



# Special Education Licensure Reform in Three CEEDAR States: Who? Why? and How?

February 9, 2018  
Council for Exceptional Children Conference

# OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- Learn how three CEEDAR states have approached licensure reform and who they have involved in the process.
- Understand their motivations for making changes.
- Understand the nature of changes states are making and why.
- Learn about the obstacles they encountered and overcame.



# PANEL

**Session Leader:** Paul Sindelar, University of Florida

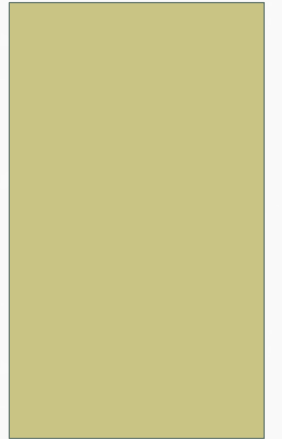
**Panelists:**

- Victoria Graf, Loyola Marymount University
- Lindsey Hayes, American Institutes for Research
- John Fabrizio, Merrimack School District, New Hampshire



THE CALIFORNIA EDUCATION SPECIALIST  
PROGRAM  
**A REFORM PROCESS IN MOTION**

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# AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

## **Motivations for undertaking reform:**

- **Low levels of achievement by students with disabilities prompting concern by State Board of Education, Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and California Department of Education**
- **The Educator Excellence Task Force (2011–12)**
  - **(2012)—Greatness by Design Report:**
    - “Education Specialists are not authorized to teach students who do not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) (i.e., typically developing students) if they do not hold a multiple subjects or single subject credential.”
    - To address these problems, preparation should be restructured in the following way: “All educators (general educators, special educators and bilingual educators) should share a common base of preparation in general education by completing a common set of courses based on a common set of standards prior to specializing.”



# AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS (CONTINUED)

- **Teacher Preparation Advisory Panel (2012–13):**
  - Modifications to the general education preliminary teacher preparation program standards were identified as the highest priority for implementation. The general education program standards and Teaching Performance Expectations were revised to ensure that teacher candidates were being prepared to teach a diverse range of learners.
  - This work is reflected in the current version of the Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Program Standards (2015) and Teaching Performance Expectations (2016).

# PROCESS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

## **Statewide Special Education Task Force (2015):**

- Educator preparation and professional learning identified that general education and special education programs should contain a common foundation in 14 specified areas and provide candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate their competence in these areas using evidence-based practices.
- **National Governors Association Grant (December 2015)**
- **Preliminary Education Specialist Work Group (2016–17):**
  - Proposed Education Specialist Program Standards and Teaching Performance Expectations

# RECURRING THEMES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER PREPARATION IN CALIFORNIA

- **Based on the series of reform efforts described and the various work that was conducted by panels and work groups, several themes have emerged:**
  - All teachers to share a common base of preparation;
  - Candidate fieldwork experience to occur early and often and be rich and robust;
  - Special education teachers to have clinical practice in both general education settings and special education settings;
  - Both general education and education specialist candidates to be better prepared to address the instructional needs of all students; and
  - Preparation for education specialists, as well as general education teachers, that is not so broad that it lacks the specific knowledge needed to effectively teach students with disabilities.



# DIRECTIONS FOR CERTIFICATION REDESIGN

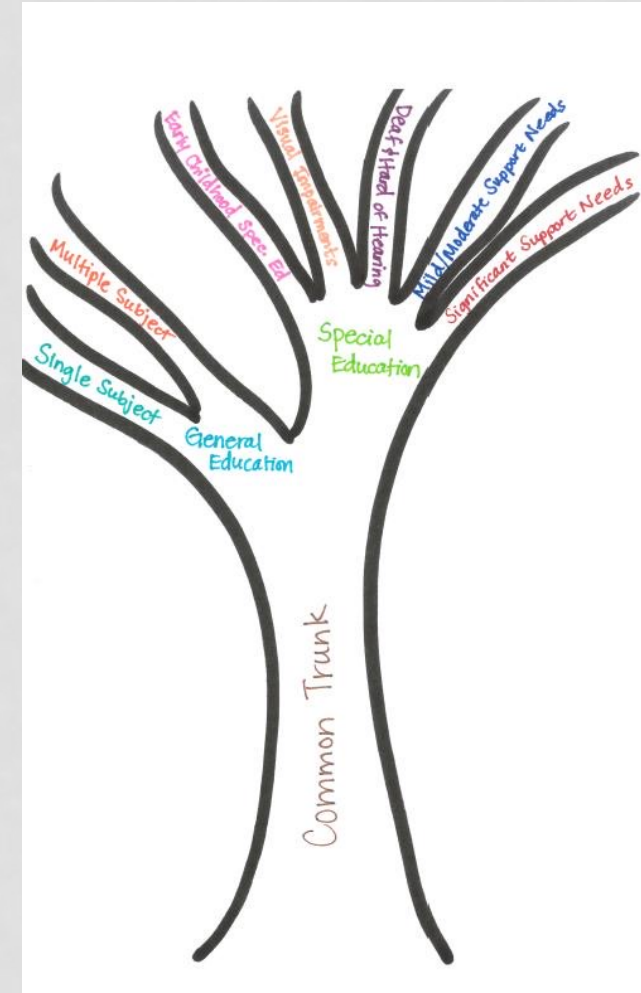
- **Recommendations to maintain stand-alone credentials for Visual Impairment, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) were presented for consideration and were adopted.**
- **The Commission also expanded the authorization of the ECSE credential to include kindergarten rather than restricting it to birth to preschool.**

## AREAS YET TO BE DECIDED

- **Two options for a credential structure were presented for Commission consideration:**
  - **Option One** proposed that the Commission adopt a single cross-categorical K–22 Education Specialist credential that would address both mild/moderate and moderate/severe student needs.
  - **Option Two** proposed that the Commission adopt a credential that was differentiated by grade bands (K–8 and Grade 6–age 22) at the lower level of intensity (currently known as mild/moderate) and a single K – 22 credential for students with the most significant needs (currently known as a moderate/severe).

# POSSIBLE CREDENTIAL STRUCTURE

- **Obstacles and strategies:**
  - States vary in terms of structure
  - Inconsistent research outcomes
  - Varying perspectives on need for reform
  - Teacher shortage
  - Role of multi-tier systems of support (MTSS)
  - CEEDAR
- **Current status of reform**



# LICENSURE REFORM IN ILLINOIS

## **Technical Assistance Blueprint Licensure and Certification Goal:**

Analyze current structure and generate recommendations for special education endorsements inclusive of initial, Learning Behavior Specialist II, Director of Special Education, early childhood special education, and subsequent endorsements, taking into consideration national standards for educator preparation and student learning, national practices, and relevant research.



# WHY?

- Desire to examine whether the current PK–21 Learning Behavior Specialist I endorsement is meeting the needs of students and educators.
- Current endorsement system was implemented in 2001 as a result of the *Corey H.* case.
- Need for transparency, stakeholder involvement, and documentation of due diligence.





# WHO?

- CEEDAR Center
- Illinois State Board of Education
- Illinois State University
- Loyola University Chicago
- National Louis University
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Eastern Illinois University
- Illinois Principals Association
- Illinois Association of School Administrators
- Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education
- Illinois Parent Teacher Association
- Illinois State Advisory Council
- Illinois Education Association
- Illinois Federation of Teachers
- Illinois Association of School Boards
- Illinois Association of Private Special Education Centers
- Illinois School Psychologist Association
- Parent Training and Information Center



# HOW?

Step	Description	Date
1. Explore key features of a comprehensive licensure system.	Build background knowledge of licensure and certification systems.	Spring– Summer 2015
2. Evaluate potential licensure approaches.	Use the Licensure Features Facilitation Tool as a starting point to evaluate potential approaches within the state context.	Fall 2015
3. Develop consensus around licensure approaches.	Employ an iterative process to add detail to approaches and achieve consensus.	Spring 2016
4. Draft recommendations.	Ensure that recommendations address a comprehensive system of licensure.	Fall 2016
5. Gather stakeholder feedback.	Seek input from a diverse group of stakeholders.	Spring– Summer 2017
6. Incorporate feedback and finalize recommendations.	Address stakeholder feedback to produce final recommendations.	TBD



# EXAMPLE

Licensure Structure		
<b>Approach #2:</b> Non-categorical license for special education teachers that specifies grade level (e.g., elementary/secondary).		
<p><b><i>What does this approach offer as a solution or means to improve the certification process?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensure structure requires teachers to specialize in a grade level range while still allowing for flexibility in hiring and job placement within that grade level range.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>What are the positive outcomes that result from this approach?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Licensure approach supports more specialized preparation in pedagogical strategies for elementary or secondary learners, taking into account developmental differences and needs.</li> <li>Teachers can be hired and serve within multiple placement and inclusive service delivery models within a grade level range.</li> <li>Districts can be more responsive in assigning teachers according to students' needs within a grade level range.</li> <li>Small and rural districts will benefit from flexibility of teacher placement within a grade level range.</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>What are the potential negative consequences to this approach?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certification is broad, covering all disability categories.</li> <li>License structure does not require teachers to be highly qualified in a subject area. Teachers holding this license are required to be experts across subject areas at the elementary or secondary level and could potentially be placed in a subject area for which they have little or no preparation.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>What are the considerations the team should contemplate with this approach?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What grade level ranges would best serve the needs of Illinois (e.g., elementary/secondary; elementary/middle/high, etc.)?</li> <li>What is the process for a special education teacher who wishes to teach in a different grade level range (e.g., a special education teacher with an elementary license who wants to teach in a secondary grade)?</li> <li>What knowledge in content and pedagogy is missing in the current structure that may be affected by preparation program hour restrictions?</li> <li>Does this certification process lead to improved teacher capacity and student outcomes?</li> <li>Do teacher data and shortage prediction data warrant this approach?</li> </ul>		



# LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS

- **Challenges:**

- Preparation programs feel pressured to cover an expanding range of content within a finite number of credit hours.
- District administrators are facing special education teacher shortages.

- **Solutions:**

- Revising content standards for special educators to prioritize key content and instructional strategies.
- Leveraging field experiences and mentored practice opportunities.
- Rethinking the approach to advanced endorsements.



# STATE LEADERSHIP TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Maintain the structure currently in place for initial endorsement in special education for teachers of students with disabilities ages PK–21 years.
- Revise the Illinois Common Core of Standards for Special Educators and endorsement-specific standard sets to strengthen high-quality preparation for teachers of students with disabilities within the current endorsement structure.
- Revise rules allowing issuance of grade-band limited endorsements to licensed educators.
- Convene a stakeholder group to review the current options to obtain an early childhood special education credential and make recommendations about appropriate routes, standards, and rules to guide preparation in early childhood special education.
- Update requirements for bilingual and English as a Second Language special education credentials.
- Examine requirements and determine incentives for advanced special education endorsements.





## NEXT STEPS

Illinois State Board of Education executive staff are reviewing the recommendations and will determine if amendments will be included when licensure rules are open for revision in spring 2018.



# CEEDAR—NEW HAMPSHIRE



# NEW HAMPSHIRE'S VISION

New Hampshire policy and programs of educator preparation, professional learning, and evaluation ensure that PK–12 students attend schools in which educators apply foundational and specialized expertise to meet the needs of each student, including students with disabilities, ensuring that each student graduates having achieved college, career, and life-ready standards.



# CEEDAR MISSION FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE

To prepare all educators—teachers and building-level leadership—with the foundational and specialized expertise to meet the needs of students with disabilities, we will reform preparation and policy, as needed, and align them with service delivery models at all school levels. We will extend and enhance clinical experiences through reciprocal partnerships with PK–12 schools. We will incorporate evidence-based practices into the content of professional preparation and align it with induction, mentoring, and professional development. To inform preparation program improvement, we also will develop a system of program evaluation that includes PK–12 student outcomes.





## GOAL 3

Develop a comprehensive report from which the Professional Standards Board (PSB) can design clear regulations for special education certification.





# WHY CHANGE THE CURRENT CERTIFICATION STRUCTURE?

- The term *general* in the General Special Education endorsement is too broad to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- There is not a concentration on skill sets at different developmental levels.
- Under the current certification structure, we have not seen improvements in the state performance plan.
- Disability categories of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Emotional Behavior Disorder are on the rise, and our current certification structure does not address this.
- General special education is a critical shortage area because of a lack of reciprocity with neighboring states.
- It is a challenge to make field experiences meaningful and robust when trying to meet the needs of the broad K–12 category.



# GOAL 3 TASK FORCE MEMBERS INCLUDED

- Superintendents of schools
- Special education administrators
- Parents and Parent Information Center
- School principals
- Members of PSB
- Higher education
- Teachers (regular education, special education, English language learners, gifted/talented) and early childhood educators
- Department of Education staff
- NEA—NH
- Special education private providers



# GOAL 3 TEAM PROCESS

- 2 years of development
- 15 monthly leadership meetings
- 5 large group meetings, including a larger stakeholder group
- New Hampshire CEEDAR meetings
- Presentations to the State Commissioner of Education and division directors
- Presentation to the PSB
- Involvement in the PSB subcommittee on General Special Education Rules
- Mandate to reduce options to one



# NEW HAMPSHIRE CERTIFICATION CONSIDERATIONS

## (GOAL 3 TASK FORCE)

### **Approach 1:**

K–12 noncategorical license for special education teachers

### **Approach 2:**

Noncategorical license for special education teachers that specifies grade level (e.g., elementary/secondary)

### **Approach 3:**

Noncategorical license for special education teachers that specifies grade level (e.g., elementary/secondary) and subject area

### **Approach 4:**

Categorical license for special education teachers that specifies the area of disability specialization (e.g., high incidence vs. low incidence, mild/moderate vs. severe/profound, EBD, ID)

### **Approach 5:**

License in special education with a general education subject area

### **Approach 6:**

License in a general education subject area with a special education endorsement

### **Approach 7:**

Every educator with special education endorsement



# RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

## (GOAL 3 TASK FORCE)

1. Maintain current K–12 special education categoricals in Blind and Vision Disabilities (1909) and Deaf and Hearing Disabilities (1910).
2. Maintain current N–3 Early Childhood Special Education endorsement (1912).
3. Replace current K–12 general Special Education endorsement (1900) with:
  - An initial Special Education endorsement differentiated by grade band<sup>a</sup>
  - An initial Special Education endorsement differentiated by grade band<sup>a</sup> and subject area authorization
  - An initial K–12 Special Education endorsement with a subject-area authorization

<sup>a</sup> The task force has not defined what grade bands should be because it is the recommendation that the grade bands be aligned with other endorsement area grade bands. Grade bands could be K–8 and 5–12 or K–6, 6–8, and 9–12.





# RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS CONTINUED

## (GOAL 3 TASK FORCE)

4. Maintain current advanced endorsement categories. Maybe consider adding an additional endorsement in Autism Spectrum Disorder.
5. Update the Ed 500s and Ed 600s to have a more comprehensive scope of special education for all educator endorsements, with a focus on universally designed instruction and MTSS.



# ANALYSIS OF THREE SHORT-LIST OPTIONS

- Why is this approach a good fit for New Hampshire?
- Why should New Hampshire make the change now?
- How would this approach best serve all of our New Hampshire students in general?
- How would this approach best serve our New Hampshire identified students?



# CHALLENGES IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Diversity in our individual district—local control and policy making
- Changing government official and administration
- Financial structure of schools
- Political influence of certification changes
- Goal 3 group presentation to the commissioner
- Presenting to the associations for “buy-in”
- Traditions and values in New Hampshire
- State focus on charters and vouchers



# NEXT STEPS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Continue to answer questions about the process.
- Publicize the work of New Hampshire CEEDAR.
- Work with PSB's subcommittee on general special education rules.
- Present the single option to PSB for approval.
- Once the new standards are approved by PSB, present them to the state school board for final approval.
- Communicate new adopted standards to the associations and stakeholders.



# THEMES ACROSS STATES

- Change was motivated by:
  - Concern for achievement of students with disabilities
  - Dissatisfaction with K–12 generalist license
    - Preparation lacks focus and depth
    - Field experiences not coherent
  - Structural limitations in current designs
- Engaged a broad range of stakeholders
- Recommended actions:
  - Maintaining early childhood, deaf/hard of hearing, and blind/visually impaired distinctions
  - Subdividing generalist license
- Achieved nothing structural
- Thwarted by:
  - Special education teacher shortage trumping all other considerations
  - Varying perspectives on the need to change



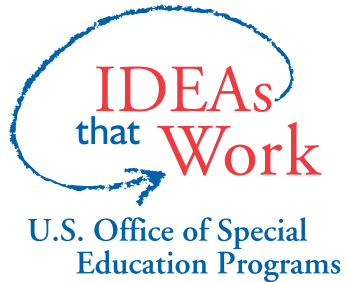


# LESSONS LEARNED

- There's no easy way to reach consensus among stakeholders.
- The current context influences long-term decisions.
- There's no absolute standard to guide decision making.
- Standards may be a more fruitful area for reform than licensure structure.



# DISCLAIMER



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