



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 24, 2023

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

FROM: Dr. Michele A. Harmala, Deputy Superintendent
P-20 System and Student Transitions

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MAH", positioned to the right of the "FROM:" field.

SUBJECT: Substitute Teacher Placement for Special Education Programs

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education (OSE) recommends intermediate school districts (ISDs) and local education agencies (LEAs), which include traditional public school districts and public school academies (PSAs), review federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) minimum requirements for teachers placed in special education programs. MDE OSE suggests ISDs and LEAs prioritize substitute teacher placements in each special education program to ensure those programs are staffed by an individual who minimally has a bachelor's degree and is participating in either a traditional or alternative route to special education certification.

While Michigan law [MCL 380.1233\(5\)\(a\)](#) allows for substitute teachers to work under a permit with a minimum of 60 credit hours, the federal IDEA requires ISDs and LEAs to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE), which includes specially designed instruction from appropriately and adequately trained personnel as outlined in [34 CFR §300.156](#).

ISDs and LEAs are reminded of their responsibility to ensure all students with disabilities have available to them a FAPE that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for future education, employment, and independent living, and to ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all students with disabilities ([34 CFR §300.1](#)).

IDEA is clear that the minimum requirements for a qualified teacher are a bachelor's degree and participation in either a traditional or alternative route to a special education certification program ([34 CFR §300.156](#)).

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Additional information on personnel qualifications is available in a memorandum issued by the federal Office of Special Education Programs on October 4, 2022: [Personnel Qualifications under Part B of IDEA](#).

The aforementioned guidance is consistent with department guidance shared on May 25, 2023 regarding [Substitute Teacher Placement for Special Education Programs](#).

The Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS) application process for Full-Year Basic Permits (FYBP) was recently modified and applications for FYBP for substitute teachers in special education placements were being placed on hold for verification of a bachelor's degree. This created an unintended delay in issuing permits. The Office of Educator Excellence (OEE) has addressed and resolved the issue. A notification will also be provided to current MOECS users.

Please contact the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education Information Desk at 1-888-320-8384 or MDE-OSE@Michigan.gov with any questions.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Departments