

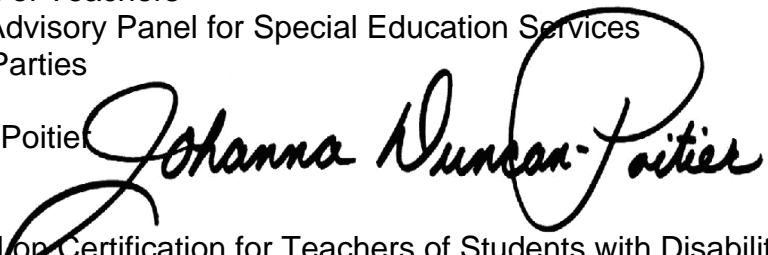


THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK /  
ALBANY, NY 12234

**SENIOR DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION – P-16**  
Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education  
Office of Higher Education

October 20, 2008

**To:** Presidents of Colleges and Universities with Teacher Education Programs  
Deans and Directors of Teacher Education Programs  
New York City Department of Education  
District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Public Schools  
Nonpublic School Superintendents  
Administrators of Charter Schools  
School Personnel Administrators  
New York State United Teachers  
United Federation of Teachers  
Commissioner's Advisory Panel for Special Education Services  
Other Interested Parties

**From:** Johanna Duncan-Poitier 

**Subject:** Modified Proposal on Certification for Teachers of Students with Disabilities

Thank you for your insightful responses to a preliminary proposal to restructure Students with Disabilities teacher certification. Current workforce shortage data indicate that the current certification structure needs to be reviewed and revisions considered to ensure a sufficient supply of special education teachers at the secondary level. At its March 2008 meeting, the Board of Regents discussed your feedback on the proposal and possible next steps. (See <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/2008Meetings/March2008/0308hed2.doc> for the Regents Report.) Since the March Regents meeting, Department staff have met regularly with educational leaders to gain further insight on how the certification structure for special education could be restructured. We now ask for your additional comments on possible further modifications that respond to your feedback and ways in which the original proposal should be adjusted as indicated below.

There is general agreement that reducing the number of certificates from 45 to 3 (i.e., Birth to Grade 3, Grades 1-6 and Grades 7-12) will help address the expected workforce shortages. We have identified additional considerations to further support the sound deployment of certified teachers. These options would help schools that span certification levels (e.g., those that serve students in grades 6 through 8) as well as special

education teachers who accept new assignments in different grades when a critical need exists. We, therefore, seek your comments on the following possible options:

1. **Use of Supplementary Certificates:** a path and process now exists for certified teachers to obtain **supplementary certificates** to teach in subjects or grade levels outside of the areas in which they are already certified. These teachers must meet certain conditions to qualify first for the supplementary certificate, and, as supplementary certificate holders, they must then complete all requirements for initial certification in the new area.

The creation of a **modified** process is being proposed for certified teachers who are seeking a supplementary Students with Disabilities teaching certificate. Such an option has the potential to tap into an existing supply of experienced, certified teachers, with the end result being a well-prepared special education workforce that can be deployed more flexibly. Ultimately, as a requirement of the supplementary certificate process, these educators will earn initial certification in the Students with Disabilities title of their supplementary certificate.

- **Is this approach desirable? If you agree with this approach, please comment on the three supplementary certificate proposals that follow. If you disagree with this approach, please explain.**

#### **Supplementary Certificate Proposal 1:**

A certified **special education teacher** would qualify for a supplementary certificate in another special education grade span by virtue of already being a certified special education teacher.

Example: certified grades 1-6 special educators would qualify for supplementary certificates to teach students with disabilities in grades 7-12 by virtue of their existing special education certification. Those teachers would then have up to three years to complete the necessary coursework for initial special education certification in Grades 7-12.

**Question:** If the Board of Regents decided to modify the existing requirements for these individuals to qualify for an initial certificate to teach students with disabilities in a new grade span, what coursework (and/or other requirements) would those teachers need to complete to earn that initial certificate? **Please consider movement between all three proposed developmental levels in your response** (i.e., Birth to Grade 3, Grades 1-6, and Grades 7-12).

#### **Supplementary Certificate Proposal 2:**

As is currently an option, **general education teachers** would continue to qualify for a supplementary certificate in special education with the completion of **nine credit** hours in special education, among other requirements.

**Question:** If the Board of Regents decided to modify the existing requirements for these general educators to qualify for an initial certificate to teach students with disabilities, what coursework (and/or other requirements) would these teachers need to complete to earn that initial certificate? **Please consider all three proposed developmental levels in your response.**

### **Supplementary Certificate Proposal 3:**

We have heard that K-12 "special subjects" (art, music, etc.) teachers currently face obstacles in attaining Students with Disabilities certification. For example, they may lack a part of the general education academic core required of special education teachers. Pathways for the certification of these teachers also need to be created.

#### **Questions:**

- If the Board of Regents decided to modify the existing requirements for these individuals to transition from being "special subjects" teachers, what coursework (and/or other requirements) would these teachers need to complete to qualify for a supplementary certificate and begin teaching students with disabilities as a special educator?
  - Likewise, as the second step, what additional coursework (and/or other requirements) would these teachers need to complete to move from a supplementary to an initial special education certificate? **Please consider all three proposed developmental levels in your response.**
2. **Academic Core:** for grades 7-12 teachers of students with disabilities, the Department's refined proposal recommends collaborative support from general education teachers and an interdisciplinary academic content core. We propose that this interdisciplinary content core would consist of a minimum of nine credit hours in each of the four core academic subjects of English, social studies, mathematics and the sciences. Of the nine credits, three credits may be in the teaching of that academic content area. Colleges will also be encouraged to advise students that, with the addition of a major or minor in a core academic subject, they could be in a better position to meet the definition of "highly qualified" under NCLB by pursuing the appropriate Content Specialty Test in the appropriate subject area.

The Department would also continue to allow colleges to register programs leading to dual certification as a 7-12 teacher of students with disabilities and as a teacher of a 7-12 academic content area.

- **Is this approach desirable? If you agree with this approach, please respond to the question that follows. If you disagree with this approach, please explain.**

**Question:** If the Board of Regents decided to modify the existing requirements for special education certification at the grades 7-12 level, what should the interdisciplinary academic content core contain?

Thank you again for the feedback that informed these refined proposals. We encourage you to discuss the modified proposals and the questions included here with your colleagues and **provide feedback to Associate Commissioner Joseph Frey by November 20, 2008**, at the following address:

Joseph P. Frey, Associate Commissioner  
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New York State Education Department  
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Albany, New York 12234  
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Thank you again for your guidance as we work together on this critical issue.

cc: Joseph P. Frey