



PA 18-123—sHB 5450

Education Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

SUMMARY: By law, state-funded early childhood education program staff must meet an increasingly advanced level of educational attainment over the next several years. These qualification requirements increase over three phases. This act gives staff more time to comply with the requirements by extending the duration of the first phase by two years and delaying the implementation of the second and third phases by two years.

The act also requires the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), within available appropriations, to analyze the qualification requirements for state-funded early childhood education staff. OEC must submit its analysis and any resulting legislative recommendations to the Education Committee by January 1, 2020.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage for OEC’s analysis and July 1, 2018 for the changes to the schedule on minimum staff qualifications.

§ 1 —SCHEDULE ON STAFF QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Existing law establishes three phases under which state-funded early childhood education program staff must meet increasingly advanced qualification requirements. (The requirements for the first phase apply only to school readiness classrooms; the requirements for the remaining phases apply to all early childhood education programs accepting state funds.)

The act extends the first phase by two years and delays the implementation of the last two phases by two years, as shown in Table 1. Under each phase, the qualification requirements for staff remain unchanged (see BACKGROUND).

Table 1: Changes to Qualification Requirements Schedule

Phase	Prior Law	The Act
One	Through June 30, 2018	Through June 30, 2020
Two	July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2021	July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2023
Three	On and after July 1, 2021	On and after July 1, 2023

§ 2 — ANALYSIS OF STAFF QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Within available appropriations, OEC must analyze the qualification requirements for state-funded early childhood education staff. The analysis must at least do the following:

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1. review the goals of the requirement that individuals with the primary responsibility for a classroom of children hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education, and assess whether a bachelor's degree requirement effectively achieves these goals;
2. examine the effectiveness of the state's implementation process for bringing early childhood education programs (i.e., programs that accept state funds for infant, toddler, and preschool spaces for child care or school readiness) into compliance with the staff qualifications requirement;
3. assess how the staff qualifications requirement affects the early childhood education field, including its effects on educators, program providers, children, parents, and families;
4. provide a cost-benefit analysis of the staff qualifications requirement for the state, early childhood education program providers and educators, and children and families; and
5. consider alternative approaches to achieving the bachelor's degree staff qualifications requirement or the goals of this requirement.

The act also requires OEC to seek public input and feedback from the following constituencies when conducting this analysis: early childhood education program providers, early childhood educators, and parents.

BACKGROUND

STAFF QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS UNDER EACH PHASE

First Phase

By law, under the first phase, each classroom must have at least one staff member who meets one of the following qualifications:

1. an early childhood development or equivalent associate credential issued by an organization approved by the OEC commissioner and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from a higher education institution accredited by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) or the Office of Higher Education (OHE) and regionally accredited,
2. an associate or bachelor's degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from such a higher education institution,
3. a State Board of Education (SBE)-issued teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education, or
4. an associate or bachelor's degree with an early childhood education concentration from a regionally accredited higher education institution.

Either the OEC commissioner or the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) president, in consultation with the commissioner, determines whether a classroom teacher has fulfilled the 12-credit minimum for the above requirements.

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Second Phase

Under the second phase, at least 50% of state-funded early childhood education head classroom teachers must meet one of the following six standards:

1. hold an SBE-issued teaching certificate with an endorsement in early childhood education or early childhood special education;
2. have been issued an early childhood teacher credential;
3. hold at least a bachelor's degree with a concentration in early childhood education from a regionally accredited higher education institution;
4. have been employed by a state-funded early childhood program on or before June 30, 2015, and hold either (a) a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development or (b) a bachelor's degree in another subject area and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development;
5. hold an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development, or an associate or bachelor's degree that is not in early childhood education and at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development from a regionally accredited higher education institution, subject to OEC review and assessment; or
6. have been employed by the same state-funded early childhood program since 1995 and hold an associate degree with at least 12 credits in early childhood education or child development as determined by the OEC commissioner or CSCU president, from a higher education institution accredited by BOR or OHE and regionally accredited (these individuals are grandfathered into the staff qualification requirements only until June 30, 2025).

The remaining head classroom teachers must hold an associate degree with an early childhood concentration from a regionally accredited higher education institution.

Third Phase

The final phase requires that 100% of head classroom teachers, not only 50%, meet one of the six standards listed above under the second phase.