

Hello Everyone:

Here's the GOOD NEWS about the PHI credential. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) approved the workgroup's recommendations that the PHI credential be retained (thank goodness)! The credential will be good for probably another 10-12 years. The state just does not want to go through with the expense of reviewing credentials very often.

Here's the OTHER NEWS. In addition to the PHI credential, the CCTC approved a PHI certificate that can be added as a Level II option for candidates who earn the preliminary Education Specialist credential in Moderate/Severe. Sharon, Satoko, and I had many discussions and some anguish about our proposal to develop a PHI certificate as an option for the M/S credential. Here was our thinking:

- Candidates who earn the M/S credential do not necessarily have much training to work with multiply disabled students who have orthopedic impairments or traumatic brain injury. Faculty who were part of the CTC Workgroup in the area of M/S agreed that this was a weak area of training in their programs. Adding a certificate in PHI could address this training shortfall. This will be good for children.
- Sharon, Satoko, and I realized that we needed to negotiate against the charge from school district personnel that the best response to having only three PHI credential-granting institutions (Cal State LA, San Francisco State, and Fresno Pacific University) was to eliminate the credential. As workgroup members, we have no authority to mandate more PHI credential programs in California. However, we could offer the suggestion of a PHI certificate. This was decision that helped us to negotiate retention of the PHI credential.

Concerns

Many school district personnel hire teachers with the M/S credential to work with students who should really be designated as PHI. This is done by designating students as "multiply disabled – orthopedic" or failing to respond to the orthopedic disability as primary designation. This reason for this is that is easier for school district personnel to hire candidates with the M/S credential than the PHI credential. Another ploy is to re-designate students who are classified as PHI as multiply disabled.

We know this happens throughout California. For the cognitively typical or near typical students with orthopedic or health impairments, or who have TBI, this is a terrible decision because the student is placed with a teacher who is not equipped to meet their unique needs. Let me outline what will be happening to address this dynamic:

- Now that the PHI credential and PHI certificate have been approved, it is time for a letter to go out to all SELPA and County Office Directors reminding them of their obligation to hire teachers qualified to services their students. This letter should come from CAPHI. Sharon and I can work on this letter and will blanket the state. Certain school district superintendents and human resource managers will also be contacted.

- There are plans to place the PHI-specific courses online to facilitate candidate access to programs. This is a time consuming process that requires movement of course modifications through the university. Hopefully this will be accomplished during the next calendar year (September 2008-June 2009).
- Sharon and I need you to help us track the “dumping” of PHI students into inappropriate programs and/or class placements by contacting us if you hear about this practice. Be an advocate to maintain a PHI designation on your student’s IEPs. Remind parents before IEP meetings that a change in their child’s designation could result in a change of placement and/or placement with a teacher who has not had specific training in PHI. Avoid re-designation of the child as multiply disabled – orthopedic. Districts that use this designation are exploiting the fact that the “multiple disabilities” designation is shared by both PHI and M/S. Sharon and I proposed changing the multiple disabilities designation out of M/S and into PHI during workgroup meetings and we were shot down.

Next Steps

The work is not over. As you may have heard, Sharon Grandinette, myself, and Satoko Davidson from Oakland have been selected to re-write the standards for the PHI Education Specialist credential and the new PHI Certificate. This is a good thing for which we volunteered. However, we have been given an incredibly short timeline to accomplish this job and also to create standards for a PHI certificate.

CAPHI has posted the current PHI Standards for Level I and Level II and we need you to look at them closely and respond to us as soon as possible. Decide what should be kept the way it is currently written, what should be expanded (maybe even new standards), and what should be eliminated. The word I heard is that we will be asked to keep the number of standards down. So, the strategy is to develop standards that are very specific to PHI. We don’t want standards that make the PHI credential look like the M/S or the M/S credentials.

Sharon, Satoko, and I are meeting on May 15th (the only face-to-face meeting) to work on these standards. I believe the draft of the standards is due to the CCTC by June. So, we need your input immediately. This is our chance to make our decisions about our credential.

If you need to contact me, email is always good or you can call me at home at 909/596-4679. We want to make the PHI credential and new certificate strong and you are the ones to add your voice. Please feel free to share the standards with other interested stakeholders (i.e. parents, therapists, etc.) and send us your feedback.

Sherry Best