

TO: Local Certification Authorized Partners and Associates
Human Resources Directors
Educator Certification Points of Contact for Maryland State Agencies

FROM: Sophia Fitzpatrick, Director of Certification 

DATE: January 26, 2024

SUBJECT: Adoption and Implementation of COMAR 13A.12 Regulations

Background

In 2018, the Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE) and Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) charged the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) with the task of repealing and replacing all the chapters in Title 13A Subtitle 12 *Educator Certification* and 13A.07.06 *Programs for Professionally Licensed Personnel* to increase the rigor of educator preparation and certification in Maryland.

On November 2, 2023, and December 5, 2023, the Professional Standards Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) and State Board of Education (SBOE), respectively, granted permission to adopt new regulations governing educator certification. These regulations, codified as COMAR 13A.12.01-.07 will be effective on **April 1, 2024**, and will be available online via [COMAR Online](#) once published. The regulations are attached for your review and can also be referenced in the Certification Resource Folder.

Summary

MSDE recommended that the repeal and replacement of Title 13A, Subtitle 12 be completed in phases due to the extensive amount of regulatory language involved. Phase one focused on amending the areas outlined in this document. Phase two will focus on the systematic review of all specialist and administrator licensure areas to determine what regulations require amendments.

Structure of the Chapters

The chapters were restructured to group requirements by type of educator. For example, the initial certification pathways, renewal requirements, and endorsement requirements for academic teachers are all found in Chapter 02. In addition, the distinction is made between requirements for academic teachers (Chapter 02) and professional technical and specialized areas of fine arts teachers (Chapter 03). The chapters of Title 13A Subtitle 12 are as follows:

Chapter 01 - General Provisions

Chapter 02 - Teachers

Chapter 03 - Professional and Technical Education and Specialized Areas for Fine Arts

Chapter 04 - Specialists

Chapter 05 - Administrators and Supervisors

Chapter 06 - Disciplinary Action and Denials

Chapter 07 - Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board

Transition to the term “license”

The new regulations transition from “certification” to “licensure” to distinguish the difference between State licensure and National Board Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is required to advance on the career ladder established by the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.

General provisions associated with licensure

Chapter 01, *General Provisions*, establishes requirements that pertain to all licensed educators, including application requirements, types and validity periods of licenses, and requirements to reinstate an expired license. This chapter also includes a comprehensive set of definitions for the subtitle and identifies the personnel who are required to hold a license.

Types of Maryland licenses

The types of licenses in the new regulations differ greatly from the current certificate structure. The new regulations establish a hierarchy of licenses; however, advancement is voluntary. A certificate holder may decide to renew a professional license without advancing to the next tier of licensure. **It should be noted that these regulations do not prohibit a local education agency from requiring an advanced tier of licensure for employment.**

Effective dates for licenses will remain the same. If the license was issued from January 1 through June 30, the effective date of the license is January 1; and if the license was issued from July 1 through December 31, the effective date of the license is July 1.

Pathways to teacher licensure

The new regulations establish new, flexible pathways to initial teacher licensure for those candidates prepared in Maryland, as well as maintained pathways for those who are prepared in another state or country. The transcript analysis option to teacher licensure has been eliminated in the new regulations.

Science of Reading

The new regulations require applicants and existing license holders to demonstrate proficiency in reading instruction aligned with the science of reading. Those individuals seeking licensure in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) may demonstrate proficiency through a standardized assessment or an attestation by a Department-recognized assessor using a Department-approved observation measure. Additionally, existing certificate holders will be required to demonstrate proficiency at renewal beginning in 2025.

Rigorous renewal requirements

The SBOE and PSTEB requested that MSDE draft renewal regulations that ensure that Maryland teachers are engaging in professional learning that provides the strategies and resources required to implement

instruction in a safe, inclusive environment for all types of students with differentiated needs. The new regulations require an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) to be developed when a professional license is issued and the individual to complete professional development in specific areas prior to the end of the validity period. The regulations also introduce the concept of Professional Development Points (PDPs), 90 of which are required to renew a professional license every five years. A PDP is equal to one clock hour and may be earned in a variety of ways (see Renewal Requirements in each chapter).

Please note that at the time of renewal, an educator may renew their existing Initial Professional, Professional, or Advanced Professional License, or may request advancement to a new level of licensure under COMAR 13A.12.02.04C.

Disciplinary action

MSDE drew upon lessons learned over the years when updating this chapter. The incorporated changes provide clarity and transparency, as well as strengthen the processes associated with taking disciplinary action against a license. See COMAR 13A.12.06.

Elimination of outdated language and/or antiquated requirements

There were many areas in the regulations that referred to outdated language such as “handicapped” that were updated. Additionally, MSDE identified outdated requirements in the Reading Specialist regulation. Finally, two administrator areas were removed from the regulations: Resident Principal and Resident Assistant Principal, both of which were rarely issued during the past 10 years.

Corrections and omissions

Throughout all the chapters, corrections were made to known errors and language was added and clarified to ensure transparency.

Transition Policies

MSDE recognizes that Maryland educators will have questions about their existing credentials. To ease the transition and eliminate unnecessary burdens, MSDE is issuing the following transition policies:

Renewal of a Professional Certificate

Maryland certificate holders with an active professional certificate will have one full validity period prior to having to meet the new renewal requirements. Under this policy, certificate holders may meet the renewal requirements established at the time the certificate was issued or meet the requirements established in the new regulations effective April 1, 2024. The renewal requirements for Maryland educator certificates can be found under [COMAR 13A.12.01.11](#) of the current regulations, and are summarized in an attached document.

Please note that the Standard Professional Certificate I (SPC I) is only renewable if there is a break in service during the validity period. SPC I holders who did not have a break in service and would like to renew their certificate to a Professional License using the renewal requirements at the time of issuance may do so.

Additionally, the Standard Professional Certificate II (SPC II) is not a renewable certificate. Currently, SPC II holders must advance to the Advanced Professional Certificate (APC). As such, if an applicant holding an SPC II would like to “renew” their certificate to a Professional License using the regulations at the time of issuance, MSDE will accept the requirements to renew the SPC I under these regulations.

Applicants issued a Maryland educator license on or after April 1, 2024, are required to meet the new renewal requirements upon the expiration of their license.

Documentation Grace Period (Renewal)

The newly adopted regulations do not allow for a grace period to submit the documents needed for renewal. To ease this transition, MSDE will allow applicants the existing ninety (90) day grace period to submit all documentation required for renewal to their local education agency (LEA) during the 2024-2025 school year only (i.e., certificates expiring on July 1, 2024 and January 1, 2025). As a reminder, renewal requirements *must be completed* by the expiration date indicated on the applicant’s certificate.

Transition from Certificates to Licenses

MSDE will refer to COMAR 13A.12.01.05, *Reinstatement of an Expired Professional License*, when determining the type of license to issue when renewing a certificate to a license. Please refer to the following chart as a resource when renewing and reinstating Maryland Educator Certificates:

Certificate	License
Professional Eligibility Certificate (PEC)	Initial Professional License (IP)
Advanced Professional Certificate (APC)	Advanced Professional License (AP)
Standard Professional Certificate I (SPC I)	Initial Professional License (IP)
Standard Professional Certificate II (SPC II)	Professional License (P)
Conditional Certificate (CDC)*	Conditional License (C)*

*Issued at the request of a local education agency (LEA)

Montessori Professional Certificate

Educators who currently hold a Montessori Professional Certificate (MPC) will continue to hold this credential as it is valid for an indefinite period. Applicants issued a Montessori teaching credential on or after April 1, 2024, will be issued a Montessori Professional License (MPL). Should an individual who holds a Montessori Professional Certificate apply for an additional credential, the Montessori Professional Certificate will be transferred to a Montessori Professional License at that time.

Senior Educator Waiver

The Senior Educator Waiver may be utilized to waive the renewal requirements for any professionally licensed employee of a local education agency, State-operated school, or nonpublic school approved under COMAR 13A.09.10 if:

- (1) The professionally licensed employee is:
 - (a) 55 years old or older; or
 - (b) Employed in public or approved nonpublic school service for at least 25 years; and
- (2) The request is recommended by the county superintendent, executive director, or chief officer of the legal authority having jurisdiction over the employee.

Senior educators will transition to a comparable license, upon renewal, as indicated in the chart above (*Policy Memo dated March 26, 2018, Senior Teacher Waiver, is void effective April 1, 2024*).

Please note that beginning April 1, 2024, senior educators who meet the criteria for the senior waiver do not need to complete any requirements to renew their credential, including those requirements specific to the school counselor and blind/visually impaired endorsement areas.

Issuance of a Conditional License

Educators who hold a conditional certificate may not renew that certificate after April 1, 2024; however, the local education agency, State-operated program, or nonpublic school may request a Conditional License for an employee who has not yet met the requirements for professional licensure.

A Conditional License is a nonrenewable license valid for a period not to exceed 5 years issued only for licenses for teachers (COMAR 13A.12.02.02), and teachers of Professional and Technical Education and Specialized Areas for Fine Arts (COMAR 13A.12.03.02).

A Conditional Special Education License is a nonrenewable license valid for a period not to exceed 3 years issued only for licenses under COMAR 13A.12.02.02 if a school cannot fill a special education position with an individual who qualifies for a professional license.

Certification Evaluations

All MSDE Certification Evaluations that were issued by the MSDE or an LEA between January 1, 2020, and March 31, 2024, will be considered “reissued” on April 1, 2024, and remain valid for a three-year period ending on March 31, 2027, per COMAR 13A.12.01.10E of the current regulations. Individuals who received an evaluation during this period may continue to work toward the transcript analysis requirements identified on their evaluation through March 31, 2027. Please note that educators will not receive a new evaluation form. It will be automatically considered “reissued” if it was issued between January 1, 2020 and March 31, 2024.

Reinstatement of a Professional License

MSDE policy will allow educators who have an expired Maryland educator professional certificate and wish to reinstate until June 30, 2025, to do so without having to present the requirements under the new regulations. Under this policy, expired certificate holders may meet the reinstatement requirements under the regulations as of March 31, 2024, or they may meet the requirements established in the new regulations effective April 1, 2024. The March 31, 2024 reinstatement requirements are as follows:

A. General.

(1) A Professional Certificate or Professional Eligibility Certificate shall be reinstated if an applicant presents 6 semester hours of acceptable credit as set forth in Regulation .05C of this chapter.

(2) If a teacher has not submitted the required semester hours in reading course work, the acceptable credit needed shall include the reading course work under Regulation .11A(5) of this chapter.

B. Exemptions.

(1) A teacher holding an expired Maryland Professional Certificate or Professional Eligibility Certificate who holds a valid Professional Certificate issued by a member state and presents verification of 3 years of satisfactory experience within the last 7 years shall reinstate a Maryland Professional Certificate or Professional Eligibility Certificate.

(2) In order to maintain the specific certification areas on the certificate, a teacher shall submit at least 6 semester hours in each renewal period until the semester hours required under §A(2) of this regulation are completed.

(3) A teacher shall meet the reading coursework requirements by presenting evidence of a qualifying score as set forth in Regulation .11A(7) of this chapter.

All expired professional certificate holders must submit their reinstatement application with the acceptable documents by June 30, 2025, if reinstating under the old regulations. Applicants who submit after June 30, 2025, and/or who submit applications that are deficient, must meet the new regulatory reinstatement requirements.

Technical Assistance and Support

The certification community throughout the state and MSDE will come together to prepare for the implementation of these regulations and changes to The Educator Application and Certification Hub (TEACH) beginning in February 2024. Dates for training on the presentation of the new licensure regulations are listed below with details about additional technical assistance sessions.

Presentation of Licensure Regulations Regional In-Person Training Sessions:

Wednesday, February 21, 2024, from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Washington County Public Schools Headquarters at 10435 Downsville Pike, Hagerstown, MD, 21740

Wednesday, February 28, 2024, from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Staff Development Center (SDC) at 8830 Stanford Boulevard, Suite 120, Columbia, MD, 21045

Friday, March 1, 2024, from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville, MD, 20850

Wednesday, March 6, 2024, from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Chesapeake College Eastern Shore Higher Education Center at 1000 College Circle, Wye Mills, MD, 21679

Please note that the above sessions are specifically for local Certification Authorized Partners and Associates. Sign-up information has been provided but can be found [here](#). A confirmation email with details will be sent to attendees prior to each session.

The Educator Application and Certification Hub (TEACH) Updates Virtual Training Session:

Tuesday, March 19, 2024, from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

A virtual link will be provided via email to local certification partners and the session will be recorded.

Technical Assistance/Office Hour Sessions for Certification Partners:

Monday, April 8, 2024, through Friday, April 12, 2024, from 10:00 am to 11:00 am and 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm (twice per day)

Tuesday, April 16, 2024, and Thursday, April 18, 2024, from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm (twice per week)

Tuesday, April 23, 2024, and Thursday, April 25, 2024, from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm (twice per week)

Wednesday, May 1, 2024, through July 31, 2024, from 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm (once per week with the exception of June 19, 2024, which is the Juneteenth holiday)

For the technical assistance/office hour sessions, a virtual link will be provided via email to local certification partners, as well as a form to submit questions prior to attending. **MSDE will also offer a Certification Authorized Partner (CAP) training in late spring 2024.**

Technical Assistance for Human Resources (HR) & Staffing Partners:

Monday, March 4, 2024, from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

Friday, March 8, 2024, from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

MSDE is hosting two sessions to provide a broad overview of the upcoming changes to certification/licensure. These sessions are aimed at Directors of Human Resources, hiring teams, Resident Teacher Certification offices, and anyone else outside of the certification offices who support staff working towards licensure. Please feel free to share the [registration link](#) with your colleagues who may benefit from hearing this information.

Disciplinary Action and Denials (COMAR 13A.12.06) Virtual Technical Assistance:

Thursday, February 22, 2024, from 12:30 pm to 2:30 pm

MSDE is hosting this technical assistance to HR directors, LEA attorneys, and staff who are involved in the process of recommending disciplinary action, as well as those who review applicants during the hiring process to identify individuals who are not eligible for certification based on past offenses. This session will review the newly adopted licensure regulations that govern taking disciplinary action on an educator license, as well as what causes prohibit the issuance of a license in Maryland. Please [register](#) in advance to attend.

If you have questions regarding the policies and information above, please contact Sophia Fitzpatrick, Director of Certification, at sophia.fitzpatrick@maryland.gov or 410-767-0396.

Attachments

COMAR 13A.12.01-.07 *Educator Licensure*

Transition Policies: Renewal of a Professional Certificate