

The 2011 Florida Statutes

[Title XLVIII](#)

K-20 EDUCATION CODE

[Chapter 1012](#)

PERSONNEL

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1012.56 Educator certification requirements.—

(1) APPLICATION.—Each person seeking certification pursuant to this chapter shall submit a completed application containing the applicant’s social security number to the Department of Education and remit the fee required pursuant to s. [1012.59](#) and rules of the State Board of Education. Pursuant to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, each party is required to provide his or her social security number in accordance with this section. Disclosure of social security numbers obtained through this requirement is limited to the purpose of administration of the Title IV-D program of the Social Security Act for child support enforcement. Pursuant to s. [120.60](#), the department shall issue within 90 calendar days after the stamped receipted date of the completed application:

(a) If the applicant meets the requirements, a professional certificate covering the classification, level, and area for which the applicant is deemed qualified and a document explaining the requirements for renewal of the professional certificate;

(b) If the applicant meets the requirements and if requested by an employing school district or an employing private school with a professional education competence demonstration program pursuant to paragraphs (6)(f) and (8)(b), a temporary certificate covering the classification, level, and area for which the applicant is deemed qualified and an official statement of status of eligibility; or

(c) If an applicant does not meet the requirements for either certificate, an official statement of status of eligibility.

The statement of status of eligibility must advise the applicant of any qualifications that must be completed to qualify for certification. Each statement of status of eligibility is valid for 3 years after its date of issuance, except as provided in paragraph (2)(d).

(2) ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.—To be eligible to seek certification, a person must:

(a) Be at least 18 years of age.

(b) File an affidavit that the applicant subscribes to and will uphold the principles incorporated in the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Florida and that the information provided in the application is true, accurate, and complete. The affidavit shall be by original signature or by electronic authentication. The affidavit shall include substantially the following warning:

WARNING: Giving false information in order to obtain or renew a Florida educator's certificate is a criminal offense under Florida law. Anyone giving false information on this affidavit is subject to criminal prosecution as well as disciplinary action by the Education Practices Commission.

(c) Document receipt of a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning, or a nonaccredited institution of higher learning that the Department of Education has identified as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's degree, or higher. Each applicant seeking initial certification must have attained at least a 2.5 overall grade point average on a 4.0 scale in the applicant's major field of study. The applicant may document the required education by submitting official transcripts from institutions of higher education or by authorizing the direct submission of such official transcripts through established electronic network systems. The bachelor's or higher degree may not be required in areas approved in rule by the State Board of Education as nondegree areas.

(d) Submit to background screening in accordance with subsection (10). If the background screening indicates a criminal history or if the applicant acknowledges a criminal history, the applicant's records shall be referred to the investigative section in the Department of Education for review and determination of eligibility for certification. If the applicant fails to provide the necessary documentation requested by the department within 90 days after the date of the receipt of the certified mail request, the statement of eligibility and pending application shall become invalid.

(e) Be of good moral character.

(f) Be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of an educator.

(g) Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge, pursuant to subsection (3).

(h) Demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge, pursuant to subsection (5).

(i) Demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence, pursuant to subsection (6).

(3) MASTERY OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE.—Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of general knowledge are:

(a) Achievement of passing scores on basic skills examination required by state board rule;

(b) Achievement of passing scores on the College Level Academic Skills Test earned prior to July 1, 2002;

(c) A valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state;

(d) A valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education; or

(e) Documentation of two semesters of successful teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution of higher education identified by the Department of Education as having a quality program.

(4) ALIGNMENT OF SUBJECT AREAS.—As the Sunshine State Standards are replaced by the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards under s. [1003.41](#), the State Board of Education shall align the subject area examinations to the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.

(5) MASTERY OF SUBJECT AREA KNOWLEDGE.—Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of subject area knowledge are:

(a) Achievement of passing scores on subject area examinations required by state board rule, which may include, but need not be limited to, world languages in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish;

(b) Completion of a bachelor's degree or higher and verification of the attainment of an oral proficiency interview score above the intermediate level and a written proficiency score above the intermediate level on a test administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages for which there is no Florida-developed examination;

(c) Completion of the subject area specialization requirements specified in state board rule and verification of the attainment of the essential subject matter competencies by the district school superintendent of the employing school district or chief administrative officer of the employing state-supported or private school for a subject area for which a subject area examination has not been developed and required by state board rule;

(d) Completion of the subject area specialization requirements specified in state board rule for a subject coverage requiring a master's or higher degree and achievement of a passing score on the subject area examination specified in state board rule;

(e) A valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state; or

(f) A valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education.

School districts are encouraged to provide mechanisms for those middle school teachers holding only a K-6 teaching certificate to obtain a subject area coverage for middle grades through postsecondary coursework or district add-on certification.

(6) MASTERY OF PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION AND EDUCATION COMPETENCE.—Acceptable means of demonstrating mastery of professional preparation and education competence are:

(a) Completion of an approved teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational

institution within this state and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule;

(b) Completion of a teacher preparation program at a postsecondary educational institution outside Florida and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule;

(c) A valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state;

(d) A valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education;

(e) Documentation of two semesters of successful teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution of higher education identified by the Department of Education as having a quality program;

(f) Completion of professional preparation courses as specified in state board rule, successful completion of a professional education competence demonstration program pursuant to paragraph (8)(b), and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule;

(g) Successful completion of a professional preparation alternative certification and education competency program, outlined in paragraph (8)(a); or

(h) Successful completion of an alternative certification program pursuant to s. [1004.85](#) and achievement of a passing score on the professional education competency examination required by rule of the State Board of Education.

(7) TYPES AND TERMS OF CERTIFICATION.—

(a) The Department of Education shall issue a professional certificate for a period not to exceed 5 years to any applicant who meets all the requirements outlined in subsection (2).

(b) The department shall issue a temporary certificate to any applicant who completes the requirements outlined in paragraphs (2)(a)-(f) and completes the subject area content requirements specified in state board rule or demonstrates mastery of subject area knowledge pursuant to subsection (5) and holds an accredited degree or a degree approved by the Department of Education at the level required for the subject area specialization in state board rule.

(c) The department shall issue one nonrenewable 2-year temporary certificate and one nonrenewable 5-year professional certificate to a qualified applicant who holds a bachelor's degree in the area of speech-language impairment to allow for completion of a master's degree program in speech-language impairment.

Each temporary certificate is valid for 3 school fiscal years and is nonrenewable. However, the

requirement in paragraph (2)(g) must be met within 1 calendar year of the date of employment under the temporary certificate. Individuals who are employed under contract at the end of the 1 calendar year time period may continue to be employed through the end of the school year in which they have been contracted. A school district shall not employ, or continue the employment of, an individual in a position for which a temporary certificate is required beyond this time period if the individual has not met the requirement of paragraph (2)(g). The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to allow the department to extend the validity period of a temporary certificate for 2 years when the requirements for the professional certificate, not including the requirement in paragraph (2)(g), were not completed due to the serious illness or injury of the applicant or other extraordinary extenuating circumstances. The department shall reissue the temporary certificate for 2 additional years upon approval by the Commissioner of Education. A written request for reissuance of the certificate shall be submitted by the district school superintendent, the governing authority of a university lab school, the governing authority of a state-supported school, or the governing authority of a private school.

(8) PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION AND EDUCATION COMPETENCY PROGRAM.—

(a) The Department of Education shall develop and each school district must provide a cohesive competency-based professional preparation alternative certification program by which members of a school district's instructional staff may satisfy the mastery of professional preparation and education competence requirements specified in this subsection and rules of the State Board of Education. Participants must hold a state-issued temporary certificate. A school district shall provide a competency-based alternative certification preparation program developed by the Department of Education or developed by the district and approved by the Department of Education. The program shall include the following components:

1. A minimum period of initial preparation prior to assuming duties as the teacher of record.
2. An option for collaboration between school districts and other supporting agencies for implementation.
3. Experienced peer mentors.
4. An assessment that provides for:
 - a. An initial evaluation of each educator's competencies to determine an appropriate individualized professional development plan.
 - b. A postevaluation to assure successful completion of the program.
5. Professional education preparation content knowledge that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Requirements specified in state board rule for professional preparation.
- b. The educator-accomplished practices approved by the state board.
- c. A variety of data indicators for student progress.
- d. Methodologies, including technology-based methodologies, for teaching subject content that supports the Sunshine State Standards for students.
- e. Techniques for effective classroom management.
- f. Techniques and strategies for operationalizing the role of the teacher in assuring a safe learning environment for students.
- g. Methodologies for assuring the ability of all students to read, write, and compute.
6. Required achievement of passing scores on the professional education competency examination required by state board rule.

(b) Each school district must and a state supported public school or a private school may develop and maintain a system by which members of the instructional staff may demonstrate mastery of professional education competence as required by law. Each program must be based on classroom application and instructional performance and must include a performance evaluation plan for documenting the demonstration of required professional education competence.

(9) EXAMINATIONS.—

(a) The Commissioner of Education, with the approval of the State Board of Education, may contract for developing, printing, administering, scoring, and appropriate analysis of the written examinations required.

(b) The State Board of Education shall, by rule, specify the examination scores that are required for the issuance of a professional certificate and temporary certificate. Such rules must define generic subject area competencies and must establish uniform evaluation guidelines.

(c) The State Board of Education shall designate the certification areas for subject area examinations. All required examinations may be taken prior to graduation.

(d) If an applicant takes an examination developed by this state and does not achieve the score necessary for certification, the applicant may review his or her completed examination and bring to the attention of the department any errors that would result in a passing score.

(e) For any examination developed by this state, the Department of Education and the State Board of Education shall maintain confidentiality of the examination, developmental materials, and workpapers, which are exempt from s. [119.07\(1\)](#).

(f) The examinations used for demonstration of mastery of general knowledge, professional education competence, and subject area knowledge shall be aligned with student standards approved by the state board. The delivery system for these examinations shall provide for overall

efficiency, user-friendly application, reasonable accessibility to prospective teachers, and prompt attainment of examination results. The examination of competency for demonstration of subject area knowledge shall be sufficiently comprehensive to assess subject matter expertise for individuals who have acquired subject knowledge either through college credit or by other means.

(g) All examination instruments, including developmental materials and workpapers directly related thereto, which are prepared, prescribed, or administered pursuant to this section shall be confidential and exempt from the provisions of s. [119.07\(1\)](#) and from s. [1001.52](#). Provisions governing access to, maintenance of, and destruction of such instruments and related materials shall be prescribed by rules of the State Board of Education.

(10) BACKGROUND SCREENING REQUIRED, INITIALLY AND PERIODICALLY.—

(a) Each person who seeks certification under this chapter must be fingerprinted and screened in accordance with s. [1012.32](#) and must not be ineligible for such certification under s. [1012.315](#). A person who has been screened in accordance with s. [1012.32](#) by a district school board or the Department of Education within 12 months before the date the person initially obtains certification under this chapter, the results of which are submitted to the district school board or to the Department of Education, is not required to repeat the screening under this paragraph.

(b) A person may not receive a certificate under this chapter until the person's screening under s. [1012.32](#) is completed and the results have been submitted to the Department of Education or to the district school superintendent of the school district that employs the person. Every 5 years after obtaining initial certification, each person who is required to be certified under this chapter must be rescreened in accordance with s. [1012.32](#), at which time the school district shall request the Department of Law Enforcement to forward the fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for federal criminal records checks. If, for any reason after obtaining initial certification, the fingerprints of a person who is required to be certified under this chapter are not retained by the Department of Law Enforcement under s. [1012.32\(3\)\(a\)](#) and (b), the person must file a complete set of fingerprints with the district school superintendent of the employing school district. Upon submission of fingerprints for this purpose, the school district shall request the Department of Law Enforcement to forward the fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for federal criminal records checks, and the fingerprints shall be retained by the Department of Law Enforcement under s. [1012.32\(3\)\(a\)](#) and (b). The cost of the state and federal criminal history checks required by paragraph (a) and this paragraph may be borne by the district school board or the employee. Under penalty of perjury, each person who is certified under this chapter must agree to inform his or her employer within 48 hours if convicted of any disqualifying offense while he or she is employed in a position for which such certification is required.

(c) If it is found under s. [1012.796](#) that a person who is employed in a position requiring certification under this chapter has not been screened in accordance with s. [1012.32](#), or is ineligible for such certification under s. [1012.315](#), the person's certification shall be immediately revoked or suspended and he or she shall be immediately suspended from the position requiring certification.

(11) NONCITIZENS.—

(a) The State Board of Education may adopt rules for issuing certificates to noncitizens who are needed to teach and who are legally admitted to the United States through the United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. The filing of a written oath to uphold the principles of the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Florida, required under paragraph (2)(b), does not apply to individuals assigned to teach on an exchange basis.

(b) A certificate may not be issued to a citizen of a nation controlled by forces that are antagonistic to democratic forms of government, except to an individual who has been legally admitted to the United States through the United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services.

(12) DENIAL OF CERTIFICATE.—

(a) The Department of Education may deny an applicant a certificate if the department possesses evidence satisfactory to it that the applicant has committed an act or acts, or that a situation exists, for which the Education Practices Commission would be authorized to revoke a teaching certificate.

(b) The decision of the department is subject to review by the Education Practices Commission upon the filing of a written request from the applicant within 20 days after receipt of the notice of denial.

(13) STATE BOARD RULES.—The State Board of Education shall adopt rules pursuant to ss. [120.536](#) and [120.54](#), as necessary to implement this section.

(14) PRIOR APPLICATION.—Persons who apply for certification are governed by the law and rules in effect at the time of application for issuance of the initial certificate, provided that continuity of certificates is maintained.

(15) PERSONNEL RECORDS.—The Department of Education shall maintain an electronic database that includes, but need not be limited to, the academic preparation, professional training, and teaching experience of each person to whom a certificate is issued. The applicant or the district school superintendent shall furnish the information using a format provided by the department.

(16) AUTHORITY OF COMMISSIONER.—The Commissioner of Education may make decisions

regarding an applicant's certification under extenuating circumstances not otherwise provided for in statute or by rule. However, an applicant for certification approved by the commissioner must possess the credentials, knowledge, and skills necessary to provide quality education in the public schools.

(17) COMPARISON OF ROUTES TO A PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE.—Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, the Department of Education shall conduct a longitudinal study to compare performance of certificateholders who are employed in Florida school districts. The study shall compare a sampling of educators who have qualified for a professional certificate since July 1, 2002, based on the following:

- (a) Graduation from a state-approved teacher preparation program.
- (b) Completion of a state-approved professional preparation and education competency program.
- (c) A valid standard teaching certificate issued by a state other than Florida.

The department comparisons shall be made to determine if there is any significant difference in the performance of these groups of teachers, as measured by their students' achievement levels and learning gains as measured by s. [1008.22](#).

History.—s. 728, ch. 2002-387; s. 43, ch. 2003-391; s. 170, ch. 2004-5; s. 16, ch. 2004-295; s. 61, ch. 2006-74; s. 30, ch. 2008-108; s. 25, ch. 2008-235; s. 104, ch. 2009-21; s. 184, ch. 2011-5.