

## Certification Information

Your Human Resources Department is here to assist in processing paperwork and forwarding required proof of coursework to Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in order for you to receive a valid Maryland Education Certificate. For questions regarding issuing and renewing current certificates, please contact Human Resources Generalist Paige Paxton at 410-621-6225 or [ppaxton@somerset.k12.md.us](mailto:ppaxton@somerset.k12.md.us). Please remember that it is the **responsibility of the educator** to ensure compliance with certification requirements. For additional information, please refer to the MSDE Certification Branch Website: [www.mdcert.org](http://www.mdcert.org)

### Who Must Hold a Certificate?

Teachers, specialists, and administrators in Maryland public schools and in approved schools operated by state agencies. Certain nonpublic school personnel.

The following is helpful information regarding Maryland Certification requirements:

- **Professional Eligibility Certificate (PEC):** Valid for 5 years; issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements but is not currently employed. Educators who hold a PEC will be moved to a Standard Professional Certificate upon employment with a Maryland public school system.
- **Standard Professional Certificate (SPC I and SPC II):** Valid for 5 years; issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and is employed by a Maryland local school system or an accredited nonpublic school. Educators must submit six hours of acceptable credit in order to move from an SPC I to an SPC II. Educators must meet the requirements of an Advanced Professional Certificate upon expiration of their second SPC.
- **Advanced Professional Certificate (APC):** Valid for 5 years; issued to an applicant who submits verification of 3 years of full-time professional school related experience and a master's degree, or a minimum of 36 semester hours of post-baccalaureate course work which must include at least 21 semester hours of graduate credit and 15 MSDE/CPD courses. Another option is to obtain National Board Certification and earn a minimum of 12 semester hours of approved graduate credit after the conferral of the bachelor's or higher degree.
- **Conditional Certificates:** Are issued to allow educators more time to meet all certification requirements of a standard certificate. They are valid for 2 years. To get a second conditional certificate, a teacher must complete a minimum of 12 credits listed on the conditional evaluation and must meet the Maryland qualifying score on Praxis I. If the original conditional evaluation requires fewer than 12 credits, all requirements including the required Praxis I and Praxis II tests must be completed during the two-year validity period of the first certificate.

Certificates are issued with either a January 1 or July 1 date. Maryland does not issue a permanent certificate.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Renewal of the Advanced Professional Certificate

To renew your APC you must successfully complete six credits or renewal units. Credits can be earned through college coursework or MSDE workshops. Renewal units can be earned by completing “equivalent professional experience.” These are listed on the chart below.

All courses or activities for renewal units must be discussed and approved by your immediate supervisor (principal) prior to enrollment and should support the goals of your Professional Development Plan.

In-system workshops/committee activities held during the workday are not eligible for renewal units. Activities should have a direct impact/relationship to your job responsibilities (e.g. delivery of instruction). Selected MSTA/NEA sponsored activities may be eligible and require approval of the Director of Human Resources. All reading courses required for certification must be satisfied before renewal units can be submitted for certificate renewal.

### What is a Renewal Unit? Can anyone use these units to renew a certificate?

A renewal unit allows APC certificate holders to renew their certificates with renewal units and/or credits. Renewal units are specific to SCPS and can only be used to renew an Advanced Professional Certificate. A list of options is listed below.

### Options for Earning Renewal Units

Activity/Course	Credits or Renewal Credits	Person Responsible to Sign Off
College or Inservice Courses – “C” or better grade.	Semester Hours or Inservice Credit 1-6	Transcripts or MSDE Professional Development Experience Credit Form
Teaching of college or inservice courses. Credit will be offered only the first time a specific course is taught.	1 – 3 credits	College Supervisor
Curriculum development or revision.	1 – 3 credits	Supervisor or Principal
Serving as a chairperson, officer or member of a school system approved state, regional or national professional organization.	3 credits	Supervisor or Principal
Supervising a student intern or mentoring a new teacher. May use only 1 time during the five-year renewal period.	3 credits	Principal

Leadership role in the design and implementation of innovative school projects. This can include school clubs.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
Consultant Activities-15 hours equals one renewal credit (RC).	1 – 3 credits	Principal
Non-credit bearing courses and attending professional lectures. 15 hours equals 1 RC. Activity must be relevant.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
School Improvement Team and other school committees or county-wide committees. 15 hours equals 1 RC.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
County or MSDE Committees	1 – 3 credits	Principal
Leader of school based instructional workshops as determined by principal or supervisor.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
Attendance at state or national conference.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
Educational Travel-Journal kept with plan for adaptation to classroom activities submitted.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
State HAS/MSA related work.	1 – 3 credits	Principal
Coordinator of school related activities beyond the school day.	1 credit	Principal
Participate in a system approved improvement process, such as an approved action research project.	1 – 3 credits	Supervisor or Principal
Activities not covered by these guidelines may be submitted to the Professional Development Committee for review and approval. Submit a written request to the Human Resources Director including a detailed description and estimated time commitments.	1 – 3 credits	Assistant Superintendent

\*These activities may not be used to renew a Standard Professional Certificate or to qualify for an initial Advanced Professional Certificate.\*

## **How to Receive Renewal Credit**

Write a letter to the Human Resources Director in which you list participation in any of the above activities. Provide a brief description of each activity and the time you spent engaged in each. Attach any related information to the letter. Have the appropriate person listed in the chart to sign your letter confirming the participation. The Human Resources Office will complete APC renewal forms, send a copy to you and forward a copy to the office of certification to expedite the renewal of your Advanced Professional Certificate

## **Who is responsible for renewing my certificate?**

You are responsible for keeping track of your current certificate and its validity period. You need to keep track of the coursework that you complete and be sure to send original transcripts/official grade reports to Human Resources for all coursework completed. MSDE credits are automatically sent to HR, but college transcripts and grade reports must be requested by the teacher. It is most efficient if you have the transcripts sent to you in a sealed envelope and you deliver them to HR. That way, you know when the college has actually sent your transcript. The HR Generalist will make a request for your certificate to MSDE and will send all necessary documentation. You simply need to get the necessary documents to HR, approximately 12 weeks before your certificate expires. Once your certificate request has been made and approved by MSDE, you can go to [www.mdcert.org](http://www.mdcert.org) to print your certificate. Certificates cannot be printed before its issue date. The HR department will, however, print the certificate and send you a color copy.

## **What happens if I don't get the appropriate documentation to HR and my certificate expires?**

Every teacher must hold a valid certificate to teach in any Maryland Public School. If you do not meet the requirements for a Conditional Certificate, you cannot get another certificate. Without a certificate, you lose your status as a teacher and are no longer employed by SCPS as a contractual teacher. If you do not meet the requirements to renew a Professional certificate, you can move to a Conditional Certificate for two years to complete your missing coursework. If you do not complete the requirements in the two-year validity period, you cannot get another certificate. The HR Generalist must have your coursework 12 weeks before your certificate expires.

## **Is there a fee to renew my certificate? How do I pay it?**

Each certificate renewal requires a \$10 fee, but the addition of a certification area costs nothing. The \$10 fee can either be check or money order made payable to the Somerset County Public Schools.

## **How may I add a certification area to my certificate?**

You may add a certification area by completing 30 credits in a particular certification area or by passing the content praxis test(s) for a specific certification area with a Maryland qualifying score.

### **What are the possible Areas of Certification?**

The areas of certification 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, or go to the MSDE listing link or to ETS.org.

### **How and when do I get my actual certificate?**

You print your certificate from the MSDE website whenever you wish; however, HR will monitor and send you an original when it becomes available. Certificates cannot be printed until the date they are issued. To do so, access [www.mdcert.org](http://www.mdcert.org) and follow the onscreen directions. You need to set up an account the first time you access the site. After that, you simply need your username and the password you created on the site when you registered.

### **What is the Senior Teacher Waiver and how do I know if I am eligible for it?**

According to COMAR 13A.12.01.14B.(1)(2), a teacher who has 25 years of experience in public education or is 55 years of age may request the Senior Teacher Waiver for certificate renewal. That means that the teacher is exempted from taking the 6 credits to renew his/her Advanced Professional Certificate and is not held to the reading or special education required courses that have not yet been met.

### **How do I request the Senior Teacher Waiver?**

To request the Senior Teacher Waiver, make a written request to the Superintendent and send a copy to Human Resources. Please indicate your qualifications (age and/or service) for requesting the waiver. If the waiver is granted, your current certificate will be in effect until its expiration date. At that time and each renewal time thereafter, the certificate can be renewed without taking any additional coursework as long as the teacher is employed as a contracted teacher with Somerset County Public Schools.

## **TUITION & PRAXIS REIMBURSEMENT**

### **What is the procedure for getting tuition reimbursement?**

Submit a tuition reimbursement form and the required documentation after receiving the grade for the class. Always be sure that your coursework is taken through an accredited college or university or through MSDE and is age/grade appropriate and is related to education in general or your current or future assignment. See the Tuition Reimbursement form, available in the office of each school, for specific documentation that must be included with your tuition reimbursement request. Somerset County Public Schools allows individuals \$3000 per year for tuition reimbursement.

### **Am I eligible for reimbursement for the praxis tests for which I have met the Maryland qualifying score?**

Teachers who hold a professional teaching certificate (SPC I, SPC II, APC) are eligible for reimbursement of praxis tests passed to be deemed “highly qualified”. Teachers who hold conditional certificates are eligible for reimbursement of praxis tests passed to be deemed “highly qualified” or to complete certification requirements to move to a professional certificate

Please complete a tuition reimbursement with your identifying information and the name and number of the test and copy of test scores.

## **PRAXIS TEST**

### **Where can I get Praxis tests and registration information for specific tests?**

The Educational Testing service Website at [www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis) is a great source of information and is also where you go to register for tests. If you choose State Requirements in the center of the first screen and then choose Maryland, you will get the most accurate information for Maryland. Be sure to have your scores reported to the Maryland State Department of Education – Code **R7403**.

### **Does ETS automatically report Praxis scores to Somerset County Public Schools?**

Somerset County Public Schools does not receive score reports from ETS nor MSDE. Be sure to make a copy of all pages of your score report and send it to the Human Resources Office as soon as you receive it. Indicate if you are seeking an additional certification area by including a note or your score report. Keep your original score report 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 passed these tests.

## **No Child Left Behind and Highly Qualified Status**

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

According to the No Child Left Behind federal legislation, all teachers must be “highly qualified” by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. Each 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), have an academic major, or have 30 credits of academic content in the subject area or complete the HOUSSE document. Further information on the different HOUSSE documents is available on the [MSDE website](http://MSDE website), [www.mdcert.org](http://www.mdcert.org). Refer to the following to help you: For further information on determining whether or not you are HQ, please refer to the “**How to Achieve “Highly Qualified” Teacher Status in Maryland**” chart.

### **How can I find out what to do to become highly qualified?**

Most teachers have a bachelor’s degree and a professional teaching certificate. (Conditional teachers are preparing to gain a professional certificate and are not deemed HQ until they move to a professional certificate.) Therefore teachers can show competency in their subject area by

meeting the MD qualifying score on the content test(s) of the subject. Teachers may show competence by having an academic major in the subject area or have 30 credits of content courses in that area. (For an evaluation to determine if you have 30 acceptable credits, email [ppaxton@somerset.k12.md.us](mailto:ppaxton@somerset.k12.md.us)).

**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.

**Do I have to be HQ for each class that I teach?**

All teachers of any Core Academic course must be HQ. 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.