

The New York State Education Department

TEACHING TO HIGHER STANDARDS: NEW YORK'S COMMITMENT

The New York State Board of Regents adopted a bold new teaching policy in July 1998. It sets **higher standards for teachers to match the higher standards for students.**

Providing all students with well qualified teachers is essential to improving student learning. New York has many excellent teachers, but not all reach and maintain high standards of excellence. The new policy will correct this situation by improving teacher recruitment, preparation, and certification, and by requiring teachers to maintain their competence throughout their careers.

I. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND THE PUBLIC

What does this policy mean for New York?

- **New York will recruit and keep qualified teachers in all public schools** – with a scholarship, grant, and incentive package (dependent on State funding) to ensure the availability of certified teachers for hard-to-staff schools.
- **New teachers will meet higher standards and pass three exams to be certified** – with exams on liberal arts and sciences, subject(s) to be taught, and teaching skills.
- **All new teachers will have special support during the first year of teaching** – with mentoring provided by outstanding, experienced teachers. (The Regents are requesting additional State funding for this purpose.)
- **School districts will evaluate teachers every year using rigorous criteria** – with teachers who need improvement required to complete a “teacher improvement plan” and administrators trained in using effective evaluation models.
- **School districts will provide continuing professional education for all teachers** – with administrators and teachers collaborating to meet student learning needs.
- **New teachers will complete 175 hours of continuing education every 5 years to maintain their teaching certificates in good standing** – with this professional development focused on meeting student learning needs.
- **Teacher educators will review their programs and develop innovative ways to prepare teachers to meet the new standards.**
- **Teacher education programs that continue to have fewer than 80% of their graduates passing the state certification exams will be phased out** – with all programs required to meet higher standards and become accredited.

- **High standards will be maintained with advice from a State Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching** – with members representing teachers and school administrators; college faculty, administrators, and teacher education students; school boards; parents; and business and industry.

How will teaching reform help my child learn?

Research has shown a significant relationship between the quality of the teaching force and student learning. The Regents new teaching policy is designed to ensure that all teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to help students meet the new learning standards and graduation requirements. Through continuing professional education directly related to student learning needs, teachers will remain current with their discipline and how best to teach it, and thus be able to have a positive impact on student achievement throughout their careers.

Why is it so important to mentor new teachers?

Studies across New York State have shown that a new teacher who is mentored by an experienced teacher makes a more effective transition from teacher education into teaching. Mentored teachers focus on student learning needs sooner than non-mentored teachers, and have a significantly higher retention rate (20-30% higher) than non-mentored teachers.

What can parents and school boards do to promote these reforms?

Parents need to stay closely involved with their children's school and learning activities, using every opportunity to meet with teachers and participate in school activities and committees such as school-related parent organizations and school-based planning and shared decision making. In addition, all parents should monitor closely both their children's progress and their school's performance as stated in the annual School Report Card.

School boards should know the Regents policies and the Commissioner's requirements and hold teachers and administrators accountable for their performance and for student learning. They should analyze the implications of each School Report Card, and support all school staff fully in sound efforts to improve teaching and learning.

The Regents encourage parents and school boards to advocate for the State funding necessary to support recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, including the mentoring program for beginning teachers.

Why haven't the Regents examined the role of school administrators in improving learning?

The Regents and Commissioner recognize the critical role of school administrators and have initiated a comprehensive approach for developing effective policy on school leadership. As a first step, they will engage a broad segment of the educational community in developing a better understanding of the problems, identifying successful models, and developing strategies. This information will serve as a basis for the Board of Regents in setting policy on school leadership.

II. INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Will temporary licenses be available for hiring unqualified, uncertified teachers in hard-to-staff districts?

All temporary licenses will be phased out by September 1, 2003. Temporary licenses for hiring new teachers for schools under registration review will be phased out by September 1, 1999.

When should school districts begin to develop plans for providing all teachers with professional development focused on student learning needs? Who will determine if the plan is adequate? When must districts begin to offer professional development?

Effective September 1999, each district must develop a plan for Commissioner's approval, using guidelines to be set by the Regents. Professional development must start by September 2000.

How will the effectiveness of the required professional development be measured?

Effectiveness will be measured by: 1) improvements in student achievement as measured by New York State tests, 2) improvements in teacher performance as evaluated in the annual reviews conducted by trained administrators using rigorous criteria to be set forth in Commissioner's Regulations, and 3) other measurable criteria established by the school district.

III. INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What preparation will new teachers need for certification?

To earn an *Initial Teaching Certificate* after February 1, 2003, new teachers will need

- a bachelor's degree and a master's degree,*
- a recommendation from a college with an approved teaching program, and
- passing scores on three New York State certification exams.

To earn a *Professional Teaching Certificate* after February 1, 2003, new teachers also will need

- one year of successful mentored teaching, and
- three additional years of successful teaching, as evidenced in annual reviews.

To maintain a *Professional Teaching Certificate* in good standing, new teachers must

- complete 175 hours of continuing professional education related to student learning needs every five years.

*Please note: Candidates meeting all requirements for the Initial Certificate except the master's degree may teach up to two years with a Transitional Certificate while completing the master's program. Since the Regents goal is to have all teachers enter the classroom with their formal education completed, including the master's degree, the Regents will monitor teacher supply and demand to determine the feasibility of phasing out the Transitional Certificate. Also note that the requirement of bachelor's and master's degrees does not apply to certificates for teachers of certain occupations.

When will the new requirements for teacher certification be effective?

Teachers receiving their first certificate after February 1, 2003, must meet the new certification requirements described above.

- For example, a freshman entering college in Fall 1999 will be eligible (upon successful completion of approved bachelor's and master's programs and three certification exams) for an Initial Certificate in September 2004. After successfully completing a mentored first year of teaching and three more years of satisfactory full-time teaching, this teacher will be eligible for the Professional Certificate in September 2008.
- Another example is that of a person changing careers, who has completed a bachelor's program in engineering, and now wishes to enter teaching. This person could begin a 16 month master's program in teaching in Spring 2002 that includes graduate study in the interdisciplinary content to be taught (math, science, and technology) at the middle school level and pedagogical preparation appropriate for that content and student developmental level. This candidate could qualify for the Initial Certificate in September 2003 and, after completing mentored teaching and three more years of successful teaching, qualify for the Professional Certificate in 2007.

Do current teachers have to meet the requirement for 175 hours of professional development every five years?

Teachers currently certified will not be required to maintain their certificates in good standing through continuing professional education. However, all teachers will be expected to participate in their district's professional development program. Since every teacher's performance will be evaluated every year by a trained administrator using rigorous criteria, beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, participation in the district's professional development program should be beneficial.

Can candidates qualify for teaching certificates without a college recommendation?

Yes, if they meet all other requirements and (1) are certified by a state with comparable requirements, or (2) hold a New York teaching certificate and complete requirements for an additional certificate in another teaching area, or (3) hold a certificate from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

IV. INFORMATION FOR COLLEGES

How will colleges need to change their programs to prepare their students for certification?

Colleges will need to provide the following academic preparation:

- general liberal arts and sciences core of study,
- major in a liberal arts and sciences field, and
- education study, including diverse field experiences

By September 2000, colleges will need to have their programs re-registered by the State Education Department on the basis of the following major changes:

- alignment with NYS learning standards and the requirements for the new teaching certificates, focused on student developmental level (see General Information),
- preparation of all classroom teachers for teaching students in the regular classroom who have limited English proficiency, disabilities, and special abilities,
- improved preparation for teaching students with diverse characteristics and backgrounds, as well as students of both sexes -- through close collaboration with local schools, and
- strengthened preparation in the liberal arts and sciences, the content to be taught, and subject matter pedagogy.

Since the Regents intend to require a master's degree for an Initial Certificate, colleges are urged to develop integrated bachelor's/master's degree programs, or articulation agreements with other colleges, to provide coherent and efficient preparation through the master's degree level.

Since New York has a shortage of teachers in several disciplines and hard-to-staff areas, colleges are also urged to develop programs that prepare students for more than one certificate or extension, and to develop special programs for individuals changing careers or teaching fields.

By what date will teacher education programs have to be accredited?

By December 31, 2004, colleges must be accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education or another professional education association recognized by the Regents and the United States Department of Education, or accredited by the Regents on the recommendation of the new Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching.

V. GENERAL INFORMATION

When will scholarships, grants, and incentives for recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers be available?

The Regents will send proposals to authorize and fund these programs to the Legislature in November 1998 for action during the 1999 legislative session. If the programs are authorized, the Department will issue requests for applications so that they may begin in Fall 1999.

What will be the new certificate titles for classroom teachers as of February 2, 2003?

Early Childhood Education, Birth to Grade 2, Common Branches
Childhood Education, Grade 1 to Grade 6, Common Branches
Middle Childhood Education, Grade 5 to Grade 9, Subject or Interdisciplinary
Adolescence Education, Grade 8 to Grade 12, Subject
Special Education, Early Childhood, Birth to Grade 2
Special Education, Childhood Education, Grade 1 to Grade 6
Special Education, Middle Childhood, Grade 5 to Grade 9, Subject or Interdisciplinary
Special Education, Adolescence, Grade 8 to Grade 12, Subject
Teaching Deaf or Hearing Impaired Students, Birth to Grade 12
Teaching Blind or Visually Impaired Students, Birth to Grade 12
Teaching Students with Speech and Language Disabilities, Birth to Grade 12
Educational Services, Birth to Grade 12 (educational technology, library services, etc.)
Literacy, Childhood, Birth to Grade 6
Literacy, Adolescence, Grade 5 to Grade 12
Special Subject, Birth to Grade 12, Subject or Interdisciplinary (e.g., music, health education)
Teaching English as a Second Language, Birth to Grade 12
Work Force Preparation, Grade 5 to Grade 12 (e.g., agriculture, business ed., avionics, electronics, and computer programming)

Note: Special education teachers must have depth and breadth of knowledge and practice in the general education curriculum for early childhood, childhood, middle childhood, or adolescence education, sufficient to qualify for one of those certificates in addition to the special education certificate.

Where can I get more information?

On teacher certification: The State Education Department, Office of Teaching, Education Building, Albany, NY 12234, (518) 474-3901.

On teacher education: The State Education Department, Office of College and University Evaluation, Education Building, Albany, NY 12234, (518) 474-2593.

On scholarships, grants, and incentives: The State Education Department, Office of Equity, Access, & K-16 Collaboration, Education Building Annex, Albany, NY 12234, (518) 473-6810.

On education in New York State: <http://www.nysed.gov>

Copies of this brochure: <http://www.higher.nysed.gov/ohpe/news.htm>