



MASTER TEACHER CERTIFICATION

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CONNECTICUT'S PROGRAM

Connecticut's master teacher program, referred to in statute as the "distinguished educator designation," is available to teachers who:

- have taught for at least five years,
- hold a professional educator certificate,
- have an advanced education beyond a master's degree, and
- meet certain performance requirements established by the State Board of Education (CGS § [10-145s](#)).

QUESTIONS

Has Connecticut addressed master teacher certification in recent legislation or law? Have any other states created this certificate?

SUMMARY

Connecticut has a "distinguished educator designation," which teachers who hold the highest level teaching certificate may voluntarily pursue. This designation is similar to other states' master teacher certification programs because it honors teachers for classroom experience and post-graduate education, and it gives them the opportunity to pursue additional mentorship duties. However, unlike some states, it does not provide any additional pay to those who earn it.

In addition to this designation, established in PA [12-116](#), §§ 37 & 38, the General Assembly has considered other variations of master teacher programs. Over the past 25 years, legislation has proposed master teacher programs that select skilled educators to assist in evaluating and mentoring other classroom teachers. It also has proposed a program that extends master teachers' certification validity for those who have demonstrated expertise in a particular subject area.

At least eight other states have some type of master teacher certification designation or program.

CONNECTICUT DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR DESIGNATION

State law requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to award a renewable distinguished educator designation to applying teachers who:

1. completed at least five years of teaching in a public school or SBE-approved private special education facility;
2. earned professional educator certification, the highest Connecticut teaching certificate;
3. acquired additional, advanced education beyond a master's degree from a degree- or non-degree-granting institution, possibly in mentorship or teacher coaching; and
4. met other performance requirements that the State Department of Education (SDE) establishes, with special consideration given to demonstrated distinguished practice.

Teachers must pay a \$200 nonrefundable fee when applying for this certificate designation, which the education commissioner can waive if the applicant demonstrates an inability to pay. The designation is renewable every five years if SDE or another approved entity verifies continued distinguished practice (CGS § [10-145s\(b\)-\(c\)](#)).

CONNECTICUT MASTER TEACHER LEGISLATION

Over the past 25 years, the General Assembly has occasionally considered establishing a master teacher program in Connecticut in various bills. Table 1 describes three bills that proposed different types of master teacher programs and certificates.

Table 1: Previous Master Teacher Legislation

Bill	Proposal	Outcome
sSB 524 (1989)	Requires SBE, within available appropriations, to do a feasibility study on establishing a master teacher and evaluation program in public schools. The program would allow experienced teachers to evaluate and assist classroom teachers and develop curriculum.	Senate passed; House recommitted to Education Committee
sHB 5350 (2012)	Requires the education commissioner to establish incentives, within available appropriations, for teachers who demonstrate improvement in kindergarten through grade three student reading. Incentives may include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. master teacher designation for those who significantly improve student reading skills and 2. an option to delay certification expiration for any teacher designated as a master teacher. 	House took no action
Proposed Bill 401 (2013)	Create a master teacher model to assist administrators in conducting written teacher performance evaluations.	Referred to Education Committee; no action

MASTER TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN OTHER STATES

At least eight other states have some form of master teacher certificate or program. Six of these require teachers to become nationally certified or complete an additional rigorous state assessment process before earning the master teacher title (Alaska, Colorado, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin). Others assign master teacher honors to those who teach in a particular subject area (New York, Texas) or have taught a number of years and show evidence of student achievement (Georgia). Table 2 describes each state’s program, eligibility requirements, financial or professional benefits, and associated laws.

Table 2: Master Teacher Certificates and Programs in Other States

State	Certificate / Program	Eligibility Requirements	Financial / Professional Benefits	Associated Law
Alaska	Master Teacher Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold either a current Alaska initial or professional certificate • Meet all professional certificate requirements • Hold current national certification issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Certification • Complete application and fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master teacher certificate is valid for 10 years, instead of five (professional) or three (initial) 	Not applicable
Colorado	Master Teacher Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a valid Colorado professional teacher license • Demonstrate advanced teaching competencies or expertise by attaining NBPTS certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master teacher certificate extends the professional license from five to seven years 	CRS § 22-60.5-112.5
Georgia	Master Teacher Certification Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach full-time in Georgia public schools for at least three years under a Clear Renewable Certificate • Show evidence of student achievement and progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master Teacher designation is listed on the teaching certificate for up to seven years 	Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-205
Nebraska	Master Teacher Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete at least three years teaching in a public or private Nebraska school accredited by Nebraska's Department of Education • Hold a current Nebraska teaching certificate • Attain a national credential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual \$5,000 salary bonus, up to a statewide total of \$1 million, within available appropriations (reduced equally among teachers if statewide total exceeds \$1 million) 	Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 79-8,124 to 79-8,131
New York	New York State Master Teacher Program for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach full-time in a public New York high school with 60% of classroom hours in STEM disciplines • Participate in at least 50 hours of participation in Master Teacher-sponsored programming each school year • Receive an "effective" or "highly effective" rating on the annual performance evaluation • Remain in good standing at school and demonstrate professional educator qualities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15,000 stipend per year over four years for participation in the program (total compensation \$60,000 per teacher) • Peer mentoring and intensive content-oriented professional development opportunities 	Not applicable
	Teachers of Tomorrow: New York State Master Teacher Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess NBPTS certification • Work full-time in a low-performing public school • Serve for at least one year, or possibly up to three years with certain evaluation ratings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial annual award of \$10,000, renewable for two additional years with an "effective" or "highly effective" evaluation rating, for a maximum of \$30,000 • Award is additional to the teacher's base salary 	N.Y. Education Law § 3612(6) (McKinney 2014)

Table 2 (continued)

State	Certificate / Program	Eligibility Requirements	Financial / Professional Benefits	Associated Law
Ohio	Master Teacher Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a valid professional teaching license or certificate • Complete at least seven years of teaching • Work at least 120 days during the current school year under contract • Achieve exemplary scores in four out of five areas in the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility for an advanced license • 5% pay supplement applied to salary base 	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3319.61, § 124.181(L)(4)
Texas	Master Teacher Certificates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be eligible for a master teacher certificate in reading, mathematics, technology, or science, teachers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hold a teaching certificate, - complete specified preparation courses, - have at least three years of teaching experience, and - pass an examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to mentor other teachers 	Tex. Education Code Ann. §§ 21.0481-21.0484
Wisconsin	Master Educator License	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree • Hold, or qualify to hold, a professional educator license • Formal assessment by a team of three educators • Demonstration of exemplary classroom performance • Complete either NBPTS certification or the Wisconsin master educator assessment process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master Educator License is valid for 10 years instead of five, and is renewable (initial and professional licenses) 	Wis. Admin Code PI 34.19

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