



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
**Joint State Government Commission**  
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Harrisburg, PA 17120  
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**Report Summary of Act 82 of 2018**  
***Teacher Certification Grade Spans in Pennsylvania***

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Act 82 of 2018 directed the Joint State Government Commission to study teacher certification grade spans. The statute focused on the appropriateness of grade spans in impacting student outcomes, the creation or elimination of grade spans, and a study of national trends of certification grade spans.

Pennsylvania certification grade spans are:

Early Childhood – *spans ages 3 to 9*; includes Pre-Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Elementary/Middle – *spans ages 9 to 14*; includes 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Secondary – *spans ages 11-21*; includes 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Prior to January 1, 2013, the certification grade spans were:

Early Childhood – *spanned ages 3 to 8*; included Pre-Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Elementary – *spanned ages 4 to 11*; included Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Middle – *spanned ages 11 to 15*; included 6<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades

Secondary – *spanned ages 11 to 21*; included 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades

Between the 2010-11 and 2017-18 school years, the number of Instructional I Certificates issued by the PA Department of Education (PDE) decreased from 21,045 to 7,970, a decrease of 62 percent. During that time frame, the need for emergency certification grew and the number of emergency permits issued within the Commonwealth increased from 14,659 to 19,596. In 2015, the federal government made significant changes to education laws through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The changes increase the Commonwealth's autonomy in setting teacher preparation and certification requirements.

The Commission recommends that the State Board of Education conduct a study to evaluate the performance of students in PreK through middle school, with teacher certification as the primary variable. The State Board should use its current major review of certification regulations to consider returning to the K-6, 6-9, and 7-12 certification grade spans while maintaining the PreK-4 certificate as an option for those LEAs that want a specialized focus on early childhood. The Commission recommends that at least three credits of the coursework completed for Level II Certification and/or Act 48 credits be in cognitive development of the grade span/age range in which a teacher is employed and that teacher preparation programs emphasize age appropriate pedagogy within their curriculum. Finally, the Commission recommends that PDE continue to refine its data collection and dissemination so that data are available for evidence-based policy considerations.

The full report is available on our website, <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/>