

MEMORANDUM

To: Local Superintendents of Education, Officials of Eligible Non-public schools,
and All Other Education Stakeholders

From: Dr. Cory M. Murphy, Associate State Superintendent
Office of Teaching and Leading

Ms. Tamika R. Lipsey, Director
Division of Educator Licensure

Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Subject: Division of Educator Licensure 2022 – 2023 Compendium of Updates and Reminders

Gifted Education Subject Area Licensure Assessments Now Available for Adding a Supplemental Endorsement

Gifted K-12 (Licensure Endorsement Code 207) can be added to a Three-Year Provisional Alternate Route Internship License or Five-Year Standard License by successfully challenging the Praxis Subject Assessment (Mississippi's current test code for Praxis Gifted Education is 5358).

Praxis Subject Area Licensure Assessment, Special Education: Core Knowledge and Application (Test Code 5354) Replaced by Special Education: Foundational Knowledge (Test Code 5355)

Effective September 1, 2023, the *Praxis Subject Assessment, Special Education: Foundational Knowledge* (Test Code 5355) replaced the *Special Education: Core Knowledge and Applications* (Test Code 5354) that is required as one criterion for educator licensure. Adhering to the Mississippi State Board of Education's Discontinued Test Policy, Mississippi's qualifying passing score for the discontinued version of the assessment will be accepted through August 31, 2025, if that qualifying passing score was achieved on or prior to August 31, 2023.

Requirement to Pass Literacy Licensure Assessment for obtaining a license in Special Education Mild/Moderate K-12:

Effective January 1, 2023, all candidates seeking to obtain initial licensure in Special Education, Mild/Moderate Disability K-12 (endorsement code 221), shall earn a passing score on a test of scientifically research-based reading instruction, interventions, and data-based decision-making principles as approved by the Mississippi State Board of Education (i.e., Foundations of Reading). Please note, this applies to candidates seeking to obtain licensure via traditional and alternate route Special Education Mild/Moderate K-12 educator preparation program completion and by way of the supplemental endorsement added to a license by Praxis Subject Assessment.

Important Reminder: Candidates Unconditionally Admitted to a MSBE Approved Licensure-Track Educator Preparation Program at Close of COVID-19 Test Suspension

A completed licensure application and all supporting documents must be received by the Office of Educator Licensure on or before December 31, 2023, for the purpose of obtaining a license without being subject to meeting the admission and licensure test requirements for candidates that fall into one of the following categories:

- Candidates unconditionally admitted to a MSBE approved traditional educator preparation program and successfully completed student teaching on or before December 31, 2021
- Candidates unconditionally admitted to a MSBE approved administrator or instructional support personnel program and successfully completed the internship on or before December 31, 2021.

Verification of Applicant’s Lawful Presence in the United States Now Completed Electronically in Mississippi Educator Career Continuum Archive (MECCA) System

Applicants for educator licensure can now complete the verification of lawful presence requirement electronically during the licensure application submission process within their assigned MECCA account. The process no longer requires notary services and supporting documentation can be uploaded directly into the applicant’s assigned MECCA account.

Citizens of the United States are required to submit appropriate documentation for verification of lawful presence in the United States, once during their next most immediate licensure application submission.

Non-US citizens are required to submit appropriate documentation for verification with each licensure application submission, or when their United States Citizenship and Immigration Services documents expire, whichever comes first.

New Elementary Education K-6 Licensure Pathways Update

The Mississippi State Board of Education (MSBE) approved a **Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)** alternate-route program that leads to licensure in **Elementary Education K-6**. The following Mississippi-based educator preparation providers are currently approved to offer the program:

- Belhaven University
- Jackson State University
- Mississippi State University
- Delta State University,
- Mississippi College,
- William Carey University.

The Mississippi State Board of Education (MSBE) also approved an **Elementary Education K-6 supplemental endorsement** licensure pathway that can be added to an existing valid five-year standard renewable license held by a practicing educator with at least three-years of documented classroom teaching experience, who meets the prescribed coursework requirements at a MSBE-approved Educator Preparation Provider, and licensure test requirements. The following Mississippi-based educator preparation providers are currently approved to offer the program:

- Alcorn State University
- Delta State University
- Mississippi State University
- University of Southern Mississippi
- Belhaven University
- Mississippi College
- University of Mississippi
- William Carey University

Expert Citizen License Update (Offered in CTE Licensure Areas Only)

As you may know, effective July 1, 2022, Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-2 (6)(c), sets forth core requirements for the issuance of the Special License, Expert Citizen – Teacher License to be granted in Career and Technical Education licensure areas only, based on a valid industry-recognized certification related to the subject area in which the individual will teach. The updates to the current Expert Citizen licensure policy are as follows:

- Validity of this license type has adjusted from a One-Year to Five-Year Renewable license
- Must Hold Industry Recognized Certification in the area licensure is sought
- If Industry Recognized Certification Not Held, Local School Board Must Spread Rationale for Hire Across Board Minutes
- Class Level of License Issued at Highest Level of Degree Attainment
- Expert Citizen License Type is Not Transferrable – Must be Requested by Local School District

Adjunct Teacher License Update (Offered in Core Subject Licensure Areas Only)

On December 15, 2022, at its regular meeting, the Mississippi State Board of Education (MSBE) granted approval to repeal the previous version of the Special, Non-renewable License for Adjunct Teachers and replace it with the current Special License, Adjunct Teacher Licensure pathway. The current requirements for obtaining the Special License, Adjunct Teacher License are as follows:

- Master’s Degree or Higher; **AND**
- Three-years of Relevant Occupational Experience and Hold the Appropriate Valid Professional Licensure; **OR**

- Master's Degree or Higher; **AND**
- Three-years (six (6) complete semesters) of Documented Teaching Experience at the College/University Level in the Secondary (7-12) Subject Area to be Taught at the LEA Level

Special Notes:

- Class Level of License Issued at Highest Level of Degree Attainment
- Three-Year Validity and Renewable
- Not Transferrable – Must be requested by Local School District

Updated Licensure Renewal Policy

- Allows retired Mississippi educators to submit official documentation of retirement from service in Mississippi public schools during the final year of their valid license.
- Allows educators to submit a valid standard out-of-state license for renewal during the final year of the valid standard Mississippi license.
- Acceptance of professional learning certificate(s) bearing the appropriate number of continuing education units (CEUs), contact hours, or clock hours
- Acceptance of professional learning credit(s) earned by completion through a professional learning program provider approved by the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) and those credits earned through *Professional Associations recognized by the Mississippi Department of Education.

*Professional learning activities awarded by nationally recognized professional associations must be in the instructional support personnel licensure content area(s) listed on the Mississippi issued standard renewable license held by the educator seeking renewal.

Professional Development Documentation: All professional learning credit documents submitted for licensure renewal must bear the following information regardless of format (certificate or transcript):

- Date of Training
- Name of Educator
- Name of Training
- Name of Professional Learning Certificate or Transcript Issuing Agency
- Signature of Designated Official(s) representing the Professional Learning Credit Issuing Agency
- *Number of Continuing Education Units, Contact Hours, or Clock Hours

*Please note: Ten contact or clock hours of professional learning is equal to one CEU credit. The inclusion of both contact hours and Continuing Education Units on a certificate of completion that are not in accordance with the CEU formula may not be considered for renewal.

Please encourage educators to engage in professional learning throughout the five-year validity of the current license renewal cycle indicated on the Mississippi issued educator's license. When seeking to engage in professional learning opportunities intended for improving practice, one suggestion would be to pursue those opportunities that target areas for growth as identified using the Mississippi Educator and Administrator Professional Growth System.

When determining whether professional learning opportunities completed by an educator for the purpose of licensure renewal is acceptable, it is our practice to apply the following questions:

- How does the selected professional learning opportunity improve the teacher's knowledge and skills related to the role(s) in which he/she is serving? In essence, how will the professional learning opportunity improve teaching practice that will ultimately yield better student learning outcomes?
- How will the professional learning activity improve and sustain the professional growth of teachers?

Please be mindful that the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) reserves the right and authority to question the authenticity, refuse to accept, and/or request additional documents regarding any documentation submitted to the Division of Educator Licensure for the purposes of initial licensure or renewal.

Division of Educator Misconduct Evaluations – Reminder

Each superintendent of a public school shall report to the Mississippi Department of Education allegations, infractions, and/or offenses committed under sections cited in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-3-2. Procedures are as follows:

- Submit reports on employees as knowledge of allegations, infractions and/or offenses occurs.
- Submit an initial report on all certified/licensed employees no later than October 1 of each school year (Appendix B).

Mississippi Educator Career Continuum Archive System (educator information system)

Update:

The Mississippi Educator Career Continuum Archive (MECCA) System is a customized cloud-based, all-in-one, single sign-on educator workforce information system that serves as a hub that captures the lifecycle of a Mississippi educator from recruitment to retirement. The system also serves to supply fair solutions to local school districts and targeted supports to teachers and administrators on their journey to effective practice while ensuring the safety and welfare of the children in Mississippi schools. The following provides a broad overview of each of the four (4) portals and projected launch dates:

- **Portal One: Educator Preparation, Educator Licensure and Educator Misconduct Evaluations Portal** – Modernizes the most previous licensure application processing system: moving EPP approval and Educator Misconduct reporting requirements from paper process to electronic submission. **Launched January 17, 2023**
- **Portal Two: Educator Effectiveness Portal** – Moving observation and training process from paper to electronic to allow teachers real-time access to timely and actionable feedback and immediate access to targeted professional learning opportunities within the portal. **Projected Launch Date of November to December 2023**
- **Portal Three: Talent Portal** – Moving local school districts from a paper employment application process to electronic. Providing prospective employees access to all open positions throughout the state and local school districts will have access to all candidates seeking employment opportunities no matter where they reside in the state of Mississippi. **Projected Launch Date of June 2024**
- **Portal Four: Accreditation Portal** – This portal will allow the Mississippi Department of Education Office of Accreditation team to conduct virtual audits from anywhere in the state for those accountability standards that do not require a physical presence in the local school district. **Projected Launch Date of August 2024**

New, Additional Educator Licensure Application Correspondence Process Update

The Educator Preparation, Educator Licensure, and Educator Misconduct Evaluations Portal (Portal One) includes a MECCA Notification feature that allows members of the Office of Educator Licensure to correspond with applicants in real-time through their assigned MECCA account. This feature is similar to online chatting and instant messaging means for efficiently communicating with consumers. The use of the MECCA Notification feature will allow applicants to respond to notifications received from a member of the Educator Licensure team following the initial evaluation of certain applications for licensure.

In essence, a Licensure Specialist will send a MECCA Notification directly to the applicant to resolve an identified deficiency prior to sending a requirements letter and closing the application submitted for licensure. This courtesy service is intended to expedite the receipt of documents required for the issuance of the requested initial license, supplemental endorsement, or renewal/reinstatement thereof. The MECCA Notification will be delivered to the email address present in the applicant's MECCA account. Additionally, upon logging in to their assigned MECCA account, the applicant will find that the message icon located therein will appear red in color as an indication that a new MECCA Notification awaits review and requires action. Should the applicant fail to respond to the notification, the courtesy telephone call to the applicant from the Office of Educator Licensure, and/or submit the requested information, the application will be marked deficient, and an official traditional deficiency letter will be sent the applicant using the email address on file within their assigned MECCA account.

As always, we appreciate your assistance with disseminating and orally communicating the contents of this memorandum to all prospective and practicing educators. Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Educator Licensure team via telephone at (601) 359-3483. We value and appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

c: Dr. Paula A. Vanderford