

Special Education Personnel Qualifications and Preendorsement Authorization: Common Questions and Answers for Districts

The following questions and answers are intended to assist districts in understanding options available to them under WAC 392-172A-02090 Personnel Qualifications when they are unable to recruit and hire individuals who have a special education endorsement. The *Special Education Monthly Webinar Series on Budgeting and Staffing* ([webinar/slide deck](#)) contains an overview of staffing guidance.

1. What special education endorsement options exist?

Each of the following roles are considered to be special education endorsements:

- Special education endorsement
- Early childhood special education endorsement
- Deaf education endorsement
- Deaf education with American Sign Language (ASL) proficiency endorsement
- Teacher of the visually impaired (TOVI) endorsement

Individuals with a special education endorsement are considered to have completed “substantial professional training”¹ and therefore could independently design, provide, evaluate, and monitor specially designed instruction (SDI) for a student as well as author the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and serve as the special educator in an IEP meeting when appropriate.

It is important to note that the district is responsible for ensuring that special educators are appropriately qualified² to serve in the position they are assigned and that they have the expertise to meet the needs of their students.

For example, a teacher with only a teacher of the visually impaired endorsement may not be considered appropriately qualified to design, supervise, monitor, and evaluate the special education services for a student who does not have vision related needs, just as a school Speech Pathologist may not be appropriately qualified to design, supervise, monitor, and evaluate the special education services for students who do not have speech and language needs.

Districts must make individual decisions to staff classrooms with teachers with an appropriate special education endorsement to meet the needs of students and this could also include other competencies in staffing decisions based on student needs.

¹ [WAC 392-172A-02090\(b\)](#)

² [WAC 392-172A-02090\(i\)](#)



2. What options exist for districts who are unable to recruit and hire an individual who has a special education endorsement?

There are two last resort staffing options that districts can use to staff a special education position, the temporary out-of-endorsement assignment, and the pre-endorsement Authorization.

A **Special Education Preendorsement Authorization** requires:

- Completion of an OSPI application
- A potential candidate who is a certified teacher who has completed two hundred forty clock hours (or the equivalent of 24 quarter **or** 16 semester credits) applicable to one or more of the following Washington state special education teaching certificates:
 - Special education endorsement
 - Early childhood special education endorsement
 - Deaf education endorsement
 - Deaf education with ASL proficiency endorsement
 - Teacher of the visually impaired (TOVI) endorsement
- OSPI approval
- May independently perform all the duties of a special education teacher
- [WAC 392-172A-02090\(2\)\(a\)](#)

A **temporary out-of-endorsement assignment** is:

- Completed at the district level
- Available when the individual to be assigned has completed six semester hours or nine quarter hours of coursework applicable to one or more of the following Washington state special education teaching certificates:
 - Special education endorsement
 - Early childhood special education endorsement
 - Deaf education endorsement
 - Deaf education with ASL proficiency endorsement
 - Teacher of the visually impaired (TOVI) endorsement
- Approved by formal vote of local school board
- May be assigned to the role of a special education teacher but a special education endorsed individual within the district must review and monitor the IEPs of the students
- [WAC 392-172A-02090\(2\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#)

3. When is it appropriate for a district to initiate the processes for a temporary out-of-endorsement assignment or application for the special education pre-endorsement authorization? What are the processes?

Both temporary out-of-endorsement assignment and the special education preendorsement authorization are to be used as a last resort in staffing a special education teaching position. A district must document that every attempt has been made to recruit and hire an individual who is appropriately certified and endorsed to teach special education. Should a district be unable to

recruit and hire an individual who is qualified to teach special education, it may wish to proceed with a temporary out-of-endorsement assignment or request a potential applicant to apply for the special education pre-endorsement authorization. In both of these instances, the individual's time and effort may be charged to either federal and/or state special education funding codes.

Temporary Out-Of-Endorsement Assignment Process

The temporary out-of-endorsement assignment process is completed entirely at the district level. [WAC 392-172A-02090\(2\)](#) explains in detail the steps a district must take to assign, temporarily, an unendorsed individual in a special education teaching position. This is the same process a district uses to assign any teacher to an area in which she/he does not have an endorsement, and requires approval by a formal vote of the local school board for each teacher assigned through this process ([WAC 181-82-110](#)). The individual who is assigned to the special education position without an endorsement must hold a valid Washington state teaching certificate. This individual must have completed six semester hours or nine quarter hours of coursework applicable towards a special education endorsement. A designated representative of the district and the teacher who does not hold an endorsement, must mutually develop a written plan that provides for necessary assistance to the teacher, and a reasonable amount of planning and study time specifically associated with the out-of-endorsement assignment. It is important to note that a special education endorsed individual within the district must review and monitor the IEPs of students assigned to individuals with a temporary out-of-endorsement assignment as they do not have the credentials to fully complete the special education requirements ([WAC 392-172A-02090\(1\)\(g\)](#)). Districts are urged to use this temporary assignment sparingly, and to either recruit and hire a properly credentialed individual as soon as possible or ensure the person in the temporary assignment is pursuing a special education endorsement. Continued hiring of inappropriately credentialed individuals is not an educationally sound practice.

Special Education Preendorsement Authorization Process

The special education preendorsement authorization is for teachers who have completed 240 clock hours (or the equivalent of 24 quarter **or** 16 semester credits) applicable toward one or more special education endorsement and requires an submission of the [OSPI Pre-Endorsement Authorization Application](#). The district making the job offer or contemplating assigning the teacher to a special education assignment, the potential applicant, and the preparation program where the applicant is enrolled or earned their credits must each complete specific sections of the application. Once the application is complete, it is sent to the special education section at OSPI for review. If the applicant meets the criteria for the special education preendorsement authorization, the applicant is sent a letter with a copy to the district indicating they have three years to complete the endorsement requirements ([WAC 181-82-110\(4\)](#)). An individual with the special education preendorsement authorization is considered competent to write IEPs and commit district resources as the district's designee, unless the district indicates otherwise. It should be noted that if such an individual moves to another district, the special education preendorsement authorization remains valid for that individual.

4. May an individual who holds a standard/continuing certificate be assigned to an elementary or secondary special education teaching position?

If the certificate holder was eligible for a continuing certificate prior to August 31, 1987 or had applied for said certificate prior to July 1, 1988 and met the eligibility requirements for the certificate prior to August 31, 1987, she/he may be assigned to a special education teaching position. Continuing certificates issued prior to August 31, 1987 did not require an endorsement for special education and enable the holder to serve in any subject area at all levels P–12 ([WAC 181-79A-250\(2\)](#)). It is up to the employing district to place the holder of the standard/continuing certificate according to his/her experience and area of preparation. This individual's time and effort may be charged to either federal and/or state special education funding codes.

5. If a teacher has a conditional teaching certificate that lists “special education” under the endorsement areas, does that mean the teacher is able to independently perform all of the duties of a special education teacher (e.g., write IEPs, conduct IEP meetings, etc.)?

No, areas listed under “Endorsements” on a conditional teaching certificate indicate the areas to which the teacher may be assigned, and do not necessarily indicate that the teacher is appropriately qualified to independently serve as a special education teacher.

Teachers and Educational Staff Associate (ESA) staff with conditional certificates, while able to be assigned to that role are considered to have the IDEA requirements to complete certification and/or licensure requirements waived. Consequently, these individuals are not considered “fully qualified” under special education regulations and must have an endorsed or licensed staff member assigned to write IEPs, serve in the role of special education teacher at an IEP and other meetings, as well as monitor and evaluate student progress towards IEP goals.

The district should use the temporary out-of-endorsement assignment process or request a special education preendorsement authorization depending on the number of credits the applicant has obtained.

6. May an individual who holds a special education K–12 endorsement teach in a special education preschool program?

[WAC 392-172A-02090\(1\)\(d\)](#) states, “...Preference for an early childhood special education assignment must be given first to employees having early childhood special education endorsement.” If a district is unable to recruit and hire an individual who is endorsed in early childhood special education, another individual holding a special education endorsement may be assigned to the preschool position. If a district is unable to recruit and hire an individual with either an early childhood special education endorsement or a K–12 special education endorsement, then the district may want to consider a temporary out-of-endorsement assignment or, if appropriate, hire an individual who can meet the special education preendorsement authorization requirements. Time and effort can be charged to either the federal or state special education funding codes.

7. Can I apply for an extension for my special education preendorsement authorization?

Per [WAC 181-82-110](#) the requirements for a special education endorsement must be completed within 3 years of the date of a candidate's special education preendorsement authorization approval letter. There is not an option to extend or renew the special education preendorsement authorization. The Special Education Office at OSPI, is responsible for the special education preendorsement authorization and the Certification Office would be the point of contact for all other questions regarding qualifications and implications of other certification options. The OSPI Certification Office can be reached at 360-725-6400 and they can provide more information about what other options may exist to be qualified to continue to teach, or you can submit a question directly through their survey page: [Certification Customer Service](#).

8. If a candidate does not yet have all the required credits for the special education preendorsement authorization, can they apply for the temporary out-of-endorsement assignment?

Yes. A candidate could get a temporary out-of-endorsement, which is completed entirely at the district level, while they wait to gain the needed two hundred forty clock hours (or the equivalent of 24 quarter **or** 16 semester credits) for the special education preendorsement authorization. It is important to note that individual with the temporary out-of-endorsement assignment may be assigned to the role of special education teacher but a special education endorsed individual within the district must design and supervise the instruction, as well as monitor and evaluate the progress of students assigned to the unendorsed individual ([WAC 392-172A-02090\(1\)\(g\)](#)). Once the candidate received the special education preendorsement authorization, they would be considered independently able to do the aforementioned.

9. Can clock hours earned count towards the special education preendorsement authorization?

As a general statement clock hours do not count for the pre-endorsement waiver. The exception to this is if the clock hours are part of a PESB approved teacher preparation program leading to a special education endorsement. The reason why clock hours are mentioned in the application is our state currently has just a few teacher preparation programs which are not universities or colleges and thus cannot offer credit.

10. Who can I reach out to if I still have questions?

- Questions on certification policy are best directed to the Professional Educators Standard Board (PESB) at PESB@k12.wa.us.
- Questions about certification requirements, applications and implications are best directed to the OSPI Certification Office. You can [submit a question to certification](#) or call them at 360-725-6400
- Questions about the special education preendorsement authorization, or special education personnel qualifications for special education services are best directed to the

Special Education department. You can email your question to speced@k12.wa.us or call 360-725-6075.