

West Virginia Alternative Certification Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is alternative certification?

Alternative certification (AC) is an “alternate” pathway to teacher certification that is different than the traditional route and only available to fill critical need and shortage areas in West Virginia public schools. School districts with approved AC programs may offer employment to eligible individuals for positions that have been posted at least twice (a minimal ten-day total) and for which no fully certified applicant has applied, contingent upon the applicant receiving the Alternative Teaching Certificate. Candidates accepted into the district’s approved AC program must hold an Alternative Teaching Certificate before enrolling and completing the program of study. Upon meeting specific conversion criteria (ex. successful completion of the program, assessment and evaluation) candidates may be recommended for a Provisional Teaching Certificate by the school district (see questions 5 and 6). Upon meeting specific conversion criteria, individuals with a Provisional Teaching Certificate may apply for an Initial Professional Teaching Certificate (see question 8).

2. What do districts look for when reviewing eligibility and qualifications of individuals they are considering for participation in their approved AC program?

West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) minimal eligibility criteria:

General Education	Special Education
General requirements (at least 18 years of age, a US citizen, of good moral character, and physically, mentally and emotionally qualified to perform the duties of a teacher);	General requirements (at least 18 years of age, a US citizen, of good moral character, and physically, mentally and emotionally qualified to perform the duties of a teacher);
Clear record criminal history check to the WVDE	Clear record criminal history check to the WVDE
Hold at least a bachelor's degree with an overall 2.5 GPA from a regionally accredited institution of higher education;	Hold at least a bachelor's degree with an overall 2.5 GPA from a regionally accredited institution of higher education;
Have PASSED the Praxis basic skills assessment, <i>Core Academic Skills for Educators</i> , or qualify for an exemption (before applying);	Have PASSED the Praxis basic skills assessment, <i>Core Academic Skills for Educators</i> , or qualify for an exemption (before applying);
Have PASSED the WVBE-required Praxis CONTENT exam(s) for the endorsement that the candidate is seeking;	
Academic qualifications and/or occupational qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General education endorsements: Hold an academic major on an official transcript and/or occupational qualifications that reasonably indicate the individual will be competent to pass the subject matter tests and fill the teaching position. 	Academic qualifications and/or occupational qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific academic or occupational qualifications are required for special education endorsements (except for Deaf and Hard of Hearing**), because the approved program of study provides the special education content as well as the pedagogy preparation.

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3. What documentation do school districts use to verify candidate qualifications for general education programs (ONLY)?

- a. **Academic Qualifications:** Official transcripts which indicate the individual possesses an academic major that is the same as or similar to the endorsement sought and the subject of the posted position; OR
- b. **Occupational Qualifications:** Candidates complete application form 25 with a form V10 (wage earning experience verification) or submit a DD 214 (active military) describing experiences that are the same as or similar to the endorsement sought and the subject of the posted position. Experiences identified on form **V10 must clearly describe** how the experiences correlate with the **content standards** of the subject the candidate will be teaching and the quality of those experiences.

On application form 25, the school district certifies that the individual's academic or occupational qualifications provide evidence that reasonably indicates the candidate will be competent to fill the teaching position.

4. May the Alternative Teaching Certificate be renewed?

Yes, if the AC candidate is making satisfactory progress, the Alternative Teaching Certificate may be renewed on an annual basis, a total of two times (within a 3-year period).

5. What are the testing requirements for converting from an Alternative Teaching Certificate to the Provisional Teaching Certificate once the AC program of study has been successfully completed?

- a. **General Education:** At the conclusion of the approved AC program, teachers in the general education teaching path must meet the proficiency score(s) on the required state competency exam(s) in pedagogy, *Praxis Principles of Learning and Teaching*, for the **appropriate grade levels**.
- b. **Special Education:** At the conclusion of the AC program, teachers in the special education teaching path must meet the proficiency score(s) on the required state competency exam(s) in special education content for the endorsement sought AND the state competency exam in pedagogy, *Praxis Principles of Learning and Teaching*, for the **appropriate grade levels**.

6. When may participants on an Alternative Teaching Certificate apply for a Provisional Teaching Certificate?

Individuals who possess an Alternative Teaching Certificate may apply for a Provisional Teaching Certificate upon meeting the following requirements:

- a. Successful completion of the approved AC program of study and maintained an overall cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above for all coursework attempted
- b. Present passing scores on all WVBE required Praxis exams
- c. Receive an "approved" recommendation on the Comprehensive Evaluation Report (Form 25C)
- d. Acceptable summative rating on the WV teacher evaluation report

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A summative rating on the WV teacher evaluation report is required, so often a year of teaching experience must occur before AC candidates qualify for the Provisional Teaching Certificate.

7. What are the requirements for renewal of a Provisional Teaching Certificate?

Individuals must continue to be employed in the West Virginia county school district, receive satisfactory evaluation(s) in the professional personnel evaluation process, and receive recommendation of the employing superintendent.

8. What are the requirements for converting from a Provisional Teaching Certificate to an Initial Professional Teaching Certificate?

Individuals must successfully complete a Beginning Educator Internship/Induction for classroom teachers, complete successful evaluations for each year taught under the Provisional Professional Certificate within the West Virginia Educator Evaluation System and with an earned performance rating of emerging or above, complete two years of full-time teaching experience under the Provisional Professional Certificate and in the area(s) of endorsement on the provisional certificate, complete six semester hours of appropriate college/university coursework reflecting a 3.0 GPA and related to the public school program, or eLearning eligible courses (taken after the effective date of the provisional certificate and within 5 years of application), and receive recommendation of the employing superintendent.

9. When may individuals enroll into a school district's approved AC program?

The date of enrollment for an AC program of study cannot come before an Alternative Teaching Certificate is issued by the Office of Certification and Professional Preparation. An applicant must first receive an offer of employment in order to apply for the Alternative Teaching Certificate (General Education endorsements necessitate passing scores on required content Praxis exams prior to application). Upon approval of an Alternative Teaching Certificate, candidates may enroll into a school district's state approved AC program.

10. May individuals on permit (first class or substitute) participate in the district's alternative certification program?

Yes, if the applicant meets eligibility criteria of WVBE Policy 5202 (summarized in questions 2 and 3 above). Eligible individuals, who are on first class or substitute permits may be transitioned into the AC program and must complete the entire AC program of study.

11. May individuals who are currently enrolled in a "traditional" teacher preparation program use their Praxis exam scores toward qualifying for an alternative teaching certificate, if the test(s) are no longer effective in policy?

Praxis scores attained while *continuously enrolled* in an approved "traditional" teacher preparation program may be used even if the test and/or score requirements of WVBE Policy 5202 have changed. If individuals are not considered continuously enrolled in a WVBE approved "traditional" teacher preparation program, they are required to present passing scores on the Praxis exam(s) *currently identified* in policy.

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12. May individuals who are already certified in a *general education* endorsement seek a special education endorsement through an alternative certification program of study?

Yes. Special education AC programs offer both special education *content and pedagogy* coursework/professional development specific to special education. The candidate must successfully complete the *entire* AC program of study and then pass the WVBE-required test(s) for the specific special education content of the endorsement.

13. May individuals who are already certified in *special education* seek a general education endorsement through an alternative certification program of study?

No. General education AC programs only offer *pedagogy* coursework/professional development, and the certified teacher has already experienced the pedagogical studies. A route already exists in policy for individuals who possess a special education certification to add an additional endorsement by presenting passing scores on the required content Praxis exam(s). A guidance document may be found at <http://wvde.state.wv.us/certification/forms/>.

The following FAQs provide technical assistance to school districts:

14. Once a district receives approval of its AC program, what are the steps to implementation and where can districts find technical assistance resources?

School districts with an approved program are ready to implement the program *as it is written (in accordance with WVBE policy and state code)*. An approved AC program is aligned with the AC Proposal Template and provides information about how an approved program addresses the following required components: recruitment, eligibility/qualifications of candidates, enrollment, partner roles and responsibilities, program of study, support and observation, timelines, evaluations and recommending candidates for licensure. The Technical Assistance Webinar PowerPoint is posted on the West Virginia Department of Education web site as a resource for districts.

As school districts become well informed about their specific AC program of study, AC partners and support staff should refer to their program's description of the following required steps as implementation of the program unfolds:

- a. Determine shortages of certified teachers: **Positions are posted at least twice** (total of 10 days) and no certified applicants have applied for the position. (Documentation of posting must be submitted along with the AC application).
- b. Recruit candidates and determine their eligibility/qualifications.
- c. Consider candidate qualifications for the specific endorsement sought and confirm the correlation of their documented qualifications with the position/subject area of the teacher shortage.
- d. Communicate the AC process with candidates: timelines, employment and program of study factors, and *make a formal offer of employment to the selected candidates for the posted positions*.
- e. Assist selected candidates with making application to the WVDE for an *Alternative Teaching Certificate - Form 25*.
- f. Enroll recipients of the *Alternative Teaching Certificate* into the school district's state-approved alternative certification program of study.
- g. Compile and train the Professional Support Team.
- h. Provide intensive & effective support to participants; observe and evaluate AC participants. The Professional Support Team must document progress of AC participants.

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15. What endorsements may be included in an AC program of study and lead to candidate licensure?

The general education and special education endorsements identified in Appendix A of WVBE Policy 5202 (except for endorsements requiring a master's degree) are eligible to be addressed in the AC program of study. The school district's alternative certification program identifies approved endorsements within the "Program Overview". All endorsements recommended for grades 5-9 *must have an accompanying endorsement* recommendation in order to be approved for the alternative teaching certificate.

16. Training of the professional support team is required, but does this training need to be completed by WVCPD?

As per changes during the 2018 legislative session, the Center for Professional Development no longer exists. All professional support team must be consistent with the structure of induction, mentoring, and support provided to beginning teachers. If additional resources or support is needed, please contact the Certification and Professional Preparation Office.

17. May a school district request both multi-categorical and autism endorsements if the individual is being employed for a vacancy that requires multi-categorical with autism?

Yes. Both endorsements must be listed in the "Program Overview" of the approved AC program and the AC program of study must provide content for both endorsement areas to prepare AC candidates for the specific, required assessment(s) in addition to required special education topics. The program of study must cover required topics found within the most recently approved version of WVBE Policy 5202 specific to the endorsement of Autism and provide documentation verifying compliance upon the WVDE's request.

18. When may an individual with an Alternative Teaching Certificate begin teaching?

The alternative program teacher must hold an Alternative Teaching Certificate and begin receiving their required instruction/training either simultaneously or before assuming the role of an educator.

For example, if specific courses required within an approved AC program of study do not begin at the time in which the teacher is set to be hired and begin classroom instruction (ex. a vacancy needs to be filled in October, but specific courses in the program of study are not offered until January), the program provider must provide adequate training identified within the program which begins prior to or simultaneously as the teacher is entering the classroom. An initial teacher training identified within the approved program, provided by the school district or a partner, may be developed to be conducted whenever AC program candidates are first being hired. The approved AC program provider must be able to provide evidence that the candidate is engaged in training which prepares them to fill the teaching position as they begin instruction.

19. How do new requirements for performance assessments impact those enrolled in approved AC programs?

Beginning on July 1, 2019, all programs must provide evidence of candidate's successful completion of a valid and reliable performance assessment instrument that demonstrates and measures the proficiencies in the professional roles and in the programmatic levels for which candidates are preparing and be

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consistent with relevant national and West Virginia content and professional standards. Instrument proficiency level and/or cut score must be set within the acceptable range. Two acceptable instruments are the edTPA or the Praxis PPAT.

Individuals who began enrollment in a state-approved AC program before July 1, 2019 are not required to meet the new requirements for performance assessments. Individuals enrolled in a state-approved AC program after July 1, 2019 are required to meet this criterion prior to being eligible to convert to a Professional Provisional Certificate. State-approved AC Program providers will submit amendment proposals for their programs to the ACEPPRB for WVBE approval in advance of program participants enrolled after July 1, 2019 completing the program, to ensure that this requirement is met.

**When considering individuals for an endorsement for which there is no WVBE-required assessment, i.e. Japanese, it is important for the school district to examine the individual's academic transcript and/or documented occupational experiences/qualifications (that can be documented on a V-10). Reviewing a candidate's qualifications/fundamental experiences upon enrollment will assist in predicting and ensuring that AC candidates possess both the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the classroom.