

California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THOSE CONCERNED WITH TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS
A SECOND LANGUAGE OR DIALECT AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH AS SECOND/OTHER LANGUAGE CREDENTIAL

Proposal: Request for the California Commission On Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to approve a new single-subject credential subject area of English as Second/Other Language (ESOL).

Background: Given the increasing number of students in the California public schools for whom English is a second or other language (ESOL), it is critical that our public school teachers are as well prepared as possible to meet the needs of our growing diverse student population. “According to data from the U.S. Census, there were 3 million children, age 5-17, living in California who spoke a language other than English, representing 44 percent of the school-age population” (Gándara & Rumberger, 2006) and as we know this number will continue to increase. While we applaud the efforts of CTC to ensure that all teachers are prepared to teach and assess English learners as part of the 2042 credential and via the CTEL these measures are not sufficient to meet the unique needs of teaching specifically the academic content of English as a Second Language at the middle and high school levels. A large number of students who are in middle and high school classrooms across California are second language learners who are being taught by teachers who have single subject credentials in the areas of Math, Science, Art, etc., but do not have specific content area knowledge of linguistics and second language acquisition theory and methodology that goes beyond the 2042 and CTEL knowledge base.

Currently, California requires all new elementary and secondary credential holders to have a CLAD certificate or coursework that is now a component of the SB 2042 Multiple and Single subject credential. However, this authorization is only a supplement to a candidate’s primary subject area. The knowledge, skills and abilities these candidates exit our certification programs with are related more directly to making content areas (e.g. math, science, social studies) more comprehensible to English language learners, but not specific to developing English as a second or other language (ESOL) in and of itself. The focus of SB 2042 and CLAD is to ensure that all teachers in California have a basic knowledge of the unique academic needs of English learners and an understanding of how to assess, place and teach English learners as part of the language arts, and content area curricula. SB 2042 and CLAD certified middle and high school teachers are not prepared to specialize in teaching the content nor the unique instructional strategies of English language development/ESL to the various second language proficiency levels. This requires more in depth knowledge, skills and abilities in the areas of language acquisition, specifically complex grammatical and syntactical structures that focus on *academic* communication and literacy skills.

Under current California credentialing requirements, teachers interested in receiving this level of training would have to pursue a Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) or applied linguistics, but that would not be recognized necessarily as even meeting the CLAD requirements under 2042. Having an additional option available to middle and high school teaching candidates that would allow them to receive an ESL/ESOL credential would help to address a significant need in student instruction. In addition, this certification would meet federal NCLB requirements for highly qualified teachers. Finally, such a certification would also address concerns about teacher preparation for ELs addressed in the research conducted by Patricia Gándara and Russell W. Rumberger, *Resource Needs for California’s English Learners* (2006) and *Seeking Equity in the Education of California’s English Learners* (2004).

ESOL As An Academic Subject

In prior years, the Commission On Teacher Credentialing has argued that ESL is not an “academic subject” but only a method of teaching. CATESOL believes that there is ample evidence to counter this point view. There are professional examinations administered by other states and Educational Testing Services (ETS) that are specifically designed to assess the content knowledge for ESL/ESOL. California, while having English Language Development (ELD) Standards for students, has not adopted specific content standards for the teaching of English as a Second or Other Language. However, the International Organization of TESOL has developed rigorous standards for teacher preparation in this in this area and these standards are similar in depth and breadth to those for science, math, social studies and foreign languages. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) uses these standards to recognize ESL teacher preparation programs throughout the United States. These processes of certification and accreditation for ESL/ESOL are similar to those developed in the teaching of foreign languages including French, Italian, and Spanish, which are commonly taught languages in middle and high school settings.

Impact of An ESOL Credential

The creation of an ESOL/ELD classes. There are also major concerns that our schools are not adequately preparing our ESOL students to succeed as pointed out by the Gandara, Rumberger study. California’s efforts need to be focused on ensuring that ESL students receive appropriate instruction in English as a language and also as the language of instruction. One of the best means of doing this is to offer an ESOL credential to middle and high school teacher candidates. Such certification would ensure that there is an opportunity for those individuals who are specifically interested in teaching English as a Second or Other Language are as well prepared as possible to provide this instruction to ESL students as those who teach Math, Science and other single subject content areas.

ESL Credential Program Offered In Other States

There are many other states that offer ESL/ESOL credentials and endorsements as an option for its teacher candidates. These other states include Arizona, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Florida, Rhode Island, Oklahoma, and Texas. CATESOL can do a more exhaustive search at your request. We have attached to this document an example document from the State of Connecticut that outlines their TESOL Certification requirements (attachment #1).

Costs of Developing the Credential

There would be some cost associated with the CTC developing an ESOL credential. However, these costs should be minimal. There are TESOL standards already developed by TESOL that can be adapted for the California context, these standards are also used by NCATE for evaluation of programs. In addition, there already exists a well-developed PRAXIS English as a Second or Other Language Examination (PRAXIS-professional teacher examinations, administered via Educational Testing Service, see attachment #2) that can be used to assess content specific knowledge of ESL/ESOL. This exam is used in many states for content certification for teaching ESL and ESOL. Finally there are programs on many of the CSU campuses that can be used as models for content teaching and teacher development for ESOL programs.

Summary

The California Teachers of English To Speakers of Other Languages (CATESOL) is a statewide professional organization of ESL teachers. CATESOL is strongly supportive of the development of a single subject

ESOL credential in California. If approved this authorization could be added as a supplemental to a multiple or single subject matter credential. We are willing to support any effort to introduce legislation to implement this policy. If you would like to discuss this issue further please contact me at (916) 447-8420.

References

Gándara, P. & Rumberger, R. (2006). *Resource needs for California's English learners*. Paper prepared for: Getting down to facts: A research project to inform solutions to California's education problems. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute.

Rumberger, R. W., & Gándara, P. (2004). Seeking equity in the education of California's English learners. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), 2032–2056.

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