
Special Courses Policy 3.201

The Background:

In 1995 the State Board of Education adopted rule 0520-1-3-.05(2) and policy 3.201 (Special Courses), which allow school districts to apply to offer special courses not listed in the Approved High School Courses policy. The Department of Education annually reviews special course applications and assigns subject-specific special course codes to approved special courses.

Currently, special courses are initially approved by the department for three years and then, upon approval by the State Board, the courses become permanent offerings in those districts and use the assigned special course codes indefinitely. This special course review process differs from the approval process for all other instructional standards, which are reviewed by the state board no less than every six years (3.209) and often more frequently. Additionally, the permanent nature of approved special courses and the broad, subject-specific, special course codes prevent the analysis of specific special courses offered in a given school year.

This proposed item requires that special courses be reviewed and approved for three (3) or six (6) years, after which time the LEA would need to submit renewal special course applications to continue offering these courses. This will ensure that special course standards are reviewed and approved on an ongoing basis by both the LEA and the department to ensure high levels of rigor and alignment. Additionally, this item will reduce the annual administrative burden for LEAs submitting special course applications, and will allow the department to better track the special courses currently offered by LEAs. The department will annually submit a list of approved special courses for consideration by the state board.

This item will be phased in over the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years. All special course applications (new and renewal) approved for the 2017-18 school year will be approved for three or six years, under the revised policy. Special courses that were permanently approved prior to the 2016-17 school year are valid through the 2017-18 school year, but they must be resubmitted as new special course applications and assigned new special course codes for the 2018-19 school year. All existing special course codes will be retired following the 2017-18 school year.

There have been no changes since first reading.

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

T.C.A. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department of Education prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule, or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.