



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 6, 2020

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Dr. Scott M. Koenigsknecht, Deputy Superintendent P-20 System and Student Transitions   
Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports 

**SUBJECT:** Emergency Provisions for Special Education Student Teaching and Practicum Requirements

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has received a number of inquiries regarding the impact of mandated school closures, due to COVID-19, on the successful completion of special education student teacher placements and/or practicums. We understand how school closures critically affect the status of teacher candidates who are enrolled in their final semester.

The [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education](#) (MARSE) contains the following rules, which may impact a teacher candidate's ability to successfully obtain a special education endorsement. **Please note these rules do not prohibit an individual from obtaining a valid Michigan Teaching Certificate.**

R 340.1782 Endorsed teachers of students with disabilities (d) requires a candidate to have not less than 8 weeks of directed student teaching in the specific area of impairment. Not less than 180-hour practicum in the specific area of impairment is required for each additional endorsement.

R 340.1796 Teachers of students with speech and language impairment (1)(c) A minimum of 300 clock hours of supervised practicum experience with persons who present a variety of communication disorders, to be acquired in conjunction with academic training, 150 hours of which shall be obtained at the graduate level.

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R 340.1797 Teachers of students requiring adapted physical education  
(b) A directed field experience of not less than 60 clock hours teaching adapted physical education in a school setting to students with disabilities.

R 340.1799c Teachers of students who are deaf and hard of hearing  
(3) Before assignment to directed student teaching, each student teacher shall spend a minimum of 60 clock hours in programs with students who are deaf or hard of hearing utilizing various communication modes, both manual and oral.

In the event school buildings remain closed throughout the state for the remainder of the school year, but all students are provided an opportunity to learn from a distance, school districts and universities are encouraged to consider how student teaching candidates can still be utilized.

- Districts must provide instruction for students with disabilities in effort to ensure every student with an IEP receives a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to ensure the student makes progress in the general curriculum and toward meeting IEP goals. *34 C.F.R. §§300.39 and 300.320*
- Each IEP team for students with an IEP must review the provision of FAPE during the period of distance learning, in order to determine whether compensatory services are warranted in any service area, including instruction and/or any individual therapies. (OSERS March 2020).

In the case of a student teaching and/or practicum candidate who is not able to complete a student teaching or supervised practicum experience in the specific area of impairment, and the university can document the candidate has demonstrated fulfillment of state and institutional expectations, ***the university may recommend the candidate for a Michigan teaching certificate and temporary approval of the special education endorsement with condition.***

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) indicates teachers can be considered to meet the standard, if that teacher is participating in an alternate route to special education certification. 34 CFR 300.156(2) In Michigan, the alternate route to special education certification is through temporary approval.

MARSE R 340.1783 Temporarily approved teachers of students with disabilities states under procedures established by the department, the department may grant temporary approval as a teacher of students with disabilities to **persons who hold a valid Michigan teaching certificate.** The employing superintendent shall certify that the district conducted a search for fully qualified personnel and that no certified teacher who holds full approval or endorsement for the position was available at the time of the assignment.

Within the authority of the Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 380.1281 the State Superintendent of Public Instruction may waive any section or subsection of Administrative Rules.

*MCL 380.1281(3) of the Revised School Code allows the state board to grant a school district, public school academy (PSA), or intermediate school district (ISD) a limited time waiver from a state board or department rule if the school district, PSA, or ISD demonstrates that it can either address the intent of the rule in a more effective, efficient or economical manner or that the waiver is necessary to stimulate improved pupil performance. The state board may place conditions on the waiver and may revoke a waiver if it determines the waiver no longer meets the criteria, compromises equal opportunities for learning, or is detrimental to the educational interests of pupils.*

Executive Order 1996-12 moved the authority granted in this law from the State Board to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Under this [waiver option](#), candidates are able to apply for special education teaching positions and provide the recommendation for employment under temporary approval issued by the granting university to a school district. The school district may hire the candidate for the position, and:

- apply for a temporary approval without having to certify the district conducted a search for fully qualified personnel and that no certified teacher who holds full approval or endorsement for the position was available at the time of the assignment; and
- assign a teacher, with an endorsement in the specific area of special education, to supervise the candidate for the duration of one school year.

In instances where the university determines the school closure has impeded a candidate's ability to demonstrate appropriate proficiency in those expectations, the MDE urges the institution to support the candidate in non-traditional ways. These options might include extending the field experience for the candidate, utilizing a university summer learning camp, if available, or assigning a grade of incomplete until the candidate can return to a student teaching setting and complete their experience. The MDE recognizes universities must follow policies in place at their respective institutions in determining such options.

For questions please contact Gina Garner [garnerg1@michigan.gov](mailto:garnerg1@michigan.gov) at the MDE Office of Educator Excellence with questions. For questions regarding the waiver, please contact Beth Cooke [cookee@michigan.gov](mailto:cookee@michigan.gov) at the MDE Office of Special Education.

cc. Michigan Education Alliance