

## **Frequently Asked Questions – Act 48 Continuing Professional Education Requirements**

### **General Information about Teaching Certificates**

1. How can I ensure that I receive any correspondence regarding the status of my teaching certificate?

You can ensure that you will receive correspondence by maintaining a current address and name on file with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). In order to notify you regarding the status of your certificate, PDE must be apprised of any changes to your name or mailing address, since any correspondence regarding the status of your teaching certificate is sent to the name and address currently on file. Name and contact information is maintained online via the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS). Contact information may be updated directly in the TIMS profile. A no-fee name change application may be created and submitted via TIMS. For more information, visit the TIMS website at [www.PA-TIMS.com](http://www.PA-TIMS.com).

### **Act 48**

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 in active status.

### General Information about Act 48 and Continuing Professional Education Requirements

1. Who is affected by 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. The goal of professional education is to improve accountability and quality in professional development. PDE strives to establish expectations that include work-embedded experiences with depth and continuity consistent with the Standards Aligned System. Certain school and system leaders serving under administrative certificates are affected differently, since they must comply with Act 45 of 2007 (see question five).

2. What must educators do to comply with Act 48?

Educators must earn six credits of collegiate study; or six credits of PDE-approved continuing professional education courses; or 180 hours of continuing professional education programs, activities or learning experiences; or any combination of the above every five years to maintain active certification status.

NOTE: Each semester collegiate credit is equal to 30 continuing education hours. Each quarter collegiate credit is equal to 20 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.

3. When does the five-year period begin?

The five-year period begins on the effective date of issuance of the educator's initial Instructional I certificate. The requirements will be renewed at the end of each five-year period. Each individual's assigned five-year period is based on the date of issuance of his/her Instructional I certificate, or the date of implementation of Act 48 on July 1, 2000, whichever is later. Five-year period beginning dates can change, depending on whether an extension was granted, or if a five-year period was completed after the deadline, in which case a new five-year period is assigned beginning the day after the previous five-year period was completed.

4. 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, PDE will notify both the educator and the public school entity regarding the continuing education status and remaining credit hours, if any, which need to be completed. An additional notification of certification status will be sent at the end of the five-year period, therefore it is important that PDE has a current address for each educator.

5. Are the continuing professional education requirements for school administrators the same as those that apply to teachers and other certified educators?

No. Act 45 of 2007 defines continuing professional education requirements for school and system leaders serving under administrative certificates in specific covered positions (i.e., principals and assistant principals, superintendents and assistant superintendents, intermediate unit (IU) executive directors, assistant IU executive directors and directors of area vocational-technical schools). Individuals employed in these positions under administrative certificates must earn their continuing professional education requirements in courses and programs that have received Pennsylvania Inspired Leaders (PIL) approval from the Secretary of Education.

The following link provides information relating to Act 45 requirements:

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa\\_inspired\\_leaders/8922](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa_inspired_leaders/8922)

6. How can I view my progress toward meeting Act 48 requirements (i.e., how does PDE's Professional Educator Record Management System (PERMS) system keep track of my Act 48 hours)?

To view your progress in meeting your Act 48 requirements, go to the PERMS webpage at <https://www.perms.ed.state.pa.us>. Once there, enter your Professional Personnel Identification (PPID) number in the box provided. Your Act 48 reporting period information will be displayed. The webpage will list your specific five-year period, as well as the continuing education courses that have been credited during the reporting period, as well how many hours you still need to complete to satisfy the current reporting period requirements. If you do not have a PPID, you may retrieve your number by following the instructions provided under "Get your Professional Personnel ID."

## Act 48 and how it relates to Instructional I and II Certificate Status

1. Do the provisions of Act 48 apply to educators who have not yet converted their Instructional I Certificate to Instructional II Certificate?

Yes. The provisions apply to all educators holding a Pennsylvania public school certificate at the Instructional I level or higher.

2. Does Act 48 eliminate Level II (Permanent) certification?

No. Individuals holding a Level I Certification are required to convert their Level I Certificate to a Level II Certificate by completing all service time and educational requirements, per 22 Pa. Code Chapter 49, relating to Level I and Level II Certification. Act 48 and Level II requirements must each be met accordingly.

More information on teacher certification is available PDE's website, keyword "TIMS":  
[www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us).

3. Can the credits earned for Level II Certification or a Letter of Master's/Bachelor's Equivalency be applied toward the requirements of Act 48?

Collegiate credits and continuing professional education credits from Pennsylvania's intermediate units may be applied to the continuing education requirements if earned during the current Act 48 compliance period. The credits must relate to the educator's area of assignment/certification or within a program leading to administrative certification.

4. Can continuing education hours, continuing education units, or community college credits be applied toward obtaining a Level II Certificate or Letter of Master's/Bachelor's Equivalency?

No. Only credits from an accredited four-year degree granting college or university and continuing professional education courses from Pennsylvania's intermediate units may be accepted toward a Level II Certificate or Letter of Master's/Bachelor's Equivalency.

## Definitions and Ground Rules

1. What happens to my certificate if I do not complete the requirements for Act 48?

If a certificate holder does not complete the requirements of Act 48, the certificate(s) 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.

2. Is there a process in place for a certificate holder who is not currently using their Pennsylvania certificate to postpone or avoid having to meet their Act 48 requirements?

Yes. An educator who is not currently employed by a Pennsylvania public school entity may request a voluntary inactive certificate status by submitting an application online via the Teacher

Information Management System (TIMS). The TIMS webpage can be accessed from PDE's website, keyword "TIMS": [www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us). You may also request removal of voluntary inactive status via TIMS.

3. What is a "public school entity?"

Public school entities are defined as school districts, charter schools, joint school districts, area vocational technical schools, state schools and intermediate units.

4. What is the difference between an "active/inactive" certificate and a "valid/invalid" certificate?

Active certification indicates compliance with the provisions of Act 48. An inactive certificate indicates noncompliance with the requirements of Act 48 and will prevent an educator from serving in a professional position in a public school entity within the Commonwealth. Additionally, inactive certification may impact an individual's ability to use a certificate in other educational institutions. 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."

5. Must an educator who holds a certificate, for multiple areas, maintain active status in all areas?

Meeting the Act 48 180-hour requirement every five years with acceptable professional education courses or activities in one or a combination of the certificated specialty areas will maintain the educator's active status.

6. Will an individual with an inactive (including voluntary inactive) certificate be permitted to substitute in public schools?

An individual with an 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.

7. 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 an application, through TIMS, for removal of voluntary inactive status and evidence of 30 hours or one semester 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.

8. 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 an inactive certification has met the Act 48 requirements (i.e., the equivalent of 180 hours of continuing professional education or six collegiate credits) for the original Act 48 five-year period, when the hours or credits are reported to PERMS, the system will automatically return that certificate to active status and will assign a new five-year compliance period.

9. Can an extension of the five-year period be obtained? What if circumstances prevent an educator from completing the requirements of Act 48?

There is a provision in Act 48 for granting an extension of the five-year period due to extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances may include active military duty, a medical disability, financial hardship or others mentioned on the form. Apply online via TIMS to change your existing credential and request an extension of the Act 48 continuing education period.

10. Can a certificate holder appeal the department's inactivation decision?

Act 48 provides for an educator's right to appeal a notice of inactive certification and/or a rejection of an Act 48 extension request. Form PDE 338 R 4 may be used to appeal the inactive status designation and is available at:

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS\\_0\\_123236\\_1246927\\_0\\_0\\_18/PDE%20338%20R-4.pdf](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_123236_1246927_0_0_18/PDE%20338%20R-4.pdf).

11. Whose responsibility is it to monitor an educator's credits or hours, and/or correct discrepancies with an educator's hours or credits reported?

It is the responsibility of the educator to monitor their record of credits or hours on TIMS during the five-year period. It is also their responsibility to contact the provider to correct any discrepancies in credits or hours reported.

12. Can credits earned prior to July 1, 2000 be accepted to comply with Act 48 provisions?

PDE may accept credits from courses that ended or began after Jan. 1, 2000, for individuals prior to July 2000. Professional education hours may be accepted if completed on or after June 1, 2000, as long as the educator was certified before that date.

13. May hours or credits earned in excess of those required by Act 48 be used in the next five year period?

No. There is no provision in Act 48 to carry credits over into the next compliance period. If an educator exceeds the 180 hour requirement, the excess hours or credit-equated hours will be attributed to that five-year period and not to the succeeding five-year period.

#### Act 48's Effects on Educators Employed in Private and Nonpublic Schools

1. How will educators holding a Pennsylvania certificate but not employed by public school entities be made aware of Act 48 requirements?

PDE disseminates information regarding the requirements of Act 48 through the school districts, colleges and universities, private and nonpublic schools, as well as the department's website at

[www.education.state.pa.us](http://www.education.state.pa.us). Notification concerning the status of individual teaching certificates, as affected by statutory changes, may also be mailed to certificate holders. In order to ensure educators receive this information please maintain a current name and address on file with PDE.

2. 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. To keep their certificates active, educators employed in private or nonpublic schools must comply with Act 48. Active teaching certification is not required by law for an educator to teach in a private/nonpublic school classroom. However, it is important to note that many private/nonpublic schools, at their discretion, require their professional educators to maintain their Instructional I or II certificates in active status by completing continuing education credits or activities. Employment by public school entities in a capacity that requires teaching certification necessitates the completion of the Act 48 requirements.

3. How can educators maintain their active certificate status if they move out of Pennsylvania?  
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Educators can maintain their certificates in active status by meeting the continuing education requirements, or may request voluntary inactive status from PDE's Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality to suspend the requirements of Act 48 by submitting an application for voluntary inactive status through TIMS.

#### Earning Act 48 Hours and the Types of Activities Which Count Toward Act 48 Hours

1. What types of entities or organizations can grant Act 48 hours to educators?

- School districts and intermediate units are presumed providers of Act 48 hours for their certified professional educators by virtue of the continuing professional education plan they must file and have approved by PDE. A school district may recognize and grant Act 48 hours to an educator who is one of its employees for activities that were offered outside of the school district's own in-service program, if the school district concurs that the training activity was consistent with the district's approved professional education plan, as it extends logically to the individual educator. However, as a prudent management control, many districts will only grant Act 48 hours for their own in-service activities.
- Intermediate units may grant credit-equated Act 48 hours to any Pennsylvania-certified educator for completion of Continuing Professional Education courses approved by PDE.
- Accredited higher education institutions offer academic courses of collegiate study. Each semester credit is worth 30 Act 48 hours. In-state institutions report completion credits by direct electronic upload to PDE. Completers of collegiate study taken at out-of-state institutions, whether in a "bricks and mortar" setting or online, must have an official sealed transcript sent to: Act 48 Transcripts, Division of Planning, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, 3rd Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333. The department will only accept transcripts received directly from higher education institutions. Effective January 1, 2015, PDE began accepting electronic transcripts (eTranscripts) from institutions of higher education for the purpose of documenting completion of Act 48 continuing professional education requirements. eTranscripts are submitted to PDE via the following email address: [ra-edact48etrscript@pa.gov](mailto:ra-edact48etrscript@pa.gov).



- Act 48 approved providers consist of a wide range of organizations, including professional associations, for-profit companies, sole proprietor trainers, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, and the noncredit continuing education side of colleges and universities. Any entity desiring to acquire status as an Act 48 approved provider must apply to PDE via an application process designed to assure quality and a demonstrable impact on student achievement. Approvals are granted for a period of three years. Before enrolling in any noncredit course or activity, educators should ask the provider to substantiate that it has a current Act 48 provider approval from PDE. If the provider does not have current approval, the activities will not count toward completion of Act 48 requirements. Act 48 approved providers are responsible for uploading activity hours for participants directly into PDE's Professional Education Record Management System (PERMS) within 30 days of completion. To request approval, along with detailed application and guidance, contact PDE's Division of Planning at (717) 783-6646.
- As Pennsylvania's state education agency, PDE provides a variety of teacher institutes for educators, as well as training activities through its Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN).
- PDE currently provides free online courses for Pennsylvania-certified educators to earn Act 48 hours through its Standards Aligned System web portal (<http://pdesas.org>). Pennsylvania certificate holders must first obtain a free logon, and then click on "Teacher Tools" in the upper right corner of the site. Then, click on the file drawer icon entitled "PD Center" in order to access a wide variety of self-paced courses based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, as well as a variety of general professional development courses anchored in the components of the Standards Aligned System.
- Credit for seeking National Board Certification. Educators may earn Act 48 hours in pursuit of National Board Certification. Please contact PDE's Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality at 717-728-3224 for more information.

2. What type of collegiate study courses, continuing professional education courses, or noncredit programs and activities can be used to fulfill Act 48 requirements?

Act 48 requires that collegiate courses, continuing professional education courses (offered by intermediate units), and noncredit continuing professional education programs, activities or learning experiences be "related to an area of the professional educator's assignment or certification." (24 PS 12-1205.2(c)). PDE interprets this language as follows:

- Courses or noncredit activities in the content area of the educator's certification.
- Courses or noncredit activities in instructional methods, pedagogy, strategies/tools for the classroom, classroom management, assessment or evaluation.
- Courses or noncredit activities that enable an educator to help students improve their performance in the area of reading/writing/speaking/listening, verbal skills, English or literacy, regardless of the educator's certification.
- Courses or noncredit activities that enable an educator to help students improve their performance in the area of mathematics and mathematical reasoning, regardless of the educator's certification.
- Courses or noncredit activities in the area of inclusive classrooms (i.e., those which:
  - Teach educators how to provide effective instruction to students with mild to severe disabilities within a classroom setting;
  - Address research-proven strategies and methods to help special needs learners gain meaningful access to elementary and/or secondary curriculum content;

- Enable teachers to assess the success of instruction with special learners and improvement of outcomes for all students; or
- Teach methods of motivation and classroom management in settings with special needs learners).
- Courses or noncredit activities in the area of instructional technology that improve the educator's capacity to deliver instruction in a 21st century learning environment through the use of computers, computer software or internet technology.
- Courses or noncredit activities in the area student health, interpersonal skills in a school environment, safe and supportive schools, and resiliency.

3. Whose responsibility is it to submit documentation of Act 48 credits/hours to PDE?

Act 48 providers submit the credits/hours earned by the educators to PDE. PDE's policy is that credits and hours should be submitted within 30 days of completion. However, the educator is responsible for making a college or university aware that he/she wants the credits reported to PDE. 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: Act 48 Transcripts, Division of Planning, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, 3rd Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333. The department will only accept transcripts received directly from higher education institutions. Effective January 1, 2015, PDE began accepting electronic transcripts (eTranscripts) from institutions of higher education for the purpose of documenting completion of Act 48 continuing professional education requirements. eTranscripts are submitted to PDE via the following email address: [ra-edact48etrscript@pa.gov](mailto:ra-edact48etrscript@pa.gov).

4. Can colleges or universities in Pennsylvania award Act 48 activity hours for noncredit activities and programs?

Yes. Pennsylvania institutions of higher education desiring to acquire and/or maintain status as Act 48 approved providers for their noncredit continuing professional education offerings have been directed by PDE to consolidate their multiple noncredit offerings under a designated single point of contact to ensure the quality, rigor and relevance of all noncredit offerings. It is up to the individual college or university to maintain its status as an Act 48 approved provider. Approvals are granted for a period of three years.

5. Can educators earn Act 48 hours for presentations and/or speaking engagements?

It is the department's policy that a professional educator is entitled to four preparation Act 48 hours for every one hour of presentation preparation where the audience will be receiving Act 48 hours. Act 48 hours will not be given for preparation time to professional educators who speak to audiences where Act 48 hours will not be available to the audience. The presentation preparer is eligible for the grant of hours for prep time on a one-time basis per presentation. Remember, Act 48 hours are granted for preparation of the presentation, not for the presentation itself.

6. Can faculty members who work in a higher education institution, and who are teaching in a teacher preparation program, earn Act 48 hours for the courses they teach or for duties they perform related to professional practice?



Pennsylvania colleges and universities with PDE-approved teacher certification preparation programs may opt to upload Act 48 activity hours for members their teacher preparation faculty in conjunction with their academic teaching assignments, but not for college classroom lecture, recitation, or instructional delivery. Such activity hours must be accrued through active involvement in working with public schools to: improve student achievement in accordance with the Standards Aligned System; providing in-service professional development or induction activities for certified educators in a school district; improving the scope and quality of formative assessment; use of interventions and safety nets for struggling students; or similar activities.

Act 48 activity hours cannot be earned for paid consulting or activities for which faculty are otherwise compensated in the course of their normal academic assignments, unless such activities are considered in-service training. If a faculty member desires to pursue this option, the employing college or university must submit to PDE a list of faculty member participants (full name, professional personnel identification number and the academic department in which each is employed) on official letterhead from the appropriate department chair, dean, or provost. The university must also submit a description of public school improvement activities in which the individual faculty member(s) are or will be participating, and identify the school districts involved. Act 48 hours will not be granted for delivery of instruction within a higher education setting, or for supervising student teachers or college students taking part in pre-teaching

7. Can Act 48 hours be earned for National Board Certification?

Act 48 applies to all professional educators who hold a Pennsylvania professional certificate. Educators may earn Act 48 hours in pursuit of National Board Certification. Contact PDE's Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality at 717-728-3224 for more information.