

Elementary Education

New Grade Range is Coming Soon

The Illinois State Board of Education will be pursuing changes to expand the grade range of elementary education endorsement from Grades 1 through 6 to kindergarten through Grade 6.

The change is in response to district concerns related to difficulty assigning properly licensed teachers to kindergarten positions. It may provide districts with a larger pool of qualified applicants, which could reduce district reliance on substitute teachers or other means of temporarily assigning educators to kindergarten roles due to lack of qualified teachers.

The change will occur in two phases— one that will be in place for the 2025-26 school year, and one that will be in place for the 2026-27 school year.

Phase 1: School Year 2025-26 Changes

Educators who hold the elementary education (1-6) endorsement may apply for a short-term approval (STA) for kindergarten in their ELIS accounts. Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) may also entitle elementary education program completers for this approval. The approval application fee is \$50 and the approval is valid for three years. If entitled by an Illinois EPP, the approval will be free if entitled by the EPP at the same time as the Professional Educator License.

This application will be available in ELIS on July 1, 2025. Any elementary educator who will be assigned as a teacher of record to teach kindergarten in SY 2025-26 and who does not yet hold an endorsement to do so must apply for this approval.

No additional test or coursework is required.

Phase 2: School Year 2026-27 Changes

ISBE will promulgate rules to create a kindergarten through Grade 6 grade band in SY 2025-2026. Rules will be finalized by the start of the school year. The 1-6 endorsement will no longer be available for application after these rules are finalized (anticipated to occur by July 1, 2026). Educators who hold a 1-6 endorsement may apply for the new grade range in their ELIS account. The approval application fee is \$50. No additional test or coursework will be required.

Educators who are currently completing an elementary education preparation program (EPP) may be recommended for the new grade range by their preparation program, beginning July 1, 2026, once the program verifies with ISBE that it has either made updates to its program or does not plan to make any such updates.

What Does This Change Mean for Districts?

Districts may assign educators who hold the STA for kindergarten to teach kindergarten in SY 2025-26. Districts may assign educators who hold the STA for kindergarten or the new K-6 elementary education endorsement to teach kindergarten in SY 2026-27.

What Does This Change Mean for Elementary Education Preparation Programs?

Each EPP with an approved elementary education preparation program must, at minimum, complete an analysis of its [program using a form provided by ISBE](#) and notify the agency that it will be making changes or will not be making changes. This notification is due by December 1, 2025.

If changes are made, the EPP must submit documentation in a form determined by and submitted to ISBE explaining the changes and showing alignment to the [CAEP Elementary Teacher Preparation Standards](#) by February 1, 2029.

By July 1, 2029, all approved elementary education programs will be valid for the kindergarten through Grade 6 grade band. Any candidate who enrolls in a program on or after this date shall be considered for the K-6 endorsement. Beginning July 1, 2030, all elementary education entitlements shall be for the K-6 grade range. Candidates may earn the K-6 (rather than 1-6) endorsement upon finalization of the grade range change in rule (anticipated to occur by July 1, 2026) after notifying ISBE of no changes, or after ISBE approves submitted changes and standard alignment for the program.

Prior to the K-6 grade range being finalized in rule and prior to EPP document submission to ISBE, candidates who are entitled for the 1-6 grade range may apply for the STA for kindergarten in their ELIS accounts or may be entitled for the approval by their EPP. The approval application fee is \$50 and the approval is valid for three years. It will be awarded to any educator who holds a 1-6 elementary education endorsement.

Furthermore, ISBE will extend the September 2025 due date for alignment with the CAEP Elementary Teacher Preparation Standards to February 1, 2029. This extension will allow EPPs ample time to review and make modifications, if needed, to their elementary education program before submitting proof of standards alignment to ISBE.

Below is a chart that shows which elementary education licensure test will be required for each grade range endorsement.

Date Range	Elementary Education Endorsement Grade Range	Elementary Education Test Required	Notes
July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026	1-6	Elementary Education (Grades 1-6) Test No. 305	N/A
July 1, 2026 - Forward	Both K-6 and 1-6	The new Elementary Education (K-6) Test (Test number to be determined.)	This new test will launch July 1, 2026, and will include new requirements set forth by the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.