

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

Certification for teachers and teaching assistants in New York state



In 2004, the State Education Department (SED) implemented new certification requirements for teachers and teaching assistants. This brochure describes the certification process and general certification requirements for both groups of educators.

What you need to know about certification

Teachers

Prior to Feb. 2, 2004, individuals would receive a provisional certificate as their first credential upon satisfactory completion of all teacher preparation requirements. The provisional certificate was valid for five years from the date of issuance, and during that time provisional certificate holders would complete the requirements for a permanent certificate. The last provisional teaching certificates were issued on Feb. 1, 2004.

A *permanent certificate* is valid for life in the area of certification.

As of Feb. 2, 2004, an initial certificate replaced a provisional certificate as the entry level credential for teaching in New York state, and, in turn, the professional certificate replaced the permanent certificate. In addition, certification titles changed as new titles were introduced and others were focused on more limited student populations.

Please visit the New York State Education Department's web site at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/certprocess.html> for additional information on the certification process in New York.

Initial certificates are valid for five years from the date of issuance and during that time, initial certificate holders complete the requirements for the professional certificate. Generally speaking, applicants for professional certification must:

- already possess a valid NYS teaching certificate;
- have earned a master's degree;
- have three years teaching experience, with one year being a mentored year.

Please note that certification in career and technical subjects may not necessarily follow the sequence listed above.

All applications for teaching certificates are done using the NYS Education Department's TEACH Online system, <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/teach/>.



Teaching Assistants

Prior to Feb. 2, 2004, a temporary license was the first credential a teaching assistant would hold in New York state. A teaching assistant would then seek to obtain a continuing certificate.

Valid continuously, except when the holder has not been regularly employed as a teaching assistant for five consecutive years, a continuing certificate is portable across school districts and BOCES boundaries in the same way a teaching certificate is portable.

After Feb. 2, 2004, individuals seeking certification as a teaching assistant first apply for a *Level I certificate* and continue through progressive certification levels.

The requirements and time validity for each of the certificate types are as follows:

Level I Certificate

- Hold a high school diploma or its equivalent;
- Pass the NYS Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills (ATAS) which tests proficiency in basic quantitative and communication skills;
- Child Abuse Identification Workshop;
- School Violence Prevention and Intervention Workshop; and
- Fingerprint clearance.

Level I certificates are valid for three years and can be renewed one time, only with a commitment for employment. Individuals with one year of experience and 18 semester hours may apply directly for the Level III certificate.

Level II Certificate

In addition to meeting the requirements for the Level I certificate:

- Complete nine semester hours of collegiate study toward meeting the requirements for an associate or baccalaureate degree; and
 - One year of experience as a teaching assistant.
- Level II certificates are valid for three years and are not renewable.



Level III Certificate

In addition to the requirements for the Level II teaching certificate:

- Complete additional semester hours of collegiate study for a total of at least 18 hours toward meeting the requirements for an associate or baccalaureate degree;
- Level III certificates are valid continuously, provided that the required 75 hours of professional development consistent with the district's professional development plan are completed every five years.

Pre-professional Certificate

In addition to the requirements for a Level III teaching certificate:

- The candidate must be matriculated in a program leading to teacher certification or its equivalent, or employed in a program with an articulation agreement with a teacher preparation program;
- Valid for five years and can be renewed with the completion of an additional 30 semester hours.



Professional Development

Individuals holding professional certification in a teaching title and Level III teaching assistants are required to complete a prescribed number of professional development hours to maintain their certificates. Specifically:

- Professional certificate holders must complete 175 clock hours of professional development every five years, and
- Level III teaching assistants must complete 75 clock hours of professional development every five years.

It is important to note that these are the only certificates that require continuing professional development for certification purposes. See NYSUT's Fact Sheet on Professional Development Requirements for Certification at http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/bs.xml/bulletins_8015.htm for additional information.

Incidental teaching

Generally, a certified teacher cannot teach outside his or her certification area. However, the BOCES district superintendent may grant a school district permission to assign a teacher to teach a subject not covered by the teacher's certificate if no certified teacher is available, despite extensive recruitment efforts, and the teaching time does not exceed five classroom hours a week. This is known as "incidental teaching."

Revocation

A teacher's certificate may be revoked by the state for conviction of a crime or an act indicating lack of "good moral character," such as physical or sexual abuse of a student or minor; sale, possession, or use of illegal drugs; any crime committed either on school property or while in the performance of teaching duties; or other acts which bring into question the teacher's "good moral character." Under Part 83 of Commissioner's Regulations, a hearing is required before the certificate can be revoked.



It's **your** responsibility

Keep in mind that it is an individual's responsibility to maintain certification. Members are strongly urged to maintain a certification file including copies of all transcripts, certificates, communications with the State Education Department, and professional development hours.

Members can check their individual TEACH account to verify the status of their certificates, apply for additional certificates or time extensions to complete certification requirements, verify information reported to SED by their employing districts, or just see what SED has on file related for them regarding certification.

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/teach/>

Members with specific questions should visit the Office of Teaching Initiatives web site at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/home.html> to search for answers; the Index A-Z link does provide answers to the most often asked questions. The Office of Teaching Initiatives can also be contacted by telephone at 518-474-3901; please note that callers may have to remain on hold for long periods of time.

The regulations pertaining to specific situations regarding certification can be difficult. Contact your local union president for help. Be prepared to provide your name, Social Security number and a brief description of the situation.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

NYSUT offers a variety of materials to help new members such as certification fact sheets available at www.nysut.org. Your union can make these items available at strategic times during the year.

For more information about your union and how your colleagues can help you build a successful career, contact your union representative or your local president.

www.nysut.org

This information was compiled in collaboration with NYSUT's Research and Educational Services Department and the New Member Program

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