

# Special Education Teacher Approvals: How They Work

## Michigan Law

Michigan law requires schools to hire and employ properly certified and endorsed teachers (MCL 380.1231 and 380.1233). In order to systematically address needed exceptions to law, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has established Administrative Rules in accordance with R 340.1783 of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE). A school district or nonpublic school may choose to utilize the alternate route through the approval process as defined in the Federal Regulation 34 C.F.R. §300.156 (c)(2) to employ an individual or teacher who does not hold the appropriate endorsement. This approval process is considered an alternative route in these federal regulations.

## Steps for Obtaining a Special Education Teacher Approval

- Step 1. The employing superintendent must certify that the district conducted a search for a fully qualified teacher and there is no certified teacher holding the appropriate endorsement available to fill the position.
- Step 2. Verify the candidate possesses a valid Michigan Teacher Certificate or 1-Year Temporary Teacher Certificate. *Special Education Approvals cannot be issued to candidates without a valid Michigan teaching certificate or Temporary Teaching Certificate.*
- Step 3. Determine the appropriate approval needed for the candidate. The approval must match the category of the special education position (resource program approvals may hold any special education endorsement). See the [Special Education Assignments](#) document for the resource program endorsement exceptions.
- Step 5. Complete all tasks related to confirming the approval requirements have been met (e.g. background check per school safety law).
- Step 6. Make sure the candidate is aware they must enroll and get accepted into an approved Michigan Educator Preparation Program which matches the category of the assignment, and the candidate must complete 6 credits in

the program category prior to renewal. Please review [ProPrep](#) for approved programs.

Step 7. Obtain appropriate access to the [Michigan Online Educator Certification System \(MOECS\)](#) as a school user.

Step 8. Log in to the system and select “Approvals” from the menu of options.

Step 9. Using the appropriate [Procedures document](#) and all supporting documentation, respond to and verify each question asked within the MOECS online approval application.

Step 10. Once submitted, depending on the requirements and the approval type, the application will indicate one of the following statuses:

- Recommend or Deny
- Pending Payment (\$50)
- Approved
- Denied

## Documentation

It is important to note, in some cases (e.g., teacher consultant, transition coordinator, early childhood permit approval) the approval application does not require submission of documents to the Michigan Department of Education. In such cases, documentation to support the application must be maintained at the school or school district for future audit.

Documentation may include one or more of the following:

- College or university transcripts
- Proof of experience
- Competencies

## Validity

The approval is **not valid** until it reaches the approved status. This includes the payment process. A non-certified, inappropriately endorsed individual cannot be placed in the assignment without jeopardizing funding.

Special Education Teacher approvals are granted to an employing school district or intermediate school district (ISD). Review the guidance documents posted on the Special Education Approvals website for further clarification. Verification of an issued approval is completed either through the [Michigan Online Educator Certification System \(MOECS\)](#) or the [public verification site](#).

## Renewal

Vital to a successful renewal is the understanding of the renewal requirements for each approval (except for Early Childhood Permit: See Below) by both the district AND the candidate being considered for employment. Some renewal requirements must be completed while the candidate is working in the assignment (e.g., program specific credits, MTTC, etc.). An approval shall not be granted for more than 3 years but may be renewed.

## Early Childhood Special Education Permit Approval

- The Early Childhood Special Education Permit may be issued when a properly certificated teacher is unavailable for a teaching assignment for children with disabilities or developmental delays, per R. 340.1795.
- The Early Childhood Special Education Permit Approval is **non-renewable**.
- Is effective through June 30 of the school year for which it is issued and may not be transferred.
- The Early Childhood Special Education Permit Approval is **NOT** a [permit](#) from the Office of Educator Excellence (OEE).

## Additional Information

To better understand the designed uses and the differences between approvals, please reference the [Special Education Approvals Website](#) and guidance documents. For options outside of approvals, such as permits, please reference the [Special Education Assignments](#) guidance document or the educator [placement](#) page.

## Contact

For more information contact the MDE Office of Special Education:

608 W. Allegan Street  
Lansing, MI 48933

E-Mail: [MDE-OSE@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-OSE@michigan.gov)