

Educator Licensure Grade-Band Changes and Kindergarten Microcredential

July 6, 2026

- Please place your name, organization that you are representing, and work group in the chat.
- If you are not assigned to a workgroup (attending out of interest), please include name and what organization best reflects your role.

Agenda

- Introductions
- Grade Band: Principles & Purposes
- Kindergarten-Only Microcredential
- Implementation Timeline
- Meeting Dates
- Agenda – Grade Band 7.21.26
- Agenda – Microcredential 7.21.26

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**
 - 1:30 – 3:00 – Grade Band
 - 4:00 – 5:30 – 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

Agenda – Grade Band 7.21.26

- Introductions
- Purpose of work –
 - A realignment of current standards for EC and ELEM grade bands to extend the scope of experiences/content to include Grade 3 (EC) and K (ELEM)
 - Inclusion of ‘Play-Based Learning’ (e.g., teacher-initiated learning, student-initiated learning) in coursework and fieldwork (HB4577)
- Timeline (Getting from Here to There)
- Standards (Illinois Professional Educator Standards, Culturally Relevant Teaching and Leading Standards, EC Competencies)
- Work Time – Initial Grouping
- Next Steps

Prework:

- Workgroup members will receive current standards.
- Questions:
 - Which standards for EC and ELEM are appropriate ‘as is’ for the grade band change?
 - Which standards of the EC and ELEM grade band modifications are:
 - Appropriate ‘as is’
 - Require ‘tweaking’ and in what ways
 - What are and rationale for suggested ‘new’ possible standards

Agenda – Microcredential 7.21.26

- Introductions
- Purpose of work –
 - Creation of the requirements for a K microcredential that institutions can develop for ISBE approval
- Timeline (Getting from Here to There)
- What is a microcredential
- Work Time – Initial
- Next Steps

Prewrite:

- Workgroup members will receive current standards and competencies
- Tasks:
 - Which standards and/or competencies are necessary for demonstration(s) of readiness to serve as a teacher of record in a K classroom?
 - What are possible source documents that will support a candidate in completing a K only microcredential?

Next Steps

- Workgroup members will receive the standards and instructions for meetings on 7.21.26 during the week of 7.13.26

Please send questions to jhelfer@isbe.net