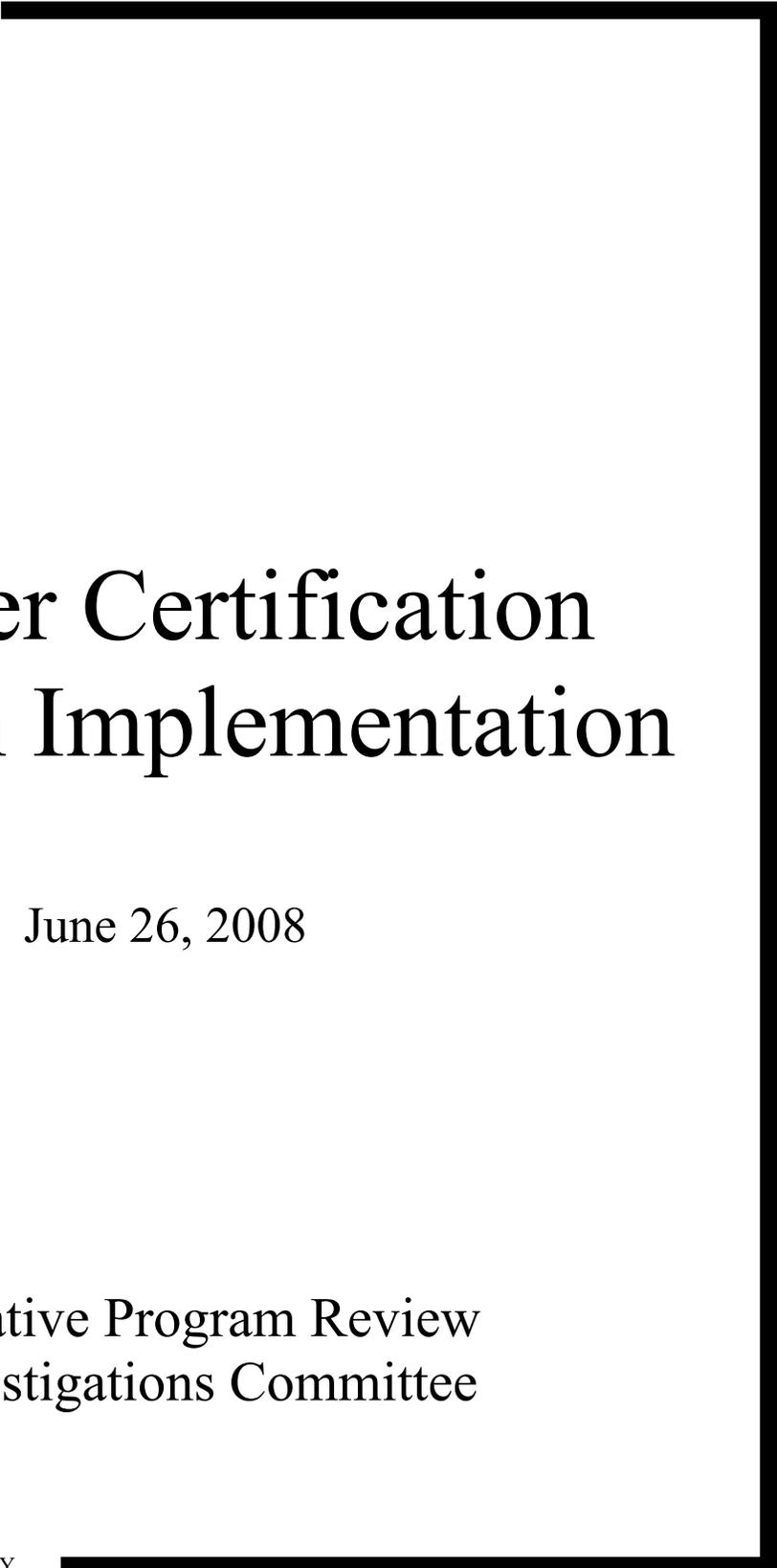


Key Points



Teacher Certification Program Implementation

June 26, 2008

Legislative Program Review
& Investigations Committee

Key Points

TEACHER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- Every educator employed in a Connecticut public school as a teacher, administrator, support services staff member (e.g., school counselor, psychologist, or social worker) vocational-technical system teacher, or adult educator must hold a valid certificate issued by the State Department of Education.
- In addition to certificates, a variety of permits and authorizations are issued to districts for positions such as coaches, substitute teachers, and when appropriate certified teachers are not available.
- A key goal of teacher certification is to ensure all students are taught by qualified educators.
 - To obtain a certificate, permit, or authorization, certain requirements regarding preparation must be met.
- Connecticut's current certification structure was adopted as part of the 1986 Education Enhancement Act.
 - Approximately 86,000 individuals hold Connecticut certificates, with an additional 9,500 holding permits or authorizations to teach or coach.
 - About 43,000 certified educators were teaching in the state during the 2006-07 school year.
- The certificate a teacher is issued depends on preparation and experience.*
 - *Initial educator certificate*: the first-level certificate, issued to educators who have completed preparation (or in certain cases, experience) requirements and earned passing scores on standardized basic skills and subject area- or grade-specific tests; it is valid for up to three years.
 - *Provisional educator certificate*: the second-level certificate, given to educators who have some teaching experience and, for Connecticut teachers, have completed the BEST program; it is valid for up to eight years.
 - *Professional educator certificate*: the third-level (highest) certificate, issued to educators who have completed 30 semester hours of post-baccalaureate credit and generally taught under the provisional certificate for at least three years. This certificate is valid for five years, and educators must complete 90 hours of continuing education to continue the certification.

* The specific requirements for each level of certificate are different among the types of certificates (teacher, administrator, support services, vocational-technical system teacher, and adult educator). This document and the accompanying report focus on the requirements for teachers.

Key Points

- A certificate authorizes the teacher for employment in at least one area (e.g., elementary education) in which the teacher has received instruction in accordance with the relevant state law, called an “endorsement.” There are 50 separate endorsements for teachers, and another 19 endorsements for administrators, support services staff members, vocational-technical system teachers, and adult educators.
- Districts employing teachers who are not certified or who are teaching out of their endorsement areas may be fined by the State Board of Education, and teachers who do so lose credit toward retirement pension.
- The Teacher Certification Unit in the SDE implements the teacher certification program. The unit has 20 staff members.
 - During FY 07, more than 22,500 certificates, permits, and authorizations were issued; many more applications were received but were incomplete.
 - Unit expenditures are projected to be approximately \$1.9 million for FY 08; in FY 07, the unit’s revenue was nearly \$2.2 million.
- Applicants for certification must submit a complete application form, successful testing results, recommendation(s) from a preparation program and/or a school district, transcripts (if a Connecticut preparation program was not completed), and a fee payment for review by the Unit.
 - Certain applications are randomly selected for audits, which verify the applicants have met the precise coursework requirements for their certificate and endorsements.
 - Applicants with criminal conviction(s), disciplinary action against a teaching credential, or unsuccessful experience in a school district go through a thorough review process.
 - A typical, complete application is usually processed in about six weeks, according to SDE.
- Certification may be revoked if an educator has been convicted of certain crimes set out in statute. There are appeal processes an applicant or certificate holder may use if certification is denied or revoked.
- The Teacher Certification Unit provides customer service through: 1) a call line open to districts for 32 hours each week, staffed by one analyst; 2) call lines open to the general public for 20 hours each week, staffed by four to six analysts at a time; 3) an automated voice response system that provides information on an application or certification; 4) its website and responding to e-mails from the general public; and 5) limited outreach to potential educators.