

TO: Directors of Schools, Special Education Directors, Federal Programs Directors, Human Resource Personnel

FROM: Kristy Brown, Chief Academic Officer

DATE: March 12, 2025

SUBJECT: **Special Education Endorsement Code 460 Conversion Option**

Overview

Pursuant to State Board of Education Educator Licensure Policy 5.502 and 34 C.F.R § 300.156, all Tennessee local education agencies (LEAs) shall ensure students with disabilities receive instruction and special education services from personnel who meet licensure requirements to provide services outlined in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). These rules apply to all students with disabilities, including students with significant cognitive disabilities.

From Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 20 U.S.C. § 6311(g)(2)(J) requires each LEA shall provide assurances that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in a program supported with ESSA grant funds meet applicable state certification and licensure requirements, including any requirements for certification obtained through alternative routes to certification.

ESSA amended the IDEA provision of 20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(14)(C) governing qualifications of special education teachers. The provision now requires that a special education teacher in the state who teaches elementary school, middle school, or secondary school:

- has either obtained full state certification as a special education teacher (including certification obtained through an alternate route to certification as a special educator) or passed the state special education teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state as a special education teacher;
- has not had special education certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; and
- holds at least a bachelor's degree.

Schools must ensure students with disabilities receive special education services from personnel with the specialized expertise as outlined in 34 C.F.R § 300.156. The IEP defines the special education services, supports, accommodations, modifications, and least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities. These must be provided by appropriate personnel in the LRE. For students whose LRE is a special education setting, the teacher must have both the expertise to teach the content and expertise in the student's disabilities.

Furthermore, students with disabilities must receive content instruction aligned with the standards and the special education services and supports described in their IEP. Course codes guide the provision of the content-area instruction. However, they do not define the special education services needed nor fully explain the setting or LRE. Therefore, in consultation with the department's Course Code Management System (CCMS), which is aligned with endorsements for content instruction, the LEA is responsible for ensuring that all student needs are met and that the personnel have the required expertise.

Active Special Education Endorsements (i.e., 461, 144, 145):

The Special Education Comprehensive Program Endorsement (461) indicates the teacher has specialized content and pedagogy expertise for serving students with the most significant disabilities. Educators with this endorsement often work with students in which the LRE is a special education setting but can provide instruction and services in other settings as well. The Special Education Interventionist Endorsements (144 and 145) provide teachers with a foundation in special education content and pedagogy for high-incidence disabilities. Educators with interventionist endorsements often work in general education settings, supporting students by providing specially designed instruction through co-teaching or intensive intervention.

Retired Special Education Endorsements

The Special Education Modified K-12 (460) is most similar to the interventionist endorsement and is a retired endorsement, as are several other special education endorsements (e.g., 105). Educators with retired endorsements may continue teaching in the area they are qualified for and renew such endorsements as long as the license remains active. If a license becomes inactive, any applicable endorsement will be replaced by the most current and equivalent endorsement upon reactivation requirements being met.

Flexibility to Convert the Special Education Modified K-12 (460) to Special Education Comprehensive Endorsement (461)

The department recognizes that highly effective, highly experienced educators with a retired 460 endorsement code have the knowledge and expertise to effectively meet the IEP requirements of students with significant cognitive disabilities in self-contained settings. An LEA may submit evidence that an educator who holds the retired special education endorsement 460 meets the requirement for the Special Education Comprehensive endorsement (461) by submitting evidence of certain professional experience and effectiveness criteria to the department by July 1, 2025. **Please note that the opportunity to convert a 460 endorsement to a 461 endorsement only applies to current educators who meet the requirements during the 2024-25 school year.**

Educators holding the 460 endorsement may complete one of the following pathways to either add or convert to a 461 endorsement on the educator’s license.

Praxis and/or Coursework Pathway * Completion of these requirements will result in the ability for an educator to submit a transaction to add endorsement 461 to their license.	Professional Experience and Effectiveness Criteria Pathway (Option available only through July 1, 2025; non-recurring) * Verification of these requirements will result in the conversion of endorsement 460 to endorsement 461 on the educator’s license. <i>No transaction is required; documentation is to be completed by the LEA and educator and submitted by the Director of Schools to the department.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a passing score on the Severe Disabilities Praxis (5547), and submit a passing score on the Reading Praxis (5205), or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit verification of at least five (5) consecutive years as the teacher of record in a self-contained (CDC) program for students with significant disabilities, and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation from a State Board-approved Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) showing completion of coursework for endorsement 461: Special Education Comprehensive K-12. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit evidence of a level 4 or 5 overall Level of Effectiveness (LOE) for the most recent three (3) consecutive years, and Complete the TN Early Reading Training or Secondary Literacy Training or Pass the TN Early Literacy Assessment to meet the licensure component of the TN Literacy Success Act.
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To support LEAs in the provision of instruction and special education services as outlined in this memo, please reference the *Guidance for Special Education Endorsement Codes, Course Codes, and Meeting IEP Requirements* [here](#), which provides additional information, scenarios, and strategies to support decision-making to ensure course scheduling, licensure endorsements held by special educators, and least restrictive environment requirements for a student’s IEP are met.

For additional general licensing information, including applicable endorsements and pathways to add endorsements for licensed educators, please consult Tennessee State Board of Education Educator Licensure Policy 5.502. For information related to required assessments for applicable endorsement areas, please consult Tennessee State Board of Education’s Professional Assessments for Tennessee Educators Policy 5.105.