



townhall.virginia.gov

Fast-Track Regulation Agency Background Document

Agency name	State Board of Education
Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) Chapter citation(s)	8 VAC20-23
VAC Chapter title(s)	Licensure Regulations for School Personnel
Action title	Fast-Track Regulatory Action for Removal of Graduate Credit for Early Childhood Special Education Endorsement
Date this document prepared	May 22, 2025

This information is required for executive branch review and the Virginia Registrar of Regulations, pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (APA), Executive Order 19 (2022) (EO 19), any instructions or procedures issued by the Office of Regulatory Management (ORM) or the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) pursuant to EO 19, the Regulations for Filing and Publishing Agency Regulations (1 VAC 7-10), and the *Form and Style Requirements for the Virginia Register of Regulations and Virginia Administrative Code*.

Brief Summary

Provide a brief summary (preferably no more than 2 or 3 paragraphs) of this regulatory change (i.e., new regulation, amendments to an existing regulation, or repeal of an existing regulation). Alert the reader to all substantive matters. If applicable, generally describe the existing regulation.

Over the past two years, Virginia has seen a 24% increase in the number of children identified with a disability for ages 2-5 attending preschool. The need for additional teachers with the ECSPED endorsement has been longstanding, with the percentage of vacancies or individuals teaching out of their endorsed area ranging from 7% to 9% over the past 6 years. This ECSPED endorsement is a combination of the two top-10 critical shortage areas. Data from 2024-2025 identifies Elementary Education PreK-6 and Special Education PreK-12 as the top two critical shortage areas on the list of ten endorsement areas. This action removes an arbitrary graduate-level course requirement as opposed to undergraduate level for those wishing to add this endorsement to their license outside of an approved program pathway. This change and the other proposed future change could fill at least 70 hard-to-fill positions in the future. Furthermore, this change would align the requirements with all other special education endorsements.

Acronyms and Definitions

Define all acronyms used in this form, and any technical terms that are not also defined in the “Definitions” section of the regulation.

“Board” means the State Board of Education

“VDOE” means the Virginia Department of Education

“ECSPED endorsement” means in Early Childhood Special Education endorsement in 8VAC20-23-540.

Statement of Final Agency Action

Provide a statement of the final action taken by the agency including: 1) the date the action was taken; 2) that the agency has “adopted final amendments” to the regulation; 3) the name of the agency taking the action; and 4) the title of the regulation. A suggested statement is, “On [insert date] the Board/Department of [insert name] adopted final amendments to the [title of regulation(s)].”

On May 22, 2025, the State Board of Education approved the Fast-Track regulatory action to amend Chapter 23 (Licensure Regulations for School Personnel).

Mandate and Impetus

Identify the mandate for this regulatory change and any other impetus that specifically prompted its initiation (e.g., new or modified mandate, petition for rulemaking, periodic review, or board decision). For purposes of executive branch review, “mandate” has the same meaning as defined in the ORM procedures, “a directive from the General Assembly, the federal government, or a court that requires that a regulation be promulgated, amended, or repealed in whole or part.”

Consistent with Virginia Code § 2.2-4012.1, also explain why this rulemaking is expected to be noncontroversial and therefore appropriate for the fast-track rulemaking process.

This fast-track regulatory action was initiated following the recommendation of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL). This regulatory action is intended to implement the Board’s decision following the recommendations of ABTEL.

The action is expected to be noncontroversial because it will open compliance pathways in 8VAC20-23-540 by removing the requirement for coursework earned towards an early childhood special education endorsement to be at the graduate level. The changes will also align the requirements with all other special education endorsements.

Legal Basis

Identify (1) the promulgating agency, and (2) the state and/or federal legal authority for the regulatory change, including the most relevant citations to the Code of Virginia and Acts of Assembly chapter number(s), if applicable. Your citation must include a specific provision, if any, authorizing the promulgating agency to regulate this specific subject or program, as well as a reference to the agency’s overall regulatory authority.

The Board’s overall regulatory authority is found in § 22.1-16 of the Code of Virginia, which states that “[t]he Board of Education may adopt bylaws for its own government and promulgate such regulations as

may be necessary to carry out its powers and duties and the provisions of [Title 22.1 of the Code of Virginia].”

Additionally, § 22.1-298.1 and §22.1-299 of the Code of Virginia require the Board to promulgate regulations concerning teacher licensure.

Purpose

Explain the need for the regulatory change, including a description of: (1) the rationale or justification, (2) the specific reasons the regulatory change is essential to protect the health, safety or welfare of citizens, and (3) the goals of the regulatory change and the problems it is intended to solve.

This regulation is change is essential to protect the health, safety or welfare of citizens because the policy of the General Assembly is to have qualified teachers. The State Board of Education has been tasked with setting qualifications.

The purpose of this regulatory action is to open compliance pathways in 8VAC20-23-540 by removing the requirement for coursework earned towards an early childhood special education endorsement to be at the graduate level.

The goal of the regulatory change is to remove an arbitrary graduate-level course requirement as opposed to undergraduate level for those wishing to add this endorsement to their license outside of an approved program pathway. This change and the other proposed future change could fill at least 70 hard-to-fill positions in the future. Furthermore, this change would align the requirements with all other special education endorsements.

Substance

Briefly identify and explain the new substantive provisions, the substantive changes to existing sections, or both. A more detailed discussion is provided in the “Detail of Changes” section below.

The term “graduate” will be removed from the requirements that a candidate for the endorsement requirement will have earned a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and completed a major in early childhood special education or 27 semester hours in early childhood special education.

Issues

Identify the issues associated with the regulatory change, including: 1) the primary advantages and disadvantages to the public, such as individual private citizens or businesses, of implementing the new or amended provisions; 2) the primary advantages and disadvantages to the agency or the Commonwealth; and 3) other pertinent matters of interest to the regulated community, government officials, and the public. If there are no disadvantages to the public or the Commonwealth, include a specific statement to that effect.

The primary advantage to both the Commonwealth and the public is that this action removes an arbitrary graduate-level course requirement as opposed to undergraduate level for those wishing to add this endorsement to their license outside of an approved program pathway. There are no disadvantages to the Commonwealth and the Public.

Requirements More Restrictive than Federal

Identify and describe any requirement of the regulatory change which is more restrictive than applicable federal requirements. Include a specific citation for each applicable federal requirement, and a rationale for the need for the more restrictive requirements. If there are no applicable federal requirements, or no requirements that exceed applicable federal requirements, include a specific statement to that effect.

There are no applicable federal requirements.

Agencies, Localities, and Other Entities Particularly Affected

Consistent with § 2.2-4007.04 of the Code of Virginia, identify any other state agencies, localities, or other entities particularly affected by the regulatory change. Other entities could include local partners such as tribal governments, school boards, community services boards, and similar regional organizations. "Particularly affected" are those that are likely to bear any identified disproportionate material impact which would not be experienced by other agencies, localities, or entities. "Locality" can refer to either local governments or the locations in the Commonwealth where the activities relevant to the regulation or regulatory change are most likely to occur. If no agency, locality, or entity is particularly affected, include a specific statement to that effect.

Other State Agencies Particularly Affected

None

Localities Particularly Affected

None

Other Entities Particularly Affected

None

Economic Impact

Consistent with § 2.2-4007.04 of the Code of Virginia, identify all specific economic impacts (costs and/or benefits), anticipated to result from the regulatory change. When describing a particular economic impact, specify which new requirement or change in requirement creates the anticipated economic impact. Keep in mind that this is the proposed change versus the status quo.

Impact on State Agencies

<p><i>For your agency:</i> projected costs, savings, fees or revenues resulting from the regulatory change, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) fund source / fund detail; b) delineation of one-time versus on-going expenditures; and c) whether any costs or revenue loss can be absorbed within existing resources 	<p>No projected economic impact exists on the State Board of Education or the Virginia Department of Education.</p>
--	---

<i>For other state agencies:</i> projected costs, savings, fees or revenues resulting from the regulatory change, including a delineation of one-time versus on-going expenditures.	There is no projected economic impact for other agencies.
<i>For all agencies:</i> Benefits the regulatory change is designed to produce.	There is no projected economic impact for other agencies.

Impact on Localities

If this analysis has been reported on the ORM Economic Impact form, indicate the tables (1a or 2) on which it was reported. Information provided on that form need not be repeated here.

Projected costs, savings, fees or revenues resulting from the regulatory change.	There are no localities that will be affected by this change. This change is projected to help school divisions fill teacher vacancies.
Benefits the regulatory change is designed to produce.	The regulatory change will lend clarity to and streamline the Board's regulatory catalogue.

Impact on Other Entities

If this analysis has been reported on the ORM Economic Impact form, indicate the tables (1a, 3, or 4) on which it was reported. Information provided on that form need not be repeated here.

Description of the individuals, businesses, or other entities likely to be affected by the regulatory change. If no other entities will be affected, include a specific statement to that effect.	No other entities will be impacted by the regulatory change.
Agency's best estimate of the number of such entities that will be affected. Include an estimate of the number of small businesses affected. Small business means a business entity, including its affiliates, that: a) is independently owned and operated and; b) employs fewer than 500 full-time employees or has gross annual sales of less than \$6 million.	No other entities will be impacted by the regulatory change.
All projected costs for affected individuals, businesses, or other entities resulting from the regulatory change. Be specific and include all costs including, but not limited to: a) projected reporting, recordkeeping, and other administrative costs required for compliance by small businesses; b) specify any costs related to the development of real estate for commercial or residential purposes that are a consequence of the regulatory change; c) fees; d) purchases of equipment or services; and e) time required to comply with the requirements.	No other entities will be impacted by the regulatory change.
Benefits the regulatory change is designed to produce.	The regulatory change will lend clarity to and streamline the Board's regulatory catalogue.

Alternatives to Regulation

Describe any viable alternatives to the regulatory change that were considered, and the rationale used by the agency to select the least burdensome or intrusive alternative that meets the essential purpose of the regulatory change. Also, include discussion of less intrusive or less costly alternatives for small businesses, as defined in § 2.2-4007.1 of the Code of Virginia, of achieving the purpose of the regulatory change.

No alternatives were considered.

If this analysis has been reported on the ORM Economic Impact form, indicate the tables on which it was reported. Information provided on that form need not be repeated here.

Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

Consistent with § 2.2-4007.1 B of the Code of Virginia, describe the agency's analysis of alternative regulatory methods, consistent with health, safety, environmental, and economic welfare, that will accomplish the objectives of applicable law while minimizing the adverse impact on small business. Alternative regulatory methods include, at a minimum: 1) establishing less stringent compliance or reporting requirements; 2) establishing less stringent schedules or deadlines for compliance or reporting requirements; 3) consolidation or simplification of compliance or reporting requirements; 4) establishing performance standards for small businesses to replace design or operational standards required in the proposed regulation; and 5) the exemption of small businesses from all or any part of the requirements contained in the regulatory change.

There is a continued need for the regulatory requirements, but by removing the "graduate" requirement, this change would align the requirements with all other special education endorsements.

If this analysis has been reported on the ORM Economic Impact form, indicate the tables on which it was reported. Information provided on that form need not be repeated here.

Public Participation

Indicate how the public should contact the agency to submit comments on this regulation, and whether a public hearing will be held, by completing the text below.

Consistent with § 2.2-4011 of the Code of Virginia, if an objection to the use of the fast-track process is received within the 30-day public comment period from 10 or more persons, any member of the applicable standing committee of either house of the General Assembly or of the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules, the agency shall: 1) file notice of the objections with the Registrar of Regulations for publication in the Virginia Register and 2) proceed with the normal promulgation process with the initial publication of the fast-track regulation serving as the Notice of Intended Regulatory Action.

If you are objecting to the use of the fast-track process as the means of promulgating this regulation, please clearly indicate your objection in your comment. Please also indicate the nature of, and reason for, your objection to using this process.

The State Board of Education is providing an opportunity for comments on this regulatory proposal, including but not limited to (i) the costs and benefits of the regulatory proposal and any alternative approaches, (ii) the potential impacts of the regulation, and (iii) the agency's regulatory flexibility analysis stated in this background document.

Anyone wishing to submit written comments for the public comment file may do so through the Public Comment Forums feature of the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall web site at: <https://townhall.virginia.gov>. Comments may also be submitted by email to Jim Chapman, Director of Board Relations, at Jim.Chapman@doe.virginia.gov. In order to be considered, comments must be received by 11:59 pm on the last day of the public comment period.

Detail of Changes

List all regulatory changes and the consequences of the changes. Explain the new requirements and what they mean rather than merely quoting the text of the regulation. For example, describe the intent of the language and the expected impact. Describe the difference between existing requirement(s) and/or agency practice(s) and what is being proposed in this regulatory change. Use all tables that apply, but delete inapplicable tables.

If an existing VAC Chapter(s) is being amended or repealed, use Table 1 to describe the changes between existing VAC Chapter(s) and the proposed regulation. If existing VAC Chapter(s) or sections are being repealed and replaced, ensure Table 1 clearly shows both the current number and the new number for each repealed section and the replacement section.

Table 1: Changes to Existing VAC Chapter(s)

Current chapter-section number	New chapter-section number, if applicable	Current requirements in VAC	Change, intent, rationale, and likely impact of new requirements
8VAC20-23-540		To earn an endorsement in early childhood special education (birth to age five) in Virginia, candidates must hold a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution. They must also either complete an approved teacher preparation program or fulfill 27 graduate semester hours in early childhood special education. This coursework must cover key areas such as special education law, assessment, preschool instruction, speech and language development, medical and behavioral aspects, collaboration, family-centered practices, and an elective in early childhood.	<p>Change: This change removes the requirement of “graduate” semester hours in early childhood special education.</p> <p>Intent: To align the requirements with all other special education endorsements.</p> <p>Rationale: Removes the arbitrary graduate-level course requirement as opposed to undergraduate-level for those wishing to add this endorsement to the license outside of an approved program pathways.</p> <p>Likely impact of new requirements: To open new opportunities and fill at least 70 hard-to-fill positions that require Early Childhood Special Education Endorsement.</p>