

# Certification Requirements for Teaching Assistants



No. – 12-20 Updates and Replaces Information Bulletin No. 201006

April 2012

## Background

In February 2004, the NYS Education Department implemented new regulations governing the certification of Teaching Assistants in NYS to reflect the policy initiatives of the Board of Regents. These policy initiatives increased the preparation requirements for teaching assistants and created a career ladder for teaching assistants.

This Fact Sheet focuses on certification requirements for teaching assistants post February 2004. It also summarizes the duties of teacher aides and teaching assistants in the areas of employment, job duties, licensing and certification, including New York State laws and regulations governing each area. Finally, it addresses the most frequently asked questions related to certification and licensure.

The document is provided for general information purposes only. An official response on the interpretation of certification regulations or the determination of individual certification status can only be obtained from the Office of Teaching Initiatives of the New York State Education Department.

## Teacher Aides

According to Education Law, Section 3009 (2)(a):

A teacher aide is appointed by a board of education to assist teachers “in the performance of their teaching functions by performing those non-teaching duties (emphasis added) otherwise performed by such regular teacher or teachers.”

Commissioner’s Regulations, Section 80 – 5.6, Supplementary School Personnel, describe the duties of a teacher aide. They include:

- ❖ Managing records, materials and equipment;
- ❖ Attending to the physical needs of children; and
- ❖ Supervising students, and performing such other non-teaching duties which support teaching when such services are determined and supervised by the teacher.

Teacher aides are classified employees, whose employment rights are governed by Civil Service Law. They are not subject to licensure and certification requirements under Education Law.

### Contents

This Information Bulletin covers the following topics:

- ❖ NYS laws and regulations governing the employment, job duties, and certification of teacher aides and teaching assistants;
- ❖ A chart of certification requirements;
- ❖ Portability of a teaching assistant credential;
- ❖ Professional development for teaching assistants;
- ❖ NYSUT Education & Learning Trust programs and resources;
- ❖ FAQs; and
- ❖ Excerpts from Commissioner’s Regulations

For historical background of the impact of NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals on the current requirements for teaching assistants in New York, please refer to the NYSUT Information Bulletin “Teacher Aides and Teaching Assistants - NCLB Requirements for Paraprofessionals” (No. 200312, August 2003).

## Teaching Assistants

According to the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, Section 80-5.6:

A teaching assistant “is appointed by a board of education to provide, under the general supervision of a licensed or certified teacher, direct instructional service to students” (emphasis added). The teaching assistant is provided “general” (as contrasted with direct or personal) supervision by the certified teacher(s) who are responsible for the student’s instruction.

Commissioner’s Regulations also describe the duties of a teaching assistant:

- ❖ Working with individual pupils or groups of pupils on special instructional projects;
- ❖ Providing the teacher with information about pupils that will assist the teacher in the development of appropriate learning experiences;
- ❖ Assisting pupils in the use of available instructional resources, and assisting in the development of instructional materials;
- ❖ Utilizing their own special skills and abilities by assisting in instructional programs in such areas as: foreign languages, arts, crafts, music and similar subjects; and
- ❖ Assisting in related instructional work as required.

Teaching assistants, unlike teacher aides, are members of the teaching staff and must be given a probationary appointment as a teaching assistant and are eligible for tenure according to Section 30.8(d) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

## Post 2004 Certification Requirements for Teaching Assistants

The requirements for teaching assistant certification will apply to a candidate who applies **on or after February 2, 2004** for a credential to work as a teaching assistant. Among the changes are new certificate levels culminating in a pre-professional certificate leading to teacher preparation, increased collegiate study, and passing a New York State Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills (ATAS) test or the Liberal Arts and Sciences test (LAST). The State Education Department has indicated on their web site that the LAST, which is required for teacher certification, is an acceptable alternative to the ATAS.

- **Level I teaching assistant certificate:** A candidate must have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and pass the New York State ATAS or the LAST. The ATAS is arranged into four subareas which address the central knowledge and understanding that teaching assistants are expected to possess in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Instructional Support.

The certificate is valid for three years and can be renewed for three years, one time only with a commitment for employment. If an individual has already renewed their Level I credential under previous regulations for an additional one year term; the certificate can be renewed once more for three years if there is a commitment for employment. The commitment for employment must be verified by the district/BOCES using superintendent statements via TEACH online services.

- **Level II teaching assistant certificate:** In addition to meeting the requirements for a Level I certificate, the candidate must also complete nine semester hours (credits) of collegiate study towards meeting the requirements for an associate's or baccalaureate degree for applications submitted after February 1, 2007. Candidates must also have one year of experience as a licensed or certified teaching assistant.

The Level II certificate is valid for three years and is not renewable.

- **Level III teaching assistant certificate:** In addition to meeting the requirements for a Level II teaching certificate, the candidate must complete a total of at least 18 semester hours of collegiate study.

The certificate is continuously valid, provided that the professional development requirements – 75 hours every five years – are met.

It is possible to move from Level I to Level III directly after one year if the appropriate course work is in place.

- **Pre-professional teaching assistant:** 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 in a program with an articulation agreement with such a program.

The certificate is valid for five years and can be renewed with the completion of 30 semester hours of coursework.

Pre-professional teaching assistants assist teachers by performing additional duties such as:

- ❖ Working with small groups of children so the teacher can work with a large group or individual children;
- ❖ Helping a teacher construct lesson plans;
- ❖ Presenting segments of lesson plans as directed by the classroom teacher;
- ❖ Communicating with parents of students; and
- ❖ Helping in training of other teaching assistants.

## Previous Teaching Assistant Certification Titles

Teaching assistants who obtained their certificates no later than February 1, 2004 were issued one of the following:

- **Temporary License:** issued to a person who has completed a four-year high school program or its equivalent, supplemented by training and experience appropriate to the position in question. The temporary license is valid for one year from the date of issuance. No more than two temporary licenses may be issued.
- **Continuing Certificate:** issued to a person who has completed six semester hours of college study in a field related to elementary or secondary education, and who has completed one year of experience as a licensed teaching assistant or as a certified teacher. The continuing certificate is valid continuously, except when the holder has not been regularly employed as a teaching assistant for five consecutive years.

## Summary of Commissioner’s regulations for Teaching Assistant Certification Requirements on or after February 2, 2004

Level I	Level II	Level III	Pre-Professional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ high school diploma or equivalent</li> <li>▪ pass ATAS or LAST*</li> <li>▪ valid for three years</li> <li>▪ may be renewed once for three years with a commitment for employment</li> <li>▪ commitment for employment must be verified by district/BOCES using superintendent statements via TEACH online services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ high school diploma or equivalent</li> <li>▪ 9 semester hours of collegiate study for applicants after February 1, 2007</li> <li>▪ pass ATAS or LAST*</li> <li>▪ work for one year as teaching assistant</li> <li>▪ valid for three years</li> <li>▪ not renewable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ high school diploma or equivalent</li> <li>▪ 18 semester hours of collegiate study</li> <li>▪ pass ATAS or LAST*</li> <li>▪ work for one year as teaching assistant</li> <li>▪ continuously valid with 75 hours of professional development every five years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ high school diploma or equivalent</li> <li>▪ 18 semester hours of collegiate study</li> <li>▪ matriculation in teacher preparation program</li> <li>▪ pass ATAS or LAST*</li> <li>▪ work for one year as teaching assistant</li> <li>▪ valid for five years</li> <li>▪ may be renewed if individual has taken 30 semester hours in the previous five year period</li> </ul>

\*New York State Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills Test or the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test

### Portability of Teaching Assistant Credential

A teaching assistant is no longer required to obtain a new certificate if they choose to seek employment in another school district or BOCES. A continuing certificate as well as a Level I, II or III certificate or a Pre-Professional certificate is portable across school district and BOCES boundaries, in the same way a teaching certificate is portable.

### Professional Development

Commissioner’s Regulations 80-.36(b)(ii) states that Level III Teaching Assistants are required to successfully complete 75 hours of professional development every five years to maintain the Level III certificate.

The Professional Development Plan (PDP) as defined in Part 100. 2(dd) of Commissioner’s Regulations requires that each school district and BOCES develop a professional development plan that ensures that “holders of Level III teaching assistant’s certificates... are provided the opportunity to participate in the professional development program of the district or BOCES.”

In addition, Part 100. 2(dd) of Commissioner’s Regulations specifies that “a school district or BOCES may include the local special education Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan... as part of its professional development plan.”

According to Commissioner’s Regulations 200.2(h), a local CSPD plan shall include, but not be limited to:

“a description of the professional development activities provided to all professional and paraprofessional staff who work with students with disabilities to assure that they have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities.”

## **NYSUT’S Education & Learning Trust**

NYSUT’s Education & Learning Trust (ELT) offers a variety of professional development opportunities to assist teaching assistants in meeting their certification requirements. These include:

**Undergraduate Courses:** The Education & Learning Trust has partnered with a number of colleges throughout New York State to offer online, face-to-face, and CD-based undergraduate courses. The courses are designed for teaching assistants seeking NYS certification, and those interested in furthering their education, including pursuing a degree in teaching.

**Professional Development Workshops:** To maintain their certification, Level III teaching assistants are required to complete 75 hours of professional development every five years. The ELT offers over 15 workshops to meet the professional development needs of our members. Topics include: Helping Students Succeed; Disability Awareness; Dealing with Difficult Students; Supporting Students with Autism; Strategies for Struggling Readers, and Using the IEP to Support Student Instruction.

For additional information on courses, workshops and other programs available through NYSUT’s Education & Learning Trust, please call 1-800-528-6208 or visit the website at [www.nysut.org/elt](http://www.nysut.org/elt).

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What impact, if any, will the post-2004 certification requirements have on teaching assistants holding a continuing certificate?**

The changes will apply only to those who apply for certification on or after February 2, 2004. Those holding a continuing certificate will retain it indefinitely. It remains valid unless the individual has not been regularly employed as a teaching assistant in a public school for five consecutive years.

### **2. Will teaching assistants holding a continuing certificate be required to take the New York State Teacher Assistant Certification Examination?**

No. Only those applying for certification on or after February 2, 2004 will be required to take the test, unless a continuing certificate holder chooses to apply for a Level I, II, or III teaching assistant certificate.

### **3. Are there different job duties assigned to each of the levels leading to the pre-professional teaching certificate?**

According to Commissioner's Regulations, the description of job duties contained in Section 80-5.6 (b) (1) (ii) (a), applies to all teaching assistants, whether they hold a Level I, II or III certificate. However, the job duties of pre-professional certificate holders are more specialized (see p. 4 of this Fact Sheet). It will be left up to the local union and school district to negotiate the job duties and commensurate pay assigned to each level, should they choose to do so.

**4. All Level III teaching assistants will be required to complete 75 hours of professional development over five years in order to maintain their certificate. Who is responsible for providing the professional development and will it be available to Level I and Level II teaching assistants?**

Commissioner's Regulations, Part 100.2(dd), require a school district and BOCES to include in their professional development plan (PDP) how they will provide teachers with substantial professional development opportunities. Level III teaching assistant certificate holders are to be afforded the same opportunities.

The district is required to make professional development available during the normal school day and school year. Professional development taking place outside of the normal school day and school year needs to be negotiated by the local union and the school district. The regulation does not specifically state that all teaching assistants (including continuing certificate holders) are to receive substantial professional development.

## Resources

- **Commissioner's Regulations § 80-5.6 Supplementary school personnel.**  
This section of regulations provides definitions and duties for Teacher Aides, Teaching Assistants, as well as licensure and certification requirements.  
<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/part80-5.html>
  
- **Commissioner's Regulations § 80-3.6 Professional development requirement.**  
This section of regulations provides specific information related to the professional development requirement for Level III teaching assistants, including adjustments to the requirement and reporting responsibilities.  
<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/part80-3.html>
  
- **Commissioner's Regulations § 100.2(dd) Requirements for Professional Development Plans**  
This section of regulations provides specific information related to the development and adoption of a PDP, measuring the impact of a PDP, and reporting and recordkeeping requirements.  
<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/regulations.html>