



# SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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March 16, 2005

TO: All Residency Certificate Holders

FROM: Dr. Terry Bergeson

I am writing to share some important information with you about progress we have been making over the last several months to improve and streamline our professional certification system (referred to in shorthand as ProCert) and make it more flexible and relevant, and easier for you to successfully navigate. As you know, since September 2000, all K-12 public school teachers in Washington are required to earn a professional certificate, a "second tier" level of certification that is performance-based. Professional certification programs are offered at 18 Washington colleges and universities, and can be combined with master's degree programs.

In this transitional period of implementing the changes that follow our official policy during this transitional period is "**Do No Harm.**" In other words, if you have completed your ProCert program or are currently enrolled in one, you will not have to rewrite or redo any components based on the revisions we have made or are in the process of making. If you are just about to start your ProCert program, the new rules will help guide your program. Whichever situation you are in, your program team will work with you to determine exactly what you need to do to achieve professional certification.

## **Completed revisions**

OSPI has been collaborating with various stakeholders for the last year to refine and rework the specific requirements of the professional certification process. Our goals are to increase clarity of the requirements, eliminate redundancy and bring us to a truly job-embedded, performance-based certification system that will help you have an even greater positive impact on student learning. These revisions to the professional certification process include:

1. Reducing the number of criteria used to demonstrate teaching competency from 17 to 12 (approved at the October State Board of Education meeting)
2. Eliminating the need to create 10 work products (CLIP, FIP, PIP, etc), as required under the old process and replacing them with more flexible guidelines for submission of evidence. These guidelines will be more applicable to individual teaching and classroom situations.
3. Eliminating the rubrics that measured work products and replacing them with "descriptions of practice" to help you reflect on your practice of the 12 criteria.
4. Creating an "advanced track" option that allows out-of-state teachers with more than five years' experience to acquire a Washington professional certificate more quickly and easily. Teachers with five years' experience simply register for a pre-

assessment seminar. If they demonstrate competency during this seminar, they don't need to take the "core" and "culminating" components of the ProCert curriculum. If specific competencies are lacking, modified ProCert options are available. The college and university programs are currently working with us to build consistency across the state.

### **Additional approved revisions**

In an effort to increase fairness and decrease the burden on teachers, a number of revisions regarding renewal of residency certificates and the timeline for completing professional certification were adopted today, March 16, at the State Board of Education meeting. These revisions include:

- 1) **Timeline for completing professional certification:** Specific language in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) is being changed to give teachers more time to earn their professional certificate. Previously, the residency certificate expired five years from the date on which it was granted. Now, the five-year countdown for expiration of the residency certificate will not begin until teachers have completed "provisional" status. For most teachers, this means you will complete two years of teaching and then have five years in which to earn your professional certificate, with your residency certificate in effect that entire time. This will allow teachers to establish themselves in a job before enrolling in the ProCert program most conveniently located. **This rule change will be retroactive for all those who already hold a residency certificate.** You can contact the OSPI certification office at 360.725.6396 to apply for an extension of your current residency certificate.
- 2) **Two-year residency renewal:** Residency certificates can still be renewed for a two year period if you are enrolled in a ProCert program. The previous requirement for satisfactory progress has been removed.

In addition, legislators are currently considering bills that would require the state's professional certificate program be administered in a more standard manner at all participating colleges and universities, that the requirements for earning a certificate be directly aligned with teachers' educational responsibilities, and that several more changes regarding the timing of the ProCert requirements and reciprocity arrangements with other states be made. Developments will be posted on our website.

### **Ongoing candidate support and communication efforts**

OSPI is collaborating with the State Board of Education, the Washington Education Association and the state's colleges and universities on a variety of projects to enhance communication, clarify professional certificate requirements and increase access for all:

1. We have hired a program specialist for professional certification to serve as point person for communication and implementation. Her name is Mary Jo Larsen, and her contact information is provided below.
2. We are creating a new process for teachers whose "Initial" certificates expired because they applied late. For more information on this option, call the OSPI certification office at 360.725.6396

3. We are developing a ProCert handbook for candidates, facilitators, districts and program administrators. By early summer this will be available on the OSPI Pro Cert website, in hard copy and on CD.
4. We are updating our website regularly, and partnering with the State Board of Education and the Washington Education Association to provide ProCert roadshows that will explain the ProCert process to teachers throughout the state.
5. We are continuing to work closely with the 18 ProCert program administrators at our colleges and universities to make sure everyone is playing by the same rules. They have formally committed to working with us to achieve our goals and are meeting regularly until we can finalize improvements.
6. We are working with the State Board of Education to ensure that the administrative fees you pay to OSPI to earn the professional certificate will not change for those teachers who already hold a residency certificate.
7. We are developing new ways to share information and allow candidates to provide feedback to our agency and other stakeholders. In a first step, OSPI contact information is listed below. We welcome your thoughts and ideas about the information presented in this letter.

I want to thank Jim Meadows, the Washington Education Association, Larry Davis from the State Board of Education and the state's colleges and universities for their help in making the positive revisions so far to the professional certification program. I am sorry that going through the ProCert process has been a difficult experience for so many fine teachers, and I am committed to working with you and other educators across the state to continue enhancing the process. For more information regarding professional certification, please visit the OSPI website at <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/ProfEd/profcertprograms.aspx>. Please direct your questions or comments to:

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Arlene Hett, Director of Professional Education and Certification  
360.725.6320  
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Thank you again for everything you do each day to positively impact the learning of all students in Washington state. My very best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Terry Bergeson  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction