



ATPE Input to State Board for Educator Certification

Regarding Chapter 231, Special Educator Certification Requirements

July 19, 2024

The **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** appreciates this opportunity to offer written input to the State Board for Educator Certification regarding the revised special educator certification requirements. The task at hand is to properly balance the need for highly qualified educators in the field of special education and the ability to recruit and retain special educators in the subject area competency worksheet that will be replacing HOUSSE.

ATPE supports high standards for special educators. It is important that our special education teachers demonstrate high levels of competency both in the specialized knowledge needed to support students in special education and in specific subject-area content knowledge. With regard to the proposed subject area competency worksheet, we acknowledge that it is and would be extremely difficult to retain existing special educators if they are asked, after years of experience, to suddenly become certified in multiple new areas, depending on their assignment. This would be unfair to ask of experienced educators and would likely lead to an increased shortage in special educators. Thus, we propose the following both short-and long-term solutions:

- The only available generalist certificate currently is EC-6. Short-term, if you have a generalist certification, regardless of grade level, you shouldn't be asked to take another certification exam. A 6th grade English teacher moving to 8th grade, who is EC-6 generalist certified as well as EC-12 special education certified, should not have to take another subject exam.
- Long-term, a 7-12 generalist certificate is an option worth pursuing for special educators who are working inclusion in classrooms with a teacher of record. That would show some general grade-level content knowledge without expecting them to have the same depth of knowledge as someone who specializes in,

say, geometry. We know that these educators are not actively providing instruction in the content area, but rather, providing reinforcement of concepts taught by the teacher of record and ensuring the student's IEP and accommodations are being met. It is important for them to have foundational knowledge, but we shouldn't expect them to be experts in every subject they attend with their students.

With regard to points given within the subject-area competency worksheet, instructional aides should be given credit for their experience and knowledge, but it is important to specify that this is for instructional aides – not uncertified non-classroom aides. Certified instructional aides provide critical support to a special education teacher of record, and this experience should count for something.

For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.