
January 2012

From the MRA President's Desk

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Recommended Citation

Velchansky, Grace B. (2012) "From the MRA President's Desk," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol45/iss1/4>

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From the MRA President's Desk

BY GRACE B. VELCHANSKY

The State of Michigan recently made changes to the teacher certification requirements that will take effect on **September 1, 2013** (teachers holding a certificate that expires *prior to 9/1/13* will remain under the current certification requirements until that date). The changes are significant at a number of levels. First, greater emphasis is placed on district level professional development, which will be required in order for teachers to renew their certification. Second, it is no longer required that teachers moving from a Provisional teaching certificate to a Professional Education certificate complete an 18-semester-hour planned program from an approved educator preparation institution.

Teachers seeking to renew their Professional Education teaching certificate traditionally met the requirement by acquiring 18 SB-CEUs, 6 credit hours, or a combination of SB-CEUs and credit hours. Teachers must now submit evidence of having participated in 5 days of district provided professional development (DPPD) each year for 5 years. This equates to 25 days of professional development over a 5-year period for a total of 150 hours. The 150 hours must be met by participating in the full 25 days. If that requirement is not met, the teacher will need to complete additional work, such as earning semester credits or additional hours of State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECH), which are now replacing SB-CEUs. It is important to note that district-provided professional development includes only time set aside by the district or supported by the district. This means the district is providing release time to attend professional development activities or time is determined by the collective bargaining agreement. Professional development initiated solely by the teacher will not count without district support.

Important changes have been made to the requirements for teachers moving from a Provisional teaching certificate to a Professional Education certificate. Still in place under MCL 380.1526 is the need for the teachers to: a) successfully complete 3 years of teaching within the validity of their certificate; b) have an assigned and approved mentor, complete 90 additional hours of professional development; and c) *meet the reading requirements*. Only one of the following must be met along with the aforementioned requirements:



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1. Complete 6 semester credits in a planned program of study since the issuance of the Provisional teaching certificate at an approved educator preparation institution.
2. Complete 180 hours of State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECH) of professional development appropriate to the grade level or content endorsement(s).
3. Complete 150 hours of district provided professional development (DPPD) as required by MCL 380.1527 of the Revised School Code with professional development activities appropriate to the grade level or content endorsements of the certificate.
4. Complete a combination of the three options stated above to equal 180 clock hours of professional development.

MRA applauds the state for maintaining the mandatory reading requirements. It is our position that all teachers need to have expert knowledge about the teaching of reading. This expertise helps all students acquire College and Career Readiness throughout their school experience.

There are, however, some provisions under the new requirements that warrant further discussion. In reviewing the requirements for the Professional Education teaching certificate and the Provisional teaching certificate, it is apparent that greater emphasis is being placed on professional development at the district level. While flexibility has value, sustained professional learning is optimal. It is our recommendation that districts provide professional development that is focused, sustained, and embedded in the work in which teachers engage on a daily basis. This includes providing professional learning

that addresses the literacy needs of students at all achievement levels and across all content areas. A concern is the reduction in the number of credit hours in a planned program of study at an approved educator preparation institution as an option to obtaining a Professional Education teaching certificate. It is our hope that teachers recognize the necessity of furthering their education beyond 6 semester credit hours. Meeting the DPPD requirements in lieu of completing 6 semester credits offers advantages to certification renewal however it is through the attainment of advanced degrees that our profession prospers.

A requirement for SCECH credit is that teachers seek professional development appropriate to their grade level or content endorsements. This provides some assurance that teachers will participate in learning that is aligned with their instruction and/or content. MRA will support the acquisition of SCECHs by continuing to offer the highest quality professional

development through the Fall, Annual, and Summer Literature conferences.

Discussing certification requirements in a literacy journal may seem unconventional; however, it is important that teacher certification be of the highest quality and include pedagogical knowledge of teaching reading. MRA has consistently monitored and responded to legislation that impacts education. Know that we will continue to advocate for quality literacy instruction and will be diligent in our message of promoting literacy at state and federal levels. You will find the changes to the teacher certification requirements at the Michigan Department of Education Office of Professional Preparation Services' website at http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6530_5683_5703---,00.html.

All the best,

Grace



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