



April 2020

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Public School Administrators
Charter School Administrators
Administrators of Nonpublic Schools with Approved Special Education Programs

FROM: Christopher Suriano, Office of Special Education

Laura Glass, Office of Teaching Initiatives

SUBJECT: Extension of the Subject Area Certification Requirement Effective Date and Statement of Continued Eligibility (SOCE) Application Deadline for Special Education Teachers Who Teach One or More Subject Areas in a Special Class in Grades 7-12 Due to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Outbreak in New York State

The following subject area certification requirement for certain special education teachers was described in a [December 2019 memo](#).

Effective July 1, 2020, all certified special education teachers who teach one or more subject areas in a special class in grades 7-12, with some or no students under alternate assessment, must either:

- be certified in each subject area that they teach, or
- meet the teaching experience requirement for the statement of continued eligibility (SOCE) and have an active SOCE application in the [TEACH online system](#) in each subject area that they teach¹.

The Department recognizes the unprecedented challenges that district administrators, teachers, and staff are facing during the COVID-19 outbreak and the need to focus all efforts on supporting the students and families they serve. For this reason, the Department is making the following changes related to the subject area certification requirement, SOCE, and limited extension to allow for additional time to complete these requirements.

¹ Pursuant to Education Law Section 2854(3), charter schools are permitted to employ a small number of uncertified teachers that meet certain requirements under the law.

- **Subject Area Certification Requirement.** The effective date for the above subject area certification requirement for special education teachers who teach one or more subject areas in a special class in grades 7-12 is **extended from July 1, 2020 to July 1, 2021**. The requirement otherwise remains the same.
- **SOCE Application Deadline.** The SOCE application deadline is **extended from June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2021**.
- **Teaching Experience.** The date by which special education teachers must complete the teaching experience for the SOCE, or the teaching experience for one of the six pathways in the limited extension, is **extended from June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2021**. This full-time special education teaching experience must be in a special class in grades 7-12 in the subject area of the SOCE or limited extension sought, during which time they would have been considered Highly Qualified through passing a HOUSSSE rubric in the subject area of the SOCE or limited extension sought. The [SOCE](#) and [limited extension](#) webpages provide additional details about the teaching experience requirement.

By extending the SOCE application deadline, districts gain the time needed to identify staff who are eligible for the SOCE, inform them about the application process and any supports provided, and submit the materials needed for the applications. In addition, extending the teaching experience date gives special education teachers the opportunity to gain more full-time, acceptable teaching experience for the SOCE or limited extension.