



The
Q's & A's
of Arizona's
Certification Process

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Arizona's Professional Teaching Standards

1. The teacher designs and plans instruction that develops students' abilities to meet Arizona's academic standards and the district's assessment plan.

2. The teacher creates and maintains a learning climate that supports the development of students' abilities to meet Arizona's academic standards.

3. The teacher implements and manages instruction that develops students' abilities to meet Arizona's academic standards.

4. The teacher assesses learning and communicates results to students, parents and other professionals with respect to students' abilities to meet Arizona's academic standards.

5. The teacher collaborates with colleagues, parents, the community and other agencies to design, implement, and support learning programs that develop students' abilities to meet Arizona's academic standards and transition from school to work or post-secondary education.

6. The teacher reviews and evaluates his or her overall performance and implements a professional development plan.

7. The teacher has general academic knowledge as demonstrated by the attainment of a bachelor's degree. The teacher also has specific academic knowledge in his or her subject area or areas sufficient to develop student knowledge and performance to meet Arizona academic standards.

8. The teacher demonstrates current professional knowledge sufficient to effectively design and plan instruction, implement and manage instruction, create and maintain an appropriate learning environment, and assess student learning.

9. In collaboration with other professionals and parents, the special education teacher participates in the design, implementation, and assessment of individualized education programs.

As part of its mission, “Keeping the Promise of Quality Public Education,” AEA supports high standards for teachers, including a performance-based system of certification. AEA leaders worked closely with the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and the State Board of Education during the five-year process of revising the Arizona teacher certification standards, rules, and procedures. AEA’s focus is on ensuring that quality teachers are licensed to teach in Arizona, that fingerprint checks and certificate issuance occur in a timely and fair fashion, that teachers from other states can more easily be certified in Arizona, and that recertification requirements meet the professional growth needs of practicing teachers.

Largely through AEA efforts, teachers now have professional choices about the nature of professional development that will help them. AEA also worked to ensure that teachers from other states have reciprocity for certificates and fingerprint checks, and AEA is diligent in its efforts to provide quality alternate certification paths.

AEA continues to work with the State Board regarding certification rules, and implementation procedures and continues to lobby for funding of professional growth opportunities for school employees. In addition, AEA supports mentoring, peer assistance, voluntary National Board Certification, and other ways to improve the teaching profession.

Q

Why does AEA support high standards?

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future concludes, in an exhaustive review of more than 200 studies on teaching and learning: "The single most important factor in student achievement is a quality teacher."

In order for Arizona teachers to have the skills, knowledge, and experience they need to provide a quality education to all students, professional growth opportunities must be an ongoing part of a teaching career. For that reason, AEA supports professional development on an ongoing basis as part of the certification renewal process.

AEA supports these efforts to strengthen and provide new skills to Arizona teachers. AEA advocates for effective induction programs for new teachers that offer mentorship, expose new teachers to exemplary teaching practices, and create an environment that supports collaboration and inquiry among colleagues.

Q

What types of certificates are available?

▲ **Teaching** (Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education)

▲ **Reciprocal** (Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education)

▲ **Career and Technical** (Agriculture, Business & Marketing, Family & Consumer Science, Health Careers, and Industrial Technology)

▲ **Administrative** (Principal, Superintendent, and Supervisor)

▲ **Professional Non-Teaching** (Guidance Counselor and School Psychologist)

▲ **Substitute K-12**

▲ **Other Certificates** (Adult Education, Athletic Coaching, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, Teacher Intern, Early Childhood)

▲ **Endorsements** (Art; Bilingual Education; Computer Science; Cooperative Education; Dance; Dramatic Arts; Drivers Education; Early Childhood; Elementary Foreign Language (K-8); English as a Second Language; Gifted; Library Media Specialist; Mathematics Specialist (K-8); Middle Grade (5-9); Music; Physical Education; Reading Specialist; Structured English Immersion.)

Endorsements

Endorsements are attachments to teaching certificates and indicate areas of specialization. They are for grades K-12 unless otherwise indicated. Once issued, they are automatically renewed with the teaching certificate on which it was posted.

Fingerprinting

All new and out-of-state applicants must have a fingerprint clearance card or proof that they've applied for one from the Arizona Department of Public Safety or proof that they've been fingerprinted in one of 19 "reciprocal" states—Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Carolina, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. To learn where/how to apply for your card, call (602) 223-2279. The cost is \$52. Unless suspended or revoked, this card will remain in effect for six years. Previous to October 2003, the cards were valid for only three years. It takes about three to five weeks to receive a clearance card.

If an applicant is denied clearance because of some minor criminal offense, he or she may be able to apply for a "good cause exception." For a list of these offenses call your AEA Organizational Consultant or the Board of Fingerprinting at (602) 322-8590. The Board of Fingerprinting may review a request for a good cause exception administratively. In some cases, a hearing may be required.

If you have never received a fingerprint clearance card, you must apply when you renew your certificate. There is no "grandfathering." You must submit the original fingerprint clearance card with your application for certification to the ADE Certification Unit. ADE will return your card. The procedure related to this law changes rapidly so check with DPS, (602) 223-2279, or the Board of Fingerprinting, (602) 322-8590.

Q How do I apply for a certificate?

Complete an *Application for Certification*, available at the Arizona Department of Education's Web site, www.ade.state.az.us/certification/generalinfo.pdf, which also includes specific instructions. Submit it along with your transcripts from accredited institutions (transcripts may be mailed directly from the college or university) and your fingerprint clearance card or proof of application for the card.

Q

What are the requirements for a Provisional Certificate?

The certificate is valid for two years and not renewable, but may be extended once for two years. Requirements are the following:

1. Bachelor's degree minimum from an accredited institution. Official transcript(s) required.
2. Valid Arizona Fingerprint Clearance Card issued by Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS).
3. Passing score on the **elementary professional knowledge** (for K-8) or **secondary professional knowledge** (for grades 7-12) portion of the Arizona Education Proficiency Assessment.
4. Passing score on the **elementary education subject knowledge** (for K-8) or **secondary subject knowledge** (for grades 7-12) portion of the Arizona Education Proficiency Assessment. For secondary, note that if a proficiency assessment is not offered in a subject area, an approved area shall consist of a minimum of 24 semester hours of subject-related courses from an accredited institution.
5. **Only one** of the following is required:
 - a. Completion of a teacher preparation program in elementary or secondary education from an accredited institution or from a Board-approved teacher preparation program.
 - b. A valid elementary or secondary certificate from another state.
 - c. Depending on which certification you require (elementary or secondary), you need 45 (elementary) or 30 (secondary) semester hours of education courses including 8 semester hours of practicum in grades K-8 (elementary) or 7-12 (secondary). Two years of verified teaching experience in grades prekindergarten-8 (elementary) or 7-12 (secondary) may be substituted for the practicum. Courses which teach the knowledge and skills described in the professional teaching standards such as learning theory, classroom management, methods, and assessments are acceptable.

Note: *If you otherwise qualify for the certificate, but are deficient in Arizona and/or U.S. constitution, you have **three years** under a valid teaching certificate to fulfill the requirement, unless you are teaching an academic course on history, government, social studies, citizenship, law, or civics, then you have **one year** to fulfill the requirement.*

Q *How do I convert my Provisional Certificate to a Standard Certificate?*

You must have completed two years of teaching and, if elementary, taken 45 clock hours of instruction in phonics. Submit an application to convert your certificate to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Forms are downloadable from www.ade.az.gov/certification. Also check with your district office.

Q *What are the requirements for a Standard Certificate?*

The certificate is valid for six years and is renewed based upon demonstration of 180 hours of professional development.

Requirements are the following:

1. Qualify and hold the Provisional Elementary or Secondary Certificate for two years.
2. Valid Arizona Fingerprint Clearance Card issued by DPS.
3. For the Provisional Elementary Certificate, 45 clock hours or 3 semesters of instruction in research-based systematic phonics is required. An accredited institution or other provider may provide this instruction.
4. A passing score on the performance portion of the Arizona Educator Proficiency Assessment. The assessment is under development. Until then, **two years** of verified full-time teaching experience during the valid period of the provisional certificate may be used to convert the Provisional Certificate to a Standard Certificate.

Q *What are the other key certificates and their requirements?* **Reciprocal Teaching Certificate**

Teachers with at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and a valid teaching certificate from another state who either have a fingerprint clearance card from one of 19 "reciprocal" states (see "fingerprinting") or from the Arizona DPS can apply for a Reciprocal Teaching Certificate. Teachers with Reciprocal Certificates have one year to meet the following requirements:

▲ A passing score on the Professional Knowledge test unless the teacher has completed three years of full-time teaching experience during the valid out-of-state teaching certificate.

▲ A passing score on the Subject Knowledge test unless the teacher holds a master's degree or higher in the subject area to be taught.

▲ The Subject Knowledge and the Professional Knowledge test will be waived for National Board Certified teachers with a valid certificate.

▲ Course completion or successful testing out of the Arizona Constitution and the U.S. Constitution requirements.

Substitute Certificate

This renewable certificate is valid for six years. The applicant must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and a valid Arizona fingerprint clearance card from DPS. The certificate holder may only substitute in the same school for 120 days in the same year. If an individual holds a valid Arizona administrator or teaching certificate, he or she does not need to have a substitute certificate to be employed as a substitute. If someone has a previously issued "Lifetime Substitute" certificate, that certificate would continue to be valid, though those certificates are no longer issued.

Emergency Teaching Certificate

The applicant must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. The district must submit a request for an emergency certificate signed by the superintendent. The teacher must have a valid Arizona fingerprint clearance card from DPS. This certificate is a one-year certificate, but it may be renewed if the district declares a continuing emergency and the teacher has completed six semester hours of course work needed for certification.

Emergency Substitute Certificate

The applicant must have a high school diploma, GED, or official high school transcript with the diploma posted on it. The district must submit a request for an emergency certificate signed by the superintendent. The certificate is good for one year, but it may be reissued if the district continues to declare an emergency and the teacher has completed two semesters of course work or 30 hours of district in-service or a combination of both. If an individual has more than 30 college course hours, the requirement is waived. The applicant must have a valid Arizona fingerprint clearance card issued by DPS. The emergency substitute may not be placed for more than 120 days of substitute teaching per school year.

Q***How do I renew my Standard Certificate?***

You are required to get 180 hours of professional development credit to renew your certificate. You may renew your certificate up to six months prior to the expiration date. If you are not currently employed, you have one year to renew. If your certificate is not renewed within one year after expiration, you must reapply as a new applicant and qualify under the current requirements for the certificate. Endorsements are automatically renewed with the certificate, if it is attached, at no additional charge. Special Education and Vocational endorsements are separate certificates.

Q***Who keeps track of when I need to renew?***

It is your responsibility to renew your certificate before it expires. Your district is not required to notify you. You can apply for renewal up to six months in advance of the expiration date of your certificate. The cost to renew your certificate is \$20, which is also the charge for adding an endorsement or removing a deficiency. The cost to have your qualifications for certification or an endorsement checked is \$60. Please note that the ADE does not accept cash or credit cards.

Your district personnel office has a copy of your teaching certificate, however, if you lose the certificate or need an extra copy, the cost to replace it is \$20. You can request a copy from ADE Certification Unit at (602) 542-4367. It's best to keep your certificate in a safe place with other professional documents.

Q***Who records my professional development activities?***

You are responsible for keeping appropriate documentation for the hours needed to renew your certificate. Your district will verify those professional development hours for recertification.



How do I know what counts for professional development?

Qualified professional development hours fall into the eight categories below. One or more categories may be used to meet your renewal requirement. This chart explains the kind of documentation you need. Your district will verify, but not approve, your renewal hours.

Professional Development Activity:	Documentation Required:
Courses related to education or a subject area taught in Arizona public schools.	Official transcripts from an accredited institution. Each semester hour of courses is equivalent to 15 hours of professional development.
District or school sponsored in-service designed for professional development.	Written verification from the sponsoring district or school stating the dates of participation and number of clock hours earned.
Professional (education related) conferences and workshops.	Conference agenda and a statement of certificate from the sponsoring organization noting clock hour earned in training sessions. Limited to 30 clock hours per year.
Business internship: internship shall be based on an agreement between a business and a district or school with the stated objective of aligning teaching curriculum with workplace skills.	Written verification by the sponsoring business and district or school stating the dates of participation and number of clock hours earned. Limited to 80-clock hours.
Educational research: shall be sponsored by a research facility or an accredited institution or funded by a grant.	The published report of the research or verification by the sponsoring agency and a statement of the dates of participation and the number of clock hours earned.
Leadership role in a professional organization (i.e. President, Vice-President, or highest governing board).	Written verification by the governing body of the professional organization of the dates of service and clock hours earned. Limited to 30 clock hours per year.
Serving on a visitation team for a school accreditation agency.	Written verification for the accreditation agency of the dates of service and clock hours earned. Limited to 60 hours per year.
Completion of the process for certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.	Written verification for the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards and a statement from the employing district or school verifying the dates and clock hours earned during the certification process.

Q***If I hold more than one certificate, do I need separate professional development hours for each?***

Any hours you earn toward renewal count for both certificates. If you renew within six months of the expiration of the first certificate to expire, you can request the same renewal date for all of your certificates.

Q***I also have an administrator certificate. Do I need separate professional development hours?***

All certificates issued by the ADE—including those for administrators—must meet the same professional development requirements. If the valid periods of the certificates overlap, professional development hours may be used for both certificates, as outlined above.

Q***What about the “highly qualified” requirements of No Child Left Behind?***

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all teachers and paraeducators to meet “highly qualified” requirements as specified in the law. These requirements are separate and distinct from the requirements for certification and certification renewal.

To be “highly qualified” according to NCLB, teachers must have a degree in the subject or subjects they are teaching, hold a valid Arizona state certificate and passed the AEPA Subject Knowledge Test, OR hold an advanced degree in the core academic subject area, OR hold National Board Certification in the core academic subject area, OR have at least 24 credit hours in the core academic subject area, OR earned a minimum of 100 points on the AZ Housse rubric for this core academic subject.

Q***What should I do now?***

Find out when your certificate expires. Gather together the documentation of your professional growth activities that fall into the categories listed here and put them into a “professional growth” folder. Your AEA affiliate can probably provide you with one. Be certain to keep the information. Your district is not obligated to retain your documentation. As you participate in professional growth activities, always get documentation for the clock hours you earn and keep the agendas for the events. Be certain to

confirm which district-sponsored professional growth activities or district committees provide recertification credit. Remember that you can only count hours obtained during the valid period of your certificate.

Structured English Immersion Endorsement Requirement

After August 31, 2006, all classroom teachers, supervisors, principals, and superintendents are required to have a Structured English Immersion Endorsement, ESL, or Bilingual Endorsement. By August 31, 2006, all teachers must get a non-renewable three-year “provisional” endorsement by earning one semester hour or 15 clock hours of ADE-approved professional development in SEI. Full SEI endorsement requires an additional three semester hours or 45 clock hours of professional development in SEI and shall be completed by August 31, 2009. Teachers certified after August 31, 2006, must earn the full SEI endorsement. The hours earned for SEI also count toward recertification. For a list of already-approved classes and the latest information, visit www.ade.state.az.us/asd/lep. The cost for the standard SEI endorsement is \$60.



Do ESL and bilingual teachers have to earn SEI endorsement?

No. They are exempt from this requirement. However, courses taken as early as 2001 toward a bilingual or ESL endorsement count toward SEI endorsement.

NOTE: This booklet is a general guide and is not intended to provide complete information or legal advice. The State Board of Education frequently updates the rule language about certification. For the latest information, visit the Web sites of the Arizona Education Association or the Arizona Department of Education which are www.arizona-aea.org and www.ade.state.az.us/certification/.



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