

# Teacher Certification in New York State



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This Fact Sheet reflects updates to Reissuance of Initial Certificates, Incidental Teaching, and Substitute Teaching regulations by the Board of Regents at their July and September 2023 meetings.

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.

## 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 (3) major categories: classroom teaching, administrative/supervisory, and pupil personnel service (i.e., school counselor, psychologist, social worker).

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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.

Note that the School Counselor certificate titles will change to initial/professional in 2023; the remaining Pupil Personnel Service certificate titles will remain as 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.nysed.gov/educator-integrity>.

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

### **Initial to Professional Teacher 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 two (2) Initial Certificate Reissuances, depending on an individual's eligibility. 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 five (5) year period, by completing the requirements for professional certification, including:

- Three (3) years of teaching experience, with one (1) year as a mentored experience;
- successful completion of an appropriate master's degree, and
- completion of the 6-hour DASA training workshop (if not completed as a requirement for the initial certificate).

### **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. See SED's guidance at

<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/exp/home.html> for additional settings that can be used to fulfill this requirement. Experience as a teaching assistant does not fulfill this requirement.

Individuals self-report their work experience on the TEACH system and must also have their employing districts submit SED's Experience Verification form – see <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/form.html>.

### **Mentored Teaching Experience**

Applicants for Professional certification are required to provide verification of being mentored while initially certified. "Mentored experience" refers to the guidance and support that experienced, certified teachers/school building leaders provide to new teachers/school building leaders. The mentoring requirement must be verified by the superintendent of the employing school district through the [TEACH Online System](#).

Individuals who have had at least two (2) years of teaching prior to service in a public (or private) school under an initial certificate are exempt from this requirement.

### **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>.

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

An expired or expiring initial certificate can be reissued for a period of five (5) years if the certificate holder has not completed the three (3) years teaching experience requirement and/or the master's degree requirement for Professional certification. Applicants seeking a reissuance of an Initial certificate will be required to:

- complete and submit the [Attestation Form](#) to [tcert@nysed.gov](mailto:tcert@nysed.gov) where they will attest that they have not met the education AND/OR experience requirements for the Professional certificate.
- apply and pay for the Initial Reissuance application through their TEACH account.

The initial certificate can be reissued for a second time if the educator has met either the education or experience requirement but has not met both requirements. Check the NYSED Web page: <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/reissue.html> for related information.

Initial certificate holders can obtain up to two (2) Initial Certificate Reissuances depending on their individual eligibility. Refer to the State Education Department [quick reference guide](#) to learn more about determining eligibility.

### **Registering with SED and CTLE Hours**

As of July 1, 2016, all permanently and professionally certified teachers working in a NYS public school or BOCES were required to register with the State Education Department (SED) using the TEACH online system. Registering is a step in the process of maintaining a certificate; registering creates a five (5) year registration cycle. Registration cycles are automatically created in TEACH for professional certificates issued after July 1, 2016.

Permanently certified teachers are required to register every five (5) years but are not required to complete Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) hours. Professionally certified teachers are required to complete 100 Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) hours during each five (5) year registration cycle. For additional information on the registration process and CTLE requirements, please visit NYSUT's website at [www.nysut.org/certification](http://www.nysut.org/certification).

CTLE activities are designed to improve the teacher or leader's pedagogical and/or leadership skills and are targeted at improving student performance. The activities also promote the professionalization of teaching and educational leadership. CTLE activities should address the content one teaches and/or how one teaches that content, and language acquisition that addresses the needs of English language learners.

What counts for the CTLE hours' requirement is a local determination and should be reflected in the district's Professional Learning Plan to the extent possible. School districts or BOCES are required to provide CTLE hours so that faculty and staff remain current with their profession, meet the learning needs of their students, and are able to maintain their certificates in good standing (Part 80.6 of Commissioner's Regulations).

The Professional Learning Plan or PLP (see Part 100. 2(dd) of Commissioner's Regulations) requires that each school district and BOCES develop a professional learning plan that ensures "...how it will provide teachers it employs holding a professional certificate and/or level III teaching assistant certificate with opportunities to complete 100 hours of continuing teacher and leader education, as required every five (5) years under Part 80 of this Title".

When a registration cycle is set to expire, permanently and/or professionally certified teachers are required to re-register with the state to create a new five (5) year registration cycle. Teachers with permanent certificates will only create a new five (5) year cycle and indicate if they are still employed in an applicable school. Teachers with professional certification will do the same but will also attest to completing or not completing the required CTLE hours for their expiring registration period. For additional information on the re-registration process and CTLE requirements, please visit NYSUT's website at [Frequently Asked Questions \(nysut.org\)](http://www.nysut.org).

### **TEACH Online Services**

The New York State Education Department uses its TEACH Online 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 certificate application(s), update demographic and employment information, and verify or update registration status.
- 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, and obtain application status updates on current or potential employees.

All individuals possessing a NYS Teaching Certificate have a TEACH account and should check it annually periodically for accuracy. You can access your TEACH account by using this link to self-register and choose a login name and password. [TEACH Resources: TEACH System: OTI:NYSED](#).

### **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.

Issue	Contact
Locked out of, or trouble accessing TEACH, password re-sets, TEACH Technical Support	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:TEACHHELP@nysed.gov">TEACHHELP@nysed.gov</a>
General questions about teacher/TA certification	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:TCERT@nysed.gov">TCERT@nysed.gov</a>
Questions about CTLE	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:CTLE@nysed.gov">CTLE@nysed.gov</a>
Questions about Registration	E-Mail <a href="mailto:OTIregistration@nysed.gov">OTIregistration@nysed.gov</a>
Prospective or Approved Providers of CTLE	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:CTLEsponsor@nysed.gov">CTLEsponsor@nysed.gov</a>

### 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.

Exams for Initial Certificate Applications after May 1, 2014:

- **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.
- **Content Specialty Tests (CST):** These examinations focus on knowledge of the NYS Learning Standards associated with the candidate's subject specific teaching certification area.

Visit <http://www.nystce.nesinc.com/> for the scheduled availability of the examinations.

### Safety Nets for NYS Certification Examinations

The State Education Department has created safety for specific exams and for specific time periods. For current information on what safety net is available for specific certification examinations, and when the safety nets are due to expire, visit SED's at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/certexamsafetynets.html>.

## **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: Additional Classroom Teaching Certificate”. This Pathway indicates the minimal qualifications required.

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 [Applying for a Certificate: Frequently Asked Questions:OTI:NYSED](#).

Any applicant for an administrative or supervisory service certificate, classroom teaching certificate or school service certificate after January 1, 2014 is required to complete the 6-hour DASA workshop as per the Dignity for All Students Act. Approved providers can be found at <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/dasa-applicant.html>. Individuals can also check with local BOCES, colleges/universities that offer teacher education programs, and teacher centers for this training.

### **Supplementary Certificates**

The supplementary teaching certificate allows currently certified teachers to obtain an additional teaching certificate in certain situations where there is a demonstrated need by completing some of the requirements for the additional certificate up front, and then completing remaining requirements over a five (5) year period. See NYSUT [Fact Sheet 17-10: Supplementary Teaching Certificate \(nysut.org\)](#).

### **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 (5) classroom hours per week, when no certified teacher is available. During the 2020-21 school year this maximum was raised to ten (10) classroom hours per week, available after an extensive and documented recruitment effort by the district. This change will continue during the 2021-2022, 2022-23, 2023-24 school years. The regulations require that the district first seek a certified teacher, file an application, and receive approval of the Commissioner.

Special education programs and services may only be taught on an incidental basis by a teacher holding some level of Students with Disability/Special Education certification.

## Interstate Applicants

Applicants who hold a certificate from another state and have been employed for at least three (3) years in another state or who have completed a comparable teacher education program in another state may be eligible for a NYS certificate through the interstate application process. See [Applicants from Other States \(Interstate Reciprocity\):Preparation Pathways:OTI:NYSED](#)

## Revocation

Under Part 83 Regulations 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" 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. During the 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 school years these individuals were allowed to substitute for up to 180 days under certain circumstance of district staffing and recruitment. As of September 27, 2023, this allowance of up to 180 days under certain circumstances of district staffing and recruitment issues is continued indefinitely.

## General Items to Consider Regarding Certification

- Individual teachers are expected to know their own certification requirements.
- Individual NYSUT members experiencing certification problems are urged to keep their local union leadership informed of these issues as they could impact their employment. Failure to maintain certification is grounds for dismissal.
- Local leaders contacted by members with certification issues are urged to notify their NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist (LRS)
- Permanent and professional certificate holders will be required to update their registration status every 5 years.
- All certified teachers are encouraged to maintain a personal certification file. This file could include copies of certificates, transcripts, correspondence with SED concerning certification, CTLE 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.

## Resources

- [Office of Teaching Initiatives](#): the state office that handles certification.
- [Commissioner's Regulations](#): Links to regulations that govern certification requirements for teachers, pupil personnel, educational leaders, and school related professionals.
- [Certification Topics A-Z](#)
- [www.nysut.org/certification](http://www.nysut.org/certification)

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