

# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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July 28, 2006

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** District Superintendents

**FROM:** Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D.

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**K12: 2006-104**

**SUBJECT: EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION CERTIFICATE ENDORSEMENTS**

In an effort to increase the number of highly effective teachers and improve student rates of learning, the Florida Department of Education is requiring that selected teachers of students with autism, severe or profound disabilities, and prekindergarten children with disabilities have specialized training. These teachers will be required to obtain an endorsement corresponding with the population they teach. The endorsement for each specific area will be required for specified teachers beginning July 1, 2011.

Specific information regarding each of the endorsement areas can be found in the following attachment.

Should you have any questions regarding the endorsement in autism or the endorsement in severe or profound disabilities, please contact Ms. Sheryl Sandvoss, Program Specialist, Florida Department of Education, by telephone at (850) 245-0478 or by electronic mail at [sheryl.sandvoss@fldoe.org](mailto:sheryl.sandvoss@fldoe.org). Should you have any questions regarding the endorsement in prekindergarten disabilities, please contact Ms. Cathy Bishop, Program Director, Florida Department of Education, by telephone at (850) 245-0478 or by electronic mail at [cathy.bishop@fldoe.org](mailto:cathy.bishop@fldoe.org).

CPY/cb/sst

Attachment

cc: Exceptional Student Education Directors  
Certification Coordinators  
Contact Persons for Programs for Students with Autism  
Contact Persons for Programs for Students with Mental Handicaps  
Contact Persons for Programs for Prekindergarten Children with Disabilities

CHERI PIERSON YECKE, PH.D.  
CHANCELLOR, K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Florida Department of Education  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

**Exceptional Student Education Certificate Endorsements  
Questions and Answers**

Exceptional student education (ESE) teachers who are the primary instructor with more than 50 percent of their students identified as autistic, dual sensory impaired, or profoundly mentally handicapped must meet the appropriate certification requirements **effective July 1, 2011**. Additionally, ESE teachers of prekindergarten children with disabilities must also meet the appropriate certification requirements effective **July 1, 2011**.

The Florida Department of Education is providing the following questions and answers to assist school district personnel in implementing these requirements. ESE teachers should work through their principals, ESE directors, and district personnel offices to determine their need for the endorsement.

**ESE Endorsements**

**1. Is there a test that a teacher can take to add any of the endorsements to their certificates?**

No. There is no test available to add any of the endorsements.

**2. Can a teacher's experience "count" toward obtaining the endorsement?**

Yes, under certain circumstances. Teachers can use appropriate teaching experience to replace some of the coursework that leads to an endorsement. Teachers can use a maximum of two years of experience per endorsement. One year of teaching is equivalent to three credit hours of coursework. The Bureau of Educator Certification makes the determination regarding which course(s) may be waived, based on individual circumstances and teacher transcripts. Districts do not make this determination.

**3. If an individual takes university coursework that corresponds to the content of the State Board rule, but the university does not have an "approved" endorsement program, how is the endorsement awarded?**

The teacher must submit an application for the appropriate endorsement with the transcript for the courses taken. The Bureau of Educator Certification will conduct a course-by-course analysis, as necessary, to review the descriptive course titles or review the description of the courses in question to determine if the courses meet the requirements of the State Board of Education.

**Endorsement in Prekindergarten Disabilities**

**4. Who will be required to have the endorsement in prekindergarten disabilities?**

Beginning in July 1, 2011, teachers certified in any exceptional education field in primary education, and/or early childhood education, and who are teaching either prekindergarten-age children birth through two years or three through five years, for courses numbered 7650030 or

7650130 will be required to obtain the specialization requirement for the prekindergarten disabilities endorsement as described in Rule 6A-4.01792, Florida Administrative Code (FAC.).

This requirement **will not apply** to teachers certified in preschool education (birth through age four years) and/or prekindergarten/primary education (age three years through grade three). **[Note: In the K-12 Memo: 2005-135 Attachment III, dated September 30, 2005, there was an error in the content that addressed the requirements related to course number 7650030, Prekindergarten Disabilities: Age Birth-Two. This current document supersedes the content of that section of the attachment.]**

**5. Is the prekindergarten disabilities endorsement the same as the prekindergarten handicapped endorsement?**

Yes. In 2002, a technical amendment to Rule 6A-4.01792, FAC., deleted the reference to “handicapped” and substituted the term “disabilities.” No content changes to the rule were made. The *Florida Course Code Directory* references both the prekindergarten disabilities endorsement and the prekindergarten handicapped endorsement.

**6. Will the endorsements in autism and/or severe or profound disabilities also be required for prekindergarten teachers who are teaching students with autism or severe or profound disabilities?**

No. The endorsements in autism and severe or profound disabilities will only apply to teachers for grades kindergarten through twelve.

**7. Is there an alternative to the endorsement?**

Yes. As an alternative to getting the endorsement in prekindergarten disabilities, teachers could take the subject area test and receive certification in preschool education (birth through age four years) and/or prekindergarten/primary education (age three years through grade three).

**8. Is information available to help a teacher prepare for these subject area tests?**

Yes. Test preparation guides are available for a nominal fee to assist candidates taking the subject area test in preschool education and/or prekindergarten/primary education. These guides may be accessed online at: <http://www.cefe.usf.edu/Guides.aspx>.

**9. The *Florida Course Code Directory* currently allows considerable flexibility for teachers of prekindergarten children with disabilities when programs are blended with other early childhood programs or when one of the early childhood programs serves as the child’s inclusive placement. Will this continue?**

The *Florida Course Code Directory* provides that when Head Start, the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, Title I preschool classes and/or school readiness classes are “blended” or serve as the inclusive placement for a preschool child with a disability, the teacher may hold a certification as required by **either** the prekindergarten disability program or by the other applicable early childhood program. The endorsement is not required for certification areas identified for Head Start, VPK, Title I, and/or school readiness. In addition, for course number 7650130, the

appointment of a child development associate (CDA or CDA-E) is permitted in accordance with Rule 6A-1.0502, FAC.

While this flexibility is anticipated to continue for the near future, we will periodically re-examine these options. Districts will be provided notice well in advance of any proposed changes to this current flexibility.

**10. What options are available to teachers interested in pursuing the prekindergarten disabilities endorsement?**

Teachers who are not currently endorsed will have the opportunity to participate in district add-on programs (when they are available) or obtain college credit in the appropriate coursework. A number of colleges and universities are developing endorsement programs for implementation and have expanded existing course offerings that satisfy the requirements established in the appropriate State Board of Education rule. Districts can establish an approved program for the endorsement to be offered by the district.

**Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities**

**11. Who will be required to have the endorsement in severe or profound disabilities?**

Beginning **July 1, 2011**, instructors who are hired to teach or who are currently the primary instructor for students in kindergarten through grade 12 and who have more than 50 percent of their students identified as either profoundly mentally handicapped (PMH) or with a dual sensory impairment (DSI) or teach courses in the *Florida Course Code Directory* listed under the “Participatory Levels: 9-12” will need to be certified in an exceptional student education area and have an endorsement in severe or profound disabilities. Rule 6A-4.01793, FAC., *Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities Academic Class*, outlines the requirements for endorsement in severe or profound disabilities.

This requirement **will not apply** to K-12 teachers certified in mentally handicapped, mental retardation or intellectual disabilities.

**12. Is there a test that a teacher can take to add the endorsement in severe or profound disabilities?**

No. There is no test available to add this endorsement.

**13. What options are available to teachers interested in pursuing the endorsement in severe or profound disabilities?**

Teachers who are not currently endorsed will have the opportunity to participate in district add-on programs (when they are available) or obtain college credit in the appropriate coursework. A number of colleges and universities are developing endorsement programs for implementation and have expanded existing course offerings that satisfy the requirements established in the appropriate State Board rule.

Districts can establish and offer an approved program for the endorsement. At the present time, there are no approved district endorsement programs for the endorsement in severe or profound disabilities.

### **Endorsement in Autism**

#### **14. Who will be required to have the endorsement in autism?**

Beginning **July 1, 2011**, instructors who are hired to teach or who are currently the primary instructor for students in kindergarten through grade 12 with more than 50 percent of their students who are identified as autistic will need to be certified in an exceptional student education area and have an endorsement in autism or an endorsement in severe or profound disabilities. Rule 6A-4.01796, FAC., Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Autism - Academic Class, outlines the requirements for the endorsement in autism. Rule 6A-4.01793, FAC., Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities - Academic Class, outlines the requirements for endorsement in severe or profound disabilities.

#### **15. Is there a test that a teacher can take to add the endorsement in autism?**

No. There is no test available to add this endorsement.

#### **16. What options are available to teachers interested in pursuing the endorsement in autism?**

Teachers who are not currently endorsed will have the opportunity to participate in district add-on programs (when they are available) or obtain college credit in the appropriate coursework. A number of colleges and universities are developing endorsement programs for implementation and have expanded existing course offerings that satisfy the requirements established in the appropriate State Board rule. Districts can establish an approved program for the endorsement to be offered by the district. Currently, Miami-Dade County Schools is the only district with an approved endorsement program in autism.

Teachers who are serving as the primary instructor with more than 50 percent of their students identified as autistic have the option of obtaining the endorsement in autism or the endorsement in severe or profound disabilities.