

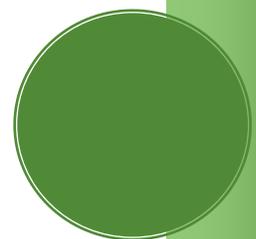


# Queen Anne's County Public Schools

*Preparing World-Class Students Through Everyday Excellence*

# CERTIFICATION HANDBOOK

*An Employee Guide to Certification and Renewal*



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## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

The Board of Education recognizes that the key to a successful educational program is the competent staff dedicated to professional growth and development. The ultimate goal of a professional development program is to provide better learning experiences in the classroom which result in a positive effect on student performance and attitude.

While professional growth through participation in ongoing staff development activities is the responsibility of all employees, the encouragement for such professional growth is the Board's obligation. The Board of Education will maintain and support a planned comprehensive in-service program that may include Board-sponsored activities to prepare staff in specific areas and individual development programs which may include workshops, seminars, and course work through outside resources.

It will be the responsibility of the Superintendent in collaboration with the professional staff to design, develop and evaluate professional development programs.

## CERTIFICATE TYPES

All professional employees must hold an educator certification issued by the State of Maryland. Maryland educator certificates are issued with either a January 1 or July 1 date.

<b>Standard Professional Certificate I &amp; II (SPC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid for 5 years</li> <li>• Issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and is employed by a Maryland school</li> </ul>
<b>Advanced Professional Certificate (APC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid for 5 years</li> <li>• Issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements including a master's degree or equivalent and three (3) years of satisfactory school-related experience</li> </ul>
<b>Conditional Certificate (CND/CDC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid for 2 years</li> <li>• Issued only at the request of the Superintendent for an applicant employed in a Maryland school system who does <u>not</u> meet all certification requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid for 2 years</li> <li>• Issued to an applicant at the request of a school system that provides a Maryland Approve Alternative Preparation Program (MAAPP) as an option for certification</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Eligibility Certificate (PEC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valid for 5 years</li> <li>• Issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and is <u>not</u> currently employed in a Maryland school</li> </ul>

## STANDARD PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE (SPC I) REQUIREMENTS

- Complete a college or university state-approved educator preparation program; or
- Hold a valid, out of state professional certificate and submit verification of three (3) years full-time satisfactory professional experience in a certification area on the certificate; or
- Meet the transcript analysis requirements; and
- Meet any other requirements (such as state-specific tests or Praxis exams) for your certification area deemed necessary by the MSDE (which can be found online at [www.mdcert.org](http://www.mdcert.org)); and
- Submit a Professional Development Plan (PDP) to reflect how you plan to earn 6 acceptable credits\* over the next five years which must include any reading requirements not yet met. (See page 8 for more information on the State's reading requirements). The original, signed PDP copy stays at your school and a copy should be sent to the Certification Specialist in HR.

*\*Acceptable credit is defined as post-baccalaureate coursework (semester hours) taken at a regionally accredited college/university or through MSDE approved continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits. The credit must be related to a school assignment and earned within 5 years immediately preceding the date on which the new certificate will be issued.*

## STANDARD PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE (SPC II) REQUIREMENTS

- Satisfy three (3) years of full-time, satisfactory school-related experience.
- Earn six (6) acceptable credits\* that must include reading course work, if required (see page 8 for more information on the MSDE's reading requirements).
- Submit a Professional Development Plan to reflect how you plan to earn 6 acceptable credits\* over the next five years. The original, signed PDP copy stays at your school and a copy should be sent to the Certification Specialist in HR.

*\*Acceptable credit is defined as post-baccalaureate coursework (semester hours) taken at a regionally accredited college/university or through MSDE approved continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits. The credit must be related to a school assignment and earned within 5 years immediately preceding the date on which the new certificate is issued.*

## **INITIAL ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE (APC)** **REQUIREMENTS**

- Satisfy three (3) years of full-time, satisfactory school-related experience.
  - Submit official transcripts showing one of the following has been met:
    - Achievement of a master's degree with the conferral date appearing on the transcript;
- OR
- a minimum of 36 semester hours of post-baccalaureate course work which must include at least 21 semester hours of graduate credit (The remaining 15 semester hours may include graduate or undergraduate course work and/or MSDE Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits;
- OR
- Achievement of National Board Certification and earned a minimum of 12 semester hours of approved graduate course work earned after the conferral of the bachelor's or higher degree.
- Submit a Professional Development Plan to reflect how you plan to earn 6 acceptable credits\* over the next five years. The original, signed PDP copy stays at your school and a copy should be sent to the Certification Specialist in HR.

*\*Acceptable credit for the renewal of an APC is defined as post-baccalaureate coursework (semester hours) taken at a regionally accredited college/university or through MSDE approved continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits. Equivalent credit that counts toward renewal can be earned for participating in certain approved school and countywide activities. Refer to Appendix A for the listing of these activities. The credit must be related to a school assignment and earned within 5 years immediately preceding the date on which the new certificate will be issued.*

## **ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE (APC) RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Satisfy three (3) years of full-time, satisfactory school-related experience.
- Earn six (6) acceptable credits\* that must include reading course work, if required (see page 8 for more information on the MSDE's reading requirements).
- Submit a Professional Development Plan to reflect how you plan to earn 6 acceptable credits\* over the next five years. The original, signed PDP copy stays at your school and a copy should be sent to the Certification Specialist in HR.

*\*Acceptable credit for the renewal of an APC is defined as post-baccalaureate coursework (semester hours) taken at a regionally accredited college/university or through MSDE approved continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits. Equivalent credit that counts toward renewal can be earned for participating in certain approved school and countywide activities. Refer to Appendix A for the listing of these activities. The credit must be related to a school assignment and earned within 5 years immediately preceding the date on which the new certificate will be issued.*

## MARYLAND READING REQUIREMENT

Once your first Maryland educator certificate is issued, you should receive a copy of your reading course work evaluation from either the MSDE or the Certification Specialist in Human Resources. If you do not have a copy, please contact HR.

*For those certified in **early childhood education PK-3, elementary education 1-6 or special education (Infant-grade 3 or grades 1-8):***

- If you do not have “Reading 12” in the *Ancillary Credits* section at the bottom of your educator certificate, you still have remaining reading credits to complete by renewal time. If this applies to you, the course work evaluation will show in what areas you need course work to meet the requirements. HR can provide a list of courses that our teachers commonly take or you can refer to the [Maryland Approved Reading booklet](#) located online.
- Another option only available to early childhood education, elementary education and special education certificate holders is to meet the reading requirement without taking additional reading courses is to meet the Maryland qualifying score on the Praxis II Test # 5203, “Teaching Reading: Elementary Education.”

*For those certified in **middle school 4-9, secondary education 5-12/7-12, special education (grades 6-Adult), Library Media Specialist or N-12/K-12 areas:***

- If you do not have “Reading 6” in the *Ancillary Credits* section at the bottom of your educator certificate, you still have remaining reading credits to complete by renewal time. If this applies to you, the course work evaluation will show in what areas you need course work to meet the requirements. HR can provide a list of courses that our teachers commonly take or you can refer to the [Maryland Approved Reading booklet](#) located online.

Special Note: If you hold **Reading Teacher** or **Reading Specialist** certification, you have met the MSDE’s reading requirement even though your certificate does not show any “Reading Credits” in the *Ancillary Credit* section at the bottom of your educator certificate.

## IMPORTANT RENEWAL INFORMATION AND REMINDERS

- It is your responsibility as the certificate holder to know the current regulations and to consult with the Certification Specialist to renew your certificate prior to the expiration date.
- As you acquire new acceptable credits, submit official transcripts, MSDE CPD credit slips, or a Credit Completion Form for in-county activities to the Certification Specialist in Human Resources.
- Submit all university/college course reimbursement requests for pre-approval prior to the course start date. The course reimbursement procedures and request form can be found online at [hr.qacps.org](http://hr.qacps.org) under “Course Reimbursement & Professional Development” section.
- As your professional goals change, you may revise your Professional Development Plan (PDP) at any time. Send your revised copy with appropriate signatures to the Certification Specialist in Human Resources.
- The MSDE charges a renewal fee of \$10.00 to the Board of Education for every new certificate issued to a full-time QACPS employee in Certificated Unit I/II bargaining units. This fee is then automatically deducted from the employee’s paycheck.

## ACTIVITY APPROVAL PROCEDURE

- A. Request for approval of continuing education courses and other activities must be submitted to the Certification Specialist in Human Resources, on the appropriate form, at least one week in advance of the scheduled course/activity.
- B. Human Resources (HR) will review the request to insure that it is in compliance with the Board of Education's Staff Development Policy.
  - 1. If the course is approved, HR will:
    - a. Determine if the activity is eligible for Queen Anne's County APC credit or MSDE CPD credit.
    - b. Assign the course a Queen Anne's County APC number or the appropriate MSDE CPD number.
    - c. Determine the number of credits for the course/activity based on the following scale: Fifteen (15) clock hours = (1) credit
    - d. Notify the appropriate personnel
  - 2. If the course is not approved, the request will be returned to the submitter.
- C. Upon completion of the approved continuing education course/activity, the instructor will complete two (2) copies of the APC Credit Completion Form for each employee who successfully completes the course/activity. One (1) copy will be forwarded to the Certification Specialist in HR to be included in the employee's certification file. The other is given to the employee.

## SENIOR TEACHER EXEMPTION POLICY FOR QACPS STAFF

The senior teacher exemption regulation permits a Superintendent to waive the certification renewal requirements for certified employees with 25 years of public school service or approved non-public service, or who are 55 years of age or older by the renewal date. The waiver is not automatic and needs to be requested at each renewal.

If you would like to request the exemption please send a letter to the Superintendent at least six months prior to your renewal date. You will receive written notification from Human Resources of the approval or denial. Please be advised the exemption is at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools and is only valid during his/her term as Superintendent.

## ADDING A NEW CERTIFICATION AREA

If you hold a Standard Professional (SPC) or Advanced Professional Certificate (APC) in a “teaching area” (as defined in COMAR §13A.12.02) and at least a bachelor’s degree, you can add an endorsement simply by presenting a passing score on appropriate Praxis II content tests. Additional course work is not required. However, if the subject does not have a Praxis II content area test, then course work is required and evaluation is needed. No pedagogy test is required to add an additional content area. For a listing of the current tests accepted in Maryland, please visit the [MSDE’s website](#).

## HIGHLY QUALIFIED STATUS

According to the No Child Left Behind Act, all teachers who teach Core Academic Subjects must be highly qualified (HQ). The HQ qualification means that you have shown proficiency in the Core Academic Subject that you are teaching by your success on Praxis content tests or by your college coursework or by the level of your teaching certificate.

### **What are the Core Academic Subjects (CAS)?**

The core academic subjects include Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, English, Language Arts/Reading, ESL, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, General Science, Environmental Science, Physics, Earth/Space Science, Geology, Physical Science, Social Studies, History, Geography, Economics, Spanish, French, German, Russian, Latin, Italian, Multiple Language Courses, other World Languages, Art, Dance, Music, and Theater. Therefore, if you teach more than one of these subject areas, you must show competence in all areas that you teach.

### **How do I know if I am highly qualified?**

Each CAS teacher must hold a bachelor's degree, a professional teaching certificate and must show competency in every content area that he/she is teaching. To show this competency, a teacher must meet the MD qualifying score on the content praxis test(s) or have an academic major or 30 credits of academic content in the subject area. For further information on determining whether or not you are HQ, please refer to Appendix E, "How to Achieve 'Highly Qualified' Teacher Status in Maryland" chart.

### **If I am determined HQ one year, does that mean I am still HQ the next year?**

Since being HQ is dependent upon what a teacher is actually teaching, whether or not you are HQ is determined on a yearly basis. If you teach the same subject each year, you will still be HQ. If you add even 1 section in another area, you must show competence in that subject area.

**(continued on next page)**

**(HQ Status continued)**

**What should I do if I am not already highly qualified?**

There are several ways you may become highly qualified:

- Obtain 30 credits of “C” or better course work in the area in which you are teaching to become “highly qualified by academic content.”
- Take and pass the Praxis test(s) required for you to be certified in the area in which you are teaching. (See <http://www.ets.org/praxis> for further information on the Praxis test requirements and test dates.)

**Who can I contact with questions about my HQ status?**

Please contact the Certification Specialist in Human Resources.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **Who must hold a Maryland certificate?** Contracted teachers and specialists employed in Maryland Public School Systems are required to hold an educator certificate issued by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). A certificate is also required of each administrator and supervisor in a position directly related to the instructional program.
2. **Can I have my records evaluated for another area of certification?** If you hold a SPC or APC you can request an evaluation for another area. The request must be sent in writing or by email to the Certification Specialist. It may take two to four weeks from the date of the request to complete the evaluation. All requests are sent to MSDE and requests are limited to two per year.
3. **My certificate is about to expire and I have not completed the renewal requirements. Can I get an extension?** The MSDE allows a ninety (90) day grace period from the expiration date of your certificate. This is the only extension granted.
4. **What happens if I allow my certificate to expire without meeting the renewal requirements?** As a result of not renewing your certificate your salary may be frozen at your current step, you may lose tenure, your employment status may be changed to long-term substitute without benefits, and/or or your employment contract may be rendered null and void and you could be terminated.
5. **How many credits will I need to move to the next salary lane?** To move from the bachelor's to the master's degree lane, you need a conferred master's degree. To move to the Master's +15, +30, +45 or +60, you would need to complete that particular number of graduate credits beyond your conferred master's degree.
6. **What kinds of classes may I take?** For salary advancement, to renew a certificate, or to receive reimbursement, you may take any coursework that is related to your current assignment, an anticipated educational assignment, or to the general field of education. If there are questions about the kinds of courses you are interested in taking please call the Certification Specialist before taking the class.
7. **May I take a video course, correspondence course, or other distance-learning course for certification?** It depends on what type of credit is given for completing the course. These types of courses may be acceptable for certification and/or salary purposes if you take them for undergraduate or graduate credit through regionally accredited institutions. To ensure this type of course work is acceptable, contact the Certification Specialist before enrolling in such a course.
8. **How can I tell what credits are on record for me?** You are responsible for keeping track of your credits.
9. **I just completed my master's degree. Will my certificate change?** Degree and name changes to certificates will be made at the time of renewal.
10. **My college does not issue grade slips with a seal. Can I submit a grade slip I print from the Internet or a copy of my grade slip?** No, photocopies of grade reports and

transcripts and Internet grades will not be accepted. You must submit an official transcript which can be paper or e-script sent directly to the Certification Specialist.

11. **When I receive my master's degree can I just submit a letter from the college or do you need a transcript?** An official transcript documenting the date the degree was conferred is required to verify changes in degree status. A letter from the college or university verifying completion of degree requirements is not acceptable for certification or salary purposes. Records cannot be updated and certification requests will not be processed without official documentation.
12. **I took some courses abroad; will you accept those credits?** College credit earned from an institution outside of the United States requires a course-by-course evaluation from an agency approved by MSDE.
13. **How do I know if I need to take reading classes and which ones do I need?** All classroom teachers must present a certain number of reading credits. The number and kind depends on the subject and grade level listed on your certificate. In general the following will apply:  
  
Twelve (12) semester hours are required for early childhood education, elementary education, and special education at those levels. Six (6) semester hours are required for secondary education (i.e. math, science), PK-12 education (i.e. music) and special education at those levels.
14. **Who is exempt from the reading requirements?** School Guidance Counselors, Reading Teacher/Specialists, Pupil Personnel Workers, Psychometrist, School Psychologists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Speech Pathologists, Audiologists, and all Non-Instructional Administrators are exempt unless they hold and wish to continue to hold a teaching area on their certificate.
15. **What do Praxis tests cover?** Praxis I consists of 3 separate tests that assess the applicant's general understanding of reading, writing, and mathematics, not their ability to teach these subjects. Praxis II assesses both content area knowledge and pedagogy (the art of teaching). The MSDE web site provides the specific numbers for each subject area or you may contact the testing service at [www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis).
26. **When I took my Praxis tests, I put in a code to have the scores sent to the MSDE. Why do you need for me to personally send you a copy?** QACPS does not receive score reports from ETS. Be sure to make a copy of all pages of your score report and send it to the Certification Specialist or forward the .pdf score report via email to as soon as you receive it. Keep your original score sheet in a safe place. ETS does not retain scores for an extended period and you never know when you will need to show that you have passes these tests.
27. **How do I register to take the Praxis tests?** Visit the Educational Testing Service website at <http://www.ets.org/praxis> for testing dates, locations, and to register online. QACPS does not reimburse for Praxis tests.

28. **I hold National Board Certification. Am I eligible for a professional certificate in Maryland?** If you hold National Board Certification and have 12 semester hours of graduate credit after the conferral of your bachelor's or higher degree, you meet the Advanced professional certificate course work requirements.