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# Calif. Gives Nod to Overhaul of Teacher Credentialing

BY KATHLEEN KENNEDY MANZO

The California agency responsible for setting requirements for public school teachers and teacher-preparation programs has given final approval to the first major overhaul of the state's teacher-credentialing system in 25 years.

The changes, which were called for under a 1998 state law and were endorsed by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing this month, will require colleges and universities that prepare teachers to restructure their academic programs over the next two years to get accredited.

Undergraduates who intend to become teachers, as well as new teachers and others working toward a state credential, will have to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the subjects they will teach, as well as the state's academic standards in those subjects.

"We have created a much better system of training our teachers and ensuring they are well-equipped to teach students in the classroom," state schools Superintendent Delaine Eastin said last week in an interview. "It's a

bold and fundamental change designed to have standards for teachers much the way we have standards for students now."

The requirements are intended to ensure that teachers are up to the task of helping students meet the state's strengthened academic-content standards. The new rules should lead to a greater emphasis in undergraduate courses on the state's standards in core

## Report says state's plan does not go far enough.

subjects, officials say.

Aspiring teachers will also be required to take methods courses designed to prepare them to teach to the standards.

"Under the new system, students will be solidly prepared in subject matter," said William C. Wilson, the assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs for the California State University system and a member of the creden-

tialing commission. "Subject-matter departments and the entire university now need to become aware of the state's new content standards and how they affect subject-matter teaching."

### Other Changes Urged

The credentialing standards were released in the same week that a new report outlined the inadequacies of the current system. The report by the Little Hoover Commission, an independent state oversight agency that reports on state government operations, suggests that, while the credentialing commission is taking a significant step toward improving the quality of the workforce, "there are many other improvements that deserve to be explored by policymakers."

According to James McNamee, the project director for the Little Hoover Commission study, the credentialing system should give more weight to the skills and practices that teachers will need to be effective in the classroom.

"The state is moving in the direction of making credentialing more performance-based and

aligning credentialing requirements with the state's curriculum standards," Mr. McNamee said. "But there are some possibilities for further steps to make the system more performance-driven, rather than relying exclusively on approved programs."

For example, Mr. McNamee said, the credentialing standards do not provide a clear enough path for experienced private school teachers, or those coming from other states, to teach in California's public schools.

The Little Hoover report also recommends that the state establish a special credentialing process for teachers likely to seek jobs in the state's most difficult schools and districts. The "challenged-school credential" would reward teachers—through the elite credential and an additional stipend—specially prepared to raise student achievement in urban schools and those with high numbers of students at risk of academic failure.

The credentialing commission acknowledges that its standards may prove inadequate, but it says that changes to the system will be made as necessary.