



Commission on Teacher Credentialing Approves 8 ELL-Related Credential Options

On September 30, 2010, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) voted unanimously to approve a set of eight recommendations for authorizations to teach English language learners.¹ In the words of CTC Executive Director Dale Janssen, “I believe the commission took a giant step forward in helping provide better services for English language learners.” The passage of these recommendations is a huge victory for CATESOL.

These recommendations approved by the CTC had been in development for almost two years; the full set of recommendations can be viewed online at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2010-09/2010-09-2E.pdf>.

The recommendations focused on several issues, including: (a) a specific focus on “academic language” and “academic literacy” in the context of teaching English learners; (b) the development of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for single-subject teachers to successfully use SDAIE; (c) standards that should be reviewed, updated, and revised to assure that the content provided in preparation programs regarding English learners reflects current research and issues in the field; (d) the authorization for 2042-prepared single-subject teachers should be limited to authorizing holders to provide SDAIE instruction only and should not include an authorization to provide English language development (ELD); and (e) further study should be given to the issue of the possibility of establishing an advanced EL authorization to provide a resource to all teachers and administrators with respect to teaching English learners in the content areas.

For CATESOL, the most important of the eight recommendations approved by the commissioners was the development of a “New or World Language” credential. The development of this new ELD or “New World” credential will help meet the language and academic needs of California’s long-term English learners (Olsen, 2010). This certification will place teachers specifically prepared to teach English learners in leveled ELD or ESL classes at the middle and high school levels. Having specifically certified teachers working with ELs will increase the linguistic and language competency of ELs such that they can be successful in school and as a result be reclassified.

The data show that almost 60 percent of English language learners in secondary schools had been in U.S. schools for more than 6 years without reaching a sufficient level of English proficiency to be reclassified as fluent (Olsen, 2010).

Such a large percentage of students who are in classes in California are second language learners and are being taught by teachers who do not have specific content-area knowledge of linguistics and second language acquisition theory and methodology. For most EL students, particularly those at the middle and high school levels, students lack the vocabulary and language skills necessary to access the rigorous content contained in the subject area. An ELD-trained teacher is much better prepared to help students gain the academic and other language skills they need to be successful. Approval of this new ELD or “New World” credential will help future high school teachers to gain these needed skills.

The development and implementation of this credential has been one of CATESOL’s highest policy priorities for at least a decade. About 15 years ago, Natalie Kuhlman, from San Diego State University, and Jan Eyring, from California State University, Fullerton, wrote a position paper that advocated for TESOL majors to be developed in the credentialing of English secondary teachers. This position paper was revisited in 2003 when Karen Cadiero-Kaplan and Natalie Kuhlman, along with other bilingual advocates from across the state, met with CTC staff to address the need to reauthorize the BCLAD credential. At that time an advisory group was formed and later a panel to reauthorize the BCLAD. Past CATESOL Presidents Sara Fields and Karen Cadiero-Kaplan served on this BCLAD group along with past Elementary Level Chair Magaly Lavadenz. When the work of the BCLAD group was completed the recommendation for reexamining certification for EL teachers was brought to CTC staff (Cadiero-Kaplan, Berta-Avila, & Flores, 2007).

In December 2007, an updated position paper was written by a group of CATESOL board members and level chairs. This group included Karen Cadiero-Kaplan, Margarita Berta-Avila, Sara Fields, Tricia Lima, and CATESOL legislative advocate Jeff Frost. This paper called for English as a Second/Other Language credential. Before making this paper public, the group shared it with EL experts from other professional organizations, including the California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE), California Teachers Association (CTA), the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), with the support of the Californians Together Coalition. The circulation of the position paper led to a meeting between CATESOL leadership and the staff of the commission in February 2008. This productive meeting—with the goal of the CATESOL position paper as the focus—led directly to the commission’s approving an advisory committee to consider the range of existing English language learner authorizations and make recommendations for changes. We were fortunate again to have a past CATESOL board member, Magaly Lavadenz, serve in this advisory group. This group’s work led directly to the commission’s specific policy approvals this past September.

Now that these recommendations have been approved, the commission staff will focus on specific implementation plans. During the meeting, CTC consultant Paula Jacobs indicated to the commissioners that approval of the New World Language credential would result in the staff’s bringing back to the commission a specific timeline for implementation. Part of this would include

the convening of a panel of experts in the field to develop subject matter competencies and program standards for the new credential.

During the debate on the recommendations, several of the commissioners commented on how impressed they were with the broad support for the recommendations. Support came not only from CATESOL but from several other stakeholders, including CAFE, CTA, CFT, the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), the Central Valley Education Coalition (CVEC), and the Californians Together Coalition, which represents 21 professional organizations and interest groups including CATESOL.

Through the next several months, the CATESOL leadership and staff will continue to work to support and monitor the implementation of these recommendations and keep the entire membership informed. The board will be contacting present and past board members to apply to serve on the CTC's new advisory panel.

Authors

Jeffrey W. Frost has a wide-ranging background in academia, legislative advocacy, and public policy development. He has more than 25 years of experience lobbying the California State Legislature for school districts and education associations. He has represented CATESOL for 12 years as its legislative advocate. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the Claremont Graduate School and has taught in both the community college and university levels. While in academia, his research efforts focused on the politics of legislative advocacy. Dr. Frost has written a number of articles related to education policy and the politics of California government.

Dr. Karen Cadiero-Kaplan is a professor at San Diego State University and department chair of Policy Studies in Language and Cross Cultural Education. Her publications focus on the role of education and language policies in curriculum development and teachers' professional development for meeting the needs of English learners. She is past president (2006-2007) for the California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (CATESOL), past vice president (2007-2009) of the CATESOL Education Foundation, president of Californians Together, and 2011 Affiliate Leadership Council chair-elect for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Natalie Kuhlman, PhD, professor emeritus at San Diego State University, is a past president of CATESOL and a past TESOL board member, and she coordinated the development of the California ELD standards. She chairs the TESOL/NCATE ESL Teacher Standards Committee and represented TESOL on the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Board.

Note

¹A version of this article originally appeared in the Winter 2010 CATESOL News, 42(3), pp. 1, 16.

References

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