

## A Call to Convene an IAI Panel for Education Majors

August 15, 2022

From: The Educator Pipeline Group formed by Advance Illinois, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, Teach Plus, Educators Rising, Illinois State Board of Education, Kaskaskia College, and Vandalia CUSD 203

To: Brian Durham, PhD, Executive Director  
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Dear Dr. Brian Durham, Ginger Ostro, and Malinda Aiello,

Since 2019, several philanthropic and governmental projects have initiated and expanded secondary pathways into teaching. In 2019, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University launched [Scaling Education Pathways in Illinois](#) (SEPI) to establish college and career pathways at the secondary level in collaboration with local community colleges and universities throughout Illinois. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) augmented this work in [2020](#) and [2021](#) by making multi-million dollar career pathways grants to recruit future educators in 101 high schools and area vocational centers throughout the state. In both of these initiatives, participating high schools are required or encouraged to implement programs of study and pathways in alignment with the state's [College and Career Pathway Endorsement](#), which requires a minimum of six hours of career-focused early college credit<sup>1</sup>. For students in a teaching pathway, career-focused early college credit typically means dual credit in partnership with the local community college's education department.

As a result of these initiatives, by 2025, an estimated 1,000+ high school students will be graduating annually from Illinois high schools with at least six hours of community college credit in education coursework and looking to apply those accumulated credits towards an eventual bachelor's degree in education. These highly motivated education pathway students will need a streamlined process to transfer their relevant career-focused and technical coursework credits to a university program to complete their studies. Unfortunately, the

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1 | Career-focused dual credit courses are those incorporated as part of a career-focused instructional sequence as laid out in the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act.

transferability between community college and bachelor's degree coursework in the specific areas of Elementary, Secondary, Bilingual, and Special Education is inconsistent or ad hoc, which creates confusion across the state for high school and community college faculty looking to advise students. Such confusion costs these students valuable time and money and slows the talent flow in our state's teacher pipeline.

To reduce cost and time towards completion for students seeking bachelor's degrees in Elementary, Special, Bilingual, and Secondary Education, the undersigned recommend that the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) expand the number of education major courses that are transferable through the IAI process. To that end, we recommend the IAI — a joint project of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), and Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities — institute a new education-specific panel or expand courses in existing panels. Establishing a pool of highly-transferable, major-specific courses in education will streamline the programs offered throughout the state and increase the number of motivated students who transfer into baccalaureate degrees at educator preparation programs.

### **Additional Background and Context**

Transferability of postsecondary courses within Illinois typically happens in two ways. The first is when individual colleges have specific articulation agreements with other colleges or universities that delineate suggested transfer pathways and course equivalents. While community colleges and select universities can create articulation agreements, it involves arduous processes that the two institutions must regularly update. Articulation agreements require crosswalks among administrators and faculty of targeted major program courses and extended negotiations on their design. In the absence of robust articulation agreements, some major courses transfer ad hoc or only as elective credit (particularly when institutions cap the number of transferable credits counting towards the major), causing students to re-take courses which slows their progress to the degree. Anecdotal evidence from SEPI pathway institutions reveals that without articulation agreements, education majors at community colleges may only transfer career-focused coursework as general education courses or as single-digit credit hours within the major. As a result, students pursuing a community college transfer pathway in education are not receiving a meaningful boost to their progression into teaching careers, which thus slows the educator talent pipeline.

The second method of course transferability is through the [Illinois Articulation Initiative](#) (IAI), a statewide transfer agreement including 100+ Illinois postsecondary institutions. In addition to recommended transferable general education courses, the IAI process includes major recommendations for the first two years of college in several popular majors. IAI major recommendations work best for students who have chosen their majors and will eventually transfer but are undecided at which college or university to pursue their baccalaureate degree. Despite the state's deep need for educators across the P-12 pipeline, there is no major panel for Elementary, Special, Bilingual, and Secondary Education courses. While a major panel for Early Childhood Education exists, it consists of only three courses that do not always overlap with other education major programs. The 2021 passage of [HB2878](#), which guarantees the transferability of specific Associate of Applied Science Degrees in Early Childhood to corresponding bachelor's degree programs at state universities without the need to repeat coursework, further enhanced the early childhood educator pipeline. Unfortunately, other critical education programs have not made the same progress as early childhood education.

With the increase in college and career pathways implementation, more students are pursuing education major courses through community colleges. It is time to accelerate and streamline their progression into and through educator preparation programs by establishing targeted education courses eligible for statewide transferability. The best long-term solution to do this is by expanding the number of education major courses that are transferable through the IAI process, either through a new education-specific panel or expansion of courses in existing panels. The IAI process could create up to four lower-division major education courses (approximately 12 to 16 credit hours), which would have a standardizing effect on the community college and university courses prioritized for dual credit and dual enrollment and incorporated into associate degree programs. The additional IAI education courses would reduce the burden on colleges and universities from establishing individual articulation agreements with all the postsecondary institutions across Illinois. In addition, students would benefit by having a more robust awareness of priority education major coursework and thus be able to make informed decisions about how to progress efficiently through their education pathway. Lastly, high school districts implementing college and career pathways would be empowered to strategically implement dual credit coursework that maximizes the impact on student transferability and acceleration toward degree completion.

### Recommended Next Steps

The first step towards advancing IAI transferability for education majors is to convene a task force on the viability and specifics of this strategy. In 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed HB2170, an education omnibus bill to improve access and racial equity in the state's education system. The topic of an IAI panel for education was discussed in HB2170, [Article 130\(b\)](#), where ICCB and IBHE are “encouraged” to jointly establish a task force for a Major Panel in Education and identify respective recommended major courses that would be accepted as credit toward the education major at the receiving institutions.

It is our understanding that the IAI staff and board panel managers met in the spring of 2022 and discussed the possibility of a task force. We are encouraged that these initial steps have been taken. As the work moves forward, **we recommended that:**

- ICCB and IBHE publicly release a timeline that would include Task Force meeting dates and key related deadlines including the release of recommendations by December 2022.
- Postsecondary participation in the task force be significantly represented by institutions currently collaborating in the implementation of college and career pathways through the ISBE or SEPI programs or who participated in the advisory committee of the [Model Programs of Study for Education](#), supported by ICCB.
- If IAI transferability is to move forward, ICCB and IBHE release a plan in time for the next fiscal year budget allocations that describes how the agencies will allocate sufficient staff time and agency resources to the staffing of the relevant IAI major panels. This plan will include a timeline with key milestones through the completion of work.

Any new or expanded IAI Major Panel would require an estimated year to set the targeted major courses, and then a subsequent semester for postsecondary institutions to align their coursework to the IAI courses and seek IAI portability approval. Given this lengthy timeline, IBHE, ICCB, and the IAI should pursue this work expeditiously.

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. The members of the Early Pathways Action Team welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you and your colleagues.

## About the Educator Pipeline Group and Early Pathways Action Team

The Educator Pipeline Group, formed in fall 2019 and convening various postsecondary, union, K-12 and non-profit stakeholders, is focused on refining, advancing, and supporting innovative strategies and systems to recruit, develop, and retain highly effective educators who reflect the diversity of Illinois and can prepare students for college and career success to build stronger communities. This letter is the work of the Early Pathways Policy Action Team of the Educator Pipeline Group, which has been meeting during SY21-22 and has prioritized K-12 pathways into education. The above recommendations reflect the work, discussions, and feedback of key organizations including Advance Illinois, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, Teach Plus, Educators Rising, Illinois State Board of Education, Kaskaskia College, and Vandalia CUSD 203. Additionally, the following organizations and individuals below have reviewed this letter and signed in support.

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