

Educator Licensure Grade-Band Changes and Kindergarten Microcredential

June 16, 2026

Agenda

- Introduction
- Grade Band: Principles & Purposes
- Kindergarten-Only Microcredential
- Implementation Timeline
- Meeting Dates

Grade Band: Principles

- Child-centered focus
- Honoring teacher-child-family-community relationships
- Inclusive of developmentally appropriate pedagogies, including play-based learning and guided learning

Grade Band: Purposes

- Support staffing flexibility across early learning and elementary settings
- Preserve strong, developmentally grounded preparation for educators who teach young children
- Provide clearer pathways as licensure and credentialing updates are implemented

Grade Bands: Current and New

Current Grade Bands:

- Early Childhood: Birth – Grade 2
- Elementary Education: Grade 1 – Grade 6

New Grade Bands:

- Early Childhood: Birth – Grade 3
- Elementary Education: Kindergarten – Grade 6

Please note:

Until rules are finalized, districts may use the Early Childhood or Kindergarten Short-Term Approval.

Once finalized, Kindergarten Short-Term Approval will no longer be offered.

New Kindergarten-Only Microcredential FY 2027

Developed collaboratively with faculty from approved early childhood preparation programs, district personnel, and others.

Once finalized, ISBE will offer webinars for institutions of higher education on:

- Requirements for the kindergarten-only microcredential
- The process to apply for ISBE approval to offer the microcredential

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.

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Fall–Winter 2026

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

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2–3 Years Post-Rule

Programs must submit evidence of alignment to new grade bands.

Meeting Dates – Summer/Fall 2026

- **July 6, 2026:** 2:00-3:00 – Introductory Meeting for **Grade Band** and **MC**
- **July 21, 2026**
 - 2:00 – 3:30 – Grade Band
 - 3:30 – 5:00 – Microcredential
- **July 28, 2026**
 - 2:00 – 3:30 – Grade Band
 - 3:30 – 5:00 – Microcredential
- **August 10, 2026**
 - 2:00 – 3:30 – Grade Band
 - 3:30 – 5:00 – Microcredential
- **August 31, 2026**
 - 2:00 – 3:30 – Grade Band
 - 3:30 – 5:00 – Microcredential
- **September 22, 2026**
 - 2:00 – 3:30 – Grade Band
 - 3:30 – 5:00 – Microcredential

Final Thoughts

- Please submit nominations no later than **June 22, 2026**.
- Nominees should bring relevant expertise in one or more of the following areas:
 - Early childhood education and elementary education as a district or school leader, practicing early childhood or elementary teacher, or through a policy organization.
 - Individuals with expertise in and demonstrated effectiveness of supporting multilingual learners and special education students through a variety of different pedagogical approaches (e.g., developmentally appropriate practice, play-based and guided learning) are ideal nominees.