

# REVISION TO CERTIFICATE RENEWAL MANUAL OCTOBER 2001

## Important Information for Special Education Teachers and their LPDCs

### Introduction

In October 2000 the State Board of Education and the State Teacher Certification published the first edition of the Certificate Renewal Manual. This document contained the information necessary for the implementation of Section 21-14 of the School Code, which requires continuing professional development as a condition for the renewal of standard and master teaching certificates. The manual explained the purposes teachers' professional development is required to address and the proportions of teachers' credit that must apply to these purposes.

On June 22, 2000, the Court-appointed Monitor in the federal *Corey H.* lawsuit issued several "determinations" specifying, among other things, requirements for the continuing professional development of special education teachers. Those determinations were upheld by an order issued on September 12, 2000, by Judge Robert W. Gettleman. Pursuant to these dispositions, the State Board of Education must issue a revision to the Certificate Renewal Manual to describe the requirements that apply to special education teachers.

This supplement contains the revisions that reflect the Monitor's and the Judge's requirements. As such, the material it contains supersedes all conflicting material that currently appears in the Certificate Renewal Manual, chiefly in Sections I and II of that document. It also supersedes any conflicting statements that appear in the "Summary of Requirements for Certificate Renewal". The specific portions of the manual and the summary that are affected by this revision are noted in the body of this document, as are other provisions that are related to but not changed by the same portions of the revision.

### New Requirements for Special Education Teachers

Under the Monitor's determinations and the Judge's order, there are several different requirements with which special education teachers must comply. Two of these apply to all special education teachers, while a third requirement relates only to teachers who receive the new Learning Behavior Specialist I endorsement or approval.

Please note that these requirements apply only to individuals who are serving as special education teachers, i.e., those whose certificate renewal plans are required to be based upon a special education teaching assignment. Teachers who hold certification or approval in special education but are not currently using those credentials will become subject to these requirements if they change assignments and teach in special education in the future. However, it should also be noted that new requirements for regular education teachers to engage in continuing professional development related to special education can be expected as of January 1, 2003. These are under development at this time. Regular education teachers would be well advised to devote some portion of their activities to special education in preparation for the effective date of the new requirements.

## **I. The “50 Percent” Rule**

### **A. Distribution of Credits**

Under the system that is already in place pursuant to Section 21-14 of the School Code and the administrative rules for certificate renewal, each teacher who is subject to the requirement for continuing professional development must devote 50 percent of the credits he or she needs to a combination of “Purpose A” and “Purpose B”. The Court Monitor’s determination of June 22, 2000, alters the way in which this requirement will apply to special education teachers.

- “Purpose A” is the advancement of one’s knowledge and skills relevant to one’s current field of certification, endorsement, or teaching assignment, consistent with the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the applicable content-area standards. (For special education teachers, therefore, Purpose A already relates to special education.)
- “Purpose B” is the development of one’s knowledge and skills in areas determined to be critical for all Illinois teachers (the “State priorities” identified by the State Board of Education). (Special education is one of the five State priorities.)

The principal difference in the requirements for special education teachers is that they must choose special education over the other four State priorities (reading, mathematics, standards and assessment, and integrating technology into teaching and learning) until they have reached the 50 percent threshold. Teachers may, of course, also claim credit for activities related to any of the other State priorities, as long as the 50 percent rule is observed.

This means that 50% of the credits a teacher needs for certificate renewal must be attributable to activities that relate to any of the standards applicable to the teacher’s current field (Purpose A) or to any other matter reasonably connected

to meeting the needs of students who receive special education (Purpose B). There must be some credit for Purpose A and some for Purpose B.

Practically speaking, there is a lot of overlap between the two purposes. Since the rules provide that each activity may be credited to all the purposes to which it relates, everything that “counts” for Purpose A will, in the case of a special education teacher, automatically also “count” for Purpose B. The reverse is not necessarily true, however. There would be quite a range of activities relevant to special education (B) that would not be directly connected to the content-area standards (A) for a teacher’s specific special education endorsement.

For example, a teacher of students who are blind or visually impaired could earn 50 percent of his or her continuing professional development credits for activities that relate to the content-area standards for that endorsement. These credits would be attributable both to Purpose A and to Purpose B and would therefore fulfill the requirement established by the Court Monitor.

In another example, a teacher of students who are deaf or hard of hearing could devote 50 percent of his or her credits to learning about standards and assessment as this topic relates to measuring the progress of students with hearing impairments. The teacher could “count” these credits toward both Purpose A and Purpose B, because there are content-area standards related to the assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation of students with hearing impairments (Purpose A) and because the subject matter obviously relates to meeting the needs of students who receive special education (Purpose B). (The fact that “standards and assessment” is one of the other State priorities does not disqualify relevant activities from being attributed to the State priority of special education. The same is true for the other State priorities, as long as the skills and knowledge involved relate to meeting special education students’ needs.)

Teachers and LPDCs should note that it is not necessary for the words “special education” to appear in the title of an activity in order for that activity to be attributed to special education under Purpose A or Purpose B. As long as the evidence of completion submitted by the teacher discusses how the activity will help the teacher meet the needs of students with disabilities, the LPDC is able to “count” it toward the special education requirement.

The 50 percent requirement is permanent and must be met by special education teachers in each certificate renewal cycle.

Affected Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-5, reference to half of credits attributable to Purposes A and B;
- Page I-15, Figure 4, reference to Purposes A and B;
- Page II-5, reference to five State priorities;
- Appendix A, Instructions for Completing the Certificate Renewal Plan, item #7, reference to distribution of credits.

Other Related Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page VI-3, reference to distribution of credits;
- Appendix A, Certificate Renewal Plan (form ISBE 77-03), reference to Purpose B and State priorities;

Affected Portion of Summary:

- Pages 8-10, reference to the purposes and distribution of credits among them.

Other Related Portion of Summary:

- Page 4, discussion of purposes.

## **B. Effect of Proportionate Reduction**

The administrative rules for certificate renewal and the text of the October 2000 manual contain a provision that deals with the potential for a conflict between the total number of credits a teacher needs and the required distribution of those credits. This conflict may arise in cases where the total requirement for continuing professional development is reduced in proportion to the amount of time during which a teacher's certificate is maintained as "valid and exempt".

The manual explains that, in such a case, the total number of credits the teacher needs will govern, meaning that the teacher need not accumulate credits in excess of that number in order to satisfy the distribution of credits among the purposes that would otherwise be required.

This accommodation is not available to special education teachers. In their case, any conflict between the number of credits needed and the required distribution among the purposes must be resolved in favor of observing the "50 percent" rule as that requirement is explained above. Please see also "Beginning Date for Requirements" below.

Affected Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-12, reference to proportionate reduction and conformance with total number of credits required;
- Page II-7, reference to proportionate reduction and conformance with total number of credits required.

Related Portion of Summary:

- Pages 3-4, reference to proportionate reduction.

## **C. Time Served as a Special Education Teacher**

Many teachers have multiple certificates, and many interrupt their teaching careers for one reason or another. Consequently not everyone who is a special education teacher at some time during a given certificate renewal cycle will be a special education teacher for that entire cycle. LPDCs must track the semesters during which each individual serves as a special education teacher, because the "50 percent" rule will apply in proportion to the amount of time for which this is the case.

For example, a teacher who holds standard certificates in both elementary and special education might use the elementary certificate for the first three years of his or her certificate's five years of validity, then change assignments and become a special education teacher for the remaining two years (or 40 percent of the certificate's period of validity). The "50 percent" rule will apply to that teacher's continuing professional development only for 40 percent of the time, resulting in a 20 percent overall requirement for credits attributable to special education.

Related Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-10, reference to change in assignment;
- Page II-6, reference to change in assignment.

Related Portion of Summary:

- Page 10, item #8 regarding revising plan when assignment changes.

#### **D. Beginning Date for Requirements**

While this matter has been pending, many teachers have proceeded in good faith to engage in activities covered by their approved certificate renewal plans. Some have even completed all the required activities. These individuals may not have had adequate notice to comply with the "50 percent" rule. Therefore, for their first certificate renewal cycle only, they will receive a special accommodation.

- For any teacher who had fulfilled all the requirements of his or her approved plan prior to July 1, 2001, the 50 percent requirement will be reduced to 25 percent for the first cycle. In addition, these teachers will not be required to revise their plans to encompass any additional activities they need to complete related to special education, even if revisions would otherwise be necessary under the rules for certificate renewal. LPDCs should simply accept the required evidence of completion for such activities and credit them appropriately.
- For any other teacher whose standard certificate expires in 2004 or 2005, the 50 percent requirement will apply only to the second half of this first renewal cycle, thereby being reduced to 25 percent (and possibly less, e.g., if the teacher does not teach in special education every semester in the second half of the cycle or maintains his or her certificate as Valid and Exempt for some portion of that time). A teacher in this group will need to revise his or her plan to encompass any additional activities that need to be related to special education.

Affected Portion of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-10, reference to requirement for LPDC's approval of changes.

Affected or Related Portions of Summary: None.

## **E. A Note on Other Existing Provisions Regarding Distribution of Credits**

The Certificate Renewal Manual reflects two provisions of Section 21-14 of the School Code that remain in effect for special education teachers irrespective of the “50 percent rule” outlined above. Teachers who fulfill the requirement for continuing professional development exclusively through college coursework need to earn one quarter of the credits they need in courses relevant to Purpose A and need not fulfill any of the other statutorily established purposes. Further, for special education teachers as well as for regular education teachers, completion of the certification process established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) fulfills 100 percent of the requirement for one certificate renewal cycle, whether or not the individual receives NPBTS certification. These two provisions were reiterated in the Monitor’s determinations.

As for all other teachers, each special education teacher must determine whether Purpose C (addressing the knowledge, skills, and goals of the certificate holder’s local school improvement plan) applies to him or her and, if so, accrue some credit attributable to meeting this purpose. Activities related to special education may or may not fulfill this purpose, depending upon the content of the school improvement plan in each case.

The remainder of the credit needed by a teacher may be attributed to Purpose A, Purpose B, Purpose C, or Purpose D (expanding knowledge and skills in an additional teaching field or toward the acquisition of another teaching certificate, endorsement, or relevant education degree). Purpose D is entirely optional for any teacher.

### Related Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-5, reference to one-quarter of semester hours relevant to Purpose A;
- Page I-6, reference to completion of the NBPTS process;
- Page II-5, reference to one-quarter of semester hours relevant to Purpose A;
- Page II-6, reference to completion of the NBPTS process.

Affected or Related Portions of Summary: None.

## **II. Adapting and Modifying Curriculum**

Another aspect of the Court Monitor’s June 22, 2000, determinations is that each special education teacher’s certificate renewal plan must have content relating to adaptation and modification of curriculum as this relates to the Illinois Learning Standards. This means that some portion of each teacher’s activities must focus on adapting/modifying curriculum in the fundamental areas of learning to assist students with disabilities in meeting the State Goals for Learning and the Illinois Learning Standards.

The Court Monitor did not specify any given amount or percentage of a teacher's credits that must be devoted to this topic. It should be noted that activities related to this requirement will be creditable under Purpose A, in that the common core of content-area standards for all special educators includes an understanding of the general curriculum and of techniques for modifying instructional methods, curricular methods, and the environment to meet learners' needs. Such activities can also obviously be attributed to Purpose B (the State priority of special education). Finally, they may also be creditable under Purpose C, again depending upon the content of the school improvement plan in each case.

This requirement is permanent and must be met by special education teachers in each certificate renewal cycle.

Affected or Related Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual: None.

Affected or Related Portions of Summary: None.

### **III. The "Other Disability" Rule**

The Court Monitor's determination introduced an additional complexity to the requirements applicable only to teachers who receive the new "Learning Behavior Specialist I" credential. (The requirement outlined below does not apply to speech-language pathologists or to teachers of students with visual impairments or hearing impairments.)

The new Learning Behavior Specialist I credential will subsume the current endorsements and approvals for serving students with learning disabilities, mental impairments, physical disabilities, and social/emotional disorders. Each teacher who receives a "limited" Learning Behavior Specialist I credential will be required to engage in activities that will help him or her to meet the needs of students with disabilities other than those for which he or she was already endorsed or approved. The purpose of this requirement is to broaden these teachers' preparation, acknowledging the potential that the Learning Behavior Specialist I will have for being assigned to teach students with any of the disabilities mentioned above as well as autism, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments.

These will be credits such teachers can attribute to Purpose A (content-area standards) and Purpose B (the State priority of special education). Further, these will be the only kind of credits a teacher can attribute to Purpose A as long as his or her learning Learning Behavior Specialist I is "limited". This requirement is not permanent; it will apply to an individual only until the limitations on his or her Learning Behavior Specialist I credential expire or are removed.

Affected Portions of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-4, reference to Purpose A;
- Page I-5, reference to Purpose A and current teaching assignment;
- Page I-15, Figure 3, reference to Purpose A;
- Page II-5, reference to Purpose A.

Affected Portion of Summary:

- Page 8, reference to Purpose A.

**Note to Speech-Language Pathologists**

All speech-language pathologists currently hold teaching certificates, and those who hold standard or master certificates are subject to the requirements for continuing professional development set forth in the Certificate Renewal Manual and in the applicable portions of this revision. However, in the future, speech-language pathologists who elect to receive school service personnel certificates instead of teaching certificates will not be subject to the requirements for continuing professional development (unless separate legislation is enacted to establish such a requirement).

Related Portion of Certificate Renewal Manual:

- Page I-2, reference to applicability of requirements for continuing professional development.

Related Portion of Summary:

- Page 2, reference to applicability of requirements for continuing professional development.

**THIS REVISION SUPERSEDES ALL RELATED MATERIAL  
PUBLISHED PRIOR TO OCTOBER 1, 2001.**

As noted previously, each individual who serves as a special education teacher will be subject to the requirements stated in this revision in relationship to the length of such service. In case of any apparent conflict between the statements in this revision and any document previously published, the statements contained in this revision shall govern.