



PROGRAM SPONSOR ALERT

DATE:

September 14, 2026

NUMBER:

PSA 26-04

SUBJECT: UPDATED GUIDANCE REGARDING SUBJECT MATTER COMPETENCY

Summary:

This Program Sponsor Alert (PSA) provides guidance for educator preparation programs reviewing candidates' degrees and/or coursework to verify demonstration of subject matter competence. Specifically, this PSA addresses (1) amendments made to Education Code 44259 following the signing of Assembly Bill 126 in July 2026 that provide further specifications of what degrees may be used to meet the subject matter requirement and (2) revisions to the subject matter domains, approved by the Commission at its August 2026 meeting.

Background:

[Education Code 44259\(b\)](#) details the specific requirements candidates must meet to be issued a preliminary teaching credential. Among the requirements is the demonstration of subject matter competence in the content area in which the candidate is seeking a credential. Historically, candidates met subject matter competency by either completing an approved undergraduate subject matter preparation program or passing the California Subject Exam for Teachers that aligned with the credential they sought.

[Assembly Bill 130 \(Chap. 44, Stats. 2021\)](#) expanded options for meeting the subject matter requirement by authorizing preparation programs to verify a candidate's subject matter competence for the credential area they are seeking by reviewing the candidate's transcripts for (a) successful completion of coursework aligned with the credential area subject matter domains or (b) completion of an appropriate degree in an aligned major. Specifically, Education Code 44259(b)(5)(A)(iii) states a candidate may meet subject matter competence through

“Successful completion of coursework at one or more regionally accredited institutions of higher education that addresses each of the domains of the subject matter requirements adopted by the commission in the content area of the credential pursuant

to Section 44282, as verified by a commission-approved program of professional preparation.”

[Assembly Bill 126](#) (Chap. 65, Stats. 2026), signed into law July 9, 2026, and effective immediately, provides further guidance to programs completing coursework and degree verification for candidates.

Key Provisions:

Guidance for Verifying Subject Matter Competence by Degree

AB 126 amends Education Code 44259(b)(5)(A)(iv) to expand the allowable degree majors that satisfy subject matter competence for each credential area. The revised and/or additional language is provided in italics:

(I) For single subject credentials, a major in one of the subject areas *closely related to an area* in which the commission credentials candidates.

(II) For multiple subject credentials, a liberal studies *major, education major, or other degree major* that includes coursework *required for the degree major* in the content areas pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 44282.

(III) For PK-3 early childhood education specialist credentials, a major in child development, education, or a degree major in a subject area closely related to the credential area. For the PK-3 early childhood education specialist credentials, a major in a subject area closely related to the credential area means a baccalaureate or higher degree whose required coursework for the degree major includes not fewer than three courses, totaling at least 12 semester units or the equivalent quarter units, in child development, human development, or early childhood education.

(IV) For education specialist credentials, either a major in one of the subject areas in which the commission credentials candidates or a liberal studies or other major that includes coursework in the content areas pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 44282.

For Single Subject candidates, this revised language expands the degrees candidates may use to meet the subject matter requirement. Previously, only degree majors that named the specific content area in which a candidate was seeking a credential could be used. The revised language allows for a degree major in a closely related area to also be used. Similarly, PK-3 Early Childhood Education Specialist Instruction candidates may also use a degree major in a closely related area to meet the subject matter requirement.

For Multiple Subject candidates, the revised language specifies that candidates using an undergraduate degree major to demonstrate subject matter competency must have majored in a degree that requires coursework in the content areas listed in [Education Code 44282](#), which include language studies, literature, mathematics, science, social studies, history, the arts, physical education, and human development. Specifically, the candidate’s degree major must

have required coursework in each of these areas; if the degree major did not specifically require coursework in each of these areas, the candidate cannot meet the subject matter requirement using the degree option. When determining whether a degree major requires courses in the nine named areas, verifying programs should consult the course requirements listed in the course catalog issued by the college or university the year the candidate earned their degree major.

Because AB 126 was signed into law on July 9, 2026, the expectation is that preparation programs will align their practices with the revised legislation immediately. Subject matter verification that was met prior to the issuance of this PSA shall remain in effect for any candidate and does not need to be re-evaluated.

Guidance for Verifying Subject Matter Competence by Coursework

While AB 126 legislated changes to Education Code 44259(b)(5)(A) regarding verification of subject matter competence, at its August 2026 meeting, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing approved revised, standardized Subject Matter Domain descriptions for each credential area, with a goal of providing further clarity to programs and candidates on the content required within each domain.

Candidates who do not meet the subject matter requirement through the degree major option may meet subject matter competency by completing non-remedial, degree-applicable coursework with a grade of “C” or better that aligns with the domains of the credential area they are seeking. Coursework may have been taken at the lower-division or upper-division levels and may be completed pre- or post-degree. Acceptable coursework may include credits earned via Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate.

The revised domains, available in the updated [Domains of the Subject Matter Requirements](#), have been standardized and streamlined to better facilitate the analysis of transcripts for coursework verification. In some areas, the number of domains has also been reduced. Specifically, for the Multiple Subject credential, the total number of required domains has been reduced from 23 to 18.

As specified in [Education Code 44259\(b\)\(5\)\(A\)\(iii\)](#), educator preparation programs reviewing transcripts to verify that a candidate has demonstrated subject matter competence through the coursework option have the authority to make this decision.

Sources:

[Agenda Item 1C \(August 2026\): Approval of the August 2026 Consent Calendar](#) (page 41)

[Agenda Item 4D \(June 2026\): Proposed Standardized Subject Matter Domain Language](#)

Resources:

[Appropriate Degrees to Satisfy Subject Matter Competence](#)

Domains of the Subject Matter Requirements