

LC003820

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS

Introduced By: Senators Acosta, Mack, Bissailon, Valverde, Zurier, DiPalma, Gallo, and  
McKenney  
Date Introduced: January 23, 2026  
Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

- 1           SECTION 1. Sections 16-11-2.3 and 16-11-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-11 entitled  
2   "Certification of Teachers [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]"  
3   are hereby amended to read as follows:
- 4           **16-11-2.3. Standardized testing — Issuance of certificates.**
- 5           (a) No person who obtained an initial certificate prior to January 8, 2002 shall be barred  
6   from certification under this chapter solely because of ~~his or her~~ the person's score on any  
7   standardized teacher's examination; provided, however, that ~~he or she~~ the person successfully  
8   completes an assessment, based on criteria established by the ~~board of regents for elementary and~~  
9   ~~secondary education~~ Rhode Island department of education (RIDE), in accordance with 34 CFR §  
10   200.56.
- 11          (b) The ~~board of regents for elementary and secondary~~ Rhode Island department of  
12   education may administer a written examination to prospective teachers seeking certification.
- 13          (c) Effective July 1, 2026, all currently certified teachers as of July 1, 2026, shall have their  
14   certifications automatically extended for three (3) or five (5) years, without fee or penalty. This  
15   shall include all teacher certifications issued by the department of education, including, but not  
16   limited to, emergency certifications with conditions.
- 17          (d) In order to promote teacher recruitment, for the three (3) year period from July 1, 2026,  
18   through to June 30, 2029 (the "period"), the Rhode Island department of education shall waive all  
19   fees to apply for a teacher initial certification for that period, and shall waive all Praxis examination

1     fees for that year period.

2                     **16-11-3. Certificates without examination.**

3             (a) The board of ~~regents for elementary and secondary~~ education may, in its discretion,  
4     issue certificates of qualification without examination to persons who may present evidence of  
5     qualification and shall comply with the regulations of the board. Provided, that any teacher who is  
6     certified in two (2) fields or subjects of science, other than general science, shall also be  
7     automatically certified in the field or subject of general science without the need for examination  
8     or other proof of qualifications in the subject of general science.

9             (b) Any teacher holding a valid Rhode Island teacher certification and who has at least  
10    three (3) years of certified teaching experience, shall be allowed to acquire an additional  
11    certification(s) through examination or content coursework so long as the teacher has a minimum  
12    of three (3) years of certified teaching experience.

13            SECTION 2. Chapter 16-11 of the General Laws entitled "Certification of Teachers [See  
14    Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended by adding  
15    thereto the following section:

16                     **16-11-11. Educator preparation programs.**

17            The Rhode Island department of elementary and secondary education shall review and  
18    revise as necessary its rules and regulations governing the licensure of teachers and administrators.  
19    The rules and regulations shall be revised so as to create and permit multiple pathways and  
20    flexibility in the credential requirements for both undergraduate and post-baccalaureate degrees to  
21    obtain teacher or administrator certification. In so promulgating these rules and regulations, or  
22    revisions thereto, the department may incorporate awarding credit for non-traditional classes,  
23    work/life experience that is deemed tantamount to formal classwork, and permitting teacher and  
24    administrator candidates to obtain course credit by demonstrating course competency through a test  
25    or other demonstration of competency so as to allow waiver of the course and to provide credit for  
26    the course.

27            SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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- 1           This act would extend teacher certifications without fee or penalty for three (3) or five (5)  
2   years for teachers who hold certifications as of July 1, 2026. This act would permit a teacher who  
3   has three (3) years of certified teaching experience, to acquire an additional certification through  
4   examination or content coursework. This act would also direct the department of elementary and  
5   secondary education to revise its regulations pertaining to certification to create multiple pathways  
6   to obtain teacher and administrator certification.
- 7           This act would take effect upon passage.

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