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- Governor Abbott disaster declaration

March 16–17

- TEA staff transitioned to teleworking

March 17

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March 25

- TEA staff conducted EPP Town Hall via Zoom to allow all interested parties to receive guidance from TEA staff regarding SBEC rule flexibility and the governor's waivers
- TEA staff shared the EPP Town Hall information with SBEC Board

This item updates the SBEC on the results of those efforts that are under the SBEC's purview. As this situation continues to develop, TEA staff will continue to update the Board and will be providing any additional information at the SBEC meeting. Additionally, all of the pertinent guidance information and frequently ask questions are located on the TEA's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Support and Guidance webpage: <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/coronavirus-covid-19-support-and-guidance>.

Although SBEC has provisions codified in rule regarding flexibility in the event of a disaster declaration issued by the governor, those rules do not adequately address the severity, timeframe, or statewide impact that COVID-19 has presented with schools, EPPs, and testing centers being closed until further notice. SBEC-related issues that have arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic generally fall into three categories:

1. SBEC rules or state law provide flexibility to meet the needs of candidates or EPPs.
2. SBEC rules or state law do not provide flexibility to meet the needs of candidates or EPPs, but the timeline does not require immediate action, and SBEC can address the issues through rulemaking on a normal schedule.
3. SBEC rules or state law do not provide flexibility to meet the needs of candidates or EPPs, and the timeline requires more immediate responses than the SBEC rulemaking process can accommodate.

The specific SBEC-related actions and guidance up to this point come from current SBEC rules that provide flexibility in implementation of rules or from waivers granted by Governor Greg Abbott.

The guidance provided to the field is provided below and categorized by topics:

- x educator preparation
- x educator certification and testing
- x fingerprinting and educator discipline

Educator Preparation:

Clinical Teaching: With schools closing due to COVID-19, there are SBEC rules regarding clinical teaching requirements that candidates and EPPs cannot meet.

- x In accordance with Governor Abbott's waiver, candidates completing clinical teaching during spring 2020 who meet the following criteria will be considered to have successfully met requirements for clinical teaching:
 1. Completed at least half of the required days of clinical teaching,
 - a. 35 days for full-day assignments or
 - b. 70 days for half-day assignments
 2. Demonstrated proficiency in each of the educator standards for their assignments (to be determined by the preparation program), and
 3. Received a recommendation from their field supervisor and cooperating teacher that the candidate should be recommended for a standard certificate.

- x Governor Abbott has waived the requirements for principals and teachers to complete the surveys that are normally required to be completed during the spring and early summer and are used for EPP accountability purposes.

Field Experience: With schools closing due to COVID-19, there are SBEC rules regarding field-based experience requirements that candidates and EPPs are not able to meet.

- x Governor Abbott has waived the requirement that 15 clock-hours of field-based experiences must be completed on a school campus for those completing field-based experience requirements in spring or summer 2020. All field-based experiences may be completed by use of electronic transmission or other video or technology-based method.

Educator Certification and Testing:

With mandates to close all non-essential businesses and functions, the two educator testing vendors have been unable to provide testing to educator candidates. Consequently, candidates who have not completed all testing requirements are unable to meet the requirements in rule for certification. TEA staff anticipates providing additional guidance to candidates, districts, and EPPs prior to the Board meeting about individuals in the following situations:

- x Candidates without an existing certification who are completing a program in Spring 2020, who have met all requirements but have not completed testing (both teacher and non-teacher)
- x Candidates on intern certificates that are expiring in Spring 2020, who have met all requirements but have not completed testing (both teacher and non-teacher)
- x Candidates pursuing enrollment in a program for Summer or Fall 2020, who have not completed PACT or content pedagogy assessments.
- x Candidates on one-year emergency permits
- x Teachers from out of state serving on one-year certificates

Fingerprinting and Educator Discipline:

With the move to “at-home” learning, which may involve the use of digital and online materials, there are more opportunities for electronic communication between educators and students. To prevent and deter inappropriate communication or other educator misconduct, schools can:

- Utilize the transparency features offered in online learning platforms that allow administrators and parents to view educator-student communications,
- Closely monitor the nature and frequency of communications between educators and students,
- Remind staff of relevant policy on communications and potential consequences for violation,
- Adhere to their local district electronic communication policy required by TEC, §38.027.

Should a school find evidence that an employee engaged in misconduct pertaining to inappropriate communications, solicitation of a romantic relationship, or solicitation of sexual contact with a student, the superintendent must report this information to TEA within seven business days following the termination or resignation of the employee. (19 TAC §249.14(d)(2)(F), TEC §21.006, 19 TAC §153.1203, and TEC §22.093.) TEA recently created an online Misconduct Reporting Portal (Portal) to make reporting to TEA easier and more

