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To: Interested Stakeholder Groups

From: James N. Baldwin, Senior Deputy Commissioner 

Subject: Summary of Potential Changes to Educator Certification

Date: November 6, 2023

Over the past two years, the Department has made changes to teacher and school leader certification requirements to address the educator shortage and streamline the certification process. The Department is now considering potential changes to the certification system that would:

- Further simplify the certification process;
- Remove significant barriers to certification that have accrued over generations;
- Expand pathways to certification that will welcome qualified individuals of diverse backgrounds into the profession;
- Expand opportunities for practice of pedagogical and content knowledge; and
- Ensure teacher and leader preparation and continuing professional development supports a sustainable educator pipeline and is aligned with the urgent need to lift student achievement and achieve equity in our learning environments.

To determine the best path forward, the Department has been meeting with stakeholder groups over the past month for feedback on six potential changes. A summary of these is attached to provide more details about the proposals, including the rationale for each. Please note that this document has been prepared by Department staff for discussion purposes only, and the content does not represent a final policy determination.

The goal is to stimulate thought and discussion and to solicit feedback from our education partners about the future of teacher and school leader preparation and development. A focus is the minimum level of pedagogical practice and content knowledge, skills, abilities, and employer support an educator needs to excel in the profession.

Additionally, it represents an attempt to bring together the assets of our teacher and school leader preparation programs and the rich professional learning experiences provided by BOCES and school districts into a coherent system of professional learning and support that will result in the best prepared and most diverse teaching profession in the nation.

We welcome any feedback on the proposals and any thoughts you may have about how to achieve our goals.

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Summary of Potential Changes to Certification Draft for Stakeholder Feedback from the New York State Education Department November 2023

Research indicates that certain knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and dispositions affect an educator’s ability to perform their role in a way that benefits students. New York State’s Teaching and Educational Leadership Standards align with this research and express our shared beliefs about what effective educators should know and be able to do in their schools and classrooms. If our goal is to have an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every building and district office, then we must create conditions at the State level that ensure that educators are supported to meet these standards in the context in which they teach across the entire continuum of their careers – from preparation to career end.

Certification is a critical part of this system, as it allows the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to establish the minimum criteria someone must satisfy to enter and remain in the profession. Put simply – what is the minimum level of pedagogical and content knowledge, skills, and abilities an educator needs to be competent and positively contribute to the learning of all students? In considering how to reform New York’s existing certification process, we must consider:

1. Our goal of ensuring that all students have equitable access to certified, experienced, diverse, and effective educators;
2. Our expectations for what new educators must know and be able to do to effectively meet the needs of all students;
3. The ways in which a candidate can demonstrate that they have met those expectations;
4. The need to ensure timely, consistent determinations in granting or denying licensure;
5. The impact that certain barriers to entry have on our ability to recruit and attract potential educators into the profession;
6. The pathways to certification that should exist to maximize the supply of qualified and diverse educators; and
7. The pre-service and in-service supports that should exist to ensure that educators are well-supported as they transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application.

Potential Changes

NYSED has identified several potential changes to the certification system that could improve New York State’s ability to recruit and retain effective and diverse educators in the State’s public schools and ensure there is an adequate supply of teachers across subject areas and regions of the State. The following table lists six certification types and requirements, describes potential changes to them, and the rationale for the changes. The driving force behind the rationales is to provide access and equity to enter and remain in the teaching profession and build sustainable local teacher pipelines.

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NYSED is sharing these potential changes with stakeholders to start a discussion and collect feedback on them. **The potential changes are not finalized and may be modified based on feedback.** The feedback will be very valuable for NYSED, helping to ensure that any changes to the certification types and requirements reflect multiple perspectives on the minimum level of pedagogical and content knowledge, skills, and abilities an educator needs as well as streamline the certification process for applicants and NYSED.

Certification Type or Requirement	Description of Potential Changes	Rationale
Certification Examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the subject area certification test requirement, allow candidates to take and pass either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The NYSTCE test in the subject area of the certificate (e.g., Music CST, SBL assessment), <u>OR</u> ○ An acceptable certification test in the subject area, as determined by the Department (e.g., other national or state certification tests). 	<p>Allowing certificate applicants to take other valid and reliable subject area certification tests (e.g., Praxis, MTEL) would remove a barrier for candidates who complete a comparable educator preparation program in another state to obtain New York State (NYS) certification. Where these candidates have already taken and passed an acceptable test, they would no longer need to also take and pass the NYSTCE subject area test, which reduces the cost and time it will take them to obtain a NYS certificate.</p>
Additional Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of semester hours (SHs) for the content core requirement for an additional subject area teaching certificate (for most certificate titles) from 30 SH to 18 SH, which is the equivalent to a minor in the subject area. • No longer require teacher preparation program candidates to complete a student teaching experience in the additional certificate area (for most certificate titles), consistent with the individual evaluation pathway to certification. 	<p>This potential change expands a recent change (2022) to the content core requirement for NYS registered science teacher preparation programs and the individual evaluation pathway to science certification. Specifically, candidates who hold a science certificate, or are simultaneously preparing for two or more science certificates, would only need to complete 18 SHs, instead of 30 SHs, in the subject area of the additional science certificate. The field would like to see this change expanded to other certificate areas, such as world languages.</p> <p>Reducing the number of semester hours would reduce the cost and time it takes candidates to obtain an additional certificate and would increase the ability of institutions of higher education (IHEs) to offer dual certification programs. In addition to completing 18 SH of coursework, individuals would continue to need to pass a subject area certification test to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject area.</p>

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		<p>Candidates who enter a NYS registered teacher preparation program in Fall 2024 or later will need to complete 70 school days, instead of 40 school days, for their student teaching experience. This longer period could present a challenge for programs that lead to multiple certificates and therefore have multiple student teaching experiences. By no longer requiring student teaching experiences in multiple subject areas (for most certificate titles), this challenge would be ameliorated.</p>
<p>Teaching Assistant (TA) Certificates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamline TA certification by replacing the Level I, II, and III TA certificates with Initial/Professional TA certificates. • For the new Professional TA certificate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Require three years of TA experience, ○ Require a bachelor’s degree in any area <u>OR</u> 18 SH requirements in pedagogy (in the competencies required for Initial teacher certification) and/or content knowledge (ELA, math, science, or social studies), with at least 9 SH in pedagogy, <u>AND</u> ○ Allow certificate holders to have an enhanced scope of practice, similar to the current Pre-Professional TA certificate. • Allow experience under the new Professional TA certificate to count towards the student teaching requirement for certification based on its “enhanced” scope of practice. • Create an Initial Reissuance that allows the Initial TA certificate to be continuously renewable by completing 100 hours of Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) and/or college coursework in any area (1 SH = 15 clock hours). • Create registration requirements for IHEs to create TA programs that lead to Professional TA 	<p>By aligning the Professional TA certificate education requirement to the requirements for the Initial teaching certificate, this proposal would create an intentional pathway for TAs to become teachers.</p> <p>By creating an enhanced scope of practice for Professional certificate holders, TAs who hold this certificate would have a greater understanding of teaching responsibilities and more direct impact on students. This may entice more TAs to become teachers and ensure that they are well informed in making this decision. This new TA role could also provide more support to teachers, helping to meet the needs in classrooms and improving working conditions. This could, in turn, ensure that students are better supported and improve teacher retention.</p> <p>Permitting one year of experience under the Professional TA to count towards the student teaching requirement for certification through the individual evaluation pathway based on its “enhanced” scope of practice would remove a barrier to certification (expense and time) and strengthen the TA to teacher pipeline.</p> <p>A continuously renewable Initial Reissuance would prevent the current situation where individuals with an expired TA certificate could never work as a TA again.</p>

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	<p>certification. The requirements would be 18 SH in pedagogy (in the competencies required for Initial teacher certification) and/or content knowledge (ELA, math, science, or social studies), with at least 9 SH in pedagogy (i.e., the Professional TA education requirement). The Office of College and University Evaluation (OCUE) would create an application for IHEs and register TA programs.</p>	<p>Registered TA programs would provide TAs with the knowledge and skills to successfully work with students and support teachers as well as enable individuals to obtain the Professional TA certificate, creating an intentional alignment between TA certification Initial teaching certification. Program completers would receive an institutional recommendation for Professional TA certification.</p>
<p>Professional Teacher Certificate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish multiple, rigorous pathways for teachers to meet the education requirement for the Professional Certificate. The pathways would be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An acceptable master’s degree in pedagogy, the subject area of the certificate sought, or a related area, <u>OR</u> ○ A National Board certificate in the subject area of the certificate sought, <u>OR</u> ○ Graduate level courses and/or NYSED-approved credentials in pedagogy, the subject area of the certificate sought, and/or a related area, that total at least 450 clock hours (3 SH = 45 clock hours). The credentials would be issued by a NYS school district, BOCES, or IHE with a teacher preparation program. 	<p>The purpose of having an Initial to Professional certificate progression is to signal that teachers have acquired additional knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively work with students and remain in the profession. Currently, teachers must complete a master’s degree to meet the Professional certificate education requirement.</p> <p>While obtaining a master’s degree is one way for educators to demonstrate their knowledge, we know that there are other ways for them to do so. Given the cost and other factors associated with obtaining a master’s degree, this requirement has an unintended consequence of limiting access to the profession for many people, including historically underrepresented populations. Therefore, we believe that establishing multiple, rigorous pathways for individuals to obtain a Professional certificate will support our goal of expanding access to the teaching profession and diversifying the workforce.</p> <p>Another way that teachers could demonstrate the knowledge needed for teaching is by earning a National Board certificate in the subject area of the certificate sought. The process for obtaining this certificate is rigorous and directly connected to teachers’ practice, enabling the process to also serve as a learning experience. Several empirical studies have established</p>

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		<p>statistically significant correlations between National Board certification and improved teacher practice and student learning. The process is also much less expensive (\$1,900) than a master’s degree, reducing a possible barrier for maintaining certification.</p> <p>A third way that teachers could demonstrate the knowledge needed for teaching is by completing graduate level courses and/or NYSED-approved credentials in pedagogy, the subject area of the certificate sought, and/or a related area. Through this option, early career teachers could complete coursework and/or high quality microcredentials aligned with both their professional interests and the knowledge and skills that are essential for new teachers to be successful in the classroom. In this way, these credentials could form part of a comprehensive induction process for new educators that helps support the effectiveness and retention of these educators as they bridge the gap between their initial teacher education and becoming an accomplished practitioner. Further, these credentials could be stackable, leading to the equivalent of a master’s degree.</p> <p>Additionally, credentials could be created quickly in response to timely issues and trends in the profession (e.g., microcredential in the science of reading). They also could be less expensive than a master’s degree, possibly increasing the likelihood of teachers progressing to the Professional certificate. The Office of Teacher and Leader Development would create an application for NYS school districts, BOCES, and IHEs and approve credentials for the purposes of meeting the Professional certificate education requirement. This application process would be designed to ensure that the credentials are rigorous and comparable to any other pathways for completing the education requirement for the Professional certificate.</p>
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		<p>Importantly, most states do not require a master’s degree to remain in the teaching profession. Additionally, the literature does not establish any clear correlation between teachers holding a master’s degree and improved student outcomes.</p>
<p>Transitional Certificates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a broad, new “Transitional Teacher” certificate to streamline the Transitional certificate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The current Transitional B and Transitional G certificates would become pathways for this new certificate. No new Transitional C programs would be registered. ○ A new pathway would be created where individuals (e.g., TAs, career changers) could complete a program from an “alternative-joint provider.” An alternative-joint provider would be a partnership between a NYS IHE with a registered teacher preparation program and a school district, BOCES, or other non-profit professional education organization. ○ For the new pathway, the program would not lead to a degree (e.g., could be a credential), could be competency-based, would include all of the pedagogical requirements in traditional and alternative programs, and would lead to the Initial certificate. Individuals would need to hold a bachelor’s degree for admission and complete the required content coursework at an IHE. Candidates would be the teacher of record, complete their preparation while teaching, and need a school district employment and support commitment. The program would be reviewed and registered by the Office of Teacher and Leader Development. 	<p>Alternative teacher preparation programs that do not lead to a graduate degree are one option to attract a new population to the teaching profession that is not interested in, or cannot afford to complete, a Transitional B (alternative teacher) program at a NYS IHE that leads to a master’s degree. In the 2018-19 academic year, non-IHE alternative certification programs existed in 33 states and Washington, D.C.</p> <p>For this potential change, NYSED is proposing to create a new pathway within the Transitional certificate that would allow alternative joint providers to collaboratively co-design a teacher preparation program and tailor the curriculum to local interests and needs. Unlike alternative certification programs in many other states, this proposal would require alternative joint providers to be collaborative, mutually-beneficial partnerships between an IHE and an LEA or non-profit professional education organization. A NYS IHE with a registered teacher preparation program would be a partner under this model, ensuring that candidates receive a high-quality course of study as well as the needed experiences and support during the program.</p> <p>These alternative joint provider programs would meet the same standards as traditional and alternative degree programs. However, because these programs do not lead to a degree and do not require a specific number of credit hours, candidates would be afforded more opportunities to be immersed in the classroom to gain clinically-rich experiences that will prepare them for the profession. Additionally, these programs are likely</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rename the other Transitional certificates to clearly signify to whom they apply, eliminating confusion for applicants (e.g., Transitional A becomes the “Transitional CTE” teacher certificate). 	<p>to be much less costly for a candidate than a traditional graduate degree program, thereby increasing access to the profession for non-traditional teacher candidates (e.g., TAs, career changers).</p>
<p>Administrator Certificates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a new Professional Administrator certificate that would replace the current Initial and Professional School Building Leader (SBL) and Professional School District Leader (SDL) certificates. • The Professional School District Business Leader (SDBL) certificate would remain the same. 	<p>With the Professional Administrator certificate, individuals would be able to hold building level or district level administrator positions, thereby optimizing flexibility for a range of administrator positions and creating a natural pathway from building leadership to district leadership positions. This single certificate would also eliminate the current confusion about whether an individual needs to hold an SBL or SDL certificate for their position.</p> <p>Removing the Initial/Professional SBL certificate progression would eliminate the Professional SBL experience requirement, which has been a persistent challenge for Initial SBL certificate holders. There is also a lack of parity between the Professional SBL and Professional SDL certificate experience requirement (six years versus three years, respectively).</p>