

Florida Department of Education  
Office of Early Learning

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**VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK) EDUCATION PROGRAM  
INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS**

**EQUIVALENT CREDENTIALS FOR VPK INSTRUCTORS:  
AN OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Background**

**Requirements of Implementing Legislation (HB 1A) for VPK Instructors**

(HB 1A may be accessed at the following website:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/loadDoc.aspx?FileName= h0001Aer.doc&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0001A&Session=2004A.>)

The VPK implementing legislation includes the following requirements for instructors in the school-year program:

Private Prekindergarten Providers

Sections 1002.55(3)(c)(d) and (4), *Florida Statutes (School-year prekindergarten program delivered by private prekindergarten providers.—)*, provide as follows:

(3) To be eligible to deliver the prekindergarten program, a private prekindergarten provider must meet each of the following requirements:

(c) The private prekindergarten provider must have, for each prekindergarten class, at least one prekindergarten instructor who meets each of the following requirements:

1. The prekindergarten instructor must hold, at a minimum, one of the following credentials:

a. A child development associate credential issued by the National Credentialing Program of the Council for Professional Recognition; or

b. A credential approved by the Department of Children and Family Services as being equivalent to or greater than the credential described in sub-subparagraph a.

The Department of Children and Family Services may adopt rules under ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 which provide criteria and procedures for approving equivalent credentials under sub-subparagraph b.

2. The prekindergarten instructor must successfully complete an emergent literacy training course approved by the department as meeting or exceeding the minimum standards adopted under s. 1002.59. This subparagraph does not apply to a prekindergarten instructor who successfully completes approved training in early literacy and language development under s. 402.305(2)(d)5., s. 402.313(6), or s. 402.3131(5)

before the establishment of one or more emergent literacy training courses under s. 1002.59 or April 1, 2005, whichever occurs later.

(d) Each prekindergarten instructor employed by the private prekindergarten provider must be of good moral character, must be screened using the level 2 screening standards in s. 435.04 before employment and rescreened at least once every 5 years, must be denied employment or terminated if required under s. 435.06, and must not be ineligible to teach in a public school because his or her educator certificate is suspended or revoked.

(4) A prekindergarten instructor, in lieu of the minimum credentials and courses required under paragraph (3)(c), may hold one of the following educational credentials:

(a) A bachelor's or higher degree in early childhood education, prekindergarten or primary education, preschool education, or family and consumer science;

(b) A bachelor's or higher degree in elementary education, if the prekindergarten instructor has been certified to teach children any age from birth through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, regardless of whether the instructor's educator certificate is current, and if the instructor is not ineligible to teach in a public school because his or her educator certificate is suspended or revoked;

(c) An associate's or higher degree in child development;

(d) An associate's or higher degree in an unrelated field, at least 6 credit hours in early childhood education or child development, and at least 480 hours of experience in teaching or providing child care services for children any age from birth through 8 years of age; or

(e) **An educational credential approved by the department as being equivalent to or greater than an educational credential described in this subsection. The department may adopt criteria and procedures for approving equivalent educational credentials under this paragraph.** [emphasis added]

#### Public School Providers

Sections 1002.63(5) and (6), *Florida Statutes (School-year prekindergarten program delivered by public schools.—)*, provide as follows:

(5) Each public school must have, for each prekindergarten class, at least one prekindergarten instructor who meets each requirement in s. 1002.55(3)(c) for a prekindergarten instructor of a private prekindergarten provider. [ *Note: These requirements are for a CDA or CDA/E with emergent literacy training.* ]

(6) Each prekindergarten instructor employed by a public school delivering the school-year prekindergarten program must be of good moral character, must be screened using the level 2 screening standards in s. 435.04 before

employment and rescreened at least once every 5 years, must be denied employment or terminated if required under s. 435.06, and must not be ineligible to teach in a public school because his or her educator certificate is suspended or revoked. This subsection does not supersede employment requirements for instructional personnel in public schools which are more stringent than the requirements of this subsection.

### Academic Degrees

Consistent with the VPK legislation, in lieu of the CDA or CDA/E credentials, VPK instructors in the school-year program may hold one of the following degrees:

Bachelor's (or Higher) Degrees:

- Early Childhood Education
- Prekindergarten or Primary Education\*
- Preschool Education\*
- Family and Consumer Science
- Elementary Education (if the instructor has been certified to teach children any age from birth through 6<sup>th</sup> grade, regardless of whether the certificate is current, and if the instructor is not ineligible to teach in a public school because the certificate has been suspended or revoked)

*Note: Preschool Education and Prekindergarten—Primary Education are track majors under the degree Early Childhood Education.*

For each of the degrees listed above, related competencies and skills (defined in terms of applicable Florida Certification Coverage areas) are delineated in Attachment 1 under "Current Bachelor's Degrees"; these are further defined at <http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/subjlist.asp> (Certification Coverages) and <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/ftce/ftcecomp.htm> (Competencies and Skills).

Associate's (or Higher) Degrees:

- Child Development\*
- Any Field, with at least 6 credit hours in early childhood education or child development, and at least 480 hours of experience in teaching or providing child care services for children any age from birth through 8

*Note: For the Child Development degree listed above, related competencies and skills (defined in terms of applicable Curriculum Frameworks/Intended Outcomes) are delineated in Attachment 2 under "Current Associate's Degrees." This information is historical, as this associate's degree is no longer issued by any Florida institution, and "Child Development" is a track major under the Home and Family Life bachelor's degree.*

## **Recommendations for Equivalent Credentials and Criteria and Procedures for Approval of Additional Equivalent Credentials**

1. The VPK implementing legislation authorizes the Department of Education to approve educational credentials for VPK instructors which are equivalent to or greater than prescribed bachelor's or associate's degrees as noted above. Based on an analysis of the content requirements of these and proposed degrees, the Department recommends the following as approved credentials for instructors in the school-year VPK program:

### Bachelor's (or Higher) Degrees

Exceptional Student Education  
Special Education  
Mental Disabilities  
Specific Learning Disabilities  
Physically Impaired  
Varying Exceptionalities  
Emotional Disabilities  
Visually Impaired  
Hearing Impaired  
Speech-Language Pathology

### Associate's Degrees

### Early Childhood Education

For each of the proposed bachelor's and associate's degrees listed above, related competencies and skills (defined in terms of applicable Florida Certification Coverages or Curriculum Frameworks) are delineated in Attachments 1 and 2, respectively; these are further defined at <http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/subilist.asp> (Certification Coverages), <http://www.firn.edu/doe/sas/ftce/ftcecomp.htm> (Competencies and Skills), and <http://www.firn.edu/doe/dwdframe/0506/fc/pdf/20020203.pdf> (Curriculum Frameworks/Intended Outcomes).

2. Upon receipt of a written request and appropriate supporting documentation, the Department of Education will review any related bachelor's degree, certification coverage, or associate's degree to determine the extent to which the proposed credential incorporates competencies and skills equivalent to or greater than those delineated for other approved VPK instructor credentials at the bachelor's or associate's degree levels.

Pending such review, the Department of Education will provide a written determination of its findings, including where appropriate designation of the degree

or certification coverage as an approved credential for instructors in the VPK school-year program.

**Attachments**

1. VPK Bachelor's (or Higher) Degrees (Current and Proposed) with Florida Certification Coverage Areas/Related Teacher Competencies and Skills
2. VPK Associate's Degrees (Current and Proposed) with Related Curriculum Frameworks/Intended Outcomes