



Make An Educated Choice..... Read Our Certification Newsletter



Connecticut State Department of Education

Issue 9

Summer 2001

PLEASE NOTE:

**NEW PHONE NUMBERS FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ARE IN EFFECT.
REFER TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE SECTION ON PAGE 5 FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

As the new state CEU coordinator replacing Dick Lappert, Elisabeth Neiterman is available to answer your questions related to professional development and continuing education units (CEUs).

The endorsement under which a teacher is working determines which CEU requirements must be met. Please see our website at <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/cert/index.htm> for a chart of CEU requirements by endorsement code.

Where there is a question about the *position* held and the *endorsement* held, again, the endorsement under which the teacher serves guides the CEU requirements. It is important to refer to the specific endorsement code held by teachers to determine their CEU requirements. For example, a sixth grade teacher serving under endorsement code 013 (K to 6) must complete 15 hours in reading and 15 hours in computers in the classroom. A sixth grade teacher serving under endorsement code 006, however, (middle grades, 4-8) must complete only 15 hours in computers in the classroom.

While these two teachers are teaching the same grade, *their certification endorsements are different*. The first sixth grade teacher's endorsement gives him or her the ability to teach elementary grades (K to 6), while the second teacher is endorsed to teach middle grades. Consequently, each needs the appropriate professional development to reflect their respective endorsements.

Please see the chart outlining these requirements at <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/cert/ceutoc.htm>. You may also contact Elisabeth Neiterman directly at (860) 713-6772, the designated CEU "hotline" established specifically for school districts and other CEU providers. Since the hotline has been created for districts exclusively, it is important to refer general professional development inquiries to our main number, (860) 713-6969. Providers may also send your questions via email to elisabeth.neiterman@po.state.ct.us

A letter requesting current CEU coordinator information from each district will be mailed shortly.

COACHING UPDATE

As districts continue to fill coaching positions, here is a recap of requirements pertaining to coaching permits:

1. Any individual who coaches intramural or interscholastic athletics or who is not under the direct and continual supervision of a coach, is required to hold a valid coaching permit.
2. Job responsibilities determine the permits and endorsements required for athletic directors.
 - Athletic directors not responsible for supervision must hold a valid coaching permit.
 - A director of athletics at the elementary, middle or high school level responsible for the supervision of coaches, shall be required to hold a valid Connecticut Educator Certificate and a coaching permit.
 - A director of athletics with districtwide responsibilities, OR the evaluation of certified staff members is required to hold a Connecticut Educator Certificate endorsed for intermediate administration or supervision and a coaching permit.

In order to streamline the application process, a district may submit a conversion form to apply for coaching permits. Only the names of individuals who hold a valid teaching certificate, or an old permanent coaching permit, may be submitted on a conversion form. Copies of cards indicating an approved CPR course completed within one year prior to application, and a first aid card completed within three years prior to application must be submitted for each individual whose name appears on the coaching conversion form. A separate CPR card is required to verify that the CPR requirement has been met. Districts that wish to have permits returned to the district should indicate this on the conversion form. Permits will be returned to the superintendent's office.

A temporary emergency coaching permit may be renewed once within a district. In order to be eligible for a renewal, an individual must submit proof of enrollment in an approved coaching course OR official transcripts verifying the completion of two semester hours of credit in an approved coaching course.

A temporary emergency coaching permit (TECP) authorizes an individual to serve as a coach only in the district for which the permit is issued. An individual holding an initial TECP in one district may be eligible for the issuance of an initial permit in another district upon meeting the requirements for an initial TECP.

It is the responsibility of the district to ensure that all coaches hold a valid coaching permit.

Please contact the Bureau of Certification and Professional Development at dianne.gray@po.state.ct.us for answers to further questions.

ACTFL ORAL PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW

For applicants seeking a cross-endorsement to a world language, since April 1, 2000, Connecticut has accepted an "Advanced Mid" score on the ACTFL-OPI to waive the 24 semester hours of credit in a language. There are some recent customer service enhancements that will enable individuals seeking teacher licensing to schedule an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview with more ease.

- Toll-free phone number that individuals or school districts can call to get information and an application for an ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview: 800-486-8444, extension 3. Information is available in English and Spanish.
- ACTFL Testing Office website: www.languageTesting.com Individuals can download information and an application form from the website or apply for an OPI on-line.
- The ACTFL Testing Office has hired additional certified ACTFL testers. This has improved the average turn-around time for ratings from 2-4 weeks to 1-3 weeks.
- Address: 95 Church St., Suite 310, White Plains, NY 10601. There are testing rooms which allow face-to-face interviews for individuals who prefer this method in lieu of a telephone interview.
- Contact person: Helen Hamlyn, ACTFL Testing Office Director at 800-486-8444, extension 3.

TITLE II OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

Title II Teacher Preparation Program Institutional Reports. On April 9, 2001, as required by federal law, all higher education institutions with a teacher preparation program provided information on the program and statistical data on the 1999-2000 teacher education graduates to the State Department of Education. Included in this institutional report are data on the certification test performance of the 1999-2000 program completers. In Connecticut, these tests include PRAXIS I, the basic skills test, and PRAXIS II, the content area tests. The statewide pass rate across all PRAXIS tests taken by the 1999-2000 cohort was 95%.

Title II Grant. The Title II federal grant being administered by the Bureau of Certification and Professional Development provides funds to support Connecticut teacher preparation programs in developing competency-based curricula and related performance assessments, ideally in concert with their schools of arts and sciences. This focus is in response to complying with the Connecticut competency-based teacher certification regulations that go into effect in 2003. To provide a common knowledge base in this pursuit, three workshops were scheduled for this academic year. The December 2000 workshop presentation by Alverno College provided an introduction to competency-based curriculum, while the February and April 2001 workshops extended this topic further, with Alverno College presentations on performance assessments and student portfolio samples. In addition, the February program included a detailed presentation by the State Department of Education's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program unit on the development of the rubrics for scoring a beginning teacher portfolio. The April workshop also included a presentation by two nationally certified Connecticut teachers on the standards used in the portfolio submitted for National Board certification.

APPLICANT SCREENING

In the best of all worlds, school districts have a large pool of well-qualified applicants from which to choose, ample lead time to fill vacancies, and large human resources department staffs to complete thorough reference checks. The reality is that shortages of qualified educators are projected in many fields, vacancies often develop on short notice and staff resources may be limited. However, these circumstances should not deter a board of education from proper employment screening—a process designed to identify potential problems.

A recent change in state law requires that each person hired submit to state and national criminal history records check within 30 days of employment. It is essential that districts have procedures in place to ensure compliance with this law. An applicant's failure to disclose criminal convictions upon application, combined with a school district's failure to ensure the employee is fingerprinted, could result in the employment of educators who pose a risk to students and staff members.

While the current law requires fingerprinting "within 30 days from the date of employment," it is prudent for districts to expedite the process. Waiting until the last possible moment could mean that an educator who had failed to disclose criminal conviction at the time of application is already working in the district.

Educators need not automatically be disqualified for employment based upon criminal conviction. School districts may want to consider the relationship of the crime to the education profession, the length of time since conviction and completion of sentence, and the candidate's degree of rehabilitation.

The law also requires that each applicant for a public school position be required to state whether he or she has ever been convicted of a crime or whether criminal charges are pending at the time of application. Such statements are best made in writing, and may appropriately be included on the application form. A letter of application or resume in lieu of an official, signed application form should be avoided.

A criminal history record check is just one important pre-hiring screening tool. Districts should review carefully numerous other aspects of an applicant's background. For example, if an employee was dismissed for cause from a previous position, or has been the subject of adverse certification action in another state, a school district should consider such circumstances in evaluating an applicant's suitability and qualifications.

Disclosures made at the time of application may serve as another effective screening mechanism. With advice from your attorney, you may want to consider additional means for identifying problems not necessarily leading to criminal conviction. Here are just a few possibilities:

- In addition to routine inquiries such as "Have you ever been convicted of a crime?" consider including on the application form a related list of comprehensive questions, e.g.:
 1. Are you now the subject (in Connecticut or any other jurisdiction) of an investigation related to possible employment termination or revocation, suspension or annulment of your educator certification or licensure?
 2. Have you ever had a teaching credential revoked, suspended or annulled in any state, territory or foreign country?
 3. Have you ever been dismissed for cause from a position in a public or nonpublic school or child-care facility?
- Consider including on the application, a signed attestation that all information provided by the applicant is true, complete and accurate, and contains no willful misrepresentations or falsifications. Consider stating that misrepresentation may result in immediate rejection of the application or contract termination.
- Consider incorporating an applicant waiver to permit you to obtain information from law enforcement, current and former employers, and academic institutions.

Routine document, reference and records checks hold interesting clues which could help in evaluating an applicant's candidacy.

Several strategies which will enhance the initial screening process follow:

- Be alert to red flags, e.g.:

1. unexplained gaps in the chronology of employment and/or educational history;
2. teaching assignments interrupted before the end of the school year; and
3. a succession of positions held for only one or two years.

- Check out all references. Some employers are not authorized to write letters of recommendation, but may supply only the basic details, e.g., dates of employment, assignment, etc. However, it still may be advisable, in the absence of positive, personal letters of recommendation, to investigate further.
- Carefully consider recommendations or references from peers or support personnel submitted by the candidate in the absence of recommendations from appropriate administrators with the authority to speak on behalf of a school or school district.
- Check to see that the dates of listed experiences are consistent and logical.
- Be alert to a candidate's delay in completing, or failure to complete, sign and submit all paperwork—including the district's formal employment application.
- Be on the lookout for fraudulent documents. Be sure that:
 1. letters of recommendation are original, on letterhead, and are signed and dated; and
 2. college/university transcripts are official, and bear the institutional seal.

The vast majority of educator applicants will not have criminal records, will not have been dismissed previously for cause, and will not have had action taken against their educator certificates. Comprehensive screening should alert you to the few who might impact the health, safety and welfare of your school community.

TIPS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS

PRIORITY REVIEW REQUESTS

Priority review requests are submitted by a superintendent of schools to provide a fast, efficient response to districts wishing to employ an individual. When a priority review request is received, it is entered into the system and given directly to a staff member for review. Turnaround time for a priority review can vary.

If a completed application is on file or accompanies the request, the certificate may be issued within a few days. When additional materials or fees are required, the applicant will be sent a credential letter with a copy to the superintendent, adding to the time before a certificate can be issued. A superintendent of schools

should submit a priority review request only when an applicant is a finalist for a position, and should encourage the applicant to submit all necessary information as soon as possible.

SUPERINTENDENTS OF SCHOOLS "HOTLINE"

The "hotline" is only for use by superintendents of schools, central office staff members, principals, other appropriate school administrators, and college or university administrators. Please do not give the phone number to teachers, prospective employees or unauthorized staff members. The 860-713-6969 phone number is the general phone number to reach the Bureau of Certification and Professional Development.

To check the status of more than three applicants, we ask that you submit your request in writing or by FAX, or check the status by calling the general phone number and following the phone prompts to check an applicant's status by Social Security number.

USE THE MOST CURRENT FORMS

All applications have been updated. Forms with a revision date prior to 1999 will not be accepted. When verifying professional experience, please be sure the form is filled out completely, including dates of service, certificate required for the position, and is signed by both the principal and the superintendent of schools. We will not accept signatures on the professional experience form from the assistant superintendent or personnel director in lieu of the superintendent's signature.

SUBSTITUTE AUTHORIZATIONS

If you are hiring a substitute to teach for 40 or more days in the same assignment in one school year, you need to request a substitute authorization. Please be aware that the 40 days do not have to be consecutive in order for a substitute authorization to be required. You can apply for the substitute authorization at any time prior to the 40th day. You need not wait until that substitute approaches the 40th day in the same assignment to submit the form (ED 175).

90-DAY CERTIFICATES AND DURATIONAL SHORTAGE AREA PERMITS (DSAP)

Teachers holding a temporary 90-day certificate must enroll in the BEST Program and must receive extra support and supervision, as determined by the district. Holders of temporary 90-day certificates must be given a formative evaluation during the 90-day period, and will begin the portfolio assessment process once an Initial Educator Certificate is held.

Teachers holding a DSAP need to participate in BEST, if available for that endorsement area, unless the person already holds a Connecticut provisional or professional educator certification in one or more teaching areas. As with holders of a temporary 90-day

certificate, special attention in the form of supervision or other assistance is required.

SECOND ANNUAL MINORITY TEACHER CONFERENCE – OCTOBER 13, 2001

The second annual Connecticut minority teacher conference will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 13, 2001, at the Trinity College Learning Corridor in Hartford.

The Connecticut State Department of Education and the Greater New England Alliance of Black School Educators will collaborate for this event. The purpose of the conference is to help new minority teachers in Connecticut gain a better understanding of the many facets of school and community life, and to help schools and school districts gain information about successful practices in recruiting and retaining minority teachers.

School districts will receive additional registration and program details of this conference in August. If you have any questions, please contact the Connecticut State Department of Education Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention Program at:

E-Mail:

minority.recruit@po.state.ct.us

Telephone:

1-877-562-2612 (Toll Free)

Website:

<http://www.state.ct.us/sde/der/info/minorityteacher/index.htm>

CONNECTICUT ADMINISTRATOR TEST (CAT)

Effective September 1, 2001, The Connecticut Administrator Test (CAT) will be required for anyone applying for certification as an intermediate administrator or supervisor who is eligible for issuance of an initial or interim initial educator certificate. The CAT is not required for certified administrators applying for a reissuance of the initial educator certificate or for certified administrators applying for the provisional educator or professional educator certificate. The CAT is designed to test the knowledge of newly prepared administrators or first-time applicants for administrative certification with less than three years of administrative experience. Please be aware that graduates of an out-of-state administrator certification program or an applicant with fewer than three years of administrative experience outside of Connecticut may be eligible for an interim initial educator certificate with a deferral of the CAT for one year.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To ensure timely and efficient service to districts and individual applicants, the following customer service options are available:

- * Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Application materials may be dropped off and/or picked up. Certification consultants are not available to meet with individual applicants.
- * IVR phone system (860-713-6969), provides updated information regarding certification status within a 24 to 48 hour period. Each applicant's Social Security number is required. Consultants are available to take calls from the general public from 1 to 5 p.m, Monday through Friday.
- * FAX machine (860-713-7017) is available 24 hours a day for the receipt of forms, requests, course work approvals and other materials. Faxes are treated as correspondence and may take a few days to reach the appropriate consultant unless it is a priority review case.
- * Priority review requests expedite evaluation for candidates who are finalists for a position. To ensure the most efficient processing of all applications, please complete all questions and have forms signed by the appropriate individuals.

Address:

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Certification and Professional Development
P.O. Box 150471 – Room 243
Hartford, CT 06115-0471

E-mail: teacher.cert@po.state.ct.us

Web site: www.state.ct.us/sde

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

Charter Oak State College, New Britain, 860-832-3838.

ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, 800-486-8444 extension 3.
The ACTFL Testing Office website: www.languagetesting.com

Sylvan Learning Centers (Pro- Metric Testing Centers), 800-853-6773.

Educational Testing Service (ETS), 609-771-7395, or
www.teachingandlearning.org

Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) I and II Programs, 860-947-1300, or www.ctdhe.org

The Connecticut Regional Education Application and Placement Program (REAP), 1-888-656-1011, or www.ctreap.net