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Five new language certifications approved for Texas educators

AUSTIN - Beginning next month, Texas educators can become certified to teach Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Vietnamese.

“These five new certificates were created to be responsive to the needs of multicultural communities and to prepare students for increasing globalization of the economy,” said Karen Loonam, director of Educator Standards at the Texas Education Agency.

Certification holders will be able to teach in a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade classes.

The State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) recently approved the five new certifications and the State Board of Education, which must review SBEC rules, backed the expansion during its meeting today.

Currently, state certification is available at the secondary level (grades 6-12) in the languages of Spanish, French, German and Latin.

Some districts—such as Dallas, Fort Bend, Killeen, Victoria, Houston, and Plano—offer courses in other languages, such as Arabic or Chinese; however, the teachers of those languages do not hold state certification, but a special district permit.

Loonam said telephone calls from concerned school district personnel led to the development of the languages other than English (LOTE) plan. The plan will assist the teachers in earning the federal highly qualified status and in earning state certification. It will help districts expand their LOTE programs and meet the increasing demand for Advanced Placement courses.

To become certified to teach Spanish, French, German or Latin, certification candidates are required to pass a written proficiency exam in addition to the pedagogy and professional responsibility exam. For those seeking certification in Spanish or French, educators must also pass an oral exam.

In the absence of state-approved examinations in some languages, educator preparation programs preparing candidates for LOTE certification have been responsible for determining language proficiency of candidates through other means of assessment such as interviews, military interpreter instruments, and instruments developed by individuals.

In March, the SBEC approved the use of oral and written examinations available through the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) for Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and Vietnamese. Educators seeking certification in one of these languages for EC-grade 12 in Texas would be required to complete the appropriate requirements for

certification and pass the available ACTFL written and oral examinations of language proficiency.

“Before the use of ACTFL, educators were approved for certification through a variety of programs with varying levels of standards or proficiencies,” said Loonam.

Using the ACTFL for language proficiency provides assurance that schools will have highly qualified and certified teachers in LOTE classes. Having state certified educators could give school districts the opportunity to begin or expand current LOTE programs to include emerging languages.

The new LOTE teaching certificates is expected to be available by Oct. 15. For more information about the certification process for LOTE, contact the division of Educator Standards at (512) 936-8400.

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