

# Teacher Certification in New York State



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All teachers employed in the public schools in New York State must hold a valid certificate issued in accordance with Sections 3001 and 3009 of Education Law and Part 80 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. Section 3001 establishes that no one is authorized to teach in a public school without a teaching certificate, and Section 3009 clearly states that unqualified teachers cannot be paid with district funds. Part 80 contains certification requirements for classroom teaching, administrative/supervisory and pupil personnel (school) service titles. The Office of Teaching Initiatives at the State Education Department is responsible for certifying teachers in New York State.

State certification is also required for teachers employed in state-operated and state-supported schools, Special Act school districts, approved private schools for the education of students with disabilities, and approved preschool special education programs.

Only the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) of the State Education Department can make determinations regarding the certification status of individual members. This document is for information only.

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## CERTIFICATION OVERVIEW

New York State teachers, administrators, and pupil personnel service providers must hold a New York State certificate to be employed in the State's public schools. The certificates are issued by the Office of Teaching Initiatives and certify that an individual has met required degree, coursework, assessment, and experience requirements. Certificates are issued in a number of titles in three major categories: classroom teaching, administrative and supervisory, and pupil personnel service (i.e. school counselor, psychologist, social worker).

Prior to February 2004, *Classroom Teaching* and *Administrative and Supervisory* certificate titles were either provisional (entry level) or permanent (final). In February 2004, the provisional/permanent certificates were replaced by **Initial certificates (entry level)** and **Professional certificates (final)**. See <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/typesofcerts.html> for types of certificates and licenses.

The *Pupil Personnel Service* certificate titles remain provisional and permanent.

All applicants for certification must be fingerprinted. An individual who has been fingerprinted for certification for public school employment purposes does not need to be fingerprinted again for subsequent certification or employment. For detailed information on fingerprinting, access the NYS State Education Department Office of School Personnel Review and Accountability (OSPRA) Web site at: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/ospra/home.html>.

All applications for certification are submitted online using the TEACH Online System, found at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/>.

## **INITIAL TO PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CERTIFICATION**

There are multiple pathways to obtaining an initial teaching certificate in New York State – see ‘Preparation Pathways’ at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/pathways.html>.

Initial certificates are valid for five (5) years with the potential for a time extension or a re-issuance of the initial certificate in certain circumstances. The State Education Department no longer prints Initial certificates; individuals can confirm their certification status by checking their individual TEACH accounts.

Holders of initial teaching certificates are expected to progress to the professional teaching certificate, within the stated 5-year period, by completing the requirements for professional certification, including:

- Three years of teaching experience, with one year as a mentored experience, and
- Successful completion of an appropriate master’s degree.

### **Three Years Teaching Experience**

Applicants for professional certification can count teaching experience in public and private schools, part-time or full time, per diem and long-term substitute teaching, and in-state or out-of-state teaching. Experience as a teaching assistant does not fulfill this requirement. Individuals report their work experience using the TEACH online system.

### **Mentored Teaching Experience**

To obtain a professional certificate, an individual employed in a public school district must receive mentoring in the first year of teaching. Individuals who have had at least two years of teaching prior to service in a public (or private) school under an initial certificate are exempt from this requirement.

Public school employers report the mentored experience for the certificate holders they employ using the TEACH online system.

### **Successful Completion of a Master’s Degree**

The professional certification requirement is satisfied, if an individual:

- ❑ successfully completes a graduate teacher education program from an accredited college in New York State or another jurisdiction that qualifies the individual for a new or additional certificate (in NYS or in another jurisdiction);
- ❑ holds a master’s degree accepted previously to satisfy requirements for a NYS permanent or professional certificate;
- ❑ successfully completes a master's or higher degree program in the content core of the initial certificate or in a related content area; or
- ❑ successfully completes a master's or higher degree program in any field, provided that the individual has completed at least 12 semester hours of graduate study in the content core of the initial certificate or in a related content area.

For more information go to the Professional Certificate - Master's Degree Requirement at:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/relatedmasters.html>

The Office of Teaching Initiatives maintains a FAQ site that is current and can also be a valuable resource:

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/faq.html>.

### **Time Extensions**

Extensions are available to initially certified teachers who are unable to fulfill the requirements for the professional certificate within a five (5) year period. Visit the State Education Department's web site at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/timeext.html> for additional information regarding time extensions and the conditions that allow for them. Individuals who require an extension must apply for the extension using the TEACH online system. Ideally, the application should be made seven (7) months prior to the expiration date of the certificate.

### **Reissuance of an Initial Certificate**

An expired initial certificate can be reissued for a period of five years if the certificate holder has not already completed three years full time teaching experience. Applicants seeking a reissuance of an Initial certificate will be required, within one year of the candidate's application for a reissued initial certificate, to:

- ❑ re-take and pass the applicable NYSTCE content specialty test(s) if the certificate has been expired for more than two years; and
- ❑ successfully complete 75 hours of acceptable professional development.

The initial certificate can only be reissued once and would not be eligible for an additional extension of time. Check the NYSED Web page: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/reissue.html> for related information.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR HOLDERS OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CERTIFICATES**

In order to maintain the validity of a Professional Teaching Certificate, the holder of the certificate must complete 175 hours of professional development every five years, commencing the July 1st following the date printed on an individual's professional certificate (printed dates are either 9/1 or 2/1). The 175 hours of professional development applies only to holders of professional teaching certificates.

These professional development hours should be consistent with the school district's Professional Development Plan and offered during regular school hours to the certificate holder (unless otherwise collectively bargained).

For professional certificate holders who are employed full-time in a public school, the employing public school district reports professional development hours to the State Education Department using the TEACH Online system.

Professional certificate holders who are not employed full-time in a public school or who are not working in a public school report their own professional development hours using the State Education Department's TEACH Online system.

For more information on this professional development requirement, see <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/maintaincert-prof.html>

The Office of Teaching Initiatives maintains a FAQ site that is current and can also be a valuable resource: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/faq.html>.

## **TEACH ONLINE SERVICES**

The New York State Education Department developed the **TEACH Online Services System**, commonly known as **TEACH**, to process all matters related to certification in New York State. TEACH provides services for:

- a. Individuals, who can apply for certificates, check on the status of their application(s), update their demographic and employment information, and view their professional development record;
- b. Colleges/Universities that offer teacher and/or leadership preparation programs can submit certification recommendations for their program graduates.
- c. School Employers, who can access an employee (or prospective employee's) certification, fingerprint, and employment history, submit employees' professional development records online, and obtain application status updates on current or potential employees.
- d. The General Public, who can use the TEACH system to obtain information on the certification status of teachers across the state, as well as examination result reports for institutions of higher education that prepare teachers. TEACH also provides information related to filing a moral character complaint.

All individuals possessing a NYS Teaching Certificate have a TEACH account and should check it annually (at a minimum) for accuracy. You can access your TEACH account by using this link to self-register and choose a login name and password. <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/>.

## **STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION**

Only the State Education Department's (SED) Office of Teaching Initiatives can officially interpret certification regulations and make determinations regarding the certification status of individual applicants.

<p><b>New York State Education Department Office of Teaching Initiatives 5N Education Building Albany, New York 12234</b></p>
<p><b>Phone: (518) 474-3901 <i>from 9:00-4:30 p.m. (Monday through Friday)</i></b></p>
<p><b>Web: <a href="http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert">http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:tcert@mail.nysed.gov">tcert@mail.nysed.gov</a></b></p>

For TEACH issues, call the TEACH HELP phone line at 518-486-604; help is available from 9am - 4pm.

The Office of Teaching Initiatives maintains a FAQ site that is current and can be a valuable resource: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/faq.html>.

## **NYS TEACHER CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION PROGRAM**

The New York State Teacher Certification Examination (NYSTCE) program is designed to help ensure that certified teachers have the knowledge and skills to succeed in New York State public schools. As part of its Race to the Top application, the State Education Department committed to redesigning the examinations required for teacher certification. The table below indicates what examinations will be required on or after May 1, 2014 for individuals pursuing their first initial teaching certificate.

### **Initial Teacher Certification Examinations**

New Exams, for Initial Certificate Applications on or after 5/1/14

#### **The Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA):**

The edTPA is a portfolio-based assessment for pre-service teacher candidates, i.e., those individuals seeking their first New York State teaching certificate. Individuals taking the edTPA will be required to complete a 20-minute video segment of themselves teaching K-12 students.

#### **Educating All Students (EAS):**

This examination is designed to assess if an individual possesses the professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach all students effectively in New York state public schools. The EAS will test knowledge of how to use research-validated instructional strategies, knowledge of legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities in educational settings, and the importance of parent/guardian involvement in a child's education.

#### **Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST):**

This examination is designed to assess if an individual possesses the academic literacy skills necessary to teach effectively in New York state public schools. The ALST will test knowledge of proficient, close, and critical reading of informational and literary texts; ability to use evidence from text and to demonstrate cogent reasoning to analyze and synthesize ideas; and the ability to produce complex and nuanced writing for a given task, purpose, and audience.

#### **Revised Content Specialty Tests (CST):**

The revised examinations will focus on knowledge of the NYS Learning Standards associated with the candidate's subject specific teaching certification area, as well as the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics. Visit <http://www.nystce.nesinc.com/> for the scheduled availability of the revised examinations.

## **OTHER CERTIFICATION INFORMATION**

### **Certified Teachers Seeking Additional Teaching Certificates**

Certified teachers who seek an additional certificate(s) should review the requirements for the certificate sought at the NYSED Office of Teaching Initiatives web site at <http://eservices.nysed.gov/teach/certhelp/CertRequirementHelp.do>. After entering the specific certificate title of interest, review the requirements under “**Pathway: Individual Evaluation for Additional Classroom Teaching Certificate**”. This Pathway indicates the minimal qualifications required by NYSED to obtain an additional certificate in a specific certification title.

If the review of your application by the Office of Teaching identifies unmet requirements, please visit NYSED’s FAQ section, ‘Coursework to Satisfy Unmet Requirements’ page at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/faq.html>.

Certified teachers who apply for additional certificates on or after May 1, 2014 will be required to pass the revised Content Specialty Test (if available) associated with the teacher/leadership certificate sought. Please visit [http://www.nysce.nesinc.com/NY\\_annProgramUpdate.asp](http://www.nysce.nesinc.com/NY_annProgramUpdate.asp) for when specific subject area CSTs are scheduled to be implemented.

### **Incidental Teaching**

A superintendent of schools may assign a certified teacher to teach a subject not covered by the teacher's license or certificate, for a period not to exceed five classroom hours per week, when no certified teacher is available. The regulations (<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/part80-5.html>) require that the district first seek a certified teacher, file an application, and receive approval of the Commissioner. Requests for incidental teaching approvals are submitted directly to the local BOCES District Superintendent as an agent of the Commissioner. Incidental teaching in New York City is approved by the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education. Special education programs and services may not be taught on an incidental basis.

### **Interstate Reciprocity**

Applicants who hold a certificate from another state, or who have completed an approved program that would lead to a teaching certificate in another state, may be eligible for a certificate through interstate reciprocity. If approved by the State Education Department, applicants will be issued a Conditional Initial certificate. This certificate is non-renewable and valid for two years, during which time the teacher must satisfy the examination requirement for a regular initial teaching certificate. For more information on this, see <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/teachrecother.html>.

### **Revocation**

Under Part 83 of the Regulations of the Commissioner (<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/part83.html>) the Commissioner of Education may institute proceedings to remove a teacher’s certificate for cause under the good moral character requirement. A due process hearing is required. Certification may be revoked for conviction of a serious crime, or if the teacher has committed an act which raises a reasonable question as to the teacher’s moral character.

### **Substitute Teachers**

Commissioner’s Regulations define a substitute teacher as “one who is employed in place of a regularly appointed teacher who is absent but is expected to return.” Persons serving on a long-term basis must have proper certification for the position. There are three categories of substitutes:

1. ***Substitutes with valid teaching certificates.***  
Service may be rendered in any capacity for any number of days. If employed on more than an “itinerant basis” (employment for 40 days or less by a school district in a school year) such persons will be employed in an area for which they are certified.
2. ***Substitutes without a valid certificate, but who are completing collegiate study towards certification at the rate of not less than six semester hours per year.***  
Services may be rendered in any capacity for any number of days, in any number of school districts. If employed on more than an “itinerant basis,” such persons will be employed in an area for which they are seeking certification.
3. ***Substitutes without a valid certificate and who are not working toward certification.***  
Service may be rendered in New York State public schools for no more than 40 days in a given school district in a school year.

### **General Items to Consider regarding Certification**

- ◆ Individual teachers are expected to know their own certification requirements. For example, holders of initial certificates are expected to know the requirements for the professional certificate and when to apply for it.
- ◆ Individual NYSUT members experiencing certification problems are urged to keep their local union leadership informed of these issues as they could impact one’s employment. Failure to maintain one’s certification is grounds for dismissal.
- ◆ Local leaders contacted by members with certification issues are urged to notify their NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist (LRS).
- ◆ Professional certificate holders should know how their district will track and report professional development hours to the NYS Education Department as well as what professional development activities count toward the 175-hour requirement.
- ◆ Professional certificate holders are encouraged to check their TEACH accounts periodically, but at least annually to make sure their professional development hours are being reported accurately to the NYS Education Department.
- ◆ All certified teachers are encouraged to maintain a personal certification file. This file could include copies of your certification examination scores, transcripts, correspondence with SED concerning certification, notes or e-mails to/from certification officials, professional development hours, etc.
- ◆ When applying for NYS teaching certificates, applicants should allow 3-4 months for application processing by the NYS Education Department.
- ◆ A limited number of regional certification offices are operated by Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and are available to the public for certification assistance. Their certification specialists can advise on requirements for certification, evaluate credentials for many (but not all) certificate titles/pathways, and offer expedited processing of applications via the district superintendent’s request.