

Sands CISD Teacher Certification Transition Plan

Base Year: 2025–2026

Proposed Delay of Implementation: Through 2029–2030 School Year

Partner EPP: iTeach Texas

Approved by Sands CISD Board of Trustees on February 19, 2026

1. Purpose and Overview

Sands CISD seeks approval from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for a Delay of implementation of the requirement to hire fully certified teachers. The purpose of this plan is to establish a structured and data-driven approach for reducing the number of uncertified teachers within Sands CISD in compliance with House Bill 2, passed by the 89th Texas Legislature. The district will implement a multi-year strategy to support uncertified teachers in obtaining full certification, strengthen recruitment pipelines, and ensure all instructional staff meet state certification requirements by the 2029–2030 academic year.

The plan is designed to:

- Address current labor shortages in rural West Texas and specifically in the areas of Dawson, Howard, and Martin counties where Sands CISD is located.
- Ensure high-quality instruction during the transition period.
- Implement a structured pathway for uncertified teachers to become certified through iTeach Texas.
- Establish annual benchmarks that demonstrate measurable progress.

2. Current Staffing Context (2025–2026 Base Year)

- As of the 2025–2026 school year:
- Sands CISD employs 26 teachers with 24 of the 26 fully certified in the courses they are teaching. We have two staff members who are currently teaching while pursuing their alternative certification pathway.
- A small applicant pool exists when jobs become open, but it often lacks certified candidates.
- Sands CISD’s rural location creates challenges in teacher recruitment and retention.
- The district has established a partnership with iTeach Texas to support educator preparation, coursework, mentoring, and certification pathways.

3. Partnership with iTeach Texas

- The EPP will review and admit those candidates that meet state and program requirements.
- The EPP will provide candidates access to its 100% online, self-paced teacher certification program, which includes comprehensive coursework designed to meet state certification requirements.
- The EPP will offer ongoing support to candidates throughout the program, including access to academic advisors, instructional coaching, test preparation resources, and professional development opportunities.
- The EPP will assign qualified supervisors to observe, evaluate, and provide feedback to candidates during their teaching experience, ensuring they meet the required competencies.
- The EPP will ensure that its program complies with all State Education/ Certification Agency regulations, including deadlines, certification requirements, and standards for alternative teacher preparation programs.

4. Transition Goals (2025–2030)

The primary goal of this plan is that by the start of the 2029–2030 school year, 100% of newly hired teachers that teach foundation curriculum courses will hold a valid Texas educator certificate.

Secondary goals include:

- Increasing the percentage of certified teachers in the district incrementally each year.
- Ensuring that all uncertified teachers are enrolled in iTeach Texas’s EPP or another TEA-approved certification pathway no later than August 2026.
- Providing district-led mentoring and support systems to help candidates successfully complete certification.

5. Annual Benchmarks and Action Steps

2025–2026 (Base Year)

- Finalize partnership with iTeach Texas EPP.
- Identify all uncertified teachers and determine their status in obtaining certification.
- Begin enrolling uncertified teachers into the iTeach Texas EPP..
- Provide district onboarding, mentoring, and observation cycles.

2026–2027

- Require all newly hired uncertified teachers to enroll in iTeach Texas's EPP or another comparable TEA approved certification program within 60 days of employment.
- Implement district-wide instructional coaching for all certification candidates.
- All uncertified teachers remaining from the base year must be enrolled in an EPP and progressing toward certification.
- Begin reducing the number of uncertified employees by at least 1 per year.
- Seek to hire new employees that are fully certified on 50% of new hires.

2027–2028

- All uncertified teachers remaining from the base year must have completed EPP requirements and are in the process of finalizing certification through passing appropriate certification exams.
- Seek to hire new employees that are fully certified on 75% of new hires.
- Increase recruitment efforts targeting Texas Universities/colleges education graduates.

2028–2029

- All base year employees should be fully certified.
- Require all new hires to hold at minimum a **probationary or intern certificate**.
- Seek to hire new employees that are fully certified on 90% of new hires.
- Continue mentoring, EPP collaboration, and retention support.

2029–2030 (Final Implementation Year)

- Sands CISD will **hire only fully certified teachers** for all foundation curriculum teaching assignments.
- All current uncertified teachers from prior years must have completed certification or will not be eligible for assignment as teacher of record.
- Submit annual TEA updates verifying full implementation.

6. Recruitment and Retention Strategies

To strengthen the transition, Sands CISD will implement the following strategies:

- **Grow-Your-Own Pathway:** Identify paraprofessionals and local community members interested in education careers and sponsor their entry into iTeach Texas's EPP.
 - **Local University Student Teaching Pipeline:** Establish a structured student-teaching placement program with local colleges and universities to convert student teachers into full-time hires.
 - **Rural Recruitment Campaign:** Target recruitment at regional colleges, job fairs, and university/college teacher candidate pools.
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7. District Support Structure for Certification Candidates

Sands CISD will provide:

- Assigned mentor teachers for each certification candidate.
 - Ongoing walkthroughs, coaching cycles, and performance feedback.
 - Release time, when possible, for EPP coursework or required iTeach meetings.
 - Annual progress monitoring for each candidate with documentation shared between Sands CISD and iTeach Texas.
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8. Data Monitoring and Reporting

The district will maintain annual records for:

- Number of certified vs. uncertified teachers.
- Number of teachers actively enrolled in iTeach Texas or other certification pathways.
- Certification progress benchmarks for each candidate.
- Recruitment outcomes and retention rates.
- Percentage of new hires meeting certification goals.

Reports will be shared annually with:

- Sands CISD Board of Trustees
 - iTeach Texas
 - TEA as required
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9. Board Approval & Submission

This plan received unanimous approval by the Sands CISD Board of Trustees.

Upon approval, Sands CISD will submit the plan and application to the Texas Education Agency to request the Delay of Implementation through the 2029–2030 school year.