

Grade Band Workgroup

September 22, 2026

Agenda

- Introductory Framing
- Recap from August 10, 2026 meeting
- Breakout Groups to discuss standards not considered at the 8.10.2026 meeting.
- Whole Group
- Implementation Timeline
- Next Steps

Introductory Framing

- Before ISBE moved to a system of licensure from a system of certification, early childhood certification covered birth–grade 3 and elementary certification covered K–grade 9.
- Within a Professional Educator License (PEL): Early Childhood covers birth–grade 2; Elementary covers grades 1–6.
- The narrower bands create an assignability gap.
- District and hiring leaders have flagged this gap to ISBE since 2014.
- Since 2015, short-term approvals (STA) have covered all content areas and grade bands as a first corrective.
- The STA is valid for three years and is non-renewable.
- ISBE added a K-only STA on July 1, 2025.
- The K-only STA is a bridge, not a permanent fix.

Introductory Framing Continued

- In fall 2024, district and building leaders raised the assignability issue with ISBE.
- Their request: restore the previous grade bands to Birth – Grade 3 (ECE) and Kindergarten through Grade 6 (ELEM).
- Note: Changes from the system of certification to the system of licensure led to the identification of specific middle school licenses valid for grades 5 through 8. Thus, the elementary education endorsement needs to only be for kindergarten through grade 6.
- Meetings With stakeholders beginning in the late spring of 2025 led to the identification of two work streams to construct a durable response.
 - Grade Band Modification Work Group
 - K-Only Microcredential Work Group

Recap from August 10, 2026 Meetings

- 3 breakout groups:
 - Group Emily: 38/38 standards considered
 - Group Kirstin: 23/38 standards considered
 - Group Ronda: 19/38 standards considered
- Reminder(s)
 - Consider draft language in comparison to current language.
 - Keep the work tied to candidate preparation, not program redesign.
 - Scope/Overreach –
 - Boundary question: does the current language already reach the new grade?
 - Minimum change: the smallest wording change that solves the fit problem.
 - Overreach check: too detailed, too prescriptive, or creates a mandate
 - Structure preservation: extend what exists rather than add a new standard
 - Inclusivity: individual differences and multilingual learners

Breakout Groups to discuss standards not considered at the 8.10.2026 meeting

Whole Group

Whole Group Continued

Implementation Timeline

Summer–Fall 2026

Grade Band: Alignment work including higher education faculty and district personnel. Focus on identifying early childhood/elementary preparation overlap, play-based learning, family engagement, health/safety/nutrition, and field experiences

Microcredential: Requirements for MC are identified

July 1, 2027

Grade Band: Anticipated effective date for new grade-band rules

Microcredential: Entities can apply for ISBE approval to offer the K only MC.

1

2

Fall–Winter 2026

Proposed modifications go through the rulemaking process for **Grade Band modifications** and **MC** as a means to obtain a subsequent endorsement. .

3

4

2–3 Years Post-Rule

Programs must submit evidence of alignment to new grade bands.

Next Steps

- Prior to 10.6.2026 meeting
 - Summarize and share information from 8.31.meeting from all workgroups
- At the 10.6.2026 meeting:
 - Discuss recommendations in 'rule form.'
 - Public Comment Process