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Educator Preparation Institute Application Guidelines October 2004

Senate Bill 2986, Education Personnel, 2004, S.1004.85, F.S.
Educator Preparation Institute Application Guidelines

Introduction

The 2004 Legislature passed Senate Bill 2986 establishing section 1004.85, Florida Statutes, which provides the opportunity for postsecondary institutions to create Educator Preparation Institutes. These Institutes may only be created at accredited or approved postsecondary institutions as defined by rule, and any institution that chooses to offer an Educator Preparation Institute must receive approval from the Department of Education.

Educator Preparation Institutes may be created to provide any or all of the following:

- (a) Professional development opportunities to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction and in meeting certification requirements
- (b) Instruction to assist potential and existing substitute teachers in performing their duties
- (c) Instruction to assist paraprofessionals in meeting education and training requirements
- (d) Instruction for baccalaureate degree holders to become certified teachers through competency-based alternative certification programs specifically described in the law, in order to increase routes to the classroom for mid-career professionals who hold a baccalaureate degree and college graduates who were not education majors.

Through an Educator Preparation Institute's competency-based programs, Florida institutions are provided a unique opportunity for flexibility and creativity in the delivery of teacher training, and teachers are provided with another meaningful, quality option in teacher training in addition to state-approved degree programs and district-delivered competency-based programs currently offered. Educator Preparation Institutes will help to propel Florida forward in exceeding state and federal standards for high performing instructional staff, and participants in these programs have great potential to significantly increase student achievement in our state.

This document provides guidelines for completing an application for both an Educator Preparation Institute and an Institute's alternative certification program. Explanations are included of the new statute and any existing laws, rules, or documents referenced by it.

I. ESTABLISHING THE INSTITUTION'S STATUS AS ACCREDITED OR APPROVED

Postsecondary institutions that are accredited or approved as described in state board rule may seek approval from the Department of Education to create educator preparation institutes.

Chapter 6A-4.003(1), FAC, establishes the criteria for an institution to be considered accredited for purposes of educator certification as follows:

Accredited institutions. Degrees and credits awarded by an institution of higher learning accredited by one of the types of accrediting associations listed below shall be acceptable for educator certification purposes.

- Regional accrediting associations. The regional accrediting association for Florida institutions is the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).
- Accrediting agencies approved by the United States Department of Education. A current list of acceptable accrediting agencies may be found online at http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg4.html#Nationally%20Recognized.

Comment

Since these programs will be approved by the Florida Department of Education, only applications from institutions based in Florida that meet the accreditation criteria will be considered.

Chapter 6A-4.003(2), FAC, establishes the criteria for a nonaccredited Florida institution to be considered "approved" for purposes of educator certification as follows:

Nonaccredited approved institutions. A non-accredited approved institution of higher learning shall be identified as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's or higher degree by one (1) of the following criteria:

- The institution holds a certificate of exemption pursuant to Section 1005.06, Florida Statutes (carried over from s. 246.085(1)(b), FS, 2001).
- The institution is a newly created Florida public college or university that offers a bachelor's or higher degree program.

Comment

Since these programs will be approved by the Florida Department of Education, only applications from institutions based in Florida that meet the approval criteria will be considered.

II. PROVIDING THE INSTITUTION'S PURPOSE(S) FOR ESTABLISHING THE INSTITUTE

Educator Preparation Institutes may seek approval from the Department for the purpose of providing any or all of the following:

- (a) Professional Development instruction to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction and in meeting certification requirements.
- (b) Instruction to assist potential and existing substitute teachers in performing their duties.
- (c) Instruction to assist paraprofessionals in meeting education and training requirements.
- (d) Instruction for baccalaureate degree holders to become certified teachers through competency-based alternative certification programs specifically described in this section of law, in order to increase routes to the classroom for mid-career professionals who hold a baccalaureate degree and college graduates who were not education majors.

Comments

First, the law is clear that an institution may seek approval to establish the Educator Preparation Institute for “any or all” of the four purposes listed in the statute. Therefore, in reviewing an institution’s application for approval of its institute, the department will be looking for (1) which areas of educator preparation the institution will be offering, and (2) evidence that the institution has a plan for providing the type(s) of educator preparation selected as they are described in the statute.

Second, the competency-based alternative certification program [preparation type (d) shown above] must be approved separately, since the statute stipulates that such program may only be offered by an institution with an approved Educator Preparation Institute. Therefore, for institutions seeking to offer competency-based alternative certification programs, the institution’s application must first be reviewed for approval to have an Institute, and then must be reviewed for approval of its competency-based alternative certification program. An institution may submit the approval information for both an Institute and an alternative certification program in one package.

Institute Approval Guidelines

1.0 General Guidelines

1.1 Partnerships with K-12 instructional delivery settings. Each of the areas of educator preparation described focus on the need in Florida to increase high-*performing* classroom personnel in our K-12 schools. Therefore, it is necessary that the Institute partner with entities providing K-12 instruction, such as school districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools, to meet the needs of these entities in our state, and to establish a means for educators enrolled in the institute to practice and demonstrate their ability to perform at an acceptable level.

1.2 Qualified, experienced faculty. The statute only specifies qualifications for faculty involved in the delivery of competency-based alternative certification programs. However, since each of the types of educator preparation offerings available to an institute are tied to either state or federal requirements, the qualifications and educational experiences of faculty that will be involved in the program(s) should be included in this application.

2.0 Explanation and Resources for Types of Educator Preparation that May Be Offered

2.1 Professional development instruction to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction and in meeting certification or recertification requirements. The statute specifies delivery of this type of educator preparation as “professional development.” The Department has recently released the latest protocol for delivery of professional development aligning Florida approved professional development systems with national research and the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. A Florida school district or other entity which awards Master Inservice Plan points to instructional personnel must do so based upon the individual’s participation in a program that meets the requirements of the protocol and requirements stated in s. 1012.98, F.S., the School Community Professional Development Act.

Additionally, this training targets individuals who are already teaching (“teachers”), meaning these individuals will already hold either a Temporary or Professional Educator’s Certificate, and covers two general purposes. The first is to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction. This should be related to any or all of the following: rigorous instruction in the Sunshine State Standards, especially with regard to reading proficiency and critical thinking skills; assessment and progress monitoring methods; data analysis; effective use of technology; continuous improvement; and classroom management. The second general purpose of this training is to assist teachers in meeting requirements to add a subject or endorsement to their existing certificate or to complete requirements for the renewal of their Professional Certificate. Many subject areas may be added to a certificate by passage of the appropriate subject area examination and such professional development should be based upon the examination competencies.

Comments

All accredited Florida postsecondary institutions offer individual college credit courses that teachers complete for purposes of initial certification or certificate renewal. Establishing an Institute for the purpose of offering “professional development” (teacher training that results in the awarding of Master Inservice Plan points) as described in this section does not affect that ongoing mission.

College credit courses in areas of teaching methods and curriculum are currently offered only at the upper division level, based upon common course numbering. However, since these offerings will be delivered through approved Institutes as professional development, rather than college credit, districts and other entities that award inservice points will be able to utilize these offerings as long as they meet the criteria referenced in the state protocol. The state protocol, national criteria, and additional resources may be found online at <<http://www.firn.edu/doi/profdev/inserv.htm>> and <<http://www.teachinflorida.com/Teachertoolkit/Professionaldevelopment.asp>>.

Requirements and options for adding subjects and endorsements to a valid Florida certificate may be found on line at <<http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/adding.asp>> and renewal requirements and options at <<http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/renew.asp>>. Examination competencies are on line at <<http://www.firn.edu/doi/sas/ftcehome.htm>>. Note: Some subject areas (Guidance and Counseling, Educational Leadership, etc.) require graduate level college credit for initial certification in that subject, and would not be appropriate for delivery as professional development through an Institute, except for certificate renewal purposes.

2.2 Instruction to assist potential and existing substitute teachers in performing their duties.

Senate Bill 2986 established specific training requirements for substitute teachers. Section 1012.35, F.S., was amended to require that all substitute teachers employed by a school district complete an initial orientation and training program in district policies and procedures addressing school safety and security, educational liability laws, professional responsibilities, and ethics. Candidates for substitute teaching with

no teaching experience must also complete training in classroom management skills and instructional strategies.

Comment

Institutions that are currently providing substitute teacher training will need to compare their offerings with the new requirements. Training requirements are listed in the 2004 Florida Statutes, available online at www.flsenate.gov (select "Statutes and Constitution").

2.3 Instruction to assist paraprofessionals in meeting education and training requirements. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that any paraprofessional with instructional support duties in a Title I school-wide program or a paraprofessional with instructional support duties in a targeted assistance program who is paid with Title I Funds must meet the Paraprofessional Qualification Requirements. To meet the requirements, one of the following must be completed:

1. An associate's or higher degree,
2. Two years of study at an institution of higher education, or
3. A rigorous standard of quality on a formal state or local academic assessment to demonstrate the ability to assist in instructing, as appropriate, either (a) reading/language arts, writing, and mathematics, or (b) reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.

Comments

Paraprofessionals who choose to complete the assessment (#3) rather than credit may take one of the following recommended examinations or another equivalent test approved by their district: the Educational Testing Service *Praxis Parapro Assessment*, the *College Level Academic Skills Test* (CLAST), or the Florida Teacher Certification Examination *General Knowledge Test*. An institution may wish to consider test preparation as a means to assist these paraprofessionals who choose the assessment option rather than college credit to become qualified.

2.4 Instruction for baccalaureate degree holders to become certified teachers through competency-based alternative certification programs, in order to increase routes to the classroom for mid-career professionals who hold a baccalaureate degree and college graduates who were not education majors. Section 1004.85(3), Florida Statutes, requires that alternative certification programs described in this section be competency-based, provided to individuals who already hold a bachelor's or higher degree in an area other than education, and approved by the Department. Once the Department receives an institute's application it must either approve the program or send a notice of deficiencies to the institution within 90 days. An alternative certification program is competency-based when the participants are determined to have completed the program based upon their demonstration ("performance") of the competencies required by the statute. Therefore, the assessment system that the Institute uses to evaluate participants will be the backbone for the delivery of instruction. An institution is required to award a "credential" to the program completer.

Comments

Senior (4-year and graduate) Institutions. Senior institutions currently offer degree programs for teacher preparation which are based upon earning specified college courses, including upper-division or graduate credit, and required program courses are "competency-infused" for purposes of program approval. The preparation program is considered completed when the required courses are completed with an acceptable GPA and the degree is earned. An alternative certification program offered through an Institute under this statute is different in that program completion is based upon the candidate's demonstration of required competencies, not completion of courses. This does not necessarily

preclude a senior institution from offering upper-division or graduate credit for a completed program. However, the individual's performance in demonstration of the required competencies must be the basis for determining the training s/he completes and whether s/he has successfully completed the program. The institute is required to award the participant with a "credential" upon completion.

Community (2-year) Colleges. Community colleges offering freshman and sophomore level credit are not authorized to offer college credit for upper division courses. Education courses in teaching methods and curriculum are generally offered only at the upper-division level. The community college models for delivering these programs will be based upon non-credit modules and will result in the required "credential" for program completers.

2.4.1 Criteria for initial approval of programs. Section 1004.85(3)(c), F.S., indicates that program completers will exit with a "credential" from the institute verifying that they meet requirements for 1012.56(5), F.S., which describes the options for demonstrating mastery of professional preparation and education competence for a Professional Florida Educator's Certificate. Professional preparation and education competence may be considered in three parts: (1) training in education, (2) demonstration of required competencies in a classroom setting, including the Educator Accomplished Practices, and (3) a passing score earned on the Professional Education Test of the FTCE.

This section outlines three specific criteria for which an institute must supply "sufficient evidence" to the Department for approval of the alternative certification program:

1. Instruction must be provided in "professional knowledge and subject matter content that includes educator-accomplished practices and competencies specified in State Board of Education rule and meets subject matter content requirements, professional competency testing requirements, and competencies associated with teaching scientifically-based reading instruction and strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers."

Comments

Competency-based programs are based upon specified outcomes as demonstrated by performance of the participants and documented through consistently collected evidence. Section 2.4.1 describes areas of instruction that must be covered. However, since the programs are required by statute to be competency-based, this section does not specify these as courses that must be taken, but training offered to candidates to help them demonstrate competencies. Competencies associated with the Florida certification subject area examinations and the professional education test may be found online at <<http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/ftcehome.htm>>. The Educator Accomplished Practices may be found online at <<http://www.teachinflorida.com/Jobcenter/standards.asp>>.

The Just Read, Florida! office has established the five competencies necessary for teaching reading based upon research-based methods and for earning the Reading Endorsement. To meet the requirements of this statute of general professional preparation, it is recommended that institutes include competencies 1 and 2. Reading competency information is available through the Just Read, Florida! Office online at <<http://www.justreadflorida.com/>> or by calling 850/245-0503.

2. The program must provide field experiences with supervision from qualified educators.

Comment

Each institution will need to locate and partner with K-12 education entities through which participants will practice and demonstrate the standards for professional education competence. In addition, the

Institute will need to include in the application the list of qualified educators on staff or describe the means that will be used to partner with qualified educators to provide the required supervision.

3. The program must provide a certification ombudsman to facilitate the process and procedures required for participants who complete the program to meet any requirements related to the background screening pursuant to s. 1012.32, F.S., and educator professional or temporary certification pursuant to s. 1012.56, F.S.

2.4.2 Program participants. Subsection (3)(b) lists three requirements for program participants:

1. Meet certification requirements pursuant to s. 1012.56(1), F.S., by obtaining a Statement of Status of Eligibility and meet the requirements of s. 1012.56(2)(a)-(f), F.S.

Comment

Certification requirements include appropriate age, filing the application for the Official Statement, meeting fingerprint requirements and holding a bachelor's degree from an accredited or approved institution. A participant may obtain information and apply directly online to the Bureau of Educator Certification for an Official Statement of Status of Eligibility at www.fldoe.org/edcert.

2. Participate in field experience that is appropriate to his or her educational plan.
3. Fully demonstrate his or her ability to teach the subject area for which he or she is seeking certification and demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence by achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule prior to completion of the program.

Comment

The requirement for the participant to "fully demonstrate his or her ability to teach the subject area" should at least include the demonstration in a classroom setting. Although the only "certification test" required for program completion is the Professional Education Test, section 2.4.4 describes the requirement in the statute for Institutes to provide the Department with pass rates of completers on *all* certification tests (subject area, general knowledge and professional education) as part of continued program approval.

2.4.3 Program faculty. Section 1004.85(5), F.S., stipulates that instructors for an alternative certification program approved pursuant to this section must possess a master's degree in education or a master's degree in an appropriate related field and document teaching experience.

Comment

The statute does not specify any particular definition of "teaching experience" for use in determining qualified faculty for alternative certification programs. Given the context of teacher training, faculty with experience in a K-12 setting would be beneficial.

For informational purposes, there is an existing rule that addresses "teaching experience" as it relates to teacher certification purposes. Chapter 6A-4.002(5), FAC, defines "teaching experience" that is acceptable for teacher certification purposes as full time teaching, administrative or supervisory experience in a public elementary or secondary school, and specified public prekindergarten settings. Private school teaching experience is also acceptable if gained while the individual held a state-issued teaching certificate.

2.4.4 Program Funding and Fees. Section 1004.85(6) provides that approved Educator Preparation Institutes that are providing approved instructional programs for any of the four purposes described are eligible for funding from federal and state funds, as appropriated by the Legislature.

Comment

A part of the ability to support an Educator Preparation Institute's Alternative Certification Program will be an institution's means to financially support the program. The application documentation should include funding sources and an estimate of any fees that may be charged to participants.

2.4.5 Continued Program approval. Section 1004.85(4) requires that each institute approved pursuant to this section shall submit to the Department of Education annual performance evaluations that measure the effectiveness of the programs in each of the following areas:

- the pass rates of participants on all examinations required for teacher certification
- employment rates
- longitudinal retention rates
- employer satisfaction surveys.

The employer satisfaction surveys must be designed to measure the sufficient preparation of the educator to enter the classroom.

The Department of Education is required to use the evaluations from each institute for purposes of continued approval of an educator preparation institute's alternative certification program.

Comment

The data to be collected in the performance evaluation are not listed as components for initial program approval. However, since these are the data that will constitute the essence of continued approval, items included in the performance evaluation will significantly impact the training included in the program. For example, although the statute specifies that program completers will have met the certification requirement to demonstrate mastery of Professional Preparation and Education Competence (see section 2.4.2.), the institute itself will have to release to the Department the pass rates for participants on all of the certification examinations. This includes the General Knowledge Test and the Subject Area Tests, as well as the Professional Knowledge Test.