**What is an alternative certification program?**

Among other certification requirements, individuals seeking a teaching certificate must demonstrate mastery of general knowledge, subject area knowledge, professional preparation, and education competence. The traditional way that individuals demonstrate mastery of professional preparation is through completion of a bachelor's degree program in education offered by a college or university. Alternative certification programs enable individuals who hold a bachelor’s or higher degree in non-education fields to demonstrate professional preparation. These programs provide training in teaching skills and competencies that enable the individual to demonstrate professional preparation and education competence and obtain educator certification.

Alternative certification programs may be offered by both school districts and Educator Preparation Institutes. District alternative certification programs (DACP) enable K-12 classroom teachers to complete professional preparation requirements after obtaining a temporary certificate and while employed by the district. A school district may offer either a state model alternative certification program developed by the Department of Education (DOE) or a program that is developed by the school district and approved by the DOE.

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1. Section 1012.56(2)(g)-(i), (3), (5) and (6), F.S.; see also Teacher Certification Fact Sheet.
2. Section 1012.56(6)(a) and (b), F.S.
3. Section 1004.85 and 1012.56(8), F.S. Additional ways to demonstrate professional preparation and education competence include:
   - Holding a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another state;
   - Holding a valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (see http://www.nbpts.org) or a national educator credentialing board approved by the State Board of Education;
   - Documenting two semesters of successful teaching at a college or university; and
   - Completing professional preparation courses specified in rules adopted by the State Board of Education (see rule 6A-4.006(2)(a), F.A.C.), demonstrating professional education competence to the school district, and passing the professional education test of the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations. Section 1012.56(6)(c)-(f) and (8)(b), F.S.


4. Section 1012.56(8)(a), F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(b), F.A.C.
5. Section 1004.85(3), F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(c), F.A.C.
6. See s. 1012.56(6)(g) and (8)(a), F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(b)2., F.A.C.; see also Teacher Certification Fact Sheet. Seventy-two school districts or university lab schools offer alternative certification programs. Florida Department of Education, Florida’s Alternative Certification Program, Program Overview, Coordinator Information, http://www.altcertflorida.org/programOverview.htm (last visited May 25, 2010).

A college or university may, subject to DOE approval, establish an Educator Preparation Institute to provide instruction for bachelor’s degree holders to become certified teachers. Alternative certification programs offered by Educator Preparation Institutes provide professional preparation to individuals who are either employed as classroom teachers on a temporary certificate or to those who are not but who wish to become trained as a teacher. An Educator Preparation Institute’s alternative certification program design must also be approved by DOE. Once approved, other Educator Preparation Institutes may use the approved program design.

Who is eligible to participate in an alternative certification program?

Participants in an Educator Preparation Institute’s alternative certification program must hold a bachelor’s or higher degree in a major field other than education. Participants must also demonstrate that they are eligible for temporary certification or that they hold a valid temporary certificate. A participant seeking certification through a DACP must hold a bachelor’s or higher degree, hold a temporary teaching certificate, and be employed by the school district as a classroom teacher. In either case, a 2.5 G.P.A., on a 4.0 scale, is required in the major field of study, which is established when the participant seeks eligibility for the temporary certificate.

Florida law also requires that participants in alternative certification programs satisfy the basic requirements for educator certification. Thus, a participant is required to:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Sign an affidavit to uphold the United States Constitution and the State Constitution;
- Submit to background screening and not have a criminal history that requires the participant’s disqualification from certification or employment;
- Be of good moral character; and
- Be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of a teacher.

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9 Sections 1004.85(3) and 1012.56(6)(h), F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(c)2., F.A.C.

10 Section 1004.85(3), F.S.

11 Sections 1004.85(2)(d) and (3)(b)1., F.S.

12 Section 1004.85(3)(b), F.S.; see infra notes 23 and 24 and accompanying text.

13 Section 1012.56(1)(b), (2)(c), (7)(b) and (8)(a), F.S.

14 Sections 1004.85(3)(b)1. and 1012.56(2)(c) and (7)(b), F.S.

15 Sections 1004.85(3)(b)1. and 1012.56(1)(b), (2)(a)-(f), and (7)(b), F.S.; see also Teacher Certification Fact Sheet.

16 Section 1012.56(2)(a) and (7)(b), F.S.

17 Section 1012.56(2)(b) and (7)(b), F.S.

18 Sections 1012.315 and 1012.56(2)(d), (7)(b) and (10)(a), F.S.

19 Section 1012.56(2)(e) and (7)(b), F.S.

20 Section 1012.56(2)(f) and (7)(b), F.S.
The main difference in the eligibility requirements between an Educator Preparation Institute and a DACP is that participants in a DACP must be employed as a teacher in the district and hold a temporary certificate whereas participants in an Educator Preparation Institute’s alternative certification program do not need to be employed as a teacher or hold a temporary certificate.\textsuperscript{21} Participants in an Educator Preparation Institute’s alternative certification program need only apply for an educator certificate and obtain an official statement of status of eligibility which indicates eligibility for a temporary certificate.\textsuperscript{22}

### What training does an alternative certification program provide?

Alternative certification programs provide practical teaching experience and training in the skills and competencies needed to pass the professional education test of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination and obtain educator certification.\textsuperscript{23} Training in teaching skills and competencies must address:

- **Competencies of the Educator Accomplished Practices** at the preprofessional level:\textsuperscript{24}
  - Assessment
  - Communication
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Critical Thinking
  - Diversity
  - Ethics
  - Human Development and Learning
  - Knowledge of Subject Matter
  - Learning Environments
  - Planning
  - Role of the Teacher
  - Technology

- Competency 2 of the State Board of Education’s approved Reading Endorsement Competencies entitled “Foundations of Research-Based Practices.” This competency

\textsuperscript{21} To obtain a temporary teaching certificate, a person must, among other things, complete the content requirements for a specialization in the teaching subject area or demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge (e.g., passage of subject area examination). Sections 1012.56(1), (5)(a), and (7)(b), F.S.; rule 6A-4.0021, F.A.C.; see Teacher Certification Fact Sheet. The State Board of Education has approved specializations in 54 subject areas. Approved specializations include core content areas such as elementary, middle school, and secondary mathematics, language arts, and science subjects; exceptional student education and specializations for teachers of students with autism spectrum disorder and mobility, visual, or speech impairments; fine and performing arts subjects; and elective subjects such as journalism and agriculture. Generally, an individual must hold a bachelor’s degree in the teaching subject or complete the required number of credits in specified college coursework and field experiences in order to meet the specialization requirements. See rules 6A-4.008, 6A-4.0082, 6A-4.0101–6A-4.0162, and 6A-4.0172–6A-4.078, F.A.C. (specialization requirements for certification).

\textsuperscript{22} Sections 1004.85(3)(b)1. and 1012.56(1)(c), F.S. The DOE provides a statement of status eligibility to each educator certification applicant who does not meet the requirements for a professional certificate. This includes individuals who qualify for a temporary certificate, but not a professional certificate, and individuals who do not qualify for either certificate. Section 1012.56(1)(a)–(c), F.S. The statement of status eligibility must advise the applicant of any requirements that must be met in order to be issued a professional certificate. Section 1012.56(1), F.S. (flush-left provisions at end of subsection).

\textsuperscript{23} Sections 1004.85(3)(b)3. and 1012.56(6)(h) and (8)(a)6., F.S.; rules 6A-4.0021 and 6A-5.066(2)(b)1.d. and (c)1.d., F.A.C.

\textsuperscript{24} Rules 6A-5.065 and 6A-5.066(2)(b)1.a. and (c)1.a., F.A.C. The Educator Accomplished Practices describe twelve essential practices of effective teaching, which are expressed at three levels: the accomplished teacher, the professional teacher, and the preprofessional teacher. Id.; see Florida Department of Education, Educator Accomplished Practices: Competencies for Teachers of the Twenty-First Century, 1-10 (Dec. 2007), available at http://www.fldoe.org/dpe/pdf/AccomPractices_11-09-07.pdf.
addresses the principles of scientifically based reading research as a foundation of comprehensive instruction that synchronizes and scaffolds each of the major components of the reading process toward student mastery.25

The competencies and skills of professional education preparation required for teacher certification and tested on the professional education test of the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations, which include:

- Use of various types of assessment strategies;
- Effective communication with students, parents, faculty, and others;
- Continuous improvement in professional practices;
- Strategies, materials, and technologies for enhancing critical thinking skills;
- Cultural, linguistic, and learning style differences;
- Educator ethics codes;
- Application of human development and learning theories;
- Application of reading strategies across the curriculum;
- Strategies to promote a safe, efficient, supportive learning environment;
- Lesson planning and execution;
- Collaboration with parents and other professionals;
- Use of technology;
- Knowledge of education history, philosophies, and sociological foundations; and
- Strategies for educating students with limited English proficiency.26

Additional training specific to each type of program:

DACP s must also cover:
- A variety of data indicators for student progress;
- Methodologies, including technology-based methodologies, for teaching subject content that supports the Sunshine State Standards for students;
- Techniques for effective classroom management;
- Techniques and strategies for operationalizing the role of the teacher in assuring a safe learning environment for students; and
- Methodologies for assuring the ability of all students to read, write, and compute.27

Alternative certification programs at Educator Preparation Institutes must also cover:
- Subject matter content requirements;
- Professional competency testing requirements;
- Competencies associated with teaching scientifically based reading instruction; and
- Strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers.

27 Section 1012.56(8)(a)5.c.g., F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(b)1.c., F.A.C.
Practical classroom teaching experience is also a required component of each type of alternative certification program. For participants in a DACP, classroom teaching experience is gained on-the-job, with the support of peer mentors, and after a period of initial preparation prior to entering the classroom. Participants in an alternative certification program offered by an Educator Preparation Institute may gain classroom teaching experience through field experience in a K-12 classroom setting with supervision from qualified educators or as a K-12 classroom teacher who holds a valid temporary certificate.

### What are the components of the Department of Education’s model alternative certification program?

The model alternative certification program developed by DOE includes the following components:

- **Survival training** which provides the minimum amount of instruction that a classroom teacher should have to prepare for the first days and weeks of school, including:
  - An orientation to the school and district;
  - An introduction to effective teaching behaviors;
  - An introduction to the Educator Accomplished Practices;
  - Ethical and legal guidelines for teachers;
  - Classroom and behavior management tools;
  - Basic lesson planning; and
  - Multicultural and multilingual issues to consider.

- **CD-ROM** training on features of the web-based learning management system used to deliver the learning activities;

- **Assignment to a support team** to coordinate and support the professional development of the teacher;

- **Assignment to a peer mentor** to offer face-to-face feedback and assistance throughout the learning experience;

- **Online tutoring** to provide guidance, feedback, and assessment of the participant’s work products developed through the program’s learning activities;

- **A building level administrator** to verify the participant’s successful demonstration of all education competencies;

- **An outside educator** to offer feedback as a collaborative partner from higher education or a district level supervisor;

- **A pre-assessment** to determine the learning needs of each teacher;

- **An individual action plan** to outline the structured learning experiences for each teacher;

- **An online professional preparation learning activities** to provide in-depth, in-time acquisition of the Educator Accomplished Practices;

- **Summative assessment tasks** to ensure a standards-based method of determining mastery of the professional education competencies;

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28 Section 1012.56(8)(a)1. and 3., F.S.
29 Section 1004.85(3)(a)2. and (b)2., F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(c)2., F.A.C.
Florida House of Representatives

- A database tracking system to document the progress of each teacher in successfully demonstrating the Educator Accomplished Practices; and
- A professional education test which enables the participant to demonstrate knowledge of educational pedagogy.31

**What are the reporting requirements for alternative certification programs?**

An alternative certification program must annually report:

- Data on program completer’s:
  - Pass rates on the Professional Education Test of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination;
  - Demonstration of the Educator Accomplished Practices;
  - Satisfaction with their training and preparedness to teach; and
  - Impact on K-12 student learning.

- Employer satisfaction data; and
- Rehire rates of program participants.32

DOE reviews this data annually and conducts a site visit every seven years, at which time a determination is made regarding whether to continue a school district’s or Educator Preparation Institute’s approval to offer an alternative certification program.33

**How many teachers do alternative certification programs produce?**

In the 2008-09 academic year, of the 9,705 individuals who completed a Florida-approved teacher preparation program, 3,612 were trained by alternative certification programs. Of the 1,650 individuals who completed a DACP, 1,435 (87%) were employed in instructional positions during the 2009-10 academic year. Of the 1,962 individuals who completed an alternative certification program offered by an Educator Preparation Institute, 1,039 (53%) were employed in instructional positions during the 2009-10 academic year. In comparison, 2,616 (43%) of 6,093 individuals who completed a traditional teacher preparation program at a college or university were employed in instructional positions during the 2009-10 academic year.34

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31 Model Program Overview, supra note 8.
32 Section 1004.85(4), F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(2)(b)4. and (2)(c)4., F.A.C.
33 Section 1004.85(4), F.S.; rule 6A-5.066(1)(a), F.S.
34 Presentation by Florida Department of Education, Teacher Quality Overview: Hearing Before the Florida House of Representatives PreK-12 Policy Committee (March 3, 2010). The comparatively high percentage of school district alternative certification program completers who were employed in instructional positions is likely due to the fact that these individuals must hold a temporary certificate and be employed by a school district prior to entering such program. See s. 1012.56(1)(b) and (8)(a), F.S.
Where can I get additional information?

**Florida Department of Education**
Bureau of Educator Certification  
(850) 245-5049  
http://www.fldoe.org/edcert

**Florida Department of Education**
Bureau of Educator Recruitment, Development, and Retention  
(850) 245-0435  
http://www.fldoe.org/profdev

**Florida House of Representatives**
Education Committee  
(850) 488-7451  
http://www.myfloridahouse.gov

**Florida House of Representatives**
Appropriations Committee  
(850) 488-6204  
http://www.myfloridahouse.gov