How Middle School Subject Matter Authorizations Work

Individuals who hold a California multiple subjects credential can qualify for a middle school subject matter authorization in a number of single subjects. To understand how this works, we need to first understand how teacher preparation in California works in a general way.

Teacher Preparation in California

California’s process for certifying teachers at the primary and secondary levels differs from the process in many states. In California, content preparation and pedagogical preparation are separated. That is, candidates learn the content they intend to teach and how to teach that content in separate programs. Candidates who qualify for a middle school subject matter authorization will establish their content competence through 32+ units of coursework in their chosen content area and their pedagogical competence through their multiple subjects credential.

Necessary Qualifications for a Middle School Subject Matter Authorization

To qualify for a middle school subject matter authorization, a candidate must possess all of the following:

X) a California multiple subjects credential
Y) a minimum of 32 units of coursework in an approved subject area (see below for approved subject areas)
Z) sufficient coursework in specific sub-content areas within the larger single subject area (3-6 units per sub-area, depending on area)

Note that these qualifications are identified by letter, rather than number, to indicate that the order of completion of the qualifications isn’t set. Most Liberal Studies students at San Diego State complete Y and Z together with their undergraduate requirements (before they complete X), but this is only one order in which to meet the qualifications. It’s also important to note that Y and Z alone don’t certify the candidate to do anything in a classroom; qualification X is also required.

Available Subject Areas for Middle School Subject Matter Authorizations

Currently, the state of California grants middle school subject matter authorizations in the following content areas (with sub-areas):

- **Language Arts** (grammar, composition, speech, drama, literature)
- **Mathematics** (algebra, advanced algebra, geometry, statistics, real number systems)
- **Science** (biology, chemistry, geosciences, physics)
- **Social Science** (US history, California history, world history, world civilizations, physical geography, US government)
- **Spanish** (grammar, composition, culture, conversation, literature)
- **Studio Arts** (art history, two dimensional art, three dimensional art, photography/computer generated imagery)

For more information, candidates are encouraged to visit the Liberal Studies website (see the URL below).