

Can you teach outside your certification area????

Teachers are often asked by their districts to teach classes outside of their certification area to help meet a temporary shortage. However, with the increased emphasis on accountability over the last several years, and the need to meet the 'highly qualified' requirements of NCLB, teaching outside of your certification area is **not** allowed in CT. The questions and answers below will help you understand the possible consequences of teaching outside your certification area, and what you can do when faced with this situation.

Q : What does it mean to teach 'outside of your certification area?'

A : It means that you are providing direct instruction to students, for which they are receiving credit as part of their curriculum, in subjects for which you do not hold an approved certificate / endorsement.

Q : What's the difference between a 'certificate' and an 'endorsement?'

A : A *certificate* is the legal document that authorizes you to teach in CT, having met the requirements set forth. An *endorsement* is a subject area in which you are authorized to teach. Teachers generally hold one certificate (initial, provisional, or professional), but may have more than one endorsement on it (e.g., secondary social studies and secondary English).

Q : What are some examples of 'teaching outside your certification area?'

A : **example 1** - You hold a certificate with a 7-12 math endorsement (which allows you to teach math down to grade 5), and you teach math to 7th graders in a middle school. The district asks you to teach one class in general science, since you had 15 credits in science as part of your college program.

example 2 - You hold a certificate with a 7-12 English endorsement and teach at the high school level. The district asks you to teach one class in 'business writing,' which, although it focuses on writing, is part of the business department program, not the English department program.

example 3 - You hold a certificate with the K-12 special education endorsement on it, and work in a middle school. The district asks you to teach a reading class to low achievers on your team.

example 4 - You hold a K-6 certificate and teach in an elementary school. The district has created a position they call a 'literacy specialist', which entails providing

instructional support to students who are having difficulties learning and mastering skills they encounter as part of their reading program. The district asks you to fill this position.

Q : What would happen if I taught a class or two outside of my certification area?

A : If the Teacher's Retirement Board (TRB) finds that you have taught classes without the proper authorization, you may lose service credit that is used to determine retirement benefits. For example, if you taught 1 class outside of your certification area, for 2 consecutive school years, TRB would mathematically figure what percentage of your time was spent teaching those classes, how many months of time that equaled, and then subtract that amount of 'service time' from the time accrued toward retirement benefits. The more classes, and the longer the period of time, you teach without proper authorization, the more retirement service credit you can lose.

Q : What do I need to do to become 'properly authorized' to teach outside of my certification area?

A : There are 3 options:

1. **additional endorsement(s)** - Meeting the endorsement requirements generally involves taking courses and passing the Praxis II exam for each subject endorsement you seek (there are some areas that don't require the Praxis exam).

2. **temporary authorization for a minor assignment** - This is an authorization you and the district apply for together. There are four conditions that must be met: (a) you must already hold a teaching certificate; (b) you must have at least 12 credits in the subject area you'll be teaching; (c) the minor assignment must supplement a primary assignment; and (d) you may not teach more than 2 periods in the minor assignment. The minor assignment authorization is valid for 1 year, and may be reissued upon completion of 6 additional credits in the subject area.

3. **durational shortage area permit** - Although this permit is frequently issued to a person who is not currently certified, but is enrolled in a planned program leading to certification, it can also be issued to a certified teacher who is planning to seek an additional endorsement. You and the district must apply for the DSAP together, and there are 3 conditions that must be met: (a) you must have taken and passed the Praxis II exam for the subject; (b) you must have at least 12 credits in the subject area you'll be teaching; and (c) you must be in a planned program leading to earning the endorsement. The DSAP is valid for 1 year, but may be reissued twice upon completion of 9 credits for each reissuance.

Q : How should I respond to my administrator if I'm asked to teach a class outside of my certification area?

A : If you're willing to teach the class, and have the necessary credits for either the minor assignment permit or the DSAP, you should let the administrator know that you will need to apply for one of those, and *expect* that they will complete the paperwork with you. If your administrator indicates that the paperwork isn't necessary, show them the CT Certification Regulations governing these documents, which can be found at this link: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/Cert/regulations/regulations.pdf> (pages 30-32). If the administrator is not willing to complete the paperwork, but insists you must teach the class, go to your local association president for assistance.