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Educator Certification Flexibility in Response to COVID-19

APRIL 28, 2020 • Karen Dooley



Editor's note: This article has been updated to include the most recent TEA guidance on educator certification and preparation released on June 9, 2020.

Governor Abbott has issued a waiver allowing certain educator certification candidates to qualify for a one-year probationary certificate without meeting some requirements so they may be certified for the 2020–2021 school year.

The governor's waiver is meant to minimize the impact of the pandemic on educator preparation program (EPP) certification requirements including testing, paid internship, and other pre-employment requirements. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) continues to update [guidance on educator certification and preparation \(pdf\)](#).

Eligibility

The waiver applies to individuals who meet one of the following conditions:

- Teacher candidates who completed clinical teaching during fall 2019 and/or spring 2020 and are designated as having completed all preparation requirements by their EPP
- Teacher candidates who completed an internship during spring 2020 and are designated as having completed all preparation requirements by their EPP
- Non-teacher candidates who completed a practicum during fall 2019 and/or spring 2020 and are designated as completing all requirements of their EPP

State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) rules already allow issuance of a probationary certificate for candidates in an alternative certification program (ACP).

This waiver allows additional candidates to be eligible for a probationary certificate and seek employment as a certified educator.

Process

Eligible candidates should begin the application process immediately. EPPs will be able to recommend candidates during a window tentatively scheduled for May 15–July 1.

Steps for [applying for a probationary certificate \(pdf\)](#) can be found on the TEA website.

An application must be completed, including the required fee (\$78), background check, and EPP recommendation, for a certificate to be issued. Failure to complete the process by July 1 will require the candidate to meet all standard certification requirements, including testing.

The probationary certificate will be valid for one year. Prior to expiration of the probationary certificate, candidates must complete all testing requirements to be eligible for a standard certificate.

At this time, TEA is not planning on modifying the fingerprinting requirement for certificate applicants, non-certified employees, or any other individuals required to fingerprint for TEA or SBEC. Identogo, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) vendor, is operating in about half of its locations in Texas, resulting in a decrease of fingerprinting appointments available. A video tutorial for certification applicants and additional fingerprinting information can be found on the [TEA website](#).

Moving forward

The waiver providing a probationary certificate to certification candidates unable to meet testing requirements, paid internship requirements, and other pre-employment requirements will allow school districts to put a qualified certified educator in classrooms despite circumstances caused by COVID-19. The certification candidate can focus on the start of their teaching career and districts can move forward with their recruitment efforts without worrying about applicant testing requirements.

Karen Dooley is a senior HR consultant at TASB HR Services. Send Karen an email at karen.dooley@tasb.org.

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P.O. Box 400, Austin, Texas 78767-0400
800.580.7782 • hrrservices@tasb.org