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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. *Lillian M. Lowery*
DATE: October 30, 2013
SUBJECT: COMAR 13A.12.02.23, Visually Impaired
Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board Proposed Changes

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memo is to present proposed publication of revisions to COMAR13A.12.02.23, Visually Impaired and to provide the opportunity to convene a Joint Conference Committee should you so desire. The Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) voted to publish the proposed changes at its October 3, 2013 meeting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

House Bill 413 and Senate Bill 230 passed during the 2010 legislative session, required the State Board and the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) to review and, as appropriate, modify certification and re-certification requirements for teachers of students who are blind and visually impaired.

Following a presentation at its December 2012 meeting, the PSTEB directed staff in the Divisions of Educator Effectiveness and Special Education/Early Intervention Services to convene a Work Group of representative constituencies. This Work Group included teachers of the blind and visually impaired, special education administrators, human resource personnel from local school system, higher education teacher preparation program in blindness/visual impairment, and two representatives from the National Federation of the Blind. The Work Group met for two half-day meetings in May 2013 to review background information and provide feedback for the revisions to the certification requirements.

The Work Group recommended the following:

- * Change name of certification area to Blind/Visually Impaired;
- * Eliminate the requirement for certification in generic special education;
- * Reduce the number of required general special education course work;
- * Expand the number of the general education course work; and
- * Update the content specific coursework in vision language.

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For renewal, the Work Group addressed the need for teachers of the blind/visually impaired to demonstrate proficiency and continued maintenance in knowledge of the braille code through more clearly defined means than currently required. The group recommended this would be demonstrated by passing a national braille proficiency test during the initial renewal period. For subsequent renewal periods, demonstrated coursework related to the braille code would maintain or expand proficiency in braille and could be tailored to an individual's professional learning needs.

SUMMARY:

The current regulation, COMAR 13.12.02.23, Visually Impaired, requires changes due to required legislative review, current needs, and recommendations of a Work Group comprised of key constituents.

ACTION:

This item is presented for information and to provide you an opportunity to convene a Joint Conference Committee should you so desire.

LML/JES

Attachment

.23 Blind/Visually Impaired.

A. The requirements for initial certification to teach *blind/visually impaired* students [with visual impairments] and renewal of certification to teach *blind/visually impaired* students [with visual impairments] are those set forth in §§B—[E] D of this regulation.

B. [Special Education Background.] For initial certification to teach *blind/visually impaired* students [with visual impairments], an applicant shall [meet the requirements for special education certification or have 21] *submit 6* semester hours of course work *or its equivalent in* [including all] the following areas:

- (1) Historical, philosophical, and legal foundations of special education;
- (2) Human growth and development emphasizing normal growth and development patterns;
- (3) Introduction to exceptional children;
- (4) Formal and informal assessment, diagnosis, and prescriptive techniques;
- (5) Methods of teaching reading;
- (6) Education of students with multiple disabilities; and
- (7) Human relations skills.]

(1) Special Education Course Work:

- (a) Introduction to exceptional children; and*
- (b) Education of students with multiple disabilities.*

(2) Specialized Content Course Work:

(a) An applicant shall submit a minimum of 21 semester hours of credit or Department-approved Continuing Professional Development credits:

- (i) Knowledge of literary braille, including methods of teaching Braille reading and writing;*
- (ii) Knowledge of Nemeth Code for Mathematics and Science and other braille codes (foreign language, braille formats, computer, Unified English Braille Code...);*
- (iii) Medical aspects and disorders of the eye including their current and future impact on the development of the student and current and future literacy needs;*

(iv) Curriculum, instructional methods, and adaptations to meet the individualized needs of blind/visually impaired students (including the Expanded Core Curriculum and access to the general education curriculum);

(v) Assessment, diagnosis, and prescriptive techniques to meet the individualized needs of blind/visually impaired students (including the Expanded Core Curriculum and access to the general education curriculum);

(vi) Introduction to orientation and mobility training emphasizing the development of concepts and skills required for independent travel; and

(vii) A supervised practicum or 1 year of satisfactory teaching experience with blind/visually impaired students.

(3) Professional Education Course Work:

(a) An applicant shall have a minimum of 12 semester hours in course work or its equivalent:

(i) Human Growth and Development (birth through adult);

(ii) Methods of Reading Instruction;

(iii) Assessment of Reading Instruction; and

(iv) Methods of Teaching Mathematics.

[C. Specialized Content and Professional Education Courses.

(1) An applicant shall have a minimum of 27 semester hours in course work or its equivalent, including all the following areas and §C(2) of this regulation:

(a) Human growth and development emphasizing knowledge of the developmental characteristics of students with visual impairments;

(b) Assessment, diagnosis, and prescriptive techniques to meet the individualized reading needs of students with visual impairments;

(c) Curriculum, instructional methods, technology, and adaptations specific to the teaching of reading and to other areas of instruction of students with visual impairments, including all the following:

(i) Knowledge of Braille, including Braille code and methods of teaching Braille reading and writing, including portable techniques to advanced technologies; and

(ii) Introduction to orientation and mobility training emphasizing the development of concepts and skills required for independent travel;

(d) Medical aspects and disorders of the eye including their current and future impact on the development of the student; and

(e) A practicum of not less than 6 semester hours completed with students with visual impairments.

(2) Two years of satisfactory teaching of students with visual impairments may be substituted for the 6 semester-hour practicum in §C(1)(e) of this regulation. Satisfactory teaching experience shall be established by a series of at least four observation periods per year. If a supervisor certified in teaching students with visual impairments is not available, a mentor teacher so certified in teaching students with visual impairments shall work in cooperation with the special education administrator to provide the required evaluation.]

[D.] C. Special Provision. A teacher professionally certified in early childhood, elementary, [or middle school, secondary, generic special education, or PreK—grade 12 education who seeks endorsement to teach students with visual impairments [at that level] shall meet the requirements of [§C] §§B(1)—(3) of this regulation.

[E.] D. Renewal.

(1) A teacher certified for teaching *blind/visually impaired* students [with visual impairments] shall present [at least one course, continuing education unit, or professional development activity indicating maintenance of Braille proficiency] *a qualifying score on a Department approved test of braille competency before the expiration of the initial professional certificate and 6 semester hours of course work from an IHE or Department-approved Continuing Professional Development credits or Continuing Education Units (CEUs).*

(2) *For continued renewal, a teacher certified for teaching blind/visually impaired students shall submit 6 semester hours of course work from an IHE or Department-approved Continuing Professional Development credits or Continuing Education Units (CEUs) which must include maintenance of knowledge of braille code.*