

-ACT 48- IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CERTIFICATE

Beginning July 1, 2000, Act 48 of 1999 required persons holding Pennsylvania professional educator certification to complete continuing education requirements every five years in order to maintain their certificates as active.

In order for us to notify you regarding the status of your certificate, you must keep us apprised (in writing, including your Social Security number) of any changes to your mailing address.

1. Who is affected by the requirements of Act 48? All educators holding Pennsylvania public school certification including Instructional I and II, Educational Specialist I and II, Administrative, Supervisory, Letters of Eligibility and all vocational certificates. Also included are non-certified teachers and administrators employed by charter schools.

2. When did Act 48 go into effect? The effective date was July 1, 2000.

3. What must educators do to remain in compliance with Act 48? Educators must maintain their certificates as active by earning six collegiate credits **or** six PDE-approved in-service credits **or** 180 continuing education hours **or** any combination of the above every five calendar years. **NOTE:** Each collegiate credit is equal to 30 continuing education hours. All credits and hours must be related to an educator's certificate type or area of assignment, unless enrolled in an administrative program or approved by the school board.

4. Must an educator who holds a certificate listing multiple areas maintain active status in all of those areas? Meeting the requirements every five years will maintain active status for all areas on the certificate.

5. When does the five-year period begin? For all educators issued certificates prior to July 2000, the five-year period began on July 1, 2000 and ends June 30, 2005. For those issued certificates after July 1, 2000, the five-year period begins the effective date of issuance of the initial certificate. The requirements will be renewed at the end of each five-year period.

6. Can credits earned prior to July 1, 2000 be accepted to comply with Act 48 provisions? The Department may accept credits from courses that ended or began after January 1, 2000 for individuals certificated prior to July 2000. Professional education hours may be accepted if completed on or after June 1, 2000.

7. May credits earned in excess of those required by Act 48 be used in the next five-year period? There is no provision in the Act to carry credits over into the next compliance period.

8. What is the difference between an "active/inactive" certificate and a "valid/invalid" certificate? Active certification indicates compliance with the provisions of Act 48, while inactive certificate will prevent an educator from serving in a professional position in the public school entities of the Commonwealth. Additionally, inactive certification may impact an individual's ability to use a certificate outside of the public schools. *It should be noted that active/inactive status has no bearing on the validity of a certificate. A Pennsylvania certificate is valid for a specific number of teaching/service years spent in the schools of the Commonwealth. Therefore, a certificate may remain "valid" even if it becomes "inactive".*

9. What happens to my certificate if I do not complete the requirements for Act 48? If a certificate holder does not complete the requirements, the certificate will become inactive after the five-year compliance period and the holder will be disqualified from being employed by a Pennsylvania public school entity as a professional (tenured) or temporary professional (prior to gaining tenured status) employee until all Act 48 requirements have been met. An educator who is not currently employed by a Pennsylvania public school entity may request a voluntary inactive certificate status by submitting form PDE 338R to the Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation. This form can be obtained through the Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation or online at www.pde.state.pa.us.

10. Will an individual with an inactive (including voluntary inactive) certificate be permitted to substitute in public schools? An individual with inactive certification may be employed as a substitute teacher, principal, superintendent, or assistant superintendent in accordance with the endorsement on the individual's certificate or letter of eligibility for no more than 90 days during a school year.

11. What must be done to reactivate a voluntary inactive certificate? A person who requests voluntary inactive status will have the requirements of Act 48 suspended temporarily. To reactive a certificate, an educator must submit form PDE 338R-2 and evidence of 30 hours or 1 credit earned within the prior 12 months. Once active status is granted, an educator will have the balance of the original five-year period to complete the remaining hours to fulfill Act 48 requirements. Credits/hours taken during the inactive period (including the 30 hours for reactivating the certificate) may be counted toward Act 48 requirements.

Example: Ms. Smith received her Level I certificate in January 2000. Her five-year period is from July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2005. She requests voluntary inactive status (PDE 338R) in January 2001. She has earned no credits so far and used one-half year of her five-year period. If she makes a request to reactivate her certificate in January 2007 (PDE 338 R-2), she must present evidence of having earned 30 hours or 1 credit in the 12 months prior. The 30 hours or 1 credit will count toward the 6 credits/180 hours needed to complete the Act 48 requirements. Any additional credits taken during the Voluntary Inactive period may also be counted toward the balance of the 6 credits/180 hours. Ms. Smith must complete the remaining credits/hours in the 4.5 years following reactivation.

12. How can I reactivate my certificate if it becomes inactive because the requirements were not met by the end of the five-year period? Once an educator with inactive certification has met the Act 48 requirements (i.e. the equivalent of 180 hours of continuing professional education or six (6) collegiate credits) for the original Act 48 five-year period, the Teacher Certification Systems will automatically return that certificate to active status and will assign a new five-year compliance period. The Department will notify the educator that the certificate has been returned to active status.

Example: Mr. Jones was issued his Level I certificate in May 2001. His five-year period began on May 1, 2001 and will end on April 30, 2006. He only completes 120 hours during the five-year period and did not request Voluntary Inactive status. In this case, his certificate will be rendered inactive by the Department on June 1, 2006, following a 30-day administrative period. He earns the necessary 60 hours in July 2006 and the hours are submitted to the Department in August 2006. At that time, the Teacher Certification System will return his certificate to active status and his new five-year compliance period will begin on August 1, 2006.

13. Does Act 48 eliminate Level II (Permanent) certification? No. The regulations of Chapter 49 related to Level I and Level II certification remain in force. There is still a requirement to convert a Level I certificate to Level II status after six service or teaching years in a Pennsylvania public school.

14. Do the provisions of Act 48 apply to educators who have not yet converted their Level I certificate to a Level II status? Yes. The provisions apply to all educators holding a Pennsylvania public school certificate.

15. Can the credits earned for Level II certification or a Letter of Master's/Bachelor's Equivalency (MEQ/BEQ) be applied toward the requirements of Act 48? Collegiate credits and continuing professional education credits from Pennsylvania intermediate units may be applied to the continuing education requirements if earned after January 1, 2000 and related to the educator's area of assignment/certification or within a program leading to administrative certification. However, credits/hours will not carry over from one five-year period to the next. Please note that collegiate credits for Level II and MEQ issuance must be submitted on an official college-sealed transcript.

16. Can continuing education hours, continuing education units, or community college credits be applied toward a Level II certificate or Letter of Master's/Bachelor's Equivalency? No. Only credits from a four-year degree granting college and continuing professional education courses from Pennsylvania intermediate units may be accepted.

17. How will educators holding a Pennsylvania certificate but not employed by public school entities be made aware of the requirements of Act 48? The Department will continue to disseminate information regarding the requirements of Act 48 through the media, school districts, colleges and universities, private and nonpublic schools, as well as the Department's web page at www.pde.state.pa.us.

18. What are considered "public school entities"? They include school districts, intermediate units, joint school districts, area vocational technical schools, charter schools, the Scotland School for Veterans Children and the Scranton School for the Deaf, or any of these acting jointly.

19. Must educators who hold public school certification but are serving in private or nonpublic (religious) schools comply with the provisions of Act 48? Yes. The provisions of Act 48 apply to all educators holding Pennsylvania public school certificates. However, it is important to note that private and nonpublic schools may, at their discretion, require their professional staff to maintain their certificates as active by completing continuing education credits or activities. Employment by the public school entities will necessitate the completion of the Act 48 requirements.

20. Are private tutors who hold Pennsylvania certification required to comply with Act 48 requirements? Yes, except for certified individuals who provide private tutoring services as part of a home education program (home schooling), in accordance with Act 35 of 2001.

21. Does National Board Certification eliminate Act 48 requirements? No. Act 48 applies to all professional educators who hold a Pennsylvania professional certificate.

22. What can educators do if they are not employed by public school entities or move out of Pennsylvania? They can either maintain their certificates as active by meeting the continuing education requirements or they may request voluntary inactive status from the Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation to suspend the requirements of Act 48.

23. Who will maintain the records for Act 48 credits acquired by educators? Approved Pennsylvania providers will submit the credits/hours earned by the educators to the Department. Educators should contact their Pennsylvania college registrar for procedures to ensure credits will be submitted electronically to the Department. Collegiate credits earned outside of Pennsylvania must be submitted on an official college-sealed transcript to: Department of Education, Division of Professional Education and Planning, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.

24. How can educators and school entities access the continuing education records? Information regarding the credits/hours earned and the continuing education status may be accessed through the Department's web pages at www.pde.state.pa.us, Act 48 Reporting System.

25. How will educators and public school entities know when the five-year period is over?

At least 12 months prior to the end of the five-year period, the Department will notify both the educators and the public school entities regarding the continuing education status and remaining credit hours, if any, to be completed. An additional notification of certification status will be sent at the end of the five-year period. It is important that the Department has a current address for each educator.

26. What if circumstances prevent an educator from completing the requirements of Act 48? There is a provision in the Act for granting an extension of the five-year period due to extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances may include active military duty, a medical disability, educator being out of the country more than twelve months, or other. Use form PDE 338 R 3 to apply for an extension after June 1, 2004. Act 48 also provides for an educator's right to appeal a notice of inactive certification. Form PDE 338 R 4 may be used to appeal the inactive status designation after the close of the educator's five-year period when the certification has been rendered inactive by the Department. Form PDE 338 R 4 will be available on July 1, 2005.

It is the responsibility of the educator to monitor credits or hours status on the Department's website during the five-year period. It is the responsibility of the educator to contact the provider to correct any discrepancies in credits reported.

Members of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers are encouraged to contact the PFT Health & Welfare Fund for information and assistance with regard to Act 48 concerns.

The reference for questions concerning professional education plans, approved courses, providers, and submission of credits/hours may be found on the PDE Home Page at www.pde.state.pa.us under Teaching in PA, Act 48 Continuing Professional Education.

For information about your certificate, you may contact the Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation at (717) 787-3356. Certification information is also available on the Department website. Notification of a change of address should be sent to: Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation, 333 Market Street, Third Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.