
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5436

AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION.

SUMMARY

This bill makes numerous changes to the education laws related to educator certification and educator preparation programs. It:

1. simplifies the steps required to receive an initial educator certification for those going through an alternative route to certification (ARC) program (§§ 1 & 6);
2. prohibits granting any new provisional educator certificates and makes the initial certification valid for 10 years (§ 1);
3. establishes new criteria for a professional educator certificate including permitting an alternate pathway to professional licensure instead of the master's degree requirement (§ 1);
4. broadens grades covered by certain teaching endorsements (§§ 2 & 4);
5. requires, beginning July 1, 2025, that elementary education teacher preparation programs be aligned with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards and competencies for early childhood educators (§ 3);
6. simplifies the process for certified teachers to gain an additional endorsement (i.e., "cross-endorsement") (§ 5);
7. creates the Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board (CEPCB) and tasks it with numerous duties including developing proposals for regulations and legislation to submit to the State Board of Education (SBE) for approval (§§ 10 & 11);

8. repeals, effective July 1, 2025, numerous state regulations for educator certification and educator preparation programs (§ 15); and
9. makes changes to certain alternative route to certification (ARC) programs and other minor and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024, except the section repealing the regulations is effective July 1, 2025.

§§ 1 & 6 — CHANGES TO EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION

Initial Educator Certification

The bill simplifies the steps required to receive an initial educator certification for those going through an ARC program. It requires SBE to issue an initial educator certification to a candidate with a bachelor's degree or advanced degree from an accredited higher education institution who completes one of the following pathways:

1. successfully completed an SBE-approved educator preparation program, or
2. successfully completed an ARC program pursuant to state law, or
3. is an educator from another state and meets one of a list of requirements in Connecticut law (see below).

An out-of-state teacher can satisfy the pathway requirement for certification if he or she:

1. graduated from a teacher preparation program at an accredited institution in another state or an SBE-approved ARC program, but has not successfully completed the Connecticut teacher assessments;
2. has taught in another state with an appropriate certificate for at least two years and meets the Connecticut certification requirements except for successful completion of the teacher assessments;

3. was hired by a charter school after July 1 in any school year for a teaching position so long as the person could reasonably be expected to complete the requirements in the 90-day temporary certification law (see BACKGROUND);
4. received a satisfactory score on the appropriate educator subject area assessment or exam in another state, provided SBE approves the assessments or exams as being at least equivalent with Connecticut's;
5. taught in a state that participates in the enhanced educator reciprocity agreement with Connecticut; or
6. holds a military spouse permit.

The ARC pathway can be successfully completed by one of four types of ARC program authorized in law:

1. for school administrators (CGS § 10-145p);
2. for school support staff (CGS § 10-145t);
3. for persons from alternate professions (e.g., paraeducators, veterans, professors employed or previously employed at a higher education institution) (CGS § 10-145w); and
4. summer and weekend and evening ARC program (for target groups including teachers in shortage areas and former teachers with expired certification who want to return to the profession) (CGS § 10-155d).

Current law permits teacher certification through ARC programs, but requires these candidates to also satisfy the requirements of a temporary 90-day certificate or a resident teacher certificate (see BACKGROUND). The bill eliminates this requirement.

SBE Authority to Waive Requirements

The bill grants SBE the authority to waive the requirements of (1) completing an educator preparation program, (2) completing an ARC

program, or (3) being a certified educator from another state who meets certain Connecticut requirements. Under the bill, SBE may waive these requirements to issue an initial educator certificate to any person who presents a combination of education and experience that the state board determines is the equivalent of the education and experience required under the bill.

Initial Certifications Valid for 10 Years

The bill makes an initial educator certification valid for 10 years, rather than three as under the current law. (However, the bill leaves in place the three-year initial permit for those who successfully taught when holding a temporary 90-day certificate.)

The bill extends existing initial educator certificates that have not expired on July 1, 2024 (the bill’s effective date) for a period of 10 years from their issue date, and makes any new certificates issued on or after July 1, 2024, valid for 10 years.

By law, the commissioner may extend initial certifications for an additional year at a superintendent’s or local assessment team’s request. The bill prohibits the commissioner from granting this extension more than three times to any person.

Repealing the Provisional Educator Certification and New Criteria for Professional Certification

Under current law Connecticut has three levels of teacher certification: initial, provisional, and professional.

The bill eliminates the SBE’s and the education commissioner’s authority to issue and reissue provisional certificates effective July 1, 2024. Under the bill, anyone holding a provisional certificate who is not eligible to advance to the professional certificate is eligible for an initial certificate.

Beginning July 1, 2026, the bill allows those holding initial certificates (or those with existing provisional certificates) to apply for a professional certificate rather than a provisional certificate. To qualify for a professional certification a candidate must:

1. have completed at least 50 school months (five years) of successful teaching for one or more boards of education or approved nonpublic schools in Connecticut while holding an initial educator or provisional educator certificate;
2. have satisfactorily completed the teacher education and mentoring program, as required under state law; and
3. either (a) hold a master's degree or higher in an appropriate subject matter area or (b) complete an alternate pathway to professional licensure jointly approved by SBE and the Educator Preparation and Certification Board (see § 10).

Beginning July 1, 2026, upon receipt of a proper application, SBE must issue a professional educator certificate to any person who satisfies these qualifications. For good cause, SBE may waive the requirement for a master's degree or completion of an alternative pathway to professional licensure.

Under current law, to qualify for a professional certificate a candidate must hold or have held a provisional educator certificate and must have a master's degree in an appropriate subject matter area, as determined by SBE, related to the teacher's certification endorsement area.

Under current law, to qualify for a provisional certificate a candidate must either (1) have taught for one year in a public school and completed the beginning educator program or (2) have taught for at least three years within the last 10 years in a public school in another state or for a private school in any state, including Connecticut, approved by the appropriate governing body for that state, and whose superintendent or supervising agent attests the educator meets the preparation and eligibility requirements of a Connecticut initial certification. Additionally, under current law, an educator who holds a provisional certificate can apply to renew it.

Under the bill, the provisional holder may apply for a professional certificate when the provisional one expires. Also under the bill, a provisional permit holder who is not eligible for a professional

certification is eligible for an initial certification.

The bill eliminates language that permits granting provisional certifications for certain teachers who have taught in another state or in private schools in Connecticut and meet certain conditions.

The bill makes other minor and conforming changes including removing obsolete provisions.

§§ 2 & 4 — BROADENING GRADES COVERED BY CERTAIN TEACHING ENDORSEMENTS

The bill retroactively allows an educator endorsement to teach elementary grades one to six, inclusive, issued prior to July 1, 2024, to be valid for grades prekindergarten to six, inclusive. Also, any new elementary endorsement issued on or after July 1, 2024, will also be valid for grades prekindergarten to six, inclusive.

Under current law certain elementary endorsements are allowed to be valid for kindergarten through grade six, inclusive, depending on various factors including when they were issued.

The bill also makes the following endorsements for grades seven to 12 valid for grades four to 12, regardless of when they were issued: biology, business, chemistry, earth science, English, French, German, general science, history and social studies, Italian, Latin and classical humanities, Mandarin Chinese, mathematics, Portuguese, physics, Russian, Spanish, and any other world language.

Revised Endorsements Do Not Require Applications (§ 4)

On and after July 1, 2024, any person who holds an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate, and whose endorsement has been revised according to the changes described above (§ 2), will not be required to apply for a revised endorsement. The educator will be allowed to provide instruction in any course in which the subject matter content of the course corresponds with the revised endorsement.

Beginning July 1, 2026, the SBE will assign the revised endorsement

upon an educator's certificate being issued or reissued, as appropriate.

§ 3 — ELEMENTARY EDUCATION TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The bill requires, beginning July 1, 2025, that any elementary education teacher preparation program be aligned with any professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators developed by NAEYC.

§ 5 — SUBJECT AREA ASSESSMENTS AND CROSS ENDORSEMENTS

On and after July 1, 2024, the bill allows any person who holds an initial, provisional, or professional educator certificate and scores a satisfactory evaluation on the appropriate SBE-approved subject area assessment to be issued a cross endorsement in the relevant certification endorsement area. The bill specifies that this provision does not apply to the endorsement areas of special education, teaching English to speakers of other languages, bilingual, or school library media specialist.

§ 7 — ARC PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF

As part of the existing law authorizing approval of ARC programs for people employed as school support staff, the bill allows the State Department of Education (SDE) to approve programs that partner with an institution of higher education that is regionally accredited or has an equivalent accreditation, to provide a dual degree-plus-certification program for participants who hold an associate degree. Under current law, these programs are required to be open only to those who already have a bachelor's degree.

When making decisions on whether to approve these programs, the bill also requires SDE to give priority to the programs that provide participants flexibility in remaining in their school support staff positions while pursuing an initial educator certificate, other than in the period when the participants are completing the one-year residency requirement.

Under the law, the programs are required to have each participant

complete a one-year residency that requires participants to serve in a full-time position requiring professional certification for 10 school months for a school board under a certified administrator's or teacher's supervision.

§ 8 — ARC PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY EXPANDED

The bill expands the definition of who may participate in an existing ARC program for people in alternate professions. By law, all participants must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and be a person from an alternate profession, which means a person who:

1. is a paraeducator,
2. is a veteran,
3. holds an SBE-issued charter school educator permit, or
4. is or was employed as a professor at an accredited institution of higher education.

The bill expands the definition to include someone who has completed at least five years of work experience requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and independent judgment in the field related to the person's chosen relevant teaching endorsement area.

§ 9 — ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The bill removes from the duties of the Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards (1) advising on matters related to teacher certification and preparation and (2) reviewing and commenting on regulations and standards for approving teacher preparation programs. By law, the council is charged with advising SBE, the governor, and the Education Committee on teacher (1) recruitment and retention, (2) professional development, and (3) assessment, evaluation, and discipline.

§ 10 — CREATION OF THE CONNECTICUT EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION BOARD (CEPCB)

The bill creates the CEPCB, which it deems responsible for modernizing and aligning educator preparation and certification to ensure that policies attract and retain effective and diverse professionals to work in Connecticut's public schools.

The board must develop standards and proposals for regulations or legislation relating to educator preparation and certification that reflect the teaching profession and respond to emerging understandings of effective, evidence-based practices.

Additionally, the standards and proposals must address the following objectives:

1. building streamlined, flexible pathways in the educator profession that are grounded in a commitment to educator effectiveness,
2. enabling educators to broaden their scope of practice to meet more students' needs,
3. ensuring educator preparation programs are accountable for both the quality training experiences and outcomes for candidates,
4. creating a system to help educators continuously improve their practice that supports and rewards educators who demonstrate mastery,
5. supporting improved data transparency regarding the state's distribution of educators and educator vacancies and accountability for remedying observed inequities, and
6. treating educators as professionals and lifelong learners who need access to high-quality professional learning and mentorships throughout their careers.

Board Members and Appointing Authorities

The board consists of 26 members. In addition to the appointed members (see table below), the board includes the following officials or

their designees: the education commissioner, the early childhood commissioner, and the Technical Education and Career System superintendent.

**Table: Connecticut Educator Preparation and Certification Board
Appointed Members**

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Members</i>
<i>Eight public school classroom teachers who are classroom teachers throughout their term</i>	
Connecticut Education Association	Four: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one elementary teacher, • one middle school teacher, • one high school teacher, and • one special education teacher
American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut	Three: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one elementary teacher, • one middle school teacher, and • one high school teacher
Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council	One appointee
<i>Six representatives from an SBE-approved educator preparation program</i>	
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Connecticut Chapter	Three, including at least two representatives from educator preparation programs of public institutions of higher education
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges	Two appointees
Education commissioner	One representative of an ARC program
<i>Five administrators employed by a local or regional school board</i>	
Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents	Two: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one school superintendent for a rural district, and • one school superintendent for an urban district
Connecticut Association of Schools	Two, including one representative of a suburban district
Connecticut Federation of School Administrators	One appointee
<i>Additional appointees</i>	
Governor	One representative of the Governor's Workforce Council

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Members</i>
Connecticut Association of Boards of Education	One appointee
Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council	One representative from the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council
SBE	One representative from SBE who is a nonvoting member

Initial Appointments, Vacancies, Bylaws, and Board Chair

All initial board appointments must be made by August 1, 2024. The appropriate appointing authority must fill any vacancy by 10 days following the vacancy. Members serve three-year terms. The board must establish bylaws for its own operation and management.

The chairperson and vice chairperson of the board must be elected from among the voting members of the board.

Annual Report to the Education Committee

The board must develop, by January 1, 2026, and annually after that, an annual report that includes a detailed summary of the substance and disposition of any standards and proposals for regulations or legislation the board or SBE develops under the bill (see § 11). The board must submit the annual report to the Education Committee.

§ 11 — CEPCB AND SBE CONSIDER AND APPROVE OR REJECT EACH OTHER’S PROPOSALS

The bill gives CEPCB and SBE each the authority to develop standards and proposals (i.e., “proposals”) for regulations and legislation relating to educator preparation and certification. The bill creates a process where each board sends the proposals it has developed to the other board to be either approved or rejected within 60 days after receiving them (e.g., CEPCB sends its proposals to SBE, and SBE sends its proposals to CEPCB).

If either board approves the proposals, then for proposals that (1) require regulations, SBE must adopt regulations consistent with the approved proposal and (2) require legislation, the proposal will be

submitted to the Education Committee for consideration.

§ 12 — CEPCB DUTIES

The bill requires CEPCB to develop proposals for regulations and legislation by July 1, 2025, regarding the following:

1. criteria for assessing proposals from school boards, regional educational service centers (RESCs), and educator preparation programs for alternative pathways for educators to (a) progress from initial certificate to professional certificate or (b) be issued a cross endorsement that will allow educators to teach in content areas or grades beyond their initial certification areas;
2. how well degrees from SBE-approved educator preparation programs will align with the revised endorsement areas under § 2;
3. the adequacy and relevance of existing certification subject endorsement areas;
4. implementation of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation standards for educator preparation programs;
5. the necessity of the temporary 90-day certificate; and
6. the design and development of a state-wide data dashboard that enables longitudinal monitoring of educator workforce data.

Collecting, Reviewing, and Evaluating Data

Additionally, the bill requires, annually, beginning July 1, 2026, the board to:

1. collect and review (a) state-specific data, including, at least, qualitative data on stakeholders' experiences and quantitative data from SDE on educator vacancies, shortage areas, and the educator preparation program dashboard, and (b) data on applicable national policy developments on educator preparation, certification, and employment;

2. evaluate whether any changes are needed to the educator preparation and certification frameworks; and
3. develop, as necessary, evidence-based standards and proposals for regulations and legislation to strengthen existing systems.

§ 13 — CEPCB REVIEW OF CONTENT KNOWLEDGE AND ENDORSEMENT AREAS

The bill also requires CEPCB to:

1. review educator preparation and certification regulations and statutes for obsolete or conflicting provisions,
2. review how the state assesses whether educator certification candidates demonstrate minimum content knowledge within their endorsement areas as required by state law, and
3. develop recommendations for alternatives for certification candidates to demonstrate content knowledge.

By January 31, 2025, the board must submit its findings, as well as any legislative recommendations, to SBE and the Education Committee.

Also, the bill requires CEPCB to:

1. review certification endorsement areas to develop endorsement area adequacy and relevance standards, including whether to expand grade ranges for endorsement areas;
2. explore alternative pathways for cross endorsements; and
3. consider whether ARC program providers should have candidate admission criteria authority for their programs.

By July 1, 2025, the board must submit a report on its findings, as well as any legislative recommendations, to SBE and the Education Committee.

§ 14 — CEPCB TO DEVELOP STANDARDS FOR REVIEWING EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

The bill requires the CEPCB to develop standards for educator preparation program and ARC program review criteria for new or continuing programs. The standards must require that (1) these programs obtain continuing program approval every seven years, and (2) the methodology for continuing program approval be (a) based on final accreditation decisions of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and (b) classified in these categories: approval, provisional, probationary, or denial of approval. The board must complete the standards by July 1, 2026.

§ 15 — REPEALED REGULATIONS

Effective July 1, 2025, the bill repeals the numerous SBE educator preparation program and certification regulations shown in the table below.

Table: SBE Education Preparation and Certification Regulations Repealed, by Citation and Topic

<i>Regulation Citation</i>	<i>Topic</i>
10-145d-9(b) to -145d-9(e)	Procedures for educator preparation program approval
10-145d-9(g)(1), 10-145d-9(i)	SBE authority to approve or deny request for continuing approval; just cause authority to change approval status
10-145d-10(a) to -145d-10(b)(9), 10-145d-10(c) to -145d-10(g), 10-145d-11	Educator preparation program standards and approval standards, including student admission standards
10-145d-400a(a) to -145d-400a(d)	Code of professional responsibilities for teachers including to the students, the profession, and the community
10-145d-401(a), 10-145d-401(c)	Personnel required to have certification (selected provisions)
10-145d-402	Application forms
10-145d-403(b), 10-145d-403(g)	Application documentation and materials required (selected provisions)
10-145d-404 to -145d-406	Assessment requirements, exceptions; acceptability of course work
10-145d-407(a), 10-145d-407(b), 10-145d-407(d), 10-145d-407(f),	Responsibilities of employing agents of school boards

Regulation Citation	Topic
10-145d-407(h), 10-145d-407(i)	(selected provisions)
10-145d-409 to -145d-415	Recommendation from an approved institution; validity of certifications issued prior to July 1, 1989; certification types; initial, interim, 90-day temporary, and provisional educator certifications
10-145d-417	Professional educator certificate
10-145d-419	Limited extended authorization for early childhood
10-145d-420(f)	Waiver of requirement that substitute teacher have a bachelor's degree
10-145d-421(b), 10-145d-422	Requirements of a durational shortage area permit; durational shortage area permit reissue
10-145d-423(a)	Coaching permits (obsolete provision)
10-145d-426	Adult education authorization
10-145d-427	Reissuance and extension of certificates
10-145d-434, 10-145d-435(b)	Validity of certificates specific to elementary grades and kindergarten
10-145d-436 to -145d-438	Elementary level: Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-441 to -145d-443	Foreign languages pre-K through grade 8: Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-444 to -145d-448	Middle grades (grades 4-6 or 5 & 6 depending on school grade structure): Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-449 to -145d-453	Secondary grades (grades 7-12): Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-472 to -145d-474	Teaching English to speakers of other languages: Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-476 to -145d-479	Bilingual education: Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-481, 10-145d-482(c), 10-145d-482(d), 10-145d-483,	Remedial reading and remedial language arts: Validity of certificates; initial educator certification requirements (selected provisions); provisional and professional

Regulation Citation	Topic
10-145d-484	educator certification requirements
10-145d-535 to -145d-537	Special education: Blind, partially sighted, or hearing impaired: Initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-539 to -145d-542	Comprehensive special education: Validity of certificates; initial, provisional, and professional educator certification requirements
10-145d-608 and 10-145d-609	Discontinued endorsements (previously issued, but no longer available)

BACKGROUND

Temporary 90-Day Certificate

Those seeking a temporary 90-day certificate must (1) hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a major either in, or closely related to, the teacher endorsement area being sought or in the case of a secondary or special subject endorsement, possess at least the minimum number of credit hours in the subject area required by law; (2) have passed the appropriate teacher assessment; and (3) successfully completed a state-approved ARC program.

The following are additional requirements for the 90-day certificate: (1) the local board must make a written request for the 90-day certificate to SDE that includes an attestation of a special plan to supervise the 90-day certificate holder and (2) the applicant must possess an overall college GPA of at least a B and present supporting evidence of appropriate experience working with children. The law permits the education commissioner to waive the last two requirements for good cause.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 32 Nay 12 (03/20/2024)