

**Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services**

Endorsement in Autism Spectrum Disorders

Questions and Answers

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services is providing the following questions and answers to assist school district personnel in implementing Rule 6A-4.01796, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), *Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Autism – Academic Class*. This question and answer document replaces guidance previously provided via memorandum released on July 28, 2006, (K-12 Memo 2006-104), and an earlier memorandum dated September 30, 2005, (K-12 Memo 2005-135). Exceptional student education teachers are encouraged to work with their principals, ESE directors, and district personnel offices to determine their need for the endorsement.

1. Who will be required to have the ASD endorsement?

Beginning **July 1, 2011**, teachers with 100 percent of students on their caseload or in their class who are identified as an eligible student with a disability with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (either as a primary or secondary exceptionality) will need to be certified in an ESE area and have the ASD endorsement. Rule 6A-4.01796, F.A.C., *Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Autism - Academic Class*, outlines the requirements for the endorsement in autism.

2. Are there exceptions to this requirement?

Yes. Teachers who have at least one of the following are not required to obtain the endorsement:

- the severe/profound endorsement as described in Rule 6A-4.01793, F.A.C., *Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities, Academic Class*, on their Florida teaching certificates **or**
- documentation of at least two full years of teaching experience (including satisfactory teacher evaluations) with students with ASD between July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2011.

3. For teachers exercising the “two full years of teaching experience” exception, how will the experience be documented?

School districts will establish their own policies, procedures and/or practices regarding documentation of experience for the purpose of this exception.

4. How is “satisfactory” defined within this exception?

The definition of satisfactory will be included in any policies, procedures and/or practices the school district establishes regarding documentation of experience for the purpose of this exception.

- 5. What are the criteria for “teaching experience with students with ASD”? Does this mean any students with ASD, some students with ASD or all students with ASD? Does this mean full-time teaching or part-time teaching of students with ASD?**

There must be evidence of full-time teaching experience with at least one student who has autism spectrum disorder. Districts may consider out-of-state experience when reviewing a teacher’s eligibility for a waiver for the autism endorsement.

- 6. What types of certifications can the ASD endorsement be added to?**

The ASD endorsement can be added to any ESE Florida educator certificate.

- 7. What are the training and/or coursework requirements for teachers to obtain the ASD endorsement?**

Rule 6A-4.01796, F.A.C., *Specialization Requirements for Endorsement in Autism Spectrum Disorders - Academic Class* defines the requirements for the ASD endorsement as follows:

- 1) A bachelor’s or higher degree with certification in any exceptional student education area; and
- 2) Twelve semester hours to include:
 - (a) Nature of autism spectrum disorders (to include student characteristics, appropriate learning goals, teaching approaches, environmental arrangements, etc.);
 - (b) Use of assistive and instructional technology and natural, alternative and augmentative communication systems for students with autism spectrum disorders;
 - (c) Behavior management and positive behavior supports for students with autism spectrum disorders;
 - (d) Assessment and diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders; and
 - (e) Field-based experience with students with autism spectrum disorders.

- 8. Is there a test that a teacher can take to add the ASD endorsement to their certificate?**

No. There is no test available to add an endorsement.

- 9. Where can school personnel find information on courses offered at public universities in Florida?**

Most public universities and some colleges in Florida offer coursework relating to the endorsement, and some offer approved endorsement programs. For specific information, visit Florida’s Personnel Development: Supporting Exceptional Student Education website at <http://www.floridaese.org/personneldevelopment/uco/endorsements.aspx>.

- 10. Is there any financial support for teachers pursuing the ASD endorsement?**

Information on financial assistance programs that are available to educators in Florida can be found at http://www.florida-ese.org/personneldevelopment/uco/financial_assistance.aspx. In

addition, several universities have been awarded grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to provide tuition support for personnel seeking this endorsement. For more information, please visit <http://www.personnelcenter.org/get.cfm>.

11. If a teacher decides to obtain the endorsement, can a teaching experience “count” toward obtaining the endorsement?

In certain circumstances, teaching experience may be used to satisfy the college course work required for the endorsement. State Board Rule 6A-4.002(5), *General Provisions*, places a limitation on the use of teaching experience to satisfy certification course requirements. If the teacher has not already used the maximum experience allowed and if the experience is appropriate, the teacher may be able to satisfy up to six semester hours of coursework with two years of teaching experience.

The determination of possible use of teaching experience toward the endorsement is made by the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Educator Certification when the teacher submits a complete certification application for the endorsement to the Bureau. The teacher should clearly document his or her experience on this form. In addition, to further substantiate this experience, the teacher may request that the district certification office complete a CT 113 form (Teaching Experience Verification Form). The district will submit this form to the Department of Education electronically. Official transcripts of all relevant coursework that has been completed must also be submitted. Transcripts previously submitted to the Bureau of Educator Certification do not have to be resubmitted. Districts assist the Bureau in verifying teaching experience but do not make the determination regarding which course(s) may be waived.

12. Are there other options available to teachers interested in pursuing the endorsement in autism?

Yes. Teachers can complete a state approved district add-on endorsement program for ASD. Districts can establish an add-on program for the ASD endorsement to be offered in their local district. The following school districts currently have state approved ASD endorsement programs: Escambia, Lee, Miami-Dade, Okaloosa, Pasco, and Santa Rosa. Districts considering developing a district add-on program are encouraged to contact these districts for more information.

13. If a teacher decides to participate in a district add-on endorsement program, can teaching experience be used to waive some of the content/participation time of the district add-on program?

No. Teaching experience cannot be used to satisfy a portion of a district’s add-on program. Districts have the option and flexibility, if they choose to use it, to accept college courses in lieu of some of the add-on’s components. However, this flexibility does not apply to teaching experience.

14. Can a National Board Certificate be used to satisfy requirements related to the autism spectrum disorders endorsement?

There is no National Board Certificate that can be used to add the autism spectrum disorders endorsement to a Florida certificate. However, a valid National Board Certificate in the area of "Early Childhood-Young Adulthood Exceptional Needs Specialist: Severe/Multiple Disabilities" can be used to add the severe-profound disabilities endorsement to the teacher's Florida certificate. A certification application, processing fee, and a copy of the valid National Board Certificate must be submitted to the Bureau of Educator Certification.