



District Plan to Address Uncertified Teachers

DELAY OF TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS
2025-2026

Position Statement

The goal of Commerce ISD is to build and maintain a high-quality, stable, and effective educator workforce that positively impacts student outcomes. This involves ensuring that all teachers meet state certification requirements and plans are in place to address the certification status of any uncertified teachers currently employed.

The purpose of this plan is to:

Delay the timeline for implementation of the new HB 2 certification requirements for foundation curriculum courses until the start of the 2029-2030 school year. This will allow the district to:

- Extend current employment for uncertified teachers in the foundation subjects who have made significant progress toward certification requirements and shown success in the classroom.
- Extend the district's ability to utilize its District of Innovation Plan to hire uncertified teachers enrolled in educator preparation programs who are diligently working toward certification requirements for unfilled positions in the foundation courses.

Background: Changes in Texas Law for Certification

House Bill (HB) 2 of the 89th Regular Legislative session narrows the scope of exemptions allowed under "Districts of Innovation," specifically prohibiting DOI districts from bypassing requirements to employ certified teachers for courses in the foundation curriculum. This legislation restricts including K-5 reading and math teachers in DOI exemptions starting in the 2026-2027 school year, expanding to all foundation subjects and grades in the 2027-2028 school year.

Texas Education Code (TEC), §21.0032 (a-1), authorizes the commissioner of education to approve district requests to delay implementation of certification requirements for foundation curriculum courses until the beginning of the 2029-2030 school year. Texas school districts can apply for a delay of teacher certification requirements for foundation curriculum courses by submitting a comprehensive plan to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) detailing how it will transition uncertified teachers to standard certification by the new deadline.

Commerce ISD Plan to Address Uncertified Teachers

The following plan outlines how Commerce ISD will transition uncertified teachers to standard certification to meet the statutory guidelines for teacher certification requirements by the 2029-2030 school year.

TIMELINE AND STRATEGIES TO REDUCE UNCERTIFIED TEACHERS EACH YEAR

2025-2026 School Year: Verify eligible uncertified teachers and plan support for their certification.

2026-2027 School Year: Provide support for teacher certification efforts, and reduce reliance on hiring uncertified teachers in core subjects to no more than 5%.

2027-2029 School Years: Continue to phase out most uncertified teachers in foundational content areas.

2029-2030 School Year: 100 percent of teachers in foundational content areas will be certified in one of the following acceptable ways under HB 2.

• **Certificates issued by the SBEC**

- *Standard Certificate:* The primary, full teaching certificate
- *Intern Certificate:* Issued to individuals actively completing requirements for initial certification through an approved Educator Preparation Program (EPP).
- *Probationary Certificate:* Another type of certificate issued during a candidate's training and induction period within an EPP, allowing them to teach while completing requirements.
- *Enhanced Standard Certificate:* A new or modified form of standard certificate issued to individuals who complete an educator preparation program's residency pathway, which includes co-teaching with an experienced teacher for a full year while also completing an SBEC-approved educator preparation program.

➤ *Emergency Permit*: A permit issued for specific subject areas and grade levels when a fully certified teacher is not available

Acceptable Exceptions to Standard Teacher Certification

➤ *School District Teaching Permit*: an authorization from the Commissioner of Education that allows the school district to employ an individual the district deems qualified to serve as a teacher, but who does not hold a State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) teaching certificate under TEC, §21.055, for the assigned area.

➤ *Teacher Certification Waiver*: a formal request to the state for an exception under TEC, §7.056, often for positions where no certified candidate is available.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES TO HELP UNCERTIFIED TEACHERS EARN CERTIFICATION

Commerce ISD will provide the following support structures to help uncertified teachers succeed and earn certification:

1. Commerce ISD's uncertified teacher support systems include a mentor/mentee program. CISD will pair new, uncertified teachers with experienced, certified mentors for guidance and support. Mentors will provide their mentees ongoing academic and functional training to assure success in the classroom.
2. Completion deadlines: Expected completion: Within 2 years of hire.
3. During the first three weeks of school and on an ongoing basis thereafter, all uncertified teachers in Commerce ISD will be designated as Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 based on observations aligned with the T-TESS rubric conducted by instructional coaches, curriculum coordinators, and administrators. Multiple levels and forms of support are provided based on individual needs to insure continuous growth. Uncertified teachers will benefit from consistent feedback and coaching related to instructional design, delivery and classroom management to perform well on the formal and informal observations conducted by their EPPs.
4. Professional Development: Commerce ISD will offer targeted training on instructional strategies, classroom management, and curriculum development. Resources include Region 10 ESC and individualized coaching sessions conducted by district staff.

5. Ongoing Certification Tracking: The district will continuously track data for each uncertified teacher's certification progress. This will include conducting regular check-ins to address challenges during the months of August, October, January, and March, provide feedback, monitor progress, and provide support to help individuals become certified teachers.

RECRUITMENT AND TEACHER PIPELINE INITIATIVES TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CERTIFIED TEACHERS

To increase the number of certified teachers, CISD will focus on the following recruitment and pipeline initiatives:

Teacher Certification Incentive

TEC, §21.0033, provides an incentive to help currently employed, uncertified individuals complete the certification process and support districts with teacher retention. A one-time \$1,000 incentive will be paid by the TEA to the district for each eligible classroom teacher upon successful completion of the preparation requirements and issuance of a standard certificate.

Eligible teachers must meet the following criteria:

- Hired as an uncertified first-year teacher in 2022-2023, or 2023-2024 school year, and were still uncertified as of 1/1/25.
- Achieve standard certification by the end of the 2026-2027 school year.
- Continuously employed as a teacher by the district.

Beginning in 2025-26, TEA will send a list of eligible individuals to the district for employment verification in the early spring of each school year. Districts will complete verification by late spring. Payments for eligible teachers who achieve certification by August 1, 2026, will be issued no earlier than August 2026, and the process will repeat in the 2026-2027 school year. A final distribution of incentive payments will occur in August 2027.

Career Fairs

- Attend both in-person and virtual job fairs to promote the district as an attractive place to teach.

Post Vacancies on Job Boards

- TXED Job Network

Certified First Hiring Protocol

- Certified teachers will be prioritized in foundation curriculum assignments.
- Uncertified teachers will be placed, where permissible, in:
 - Electives
 - CTE courses
 - Non-tested subjects

Advertise Vacancies on Media Outlets

- District Website
- All social media platforms utilized by CISD

Host Student Teachers

- Student teaching internships serve as a pipeline for future educators, helping to address teacher shortages.
- Providing future educators hands-on experience within our district will improve the overall quality of these prospective new teachers.
- Paid student teaching internships.

PARTNERSHIP WITH AT LEAST ONE EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM (EPP)

An Educator Preparation Program (EPP) is a program that trains and prepares teachers. The preparation of educators is considered the joint responsibility of both the EPP and the school district. This collaboration aims to produce higher-quality educators who are better prepared for the classroom. Commerce ISD has partnerships with the following EEPs to prepare educators and meet state expectations for certification:

- East-Texas A&M University
- Region 10 ESC
- University-based Educator Preparation Programs
- Approved Alternative Certification Programs

For further information on this or any program offered at Commerce ISD, please contact the following personnel:

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