## TOPIC: REAUTHORIZATION OF EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS AT RELAY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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**I. SUMMARY**

This consent item recommends approval of reauthorization of the following Educator Preparation Programs at **Relay Graduate School of Education** (RGS):

* Elementary Education (K-6)
* English Language Arts (7-12)
* Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (K-12)
* Mathematics (7-12)
* Middle School Mathematics (6-8)
* Science (7-12)
* Social Studies (7-12)
* Special Education Generalist (5-21)

The item recommends approval of conditional reauthorization of:

* Early Childhood Education (0-8)

**II. BACKGROUND**

Pursuant to C.R.S. §23-1-121, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) reviews and considers for reauthorization all educator preparation programs at public and private institutions of higher education. The process for reauthorization of educator preparation programs is as follows:

* The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) conducts a review of the content of endorsement programs to ensure alignment with the requirements for licensure pursuant to C.R.S. §22-2-109.
* The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) reviews the unit and its programs for alignment to the statutorily required performance-based standards [C.R.S. §23-1-121(2)].
* CDHE and CDE then jointly conduct an on-site visit of the unit and its educator preparation programs.
* CDE staff provide a recommendation to the State Board of Education (SBE) for consideration and then forward the board’s decision to CDHE.
* CDHE staff incorporate the SBE decision alongside staff analysis in their recommendation to CCHE.

**III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

At its February 8, 2023, meeting, the Colorado State Board of Education considered and approved the content of RGS’s educator preparation programs with a vote to conditionally reauthorize the Early Childhood Education program and fully reauthorize the remaining programs. CDE staff transmitted the Board’s decision and recommendations to CDHE.

CDHE staff have analyzed the relevant programs at RGS to the statutory performance-based standards set forth in C.R.S. §23-1-121(2) and confirmed the criteria are met as outlined in the areas below. The following evidence is summarized from the institution’s reauthorization report, which was co-authored by CDE and CDHE staff:

1. **Program Design**: Relay Graduate School of Education has a clear mission that permeates the entire organization, guiding the work of program implementation and delivery in Colorado.  Alignment around this shared sense of purpose empowers Relay to be highly intentional in all aspects of its program design efforts.  Relay’s mission and vision also include an intentional focus around attracting and supporting a diverse candidate base reflective of the needed diversity of the teaching workforce and guiding the development of teachers to be competent in managing diverse student populations with unique needs.  Relay employs a conscious construction of courses and assignments that build on previously acquired knowledge in conjunction with development of candidate practices, moving from demonstration to self-reflection and narration of meta-cognition strategies to mimicking strong pedagogical practices.  Over the course of their program, candidates discover, practice, demonstrate, and reflect on the competencies identified in the Colorado Teacher Quality Standards and the English Learner Standards.  Relay also makes concerted efforts to ensure that the partnerships it establishes are beneficial to both the institution’s candidates and its partner districts and schools.
2. **Educator Knowledge and Competencies**: Relay’s curriculum has a focus on culturally responsive teaching, incorporating these concepts into all courses to assist in building a culturally responsive and respectful classroom culture.  As a result of CDE’s peer review process, Relay’s endorsements (with the exception of Early Childhood Education) were found to be aligned to and meeting state standards.  There is a clear integration of literacy content throughout all content areas and courses, and reading is prioritized as a vehicle to equity and a gateway to all content areas.  CDE peer reviewers identified gaps in Relay’s ECE program, specifically a need to fully align to state standards and to include competency and content in child growth and development from birth to age 4.  To be re-evaluated for full reauthorization of the ECE program, full alignment to Colorado standards and the incorporation of core content from birth to age 4 is needed.  Relay will be required to submit updated matrices by August 15, 2023, and demonstrate that core content from birth to age 4 is incorporated into its ECE program.  Additionally, state review team members will conduct a follow-up review no later than December 31, 2023, to explore the status of implementation of necessary changes.
3. **Clinical Experiences**: Relay traditional program candidates follow a “gradual on-ramp model” that guides their skills and competency development that increases in complexity over time while they serve in a school setting.  This guidance, which is employed by candidates and mentors, is broken down by month over the span of the academic year and exhibits how candidates should be looking to grow and develop as they take on more responsibility.  This intentional design of the candidate experience provides a solid structure to ensure that everyone involved (residents, mentors, administrators, program staff) is aware of the expectations for candidate professional development.  Relay staff have consciously and intentionally structured clinical placements in order to meet all expectations for alignment to applicable standards and to the institution’s mission and vision of creating outstanding educators for all students.  As such, program staff take great care to ensure that candidates have space to learn and reflect, that they receive support when they struggle, and that mentors are fully prepared to provide constructive feedback to ensure positive candidate growth.
4. **Program Impact and Continuous Improvement:** Relay has been performing evaluative work through the use of data in a consistent manner for multiple years.  In doing so, they have engaged both internally and externally to discern where any possible opportunities for growth exist.  There is ample evidence that their practices and collaborations have moved their programs positively forward.  Relay’s continuous improvement cycles have resulted in an updated curriculum (Relay 2.0) which will be implemented in Colorado starting next year, and a new advisory structure for candidates, which will allow for more touchpoints to focus on candidate needs and struggles.  All of this points to a conscientious and determined effort to improve all aspects of the programs for the benefit of candidates and partners.

Pursuant to Colorado Revised Statutes §23-5-129(6)(b), department staff find the educator preparation programs at Relay Graduate School of Education are consistent with the institution’s statutory role and mission and meet the educator preparation requirements in §23-1-121, C.R.S. Upon the Commission’s approval, these programs will be reevaluated during the institution’s next regularly scheduled reauthorization, which generally occurs within 5-7 years.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommend** **the full** **approval of the reauthorization of the following educator preparation programs at Relay Graduate School of Education:**

* **Elementary Education (K-6)**
* **English Language Arts (7-12)**
* **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (K-12)**
* **Mathematics (7-12)**
* **Middle School Mathematics (6-8)**
* **Science (7-12)**
* **Social Studies (7-12)**
* **Special Education Generalist (5-21)**

**Staff recommend conditional reauthorization of the following educator preparation program at Relay Graduate School of Education:**

* **Early Childhood Education (0-8)**

**V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

**C.R.S. §23-1-121. Commission directive - approval of educator preparation programs**

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(2) The commission shall adopt policies establishing the requirements for educator preparation programs that include:

(a) Program design around a shared vision of candidate proficiency and professionalism that supports decision-making about partnerships and the integration of curricula, learners, and course work and clinical experiences;

(b) Mapping, planning, development, assessment, and support of candidate proficiencies, including candidates’ deep understanding of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, the content knowledge required for educating, and the dispositions and professional qualities necessary to be successful;

(c) With regard to teacher and principal preparation programs, courses that provide content knowledge as described in part 10 of article 7 of title 22, specifically in teaching to the state preschool through elementary and secondary education standards adopted pursuant to section 22-7-1005;

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(d) Intentional clinical experience, early and throughout preparation, relating to predetermined state content standards, which experiences afford candidates multiple, intentional experiences to learn from practice. Clinical experiences must be aligned with program curricula so that candidates develop pedagogical skills and pedagogical content knowledge. Teacher preparation candidates must complete a minimum of eight hundred hours, and principal and administrator candidates must complete a minimum of three hundred hours, of clinical practice. A teacher candidate must complete the hours of clinical practice while enrolled in an approved educator preparation program; except that a program, after review, may accept clinical practice hours completed before enrolling in the program. A majority of the clinical practice hours must be completed through a continuous placement. For every additional endorsement or advanced degree, a candidate must complete an appropriate period of supervised field experiences that relate to predetermined standards, including best practices and relevant national norms related to the candidate’s endorsements.

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(e) A requirement that each candidate, prior to graduation, must demonstrate the skills required for licensure, as specified by rule of the state board of education pursuant to section 22-2-109 (3), in the manner specified by rule of the state board;

(f) A requirement that preparation program faculty, to improve their work, must engage in continuous evidence-based cycles of self-reflection and review regarding the impact of their programs on their candidates’ development throughout the programs. These cycles must include data on current candidates throughout the program and available data on program completers.

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