



Introduction to the Standards for the Preparation and Practice of Special Education Administrators

Michigan State Board of Education

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Conceptual Framework for the Preparation of Special Education Administrators in Michigan

A special education administrator preparation program is comprised of multiple interdependent components that prepare candidates for certification to demonstrate proficiencies defined in several aligned sets of standards. Although there are many standards that can be considered when establishing updated requirements for preparation programs, the following national and state standards and rules were considered as the basis for the current recommendations due to their utilization by preparation programs across Michigan.

- National Standards
 - [Educational Leadership Program Standards - Building Level](#) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011)
 - [Educational Leadership Program Standards - District Level](#) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011)
 - *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards and Guidelines* (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015)
- State Rules/Goals
 - [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education](#) (MARSE)
 - Michigan Top 10 and 10 Years Strategic Plan, Goals 1, 2, and 3

Purpose

Recent changes in federal law from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) have required the Department to reconsider the mechanisms, requirements, and standards for school administrator preparation. The existing rules under the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) do not prescribe the training or experience required for special education administrators to make them credentialed or eligible to supervise instruction of special education personnel, programs, and related services. The intent of this work is to:

- prepare and permit special education administrators to supervise and evaluate personnel,
- provide more cohesive programs and related services for all student, and
- align the existing administrator certification requirements in the development of special education standards in order to create better integration of general education and special education services.

Development of the Proposed Standards

In fall 2017, the Office of Educator Excellence (OEE) and the Office of Special Education (OSE) at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) began the conversation to plan for a transition process to move the responsibilities of overseeing the preparation program approval and credentialing processes for directors and supervisors of special education from OSE to OEE. This transition is aimed to:

- support Goals 1, 2, and 3 of MDE's Top 10 in 10 Years Strategic Plan;
- provide students, families and educators access to competent administrators;

- reduce duplication of resources between OEE and OSE by merging credentialing of special education administrators into a single process;
- create consistencies in the credentialing process; and
- recognize the expertise and training special education administrators bring.

A stakeholder group consisting of representatives from P-12 schools, educator preparation institutions, and professional associations was assembled to engage in this process to review current approval and credentialing systems at MDE, special education director and supervisor preparation practices, and on-the-job roles and responsibilities in the field. After examining current systems and practices, these stakeholders determined that competencies listed in MARSE Rule 340.1771 and 1772 are no longer sufficient in identifying what special education administrators should know and be able to do. Specifically, the current rules do not provide detailed guidance for:

- the evaluation of programs and personnel;
- curriculum and instructional leadership;
- the provision of programs, services, and outcomes;
- the application of research and evidence-based practices;
- leadership of vision, mission, and culture;
- implementation and monitoring of compliance with applicable laws and policies;
- leading professional learning; and
- collaborative approaches and ethical decision making.

Starting in August 2018, biweekly meetings were held to construct this new set of standards for the preparation and practice of special education administrators. Through this process, stakeholders also determined that the existing separation of supervisor (MARSE Rule 340.1772) and director (MARSE Rule 340.1771) competencies was no longer operationally practical. In response, another goal of developing this set of standards was to consolidate MARSE administrative competencies for these two roles into a comprehensive credentialing system for administrators who have responsibilities over special education programs and services. In doing so, the stakeholder group strongly recommended a single special education administrator certification, as opposed to two separate approval systems.

The Standards as developed by the stakeholder group were presented to the Michigan State Board of Education in August 2019. A period for public comment followed the presentation. A total of 120 responses were received with 52 comments and suggestions directly related to the proposed standards and 68 comments on the credentialing of special education administrators. The comments largely focused on three main concerns: 1) a desire to add specific language about early childhood, infant and toddler services; 2) the lack of a plan to transition currently approved directors and supervisors into the new credential; and 3) requirements for the new special education administrator credential.

1. Addition of specific language about early childhood, infant and toddler services:

Many comments on the standards called for the addition of specific language in the standards and elements to enhance special education administrators' understanding of services for early childhood populations such as infant and

toddler groups. While the stakeholder group made a few minor changes for language clarification, such as adding “early intervention” in Element 2 of Standard 4, they did not add phrases such as “infant, toddler or children” into the proposed language. They believe the use of the word “student” is sufficient as it represents all individuals who are being served by schools regardless of age. The group intentionally chose to use fewer words and phrases to define specific student populations in the standards to emphasize that these competencies are to be applied broadly to all students.

2. Transition plan for currently approved directors and supervisors of special education:

The MDE will continue to issue approval letters for special education directors and supervisors and also add a new credential for individuals to become eligible to work as a special education administrator. Individuals holding a valid approval letter to serve as a director or supervisor of special education will be able to continue serving in their respective roles after the introduction of the new special education administrator credential. Employers will be able to employ currently qualified directors and currently qualified supervisors as well as individuals possessing the new special education administrator credential in the future. The MDE will develop a process for currently approved directors and supervisors to obtain the new special education administrator credential if they desire to do so.

3. Requirements for the new special education administrator credential:

While some commenters supported the notion that special education administrators must hold a teaching credential, the overwhelming majority of public comments opposed teacher certification as a prerequisite to earning a special education administrator credential. Currently, MARSE specifies that full approval in at least one area of special education is a requirement for Director and Supervisor approval (MARSE, R 340.1771 and 340.1772). This has been interpreted as either a teaching credential in special education or a credential to provide special education services (e.g., school social worker, school psychologist). The MDE will continue to interpret this requirement broadly with the new special education administrator credential. The standards document provided for public comment erred in limiting this requirement to a teaching credential, and the MDE apologizes for this error.

While the current MARSE requirements for directors and supervisors of special education will remain in effect until the proposed changes are addressed through the formal rule-making process, the stakeholder group has asked the OEE and OSE to consider the following requirements for the new special education administrator credential:

- Full license or certificate in at least 1 area of special education, which may include teaching and/or other related services as defined by IDEA (e.g., school social worker, school psychologist).
- Three years of teaching, professional practice or administrative experience in special education or a combination of practice and experience

- Completion of an approved special education administrator preparation program which leads to a special education administrator credential in Michigan or another state
- Completion of a 200-clock hour practicum in special education administration as part of a preparation program
- Valid MDE administrator certification at either building or central office level, which may be earned concurrently with the special education administrator credential.

The OEE reconvened the stakeholder group after the public comment period to revise the standards, and in collaboration with the OSE solicited a second round of public comment through January 17, 2020.

A total of 32 comments were received during the second public comment period. Nineteen respondents indicated a position of support, support with minor revisions, or neutrality on the standards. Most of the comments offered by these respondents focused on credentialing requirements rather than the standards themselves. Respondents also offered feedback on strengthening the language in Standard 5 regarding the preparation of special education administrators to supervise and support the work of special education teachers and paraeducators. This feedback was incorporated into this draft of the standards.

Ten individuals indicated a position that significant changes were needed, and three individuals indicated that they are against the proposed standards. None of these respondents provided feedback on the standards themselves, but rather focused their comments on credentialing requirements, some of which are beyond the scope of these standards as they are governed by MARSE. As credentialing processes continue to be a topic of concern despite the clarifications made prior to the second round of public comment, the OSE and OEE will take this feedback into consideration as potential revisions to MARSE are being discussed and drafted.

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**Standards for the
Preparation and Practice of
Special Education
Administrators**

Standard 1:

Special education administrators plan for and ensure implementation of the evaluation process in special education for personnel and programs. To do so, the special education administrator must possess a strong working knowledge of models, theories, evidence-based practices, and legal requirements used to evaluate educational programs and personnel serving students with disabilities and their families.

Standard 1	Evaluation of Program and Personnel: Special education administrators promote the use of valid and reliable assessment practices.
Element 1 (K)*	Knowledge of models, theories, evidence-based practices, and legal requirements used to evaluate educational programs and personnel serving students with disabilities and their families
Element 2 (S)**	Demonstrate understanding for and implementation of procedures for the participation of students with disabilities in accountability systems
Element 3 (S)	Develop, implement, and monitor ongoing evaluations of education programs and services to ensure compliance to local, state, and federal laws and policies
Element 4 (S)	Develop and implement ongoing evaluations of education personnel
Element 5 (S)	Design and implement evaluation procedures that improve instructional content and evidence-based practices

*(K): Knowledge

** (S): Skill

Standard 2:

Special education administrators plan for and ensure that students with disabilities are provided programs and related services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) combined with the use of appropriate accommodations, differentiation, and trained support staff. To plan for the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for each student with disability, the special education administrator works effectively with general education personnel, content specialists and special education personnel to plan a meaningful, organized, standards-based sequence of curriculum offerings.

Standard 2	Curriculum and Instruction: Special education administrators use their knowledge of curriculum and specialized instruction to improve programs, supports, and related services within classroom, school, district and community settings.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of curriculum and the delivery of instruction needed to support access to the general education curriculum, including scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and assistive technology, for students with disabilities
Element 2 (S)	Develop and implement an administrative plan that supports the use of instructional and assistive technologies
Element 3 (S)	Provide ongoing supervision of personnel working with students with disabilities and their families

Element 4 (S)	Collaborate with other school curriculum personnel to determine an appropriate sequence of curricular offerings to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities
Element 5 (S)	Develop and implement transition processes that would provide continual services as indicated in Parts B and C of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
Element 6 (S)	Develop and implement transition services designed to move students toward self-determined post-secondary outcomes and independence

Standard 3:

Special education administrators understand, plan for, and assure implementation of student assessment processes. This involves collecting information about a student for the purpose of making decisions regarding: Child Find; pre-referral and screening; determination of eligibility; and monitoring and reporting of learning progress in the general education curriculum as well as individualized education program goals and objectives.

Standard 3	Programs, Services, and Outcomes: Special education administrators facilitate the continuous assessment of the eligibility process and the efficacy of programs, supports, and services within classroom, school, district and community settings for meeting the needs of students with disabilities.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of programs and services within the general education curriculum to achieve positive outcomes for students with disabilities
Element 2 (K)	Knowledge of programs and strategies that promote positive school engagement for students with disabilities
Element 3 (S)	Develop and implement a flexible continuum of programs and related services based on evidence-based practices for students with disabilities and their families
Element 4 (S)	Ensure the development and implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports which informs appropriate interventions and referrals to meet the needs of all students
Element 5 (S)	Develop data-based educational expectations and evidence-based programs that take into account the diversity of students and their families
Element 6 (S)	Ensure effective identification, assessment of eligibility, program development and student achievement

Standard 4:

Special education administrators view scholarly literature and professional learnings as the principle sources for information on effective practice. They know models, theories, philosophies, and research methods that form the basis for evidence-based practices in special education. They use research to develop, implement and improve components of program and practice including instructional techniques, intervention strategies, and curricula.

Standard 4	Research and Inquiry: Special education administrators conduct, evaluate, and use inquiry to guide professional practice.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of research in administrative practices that support students with disabilities and their families
Element 2 (S)	Engage in data-based decision making regarding the administration of early intervention, educational programs and related services that support students with disabilities and their families
Elements 3 (S)	Participate in continuous professional learning, including professional administrative organizations, to guide administrative practices when working with students with disabilities and their families
Elements 4 (S)	Function as critical consumers regarding research and inquiry methods, as well as evidence-based practices, while making curriculum, professional learning and other decisions

Standard 5:

Special education administrators lead educational agencies to facilitate policies and practices that promote student growth and achievement. They ensure the delivery of evidence-based practices which capitalize on the individual strengths of each learner.

Standard 5	Leadership: Special education administrators provide leadership to formulate vision and goals; establish and model high professional expectations; advocate for effective policies and evidence-based practices; and create positive and productive work environments.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of models, theories, and philosophies that provide the foundation for the administration of programs and related services for students with disabilities and their families
Element 2 (S)	Apply leadership, organization, and systems change theories to the provision of services for students with disabilities and their families
Element 3 (S)	Ensure effective program development and coordination of the delivery of all programs and related services across schools and districts in collaboration with general education
Element 4 (S)	Communicate a personal inclusive vision and mission for meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families
Element 5 (S)	Lead, support, manage, mentor, evaluate, and coach personnel including support staff
Element 6 (S)	Lead, support, manage, mentor, evaluate, and coach paraeducators and prepare others to do the same

Standard 6:

Special education administrators interpret and apply local, state and federal laws and policies and understand their history and social significance. They advocate for necessary change to ensure effective delivery of programs and related services designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities and provide a Free

Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment. They utilize fiscal policies and funding mechanisms to provide quality programs and related services for students with disabilities.

Standard 6	Law and Policy: Special education administrators advocate for and ensure the implementation of relevant local, state, and federal laws and policies at classroom, school, and district levels.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of federal and state historical and social significance of the laws, regulations, and policies as they apply to the administration of programs and the provision of services for students with disabilities and their families
Element 2 (K)	Knowledge of local, state and federal fiscal policies and funding mechanisms in education, social, and health agencies as they apply to the provision of services for students with disabilities and their families
Element 3 (K)	Knowledge of local, state and federal requirements on dispute resolution including mediation, state complaints, and due process complaints
Element 4 (S)	Interpret and apply current federal and state laws, regulations, and policies to the administration of instructional programs and services supporting students with disabilities and their families
Element 5 (S)	Develop a budget in accordance with local, state, and federal laws for the provision of services for students with disabilities and their families
Element 6 (S)	Engage in recruitment, hiring, and retention practices that comply with local, state, and federal laws as they apply to personnel serving students with disabilities and their families
Element 7 (S)	Advocate for local, state and federal policies that ensure effective delivery of programs and related services for students with disabilities

Standard 7:

Special education administrators engage in learning activities to continuously increase their knowledge and skill in the provision of programs and related services for students with disabilities. They plan and deliver ongoing professional development that is evidence-based and supported by professional standards and/or educational organizations. They design and align professional development activities to improve practice of key stakeholders of the educational community at all organizational levels.

Standard 7	Professional Learning: Special education administrators use professional standards to inform practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of educators and all students.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of adult learning theories and models as they apply to professional growth activities
Element 2 (K)	Knowledge of professional growth theories and evidence-based practices that address and improve academic, behavioral, and programmatic outcomes for students with disabilities

Element 3 (S)	Develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate professional growth activities and programs that improve staff professional practices and be in compliance with local, state, and federal requirements leading to improved outcomes for students with disabilities and their families
Element 4 (S)	Develop, implement, monitor and evaluate personal growth activities that improve administrative practices leading to improved outcomes for students with disabilities and their families

Standard 8:

Special education administrators model and facilitate high professional expectations and ethical decision making to create supportive environments that improve outcomes for students with disabilities. They have a deep understanding of the significance of collaboration among educators, families, and others from the community in order to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus.

Standard 8	Ethics and Collaboration: Special education administrators engage in ethical decision making and collaborate with stakeholders to improve programs, related services, and outcomes for all students and their families.
Element 1 (K)	Knowledge of ethical theories and related leadership implications for program and supervision that inform collaborative practices and support the administration of programs and related services for students with disabilities and their families
Element 2 (K)	Knowledge of administrative theories and models that facilitate communication among stakeholders
Element 3 (K)	Knowledge of contemporary and historical perspectives of advocacy at the local, state and federal level for students with disabilities and their families
Element 4 (K)	Knowledge of parent, community, and advocacy organizations as they support students with disabilities and their families
Element 5 (K)	Knowledge of the impact of diversity on educational programming expectations for students with disabilities
Element 6 (K)	Knowledge of intra- and inter-agency agreements that create programs with shared responsibility for students with disabilities and their families
Element 7 (S)	Implement collaborative administrative procedures and strategies to facilitate communication among stakeholders
Element 8 (S)	Engage in leadership practices that support shared decision making
Element 9 (S)	Demonstrate the skills necessary to promote ongoing communication, education, and support for and with families of all students

Element 10 (S)	Consult, collaborate, and coordinate regarding academic, behavioral and programmatic decisions at the school, district, intermediate school district levels to provide services within the least restrictive environment
Element 11 (S)	Utilize collaborative approaches for involving stakeholders in educational planning, systemic implementation, and evaluation
Element 12 (S)	Apply ethical practices when working with stakeholders serving all students and their families