

Assembly Bill No. 544

CHAPTER 324

An act to add Section 44262.5 to the Education Code, relating to teacher credentialing.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2009. Filed with
Secretary of State October 11, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 544, Coto. Teaching credential: American Indian languages.

Existing law authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, among other things, to establish professional standards, assessments, and examinations for entry and advancement in the education process. The commission is authorized to issue an eminence credential to any person who has achieved eminence in a field of endeavor taught, or service practiced, in the public schools of California.

This bill would require the commission, upon recommendation by a tribal government of a federally recognized Indian tribe in California, to issue an American Indian languages credential to a candidate who has demonstrated fluency in that tribal language, and met other requirements. The bill would authorize the holder of an American Indian languages credential to teach the American Indian language for which the credential was issued in California public schools in preschool, kindergarten, grades 1 to 12, inclusive, and in adult education courses, and would make the holder of that credential eligible for a professional clear teaching credential upon completion of a specified period of time and application and consultation as specified. The bill would encourage each federally recognized American Indian tribe to develop a written and oral assessment that should be successfully completed before an applicant is recommended for an American Indian languages credential.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) Teaching American Indian languages is essential to the proper education of American Indian children.

(b) Preserving American Indian languages is an important part of our national heritage and can be of value to all Americans.

SEC. 2. Section 44262.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

44262.5. (a) Upon recommendation of the tribal government of a federally recognized Indian tribe in California, the commission shall issue

an American Indian languages credential to a candidate who has met the following requirements:

(1) Demonstrated fluency in that tribe's language based on an assessment developed and administered by that federally recognized Indian tribe pursuant to subdivision (e).

(2) Successfully completed a criminal background check conducted under Sections 44339, 44340, and 44341 for credentialing purposes.

(3) Submitted an application, fee, and recommendation for the credential to the commission through the federally recognized Indian tribe.

(b) The American Indian languages credential shall authorize the holder to teach the American Indian language for which the credential was issued in California public schools in preschool, kindergarten, grades 1 to 12, inclusive, and in adult education courses.

(c) The holder of an American Indian languages credential who does not also have a valid teaching credential issued by the State of California shall not teach in a public school, including a charter school, any subject other than the American Indian language for which he or she is credentialed.

(d) Each American Indian languages credential shall be issued initially for a two-year period and may be renewed for a three-year period upon recommendation of the tribal government. Upon completion of the three-year period, the holder of an American Indian languages credential shall be eligible for a clear teaching credential for that language upon application and the recommendation of the tribal government, in consultation with the applicant's public school employer.

(e) (1) Each federally recognized American Indian tribe is encouraged to develop a written and oral assessment that should be successfully completed before an applicant is recommended for an American Indian languages credential.

(2) In developing the language assessment, an Indian tribe should determine all of the following:

(A) Which dialects of the tribal language will be included in the assessment.

(B) Whether the Indian tribe will standardize its writing system.

(C) The standard of knowledge and fluency required to qualify for an American Indian languages credential in that tribal language.

(D) Standards for effective teaching methods to be evaluated in the classroom.

(3) The assessment should be administered at an appropriate location that does not create hardship for members of the Indian tribe administering the assessment.

(f) Upon agreement by the tribe, a tribe recommending a candidate for an American Indian languages credential shall develop and administer a technical assistance program guided by the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. To the extent feasible, the program shall be offered by teachers credentialed in an American Indian language who have three or more years of teaching experience. The technical assistance program may consist of direct classroom observation and consultation, assistance in

instructional planning and preparation, support in implementation and delivery of classroom instruction, and other assistance intended to enhance the professional performance and development of the American Indian language teacher.

(g) Public school personnel responsible for evaluating teachers, in accordance with local governing board policy, shall provide individuals employed to teach on the basis of the American Indian languages credential with information on the teaching personnel evaluation process and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.