



NJDOE News

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State Board of Education Adopts New Licensing Code; Regulations Expected to Improve Teacher Quality and Teacher Preparation Programs

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The State Board of Education today adopted new standards for professional licensure of teachers. The new chapter of state regulations strengthens the state's teacher licensing process and conforms to requirements in the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards and the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) regarding highly qualified teachers.

The code also directly responds to Governor James E. McGreevey's commitment that New Jersey students be taught by high quality teachers, as outlined in his 21-point plan for education reform.

Specifically, eight of the 21 points fall under the heading of Better Teaching ([see attached excerpt](#)).

The Governor is an advocate of rigorous teacher preparation programs and has supported efforts by colleges and universities to strengthen their academic programs for prospective teachers. He also has called for New Jersey to raise the passing score that teacher candidates must attain on the PRAXIS exam, and he has encouraged current teachers to seek national certification in their subject specialties.

"One of the most significant contributions to education this board can make is to establish rules that determine the knowledge and skills teachers and administrators must bring to the classrooms of New Jersey," said Dr. Arnold Hyndman, president of the State Board of Education. "Using his or her expertise and distinctive point of view, each board member contributed important elements to this new chapter of code."

"Through countless hours of work, this board has diligently considered the many issues that are attached to the vital process of ensuring that our children learn from appropriately trained teachers of the highest quality," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "With the support and assistance of the Department of Education, this board has successfully addressed critical issues related to the licensure of teachers, school administrators and educational services personnel."

Commissioner Librera called today's action "the beginning of improvement around the issues of certification. We know that there will be an ongoing need to review and refine this code to assure it meets the needs of our educators, schools and students."

State Board President Hyndman added, "The State Board looks forward to working with the Department of Education and New Jersey's educational community in the ongoing process of improving the teaching and educational leadership in New Jersey's schools."

Changes in the new code are extensive and touch upon several areas. The greatest single change is in the teacher training aspect of the regulations. This change represents a shift in emphasis from a course-based to a standards-based approach to teacher preparation. The new regulations are expected to raise the quality of teacher preparation programs because training will center on what teacher candidates should know and be able to do, rather than on which courses and credits prospective teachers have completed in college.

The new regulations provide some flexibility to colleges and universities in course offerings and credit requirements, with the intent that the institutions will take the opportunity to focus on the knowledge and experience that teacher candidates should possess.

The regulations adopted today respond to the need to improve standards in teacher licensing and to meet federal standards for highly qualified teachers expressed in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Specifically, the new code:

- Upgrades the training of teachers in the areas of reading and mathematics, and prepares all teachers to work with special education and linguistically diverse students;
- Aligns all instructional certificates to the Core Curriculum Content Standards;
- Addresses concerns regarding subject area expertise for middle school teachers;
- Revamps licensing requirements in the area of special education;
- Eliminates the availability of emergency certificates for teachers in all instructional areas; and
- Ensures that New Jersey complies with key requirements in the federal No Child Left Behind Act that affect teacher credentials.

The state board's action today culminated a 12-month public process in which review and comment was solicited from educators and interested citizens. The state board and the Department of Education received approximately 450 written comments on the proposed new rules, which resulted in several changes that were made prior to adoption.

In addition, the more than 150 pages of new regulations include or otherwise make use of recommendations from a wide range of organizations, including: the New Jersey State Consortium of New Jersey's State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) which has recommended adoption of the standards developed by the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC); the recommendations of the New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board; and the standards developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

State Board President Hyndman commended the board's Licensure Committee for its detailed review and recommendations to the full board. The committee is chaired by Margaret Bartlett. Committee members are board members Ron Butcher, Kathy Dietz, Thelma Napoleon-Smith and Edward Taylor.

Since 1903, the state has been responsible for regulating the employment of public school teachers. Current regulations modify those originally enacted in 1967, which required all school staff to hold valid certificates for employment.

Rules were amended in 1983 to improve admission, retention and graduation requirements of college academic programs that prepare prospective teachers for state certification. In 1984, the rules were further amended to eliminate the practice of emergency certification from the academic teaching fields and to establish an "alternate route" that provides a path for college graduates who did not complete a teacher preparation program to enter the teaching profession.

Additional reforms adopted in 1988-90 applied these reforms to the certification of superintendents, principals and school business administrators. These amendments also required candidates for certification in all academic and administrative areas to serve a provisional year of employment under the guidance of a mentor as a condition of earning permanent certification.

Several amendments to the code since that time were adopted to support the major reforms adopted in 1984.

The new code will become effective upon publication in the *New Jersey Register* on January 20, 2004.

GOVERNOR MCGREEVEY'S 21-POINT PLAN FOR EDUCATION **BETTER TEACHING**

The following excerpt is from the educational reform plan presented by Governor James E. McGreevey on Sept. 17, 2002 at the Governor's Education Summit. The points below are vital components of the Governor's education agenda and are paramount in the Department of Education's mission.

BETTER TEACHING

- Strengthen state requirements to ensure that all elementary school teachers know how to teach reading.
- Increase the minimum passing scores for teacher certification exams.
- Require that teachers have certification in the subject matter they are teaching.
- Implement uniform standards for teacher preparation programs in four-year institutions.
- Streamline the Alternate Route certification program so those who are entering the teaching field can train for the classroom during an intensive summer teaching academy.
- Require teachers who need assistance in improving skills to attend a summer teaching academy or other summer program so they will succeed in the classroom.
- Provide dispute resolution tools to resolve contract disputes between teachers and local districts fairly and efficiently.
- Develop a strategy to increase the number of New Jersey Teachers who are National Board Certified, and to support teachers who

seek that certification.