

505-2-.01 GEORGIA EDUCATOR CERTIFICATION

(1) Summary: State certification terminology and requirements vary widely between states and are often confusing to many applicants. Some states use the term “licensure” while others use “certification.” The same title, such as “provisional,” may be used in a number of states, but with different definitions and requirements. Many applicants assume that “reciprocity” means an automatic “even trade” for an out-of-state certificate, but that is rarely the case. Georgia reciprocity applies to initial certification. Once an educator holds certification in Georgia, the educator must meet Georgia requirements to add a field, upgrade the level and maintain certification. The certification system used in the State of Georgia is the responsibility of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) and published on the GaPSC web site at <https://www.gapsc.com/Commission/Rules/home.aspx>.

(2) Definitions.

(a) Georgia Educator:

1. A Georgia educator for certification purposes is any individual currently or previously employed by a Georgia local unit of administration (LUA) while holding a certificate issued by the GaPSC.

(b) Initial Certificate:

1. A Georgia educator’s first certificate confirming completion of all Georgia requirements for certificate issuance.

(c) Base Certificate:

1. The base certificate is the initial certificate issued in a specific content area confirming completion of all Georgia requirements for certificate issuance at the time of application.

(d) Local Unit of Administration (LUA):

1. A local unit of administration (LUA) is a local education agency or a regional educational service agency, including but not limited to public, waiver, strategic waiver system, charter system or charter schools and private schools (i.e., faith-based schools, early learning centers, hospitals, juvenile detention centers, etc.). State agencies and public and private institutions of higher education requiring certification for employment purposes are included in this definition.

(3) GaPSC Members. The eighteen (18) members of the GaPSC are responsible for establishing and administering rules and standards for the preparation, certification and discipline of Georgia school personnel. Members are appointed by the governor and include nine (9) classroom teachers, two (2) administrators, two (2) higher education faculty, two (2) local Board of Education members and three (3) business and community leaders.

(4) Legal Authority. Georgia law, O.C.G.A. 2-2-200, stipulates that “The Professional Standards Commission shall provide, by regulation, for certifying and classifying all certificated professional personnel employed in the public schools of this state. No such personnel shall be employed in the public schools of this state unless they hold certificates issued by the commission certifying their qualifications and classification in accordance with such regulations.”

- (a) Certificated professional personnel are individuals who hold certificates, licenses, or permits issued by the GaPSC.

- (b) Teachers, service personnel, educational leaders, and all other professional education personnel that have regular contact with students in an instructional setting must hold GaPSC certification or licensure if employed in a Georgia public school, unless exempted pursuant to a charter under O.C.G.A. 20-2-2065, or increased flexibility under O.C.G.A. 20-2-80.

(5) Charter System or Charter School Educators. Georgia charter system or charter school educators may, or may not, be required to hold state certification depending on the policy outlined in the specific charter. Charter system or charter school educators who meet the criteria outlined in Section (4)(b) above are, however, required to hold a Clearance Certificate. See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.42 CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE](#).

(6) Strategic Waiver System. Strategic Waiver systems may, or may not, be required to hold state certification depending on the policy outlined in the contract. Educators employed by these systems who meet the criteria outlined in Section (4)(b) above are, however, required to hold a Clearance Certificate. See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.42 CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE](#).

(7) Private School Educators. Georgia private school educators may, or may not, be required to hold state certification depending on the local school policy.

(8) Substitute Teachers. Substitute teachers in Georgia are not required to hold state certification. See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.20 SUBSTITUTE TEACHING](#).

(9) NASDTEC Interstate Agreement. Georgia is an active member of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification ([NASDTEC](#)). As such, Georgia has signed the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement (commonly referred to as reciprocity) with all 49 other states, the District of Columbia and other NASDTEC jurisdictions. Information on how the Interstate Agreement may apply is found in GaPSC Rule [505-2-.21 CERTIFICATION BY INTERSTATE RECIPROCITY](#). Georgia also participates in the NASDTEC National Clearinghouse and reports state disciplinary actions imposed against certificate holders to this national database. Additional information on the Interstate Agreement and the Clearinghouse may be found on the web at www.nasdtec.org.

(10) Background Check Requirement. A state criminal background check is required for a Pre-Service certificate and verified by the GaPSC as outlined in GaPSC Rule [505-2-.03](#). Although state and federal criminal background checks are not part of the certification process in Georgia other than as required for a Pre-Service certificate, FBI background checks (fingerprint) are required for professional employment in Georgia public, private, waiver, strategic waiver system, charter system or charter schools. Georgia criminal background checks are also required every five (5) years for certificate renewal and affirmed by the employing school or school system.

(11) Educator Responsibility. It is the responsibility of the individual educator to meet all requirements and to obtain and maintain an accurate, valid Georgia educator certificate or license. If rules change that impact an educator's certification, it is the responsibility of the educator to apply to the GaPSC by submission of a new application requesting evaluation under the new rule. Certification issued based on a rule revision shall not be issued prior to the effective date of the revised rule.

(12) Tiered Certification. Georgia participates in a tiered teacher certification system. Tiered teacher certification is envisioned as a means of improving student learning by recognizing the unique developmental needs of teachers at every career stage and by encouraging and supporting continuous teacher growth. It is designed to provide support to new teachers and those preparing to become teachers, and to establish a fair and equitable environment for growth for practicing teachers. Tiered certification also creates career advancement opportunities for teachers aspiring to assume leadership responsibilities and contribute to school improvement efforts while remaining in the classroom.

- (a) When fully implemented, tiered certification will help foster an environment in which:
1. Educators are focused on the academic growth of their students by focusing on their own academic growth;
 2. The conditions and resources necessary for teacher professional growth and retention at each career stage are identified, valued and provided through individualized, ongoing and collaboratively designed and delivered professional learning activities focused on the common goal of improving student learning;
 3. Expert teachers who can contribute to the learning of their peers are provided leadership opportunities to mentor and coach; and
 4. School leaders promote and maintain a positive school culture in which educators are rewarded based on successful performance in the classroom as well as their contributions to the school's learning environment.
- (b) The tiered certification structure consists of the following:
1. Pre-Service (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.03 PRE-SERVICE CERTIFICATE](#));
 2. Provisional (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.08 PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATE](#));
 3. Induction (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.04 INDUCTION CERTIFICATE](#));
 4. Professional (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.05 PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE](#));
 5. Advanced Professional (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.06 ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE](#)); and
 6. Lead Professional (See GaPSC Rule [505-2-.07 LEAD PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE](#)).

(13) Routes to Certification. An explanation of the various routes to Georgia certification may be found on the GaPSC web site at www.gapsc.com.

Authority O.C.G.A. 20-2-200