State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

April 24, 2020

MEMO: UPDATED COVID-19 EPP GUIDANCE ON TESTING

Rhode Island Educator Preparation Providers,

With the closure of Pre-K – 12 schools, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and testing centers throughout Rhode Island, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt across all of our Educator Preparation Providers (EPP). As you know, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has reviewed all EPP COVID-19 plans and provided feedback. Based on these reviews, we have communicated that we recognize that all EPP plans have met the expectations that each program established as a Rhode Island approved provider. Thus, candidates put forward as program completers during this COVID-19 pandemic will be recognized as such by RIDE.

Another important element of certification eligibility is testing, specifically Praxis testing via ETS. We are aware that testing centers remain closed, though ETS has been pursuing a Praxis at Home testing option. Since that home-based option is not yet widely available and the spring 2020 semester is rapidly coming to a close, we at RIDE are providing additional guidance on tests and certification for candidates who will be completing their programs. Please note that this guidance is specifically for those candidates who still need to take the tests necessary for Rhode Island certification. Candidates who have already taken and passed required RI tests for certification will be eligible for a full Initial certificate.

Candidates who will be program completers in Spring-Summer 2020 and have not yet taken or passed the necessary tests for RI certification will be eligible for a one (1)-year Temporary Initial certificate. This certificate will allow program completers additional time (one year) to pass the appropriate tests needed for full Initial certification.

As stated in the Rhode Island certification regulations:

"'Temporary initial educator certificate' means a Preliminary Certificate issued for a limited duration to applicants who seek certification through reciprocity and who meet all requirements for the Initial Educator Certificate except for the testing requirement, Including the English Language Competency Test when applicable. This certificate allows the applicant time to take the test that may not have been available in their state. The educator does not have a Rhode Island Stage 3 National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) 'full certificate' until the testing requirement is met and an Initial Educator Certificate is issued."

The R.I. Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.

Angélica Infante-Green
Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Though the Temporary Initial certificate is typically used for educators seeking reciprocity, its language is sufficient to include the current COVID-19 situation where an educator may complete a state-approved EPP, but still need to take and pass the required RI tests for eligibility for a full Initial certificate.

Next week, RIDE will provide additional guidance for you to share with program completers to ensure that teacher candidates who apply for RI certification from an approved EPP are aware of their eligibility for either a full Initial certificate or a Temporary Initial certificate and the process required to apply for the appropriate certificate.

We also know that some of your programs require testing for program completion. Given the testing situation described above, RIDE is permitting programs to waive pedagogical and content knowledge testing requirements for program completion in lieu of the steps detailed in the COVID-19 EPP plans. Testing requirements are still required for RI certification, as outlined above, but EPPs have the flexibility to waive the testing requirement as an element of program completion during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The closure of testing centers also potentially affects candidate admission into educator preparation programs in the fall of 2020. Therefore, RIDE is extending the deadline for testing requirements found in *Academic Requirements for Entry into Educator Preparation Programs Implementation Guidance for the 2018-19 Cohort Year* that remains in effect. Candidates will have until December 31st of 2020 to complete any necessary testing needed for entry into programs. During this time, conditional acceptance policies will only be necessary if a candidate is unsuccessful in meeting the score needed for program entry.

Next week, RIDE will post EPP guidance on the RIDE website for public viewing and reference. Any changes or updates to guidance will be communicated directly to EPPs and then posted to the RIDE website. A reminder that updates and information for the Rhode Island community about the Coronavirus (and particularly for Pre-K – 12 education) can be found on RIDE's COVID-19 webpage. If you have questions regarding this COVID-19 EPP guidance, please contact clayton.ross@ride.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Foehr, Chief
Division of Teaching and Learning

The R.I. Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.