

## Sunshine State TESOL

### Position Statement on FDOE's Proposed Pathways to Endorsement in ESOL and Reading

The Sunshine State TESOL organization represents ESOL professionals in the field of teaching English language learners. Its mission is to provide educators access to professional development, resources, and interaction as well as to provide leadership and advocacy in language policy issues. In order to ensure equal access to quality instruction, we need knowledgeable and skilled teachers working with the 243,000 English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in Florida's K-12 public schools. The Florida Consent Decree and subsequent amendments stress the importance of professional development for all teachers of ELLs.

The proposed pathways to obtain a Reading endorsement for ESOL teachers and an ESOL endorsement for reading teachers acknowledges that the revised teacher standards for each endorsement have undergone some key updates and changes. The Reading endorsement has added significant reference to linguistic and cultural diversity (including ELLs) and the ESOL endorsement has added significant reference to literacy, including reading and writing development.

However, the SSTESOL Board opposes the proposed pathways on the following grounds. First, the Florida Board of Education placed into rule the Consent Decree's requirement for 300 hours of professional development for Endorsement in ESOL. State Board rule also requires 300 professional development hours for the Reading Endorsement. The proposed pathways will reduce the number of required training hours for each of the two endorsements to 150 hours. This could lead to teachers with only partial preparation in ESOL providing Reading and ESOL instruction to ELLs throughout the state. Second, the plan for professional development that has been presented is vague and does not specify that FDOE or the "statewide committee of experts" will ensure that instructors teaching courses for the Reading or ESOL endorsement will have sufficient background knowledge to effectively address issues related to both reading and ELLs. It is our belief that only specialists in TESOL should deliver ESOL professional development and only specialists in Reading should deliver Reading professional development.

Third, the pathways are proposed for all ESOL or Reading Endorsed teachers, regardless of whether they completed an endorsement based on the old or new standards in their field. From the proposed standards and competencies, it is clear that the Committee who worked on this used the NEW standards to determine what teachers need to add to their endorsement. Consequently, teachers who have obtained their ESOL or reading endorsement that were designed to meet the OLD standards need MORE than what is proposed and not the same. This process of grandfathering teachers will be detrimental for all students, but especially for ELLs throughout the state, and is in clear violation of the intent of the Florida Consent Decree. We therefore request that the proposed policy be rejected.

In recognition that this issue has been under discussion for several years and that a policy is needed to address the reading/ESOL endorsement, we propose that, at minimum, the policy should be revised to align with the intent of the Florida Consent Decree and in no way minimize what teachers need to know and be able to do when working with ELLs. This would require a policy that would:

- (a) apply only to those teachers who have obtained ESOL/Reading endorsements that were designed to meet the new ESOL/Reading endorsement standards;
- (b) include a specific plan for professional development and credentialing requirements for instructors; and
- (c) include a specific plan to provide districts and teacher educators with sample modules designed to meet the additional required ESOL or Reading standards.