligible to teach any content subject area. Even if an ESE teacher meets the ESE certification they also need to meet the federal highly qualified (HQ) teacher standard under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). (Note: This district does not hire ESE teachers specifically for Special Diploma)

- Losing ESE teachers in Gen Ed: The critical shortage of ESE teachers is not only caused by fewer numbers of ESE teachers graduating from colleges of education but also caused by the rigors of ESE teaching, planning, paperwork, direct and indirect financial costs and the teacher’s other outside obligations.
- Easy to obtain ESE certification
- Teaching standard diploma secondary ESE students requires ESE certification + certification on the four content areas based on their teaching assignment. For a self-contained ESE teacher this would mean ESE certification + four content area tests/certification + 300-hour Reading Endorsement + ESOL Endorsement (if there is an English Language Learner in a class). Additionally, if the teaching assignment is Autism, the teachers needs the ASD endorsement which is only attained via college classes. ESE teachers in Hospital Homebound, Dropout Prevention and Juvenile Justice Programs often teach three-four-five content subject areas based on their student population. The negation of MGIC certification further caused ESE teachers to bear the burden of additional testing/certifications.

- Support facilitation not working
- Certification in ESE K-12 too broad- suggest dividing certification into primary and secondary levels with some course differentiation. The broad ESE K-12 certification structure seems to be in alignment with the fact that most students with special needs are now assigned to general education classes.

- Losing ESE teachers in Gen Ed: The critical shortage of ESE teachers is...
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<tr>
<th>Considerations:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Has there been any thought to breaking up the ESE certification into K-4, 5-9, and 10-12 or even ESE adult certification for those who want to be trained to work with adults who have disabilities?</td>
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<td>• In addition to Autism, there should also be Asperger’s Syndrome endorsement</td>
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<td>• The Gifted Endorsement (Rule 6A-4.01791 FAC) may be added to any academics certification coverage <a href="http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/rules/6A-4-01791.asp">http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/rules/6A-4-01791.asp</a></td>
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<td>• Most ESE Endorsements may only be added to ESE certificate subject areas, not to general academic subject areas</td>
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<td>• (EBD Center administrator) I need teachers with specific expertise in behavior management and working with disturbed students.</td>
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<td>• I’d like to see endorsements for in-depth knowledge in different areas of ESE, like autism has. EBD, Behavior Specialist, SLD, InD, Interventionalist/Inclusionist.</td>
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**What questions remain?**
Florida Approach:

Strategy 1: A bachelor's or higher degree with a major in exceptional student education, special education, mental disabilities, specific learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, physically impaired or varying exceptionalities; or

Strategy 2: A bachelor's or higher degree with thirty (30) semester hours in exceptional student education to include the areas specified:

Specifics:

a.) Completion of an approved teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution within this state and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule;

b.) Completion of a teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution outside Florida and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule;

c.) A valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state;

d.) A valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education;

e.) Documentation of two semesters of successful teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution of higher education identified by the Department of Education as having a quality program;

f.) Completion of professional preparation courses as specified in state board rule, successful completion of a professional education competence demonstration program pursuant to paragraph (8)(b), and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule;

g.) Successful completion of a professional preparation alternative certification and education competency program, outlined in paragraph (8)(a); or

h.) Successful completion of an alternative certification program pursuant to s. 1004.85 and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by rule of the State Board of Education.

1012.56 Educator certification requirements:  [http://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2013/1012.56](http://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2013/1012.56)

Special Notations

**Stakeholder Identified Pros**

- A pro to the credentials required of ESE teachers is subject matter competency but passing a subject area exam does not necessarily correlate to a highly effective, efficient ESE

**Stakeholder Identified Cons**

- Teachers of record with only ESE certification do not meet the conditions of a highly qualified teacher
- Too many HQ requirements for ESE teachers; There is already a shortage of ESE teachers and with added certification requirements the need for ESE
Administrators can easily recommend staff to take ESE test if they anticipate need for more ESE teachers on staff.

- Losing ESE teachers in Gen Ed: The critical shortage of ESE teachers is not only caused by fewer numbers of ESE teachers graduating from colleges of education but also caused by the rigors of ESE teaching, planning, paperwork, direct and indirect financial costs and the teacher’s other outside obligations.

- Administrators can easily recommend staff to take ESE test if they anticipate need for more ESE teachers on staff.

- Support facilitation not working.

- Lack of knowledge in subject matter; SPED teachers should also have certification/degree in a general education subject area.

- SPED teachers only require a certification; mandate should include degree in SPED.

- The certification does not guarantee to the teacher is competent in the content area.

Considerations:

- It would be even better if Colleges of Education could offer a K-12 ESE endorsement as well as a certification program as an option Revise Florida’s definition of an HQ ESE teacher to center around strategy, accommodations and inclusion collaboration skills.

- Have the Gen Ed teacher be HQ in subject area, the ESE teacher HQ in delivery strategies and have the two teachers collaborate to co-teach.

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- I believe ESE teachers who teach students on a regular diploma track, should be certified in their subject area with an endorsement in ESE.

What questions remain?
Florida Approach: Foundations in special education, including educational practices and development and characteristics of students with disabilities.

Specifics: Foundations of special education to include educational practices and development and characteristics of children with disabilities;

- Assessment and evaluation to include interpretation, analysis, and application of assessment results and alternate assessment strategies;
- Evaluation of student progress in acquiring, generalizing, and maintaining skills related to participation in educational settings;
- Instructional practices in special education to include selection and implementation of instructional practices and strategies and identification of accommodations and modifications;
- Relevant general education and special skills curricula selection;
- Assessing, designing, and implementing positive behavioral supports;
- Language development and communication skills to include normal sequence of expressive and receptive language development and identification of communication deficits and appropriate interventions;
- Skills to teach interpersonal interactions to include criteria for selecting instructional procedures for teaching personal care, interpersonal skills, self-advocacy skills, and adaptive life skills;
- Transition process to include development of desired postschool outcomes; and
- Effective methods of communication, consultation, and collaboration with students, families, administrators, and other education professionals.


The following are examples of core content competencies summarized from specialization requirements in the state administrative rules:

- Nature of disability including student characteristics, appropriate learning goals, teaching approaches, and environmental arrangements
- Use of assistive and instructional technology
- Behavior management and positive behavior supports
- Assessment and diagnosis of disabilities and disorders
- Formal and informal evaluation techniques
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum, methods, and intervention strategies
- Teaming approaches to facilitate inclusion in appropriate learning environments
- Family systems theory and interaction and multidisciplinary approaches and techniques for serving the child and the family
- Stages and sequences of human development
- Impact of disabilities and biomedical risk factors on learning
- Community resources and service coordination
Transition planning for exceptional populations

https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ChapterHome.asp?Chapter=6a-4

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Considerations

• Need to include RtI related and relevant information
• Revise Florida’s definition of an HQ ESE teacher to center around strategy, accommodations and inclusion collaboration skills.
• Have the Gen Ed teacher be HQ in subject area, the ESE teacher HQ in delivery strategies and have the two teachers collaborate to co-teach.
• Add ESE endorsement for General Education Certified teachers like ESOL. ESE has to have Gen Ed already.
• Add Inclusion and Collaboration to present FEAPs.
• Gen Ed teachers are only required to have 20 hrs. of ESE Training, while ESE is expected to be qualified in ESE and Gen Ed Content area.
• ESE teachers need to be strategists and support the core instruction, not core content experts, which is the role of the general education teacher. The requirement to become the expert in all core topics is burdensome.
• Taking into consideration that schools across the state are embracing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework/principles, we should consider adding a 3-6 semester hours that addresses this area including the technology component for all certifications and endorsements (ESE & General)
• Neither plan specifically addresses understanding & use of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports in both general & special education.

What questions remain?

• Why are my ESE teachers required to be competent in academic subjects, but the Gen Ed teachers are not required to pass competency tests in the ESE strategies?
• Add ESE endorsement for General Education Certified teachers like ESOL. ESE has to have Gen Ed already.
• Where does content knowledge development happen?
**Florida Approach:** Demonstrate knowledge through the following assessments: Mastery of General Knowledge, Mastery of Subject Knowledge, and Mastery of Professional Preparation and Education Competence. FTCE – Florida

- 5 year professional certificate
- 3 year Temporary certificate

### Specifics

**What are the requirements for a Professional Certificate?**

To hold a five-year renewable Professional Certificate the applicant must:

- demonstrate **Mastery of General Knowledge**,  
- demonstrate **Mastery of Subject Knowledge** for a requested subject,  
- demonstrate **Mastery of Professional Preparation and Education Competence**,  
- obtain instructional employment in Florida, and

**Certificate renewal:**

- Six (6) semester hours of college credit must be earned during each renewal period to renew your certificate. See information below on *Acceptable College Credit Equivalencies for Renewal, Appropriate Topics for Renewal Credit*, and retaining all subjects on your certificate.  
- Renewal requirements must be completed during the last validity period of the Professional Certificate and prior to expiration of the Professional Certificate. It is the responsibility of each applicant to obtain current information regarding renewal requirements from the employing school district or Bureau of Educator Certification.

**Appropriate Topics for Renewal Credit**

- Teaching students with disabilities (SWD)  
- Exceptional student education  
- Content specific to the subject area(s)  
- Methods or education strategies specific to the subject area(s)  
- Methods of teaching reading and literacy skills acquisition  
- Computer literacy, computer applications, or computer education  
- ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)  
- Drug abuse, child abuse and neglect, or student dropout prevention  
- Training related to the goals of the Florida K-20 System, such as:
## Stakeholder Identified Pros

- Expectations are clear and easy to enforce. Tests are just gatekeepers; principals must interview to see if this is a good teacher. Tests can’t tell that
- Administrators can easily recommend staff to take ESE test if they anticipate need for more ESE teachers on staff
- Several different ways to obtain certification
- The Certification Exams in place are good to insure state-wide standards and quality

## Stakeholder Identified Cons

- ESE coursework is not required if the student earns a passing score on the ESE Subject Area exam.
- Expectations are clear and easy to enforce. Tests are just gatekeepers; principals must interview to see if this is a good teacher. Tests can’t tell that
- A pro to the credentials required of ESE teachers is subject matter competency but passing a subject area exam does not necessarily correlate to a highly effective, efficient ESE teacher.
- Most alternate certification applicants can pass the ESE and El Ed Subject Area Exams with a little study.
- Administrators can easily recommend staff to take ESE test if they anticipate need for more ESE teachers on staff
- Support facilitation not working
- Lack of practical learning required prior to certification (increase field experience/student teaching hours)
- Out-of-State teachers can get a Florida Certification without doing a Florida teacher training program.
- does not equate to teaching the subject)
- Need greater emphasis on sustainability of evidence-based practices. No present career ladder category in place for master teacher with special diagnostic – prescriptive training to implement these practices in schools (i.e. Masters + 36 credits)
Considerations:

- Many schools have changed the service delivery model for ESE students such as a strategy to help meet the certification and HQ requirements of ESE teacher but is there research that says we are meeting the needs of ESE students with support facilitation model? Doesn’t appear to be here.
- Effective methods of collaboration and planning discussed in current setting allowing for teachers and pre-service teachers the opportunity to acquire experiences prior to taking over a classroom Opportunities to work first-hand with a variety of exceptionalities prior to acquiring a teaching position.
- Improvement in the certification test should include changing current tests to K-5 and 6-12 for mild/moderate/severe exceptionalities
- Add Inclusion and Collaboration to present FEAPs.
- There should be something in place to give these folks more professional support in their daily classroom. Maybe a mentoring program for new ESE teachers should be provided by the state
- Practicum’s that are in the ESE setting Students with Disabilities credit required for certificate renewal by all educators fails to recognize and support the unique role of special educators.
- Certificate reciprocity, particularly for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

What questions remain?

- Why are my ESE teachers required to be competent in academic subjects, but the Gen Ed teachers are not required to pass competency tests in the ESE strategies?