

**Context: SSSB 6 – Alaska Reads Act – Questions asked by Senator Costello, to the Dept. of Education & Early Development – Feb. 6, 2020**

**Re. TEACHER CERTIFICATION**

**From:** Hardin, Erin M (EED)  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2020 5:19 PM  
**To:** Katie McCall <[Katie.McCall@akleg.gov](mailto:Katie.McCall@akleg.gov)>  
**Cc:** Cunningham, Suzanne L (GOV) <[suzanne.cunningham@alaska.gov](mailto:suzanne.cunningham@alaska.gov)>; Melin, Juliana J (GOV) <[juliana.melin@alaska.gov](mailto:juliana.melin@alaska.gov)>; Schoenheit, Victoria M (GOV) <[victoria.schoenheit@alaska.gov](mailto:victoria.schoenheit@alaska.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Elementary Teachers & Certification Renewal

Hi Katie,

Please see DEED's responses below in [blue](#). These were prepared by our Teacher Certification Administrator, Sondra Meredith. Let me know if Senator Costello has any questions or if our office can be of any further assistance to her.

Cheers,

ERIN HARDIN  
Special Assistant & Legislative Liaison  
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**From:** Katie McCall <[Katie.McCall@akleg.gov](mailto:Katie.McCall@akleg.gov)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 6, 2020 11:37 AM  
**To:** Hardin, Erin M (EED) <[erin.hardin@alaska.gov](mailto:erin.hardin@alaska.gov)>  
**Subject:** Elementary Teachers & Certification Renewal

Hi Erin,

Senator Costello had a few questions regarding teacher certification and renewal in Alaska and I am hoping you can pass this on to someone who is familiar with the subject.  
Here are some of the questions our office has:

- How often are elementary school teachers required to renew their teaching certificate in Alaska?
  - All teachers (including those endorsed in Elementary Education) who hold an Initial teaching certificate must apply for a Professional teaching certificate within three years of the issue date of their Initial teaching certificate.
  - All teachers (including those endorsed in Elementary Education) who hold a Professional teaching certificate must renew their Professional teaching certificate every five years.
  - A few teachers have qualified for a Master teaching certificate by earning their National Board certification. Master certificates must be renewed every ten years.

- What does the renewal process entail? i.e. tests, continuing education courses?
  - No tests are currently required for renewal.
  - The four mandatory trainings as described in statutes must have been completed during the life of the certificate being renewed.
  - Six semester hours of coursework related to the educators endorsement areas or job assignment must be completed during the life of the certificate being renewed.
    - Three credits must be upper division coursework
    - Three credits can be one or a combination of the following:
      - Upper division coursework (300 level or above in the UA system)
      - Lower division coursework
      - Continuing education units (15 hours = 1 credit), or
      - Non-academic credit (15 hours = 1 credit)
- If a new requirement was made, for example: requiring all elementary teachers to take a reading instruction course, would something of this nature be included in the certificate renewal process? And if so, what would be the general timeline for having all elementary teachers in Alaska complete such a course?
  - Depending on how the timeline for the requirement was structured within the statute or regulation, it most likely would take between five and ten years for all elementary teachers in Alaska to satisfy the requirement.
    - Five years: From the effective date of the statute or regulation, require all individuals applying for or renewing their professional certificate to have taken the required reading course. {Unintended consequence: Educators who have been proactive and completed their six renewal credits prior to the effective date would have to complete an additional course to renew their certificate. Some educators who renew their certificate at the last minute would not be eligible for renewal as they would not have adequate time to completed the required course.}
    - Six years: Giving at least a year from the date the statute or regulation became effective for the new requirement to be mandatory for renewal and initial application for the professional would allow for educators (even those who had already satisfied the six credits requirement) a sufficient window of time to satisfy the new requirement. There would be one year after the effective date of the statute where individuals could renew or apply for the professional under the current rules.
    - Ten years: If an individual holds a professional certificate on the effective date of the statute or regulation, the individual is grandfathered in under the current renewal requirements. The new requirement would only apply to the certificates issued or renewed after the effective date of the statute or regulation.

For example, if a teacher held a Professional certificate that was valid for three years on the effective date of the law, she would renew her certificate in three years using the current requirements. The next professional certificate she would hold would be valid for five years, during which she would need to satisfy the new requirement. She would not need to address the new requirement for seven to eight years from the effective date of the law.

Note: If the Senator wanted to propose a statute of this nature, she may want to consider that not all elementary teachers are endorsed in elementary education. Elementary teachers may be endorsed in almost any area, including but not limited to: Special Education, English as a Second Language, Music, Physical Education, Early Childhood, Biology, English, Mathematics, etc. There are no statutory or regulatory requirements that restricts districts' authority to assign educators to the content area and grade level that the district believes is appropriate. As a rule, districts do make teacher assignments based on endorsement areas, but this is not consistently applied in all situations.

Any information relevant to these questions would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

[Katie McCall](#)

Intern for Senator Mia Costello

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