



Department of
Education

Educator Licensure

Educator Licensure Operating Procedures

Tennessee Department of Education | May 2025



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Pathways Into Teaching

Emergency Credentials: An Overview

Permits and endorsement exemptions (waivers) are emergency credentials issued on a yearly basis from July 1—June 30, enabling districts to fill critical vacancies for which an appropriately licensed and endorsed educator could not be recruited. Waivers enable placement of a *licensed* educator in courses outside of their current area(s) of endorsement, whereas permits enable placement of an unlicensed individual in a high-need teaching role.

For the most current information regarding emergency credential types, criteria, restrictions, and step-by-step application instructions, please consult the Department's [Emergency Credential Guidance](#).

Pathways to and through licensure

Tennessee offers a variety of educator license types: teacher (academic) licenses, occupational teacher licenses, school service personnel, postsecondary educator, JROTC, and Instructional Leader Licenses. For information related to each of these license types, including obtaining, renewing, advancing, and reactivation information, please see the [Licensure Guidance Documents](#) section of the Department's website.

Academic Transcripts

Academic transcripts are considered official, acceptable documentation for licensure transactions when received by the Department in the following circumstances:

- Uploaded directly to TNCompass by a TN State Board-approved EPP
- Submitted by the issuing institution through an electronic clearinghouse to Educator.Licensure@tn.gov
- Mailed in an envelope sealed by the issuing institution to the Educator Licensure Team, Andrew Johnson Tower, 9th Floor, 710 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, TN 37243. Please allow additional time for mailed transcripts to be scanned and uploaded into TNCompass.

Out-of-Country Academic Transcript Evaluation

Educators submitting transcripts from institutions outside of the U.S. must submit original, course-by-course transcript evaluations of all degrees held, accompanied by copies of the transcripts evaluated. General procedures, accepted evaluators, and licensure options are available within the [Out-of-Country Applicant Checklist](#)

Unofficial Academic Transcripts

Transcripts that are uploaded to TNCompass by any individual outside of the Educator Licensure Team or a TN State Board-approved EPP are considered unofficial and cannot be used for licensing purposes. However, unofficial transcripts are considered acceptable documentation when applying for professional development points (PDPs).

Professional Assessments

General Information

Official reports for qualifying scores on professional assessments may be required in order to obtain, renew, advance, or reactivate a license. To count towards licensure requirements, qualifying scores must be earned on the *current* assessments and test codes established by the [Tennessee State Board of Education](#) within the Professional Assessments for Tennessee Educators Policy 5.105. Score reports must be sent directly from the assessment administrator and will not be accepted from an educator, institution of higher education, or local or state education agency.

For additional information, including information related to pedagogical and content assessments necessary for candidates, please visit the State Board’s [Professional Assessment Policy](#) and the Department’s [Assessment Guidance Document](#).

End-of-Course Exam Compliance

T.C.A. § 49-6-6006 specifies that an educator **may not** teach a course required for graduation in which an end-of-course (EOC) examination is given unless the educator has a content-specific endorsement for that subject or the educator has demonstrated sufficient content knowledge in the course material by providing passing scores on a standardized or criterion-referenced test for the content area.

To comply with this law, all teachers of record for courses in which there is a state-level EOC exam must meet one of the following requirements:

- a. Hold the subject-specific endorsement to teach the course; **or**
- b. Pass the relevant content assessment(s) outlined in the [Professional Assessment Policy for Tennessee Educators 5.105](#) related to the endorsement(s) identified in the table below indicating sufficient content knowledge; **or**
- c. Hold a permit to allow an unlicensed educator to cover this assignment for the remainder of the current school year. For additional information, see [Emergency Credentials](#).

Course with an EOC	Applicable Endorsement(s)
Algebra I*, Integrated Math I*, Algebra II, Geometry, Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III	Mathematics 6-12 *A licensed educator can also teach Algebra I and Integrated Math I by obtaining the Algebra I employment standard. For additional details, see Algebra I .
Biology	Biology 6-12
English I & II	English 6-12
U.S. History and Geography	Geography 6-12 or History 6-12

Additional Resources

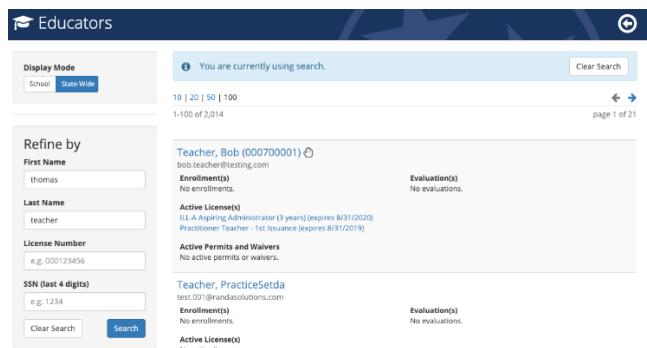
- Additional endorsement guidance for currently licensed Tennessee educators is available [here](#).
- Algebra I and Integrated Math I Employment Standards questions should be directed to Scott.Eddins@tn.gov.
- CLEP Exam information and registration are available on the College Board website ([here](#)).
- ETS Praxis assessments, qualifying scores, and registration for current Tennessee assessments are available [here](#).
- National Evaluation Series assessments, qualifying scores, and registration for current Tennessee assessments are available [here](#).

Priority Processing

Directors of schools may request priority processing of transactions for initial in-state, out-of-state, and reactivation transactions. This request must be made in TNCompass following the steps below.

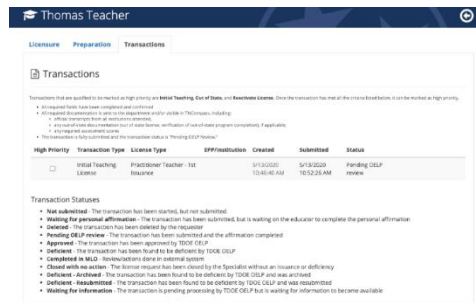
Requests for Priority Processing

Step 1: Search for the individual in TNCompass.



The screenshot shows the 'Educators' search interface. On the left, there are filters for 'Display Mode' (School, State Wide) and 'Refine by' (First Name, Last Name, License Number, SSN). The search results show two entries: 'Teacher, Bob (000700001)' and 'Teacher, PracticeSetda'. Each entry includes details like email, enrollment status, active licenses, and active permits.

Step 2: Navigate to the *Transactions* tab in the individual's profile and check the box next to the transaction for which you wish to request priority processing.



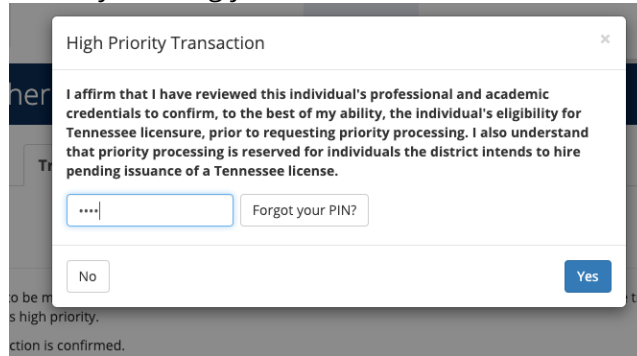
The screenshot shows the 'Thomas Teacher' profile page with the 'Transactions' tab selected. Below the tab are instructions for high priority transactions and a table of transactions. A checkbox is checked next to the first transaction. Below the table is a legend for transaction statuses.

High Priority	Transaction Type	License Type	SPF/Institution	Created	Submitted	Status
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Initial Teaching License	Practitioner Teacher - 1st	124404	5/13/2020 12:45:04 AM	5/13/2020 12:52:29 AM	Pending OELP review

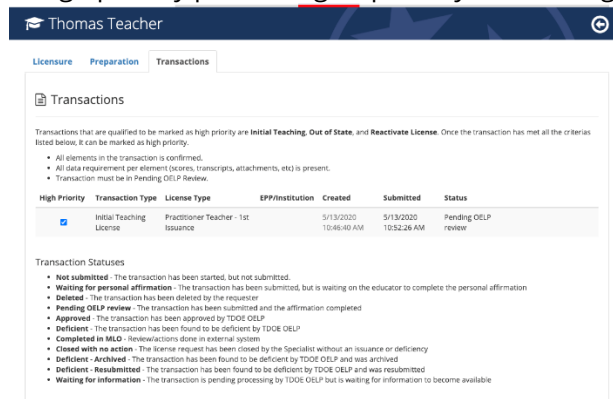
Transaction Statuses

- Not submitted:** The transaction has been started, but not submitted.
- Waiting for personal affirmation:** The transaction has been submitted, but is waiting on the educator to complete the personal affirmation.
- Delayed:** The transaction has been delayed by the requestor.
- Pending OELP review:** The transaction has been submitted and the affirmation completed.
- Approved:** The transaction has been approved by TDOE OELP.
- Deficient:** The transaction has been found to be deficient by TDOE OELP.
- Completed in MLD:** Non-regulatory done in external system.
- Closed with no action:** The license request has been closed by the Specialist without an issuance or deficiency.
- Deficient - Archived:** The transaction has been found to be deficient by TDOE OELP and was archived.
- Deficient - Resubmitted:** The transaction has been found to be deficient by TDOE OELP and was resubmitted.
- Waiting for information:** The transaction is pending processing by TDOE OELP but is waiting for information to become available.

Step 3: Complete the affirmation by entering your PIN and click Yes.



A high priority transaction is denoted by a blue check mark. If you no longer wish to have a transaction prioritized, please remove the high priority processing request by unchecking the box.



Provisional Special Education Endorsements

The State Board of Education approved an additional pathway for educators seeking to add a provisional special education endorsement to their license. This pathway allows educators to teach in a special education classroom for up to **three** years while working towards completing requirements for the continuously renewable version of the endorsement. To obtain this endorsement, a State Board-approved EPP must submit a transaction in TNCompass on the educator's behalf. In the transaction, the EPP must provide a recommendation for the endorsement and verify the following:

- a. Enrollment in a program of study for additional endorsement in the specialty area, **and**
- b. Assignment of an appropriately-endorsed mentor in the area in which the candidate is seeking additional endorsement.

During the three-year validity period of the endorsement, educators *must* complete a preparation program and submit qualifying scores on the required professional assessments. If an educator does not complete these requirements, the endorsement will become inactive. Educators who are completing traditional post-baccalaureate programs may continue to be issued the full endorsement upon completion of the program (additional mentoring requirements do not apply to these programs).

The following special education endorsements may be added through the provisional pathway:

Provisional Special Populations Endorsement	Endorsement Code
Provisional Early Development and Learning pre-K-K	199
Provisional Special Education Comprehensive K-12	195
Provisional Special Education Early Childhood pre-K-3	193
Provisional Special Education Gifted pre-K-12	198
Provisional Special Education Hearing pre-K-12	197
Provisional Special Education Interventionist 6-12	191
Provisional Special Education Interventionist K-8	190
Provisional Special Education Vision pre-K-12	196

Mathematics 6-10 Endorsement

To help meet the demand for qualified educators to teach Algebra I, the State Board of Education created an endorsement in mathematics 6-10 (endorsement code 2002). In addition to middle grades mathematics courses, educators who hold this endorsement are permitted to teach secondary mathematics courses, including Algebra 1, Geometry, and Integrated Math 1 & 2).

Initial In-State Licensure

In-state educator candidates completing approved programs in mathematics 6-10, as well as those completing programs in mathematics 6-8 and mathematics 6-12, may be eligible to receive the mathematics 6-10 endorsement, provided all criteria are met. Candidates should communicate directly with their educator preparation provider about program requirements.

Out-of-State Licensure

Educators who hold an active license in a state other than Tennessee with an aligned endorsement may receive the Mathematics 6-10 endorsement upon initial licensure. Educators who receive a Practitioner 1st Issuance license based on possession of an initial-level out-of-state license must pass the appropriate assessment (as indicated in [Professional Assessments for Educator Policy 5.105](#)) in order to qualify for their next renewal or advancement.

Reactivation

Educators who hold an expired license with endorsement in mathematics 6-12 (or have an expired mathematics 6-12 endorsement on an otherwise active license) may provide qualifying scores (as indicated in [Professional Assessments for Educator Policy 5.105](#)) on the NES Middle and Secondary Mathematics assessment (105) to reactivate and receive the Mathematics 6-10 endorsement in lieu of the Mathematics 6-12 endorsement. Please note that licensure reactivation also requires proof of program completion, per state board [Educator Licensure Rule 0520-02-03](#).

Substitute Teaching and Unfilled Vacancies

Substitute Teachers: 20 days

Educators must hold a valid Tennessee teaching license to teach in a public school, and educators without a valid teaching license cannot be staffed or evaluated in TNCompass. Substitute teachers are allowed by law to serve in their position for 20 consecutive days without a license.

ESSA-required 20-Day Parent Notification

In Tennessee, in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, all Title I schools are required to provide timely notice to parents of students who have been assigned to or taught by a teacher for four or more consecutive weeks when the teacher does not meet applicable state licensure requirements (*including professional qualifications developed by the LEA in alignment with an approved charter or strategic waiver application*) at the grade level(s) and subject area(s) in which the teacher has been assigned (*ESSA Sec. 1112 (e)(1)(B)(ii)*). In Tennessee, notification requirements apply to all educators in all LEA schools/programs. Notifications must be made within 10 business days following the four consecutive weeks. In compliance with ESSA requirements, parents must be notified of a teacher's professional qualifications under the following circumstances:

Public LEAs

When students have been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state licensure requirements at the grade level(s) and subject area(s) in which the teacher has been assigned.

Charter/Strategic Waiver LEAs

When students have been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet LEA professional qualification requirements in alignment with approved state licensure requirements for special education teachers at the grade level(s) and subject area(s) in which the teacher has been assigned. It is possible for a teacher to meet charter/strategic waiver LEA professional qualification requirements and not meet in-field requirements. In this circumstance, 20 Day Notification is not required.

- *Clearance certificate requirements are not subject to 20 Day Notification.*
- 20-day notifications are not required for paraprofessionals and substitute teachers.
 - Paraprofessionals: ESSA does not include paraprofessionals as educators for whom 20-day notifications must be sent.

In Tennessee, notifications must occur within 10 business days following the four consecutive weeks and, for verification purposes, notifications must contain:

- Day/month/year of notification
- Name of the teacher who has not met professional qualification requirements
- Name of the LEA and/or school/program
- Statement that the teacher has not met state certification OR LEA charter/strategic waiver professional qualification requirements for the grade level(s) and/or subject area(s) in which the teacher is assigned. Grade level and/or subject area must be identified.

In Tennessee, notification requirements apply to ALL educators in all LEA schools/programs. The LEA must maintain records of notifications that meet the above requirements.

Best Practices for 20-Day Parent Notification

ESSA does not prescribe the exact method of dissemination for notifications. In Tennessee, the following are considered best practices when notifying parents; a sample is provided on the following page.

- Develop written procedures for compliance which include a timeline and person, by position, responsible for verifying notification content, verifying dissemination of notification, and maintaining notification documentation.
- Notify parents in a format such that all parents have the opportunity to receive the information.
- Notify parents, to the extent practicable, in a language that they may understand.
- Ensure the notification includes a point of contact information by position, school/program, or LEA name.

Parent Notification Letter Template

To be issued if a teacher has taught a student for four or more consecutive weeks and does not meet state and/or LEA professional qualifications.

[Print on Letterhead]

[Month, Day, Year]

Dear Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s):

In Tennessee, in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, all Title I schools are required to provide timely notice to parents of students who have been assigned to or taught by a teacher, for four or more consecutive weeks, when the teacher does not meet applicable state licensure requirements at the grade level(s) and subject area(s) in which the teacher has been assigned. *ESSA Sec. 1112 (e)(1)(B)(ii)*

We are notifying you that your child's [insert grade-if applicable-and course] teacher, [educator name], does not meet state and/or district professional qualifications. [Insert name of LEA or school] is working with this teacher to ensure that the necessary steps are taken in order to meet these requirements.

[Insert educator name] has [insert qualifications, such as the name of the degree the teacher earned and the college from which it was earned] and has taught in a local school for [insert number, if relevant] years.

We will closely monitor this class to ensure students are receiving adequate instruction. However, if you have additional questions or concerns about your child's educational progress or teacher, you may contact me.

Sincerely,
Name, Title
Telephone
Email

Screening Licensed and Non-Licensed Applicants

For over 25 years, the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) has helped keep students safe by maintaining the [NASDTEC Educator Identification Clearinghouse](#). *The Clearinghouse* is used by the educator certification/licensure agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense schools, and U.S. Territories to screen out-of-state licensure applicants to identify those who have had an adverse action taken against their certificates. The Clearinghouse is now available to local school districts as well.

Since most adverse actions taken against an educator's license are not prosecuted as criminal offenses, the educator's misconduct may not show up in a traditional criminal background check. By including the Clearinghouse in its screening of licensed and non-licensed applicants, a school district can make more fully informed hiring decisions. A brief overview video about *The Clearinghouse* is available [here](#).

Employment Standards

Employment standards allow an educator to fill specific positions without obtaining a full endorsement. By meeting the criteria outlined in the State Board of Education's Employment Standards rule, educators can qualify to teach courses such as Algebra I, Gifted Education, Personal Finance, courses with an EOC, and Year 1 CTE courses. Additionally, certain district-level positions have employment standard criteria. For current information about available employment standard options and specific requirements, visit [Rules of the State Board of Education 0520-02-06](#).

Endorsements

District & School Endorsement Flexibility

Teaching One Course Out of Area of Endorsement

Tennessee districts and schools have the option to staff a licensed educator to teach up to two sections of one course outside of their endorsement area. This flexibility cannot be used to cover elementary P.E., special education, or EOC courses.

Flexibility – Grade Span of Endorsement/In School

Tennessee districts and schools may exercise limited flexibility rooted in the current, active license and endorsement(s) for an educator without use of an emergency credential. Educators may teach one (1) grade above and one (1) grade below in the same licensure and endorsement area on an active license. **The flexibilities include, but are not limited to:**

Grade-level of Endorsement Held	Flexibility to Teach
K-5	Any course in Pre-K through grade 6
6-8	Courses in grade 5 and grade 9 in the same content area as the 6-8 endorsement
6-12	Courses in grade 5 in the same content area as the 6-12 endorsement. <i>Note: There is no grade-level applicable above grade 12.</i>
7-12	Courses in grade 6 in the same content area as the 7-12 endorsement <i>Note: There is no grade-level applicable above grade 12.</i>

Note: Flexibilities may NOT be used across license types (School Service Personnel license→courses that require an Academic endorsement; Academic courses→Occupational courses, etc.). Additionally, any active programmatic statutes, rules, or policies related to content areas surpass any endorsement flexibilities.

Additional Endorsements

Educators with a full and valid license may add additional endorsements through one (1) of the options outlined in [State Board of Education Educator Licensure Policy 5.502](#).

Additional Endorsements Added by Coursework OR Assessment Only

Educators may apply for additional endorsements by coursework or content assessments only for each endorsement an educator is seeking to add if all the criteria below are met. To qualify for the one of these option, educators must:

1. have completed an approved educator preparation program;
2. hold an active Tennessee educator license; **and**
3. have completed additional endorsement coursework OR obtained qualifying scores on all state-required content assessments that are:
 - a. submitted to the Department directly by the assessment administrator (e.g., ETS or Pearson); **and**
 - b. aligned with the requirements outlined in the State Board's [Professional Assessment Policy 5.105](#);

The following table lists endorsements that may be added by coursework **or** assessment only. Educators seeking an additional endorsement not listed in the table below must complete a qualifying endorsement program with applicable assessment(s) or possess an active out-of-state license with an aligned endorsement area.

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Endorsement Held <i>(Category)</i>	Add by coursework only OR assessment only	Integrated Early Childhood and Special Education (Birth-K; Pre-K-3)	Early Childhood Education (Pre-K-K; Pre-K-3)	Elementary Grades – Core Academic (K-5, K-6)	Middle Grades – Core Academic (4-8; 6-8)	Middle and Secondary Grades – Core Academic (6-12; 7-12)	Middle and Secondary Grades – World Languages (Pre-K-12; 6-12)	College, Career, and Technical Education – Academic (K-12; 6-12)	Visual and Performing Arts (K-12)	Special Populations <i>(English as a Second Language K-8; 6-12; K-12)</i>	Special Populations <i>(Interventionist; Modified, Comprehensive, Vision, Hearing, Gifted)</i>	Health and Physical Education (K-8; 6-12; K-12)	Specialists (Pre-K-12)
Integrated Early Childhood and Special Education (Birth-K; Pre-K-3)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Early Childhood Education (Pre-K-K; Pre-K-3)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Elementary Grades – Core Academic (K-5, K-6)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Middle Grades – Core Academic (4-8; 6-8)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Middle and Secondary Grades – Core Academic (6-12; 7-12)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Middle and Secondary Grades – World Languages (Pre-K-12; 6-12)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
College, Career, and Technical Education – Academic (K-12; 6-12)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Visual and Performing Arts (K-12)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Operating Procedures

Endorsement Held (Category)	Add by coursework only OR assessment only	Integrated Early Childhood and Special Education (Birth-K; Pre-K-3)	Early Childhood Education (Pre-K-K; Pre-K-3)	Elementary Grades – Core Academic (K-5, K-6)	Middle Grades – Core Academic (4-8; 6-8)	Middle and Secondary Grades – Core Academic (6-12; 7-12)	Middle and Secondary Grades – World Languages (Pre-K-12; 6-12)	College, Career, and Technical Education – Academic (K-12; 6-12)	Visual and Performing Arts (K-12)	Special Populations (English as a Second Language K-8; 6-12; K-12)	Special Populations (Interventionist; Modified, Comprehensive, Vision, Hearing, Gifted)	Health and Physical Education (K-8; 6-12; K-12)	Specialists (Pre-K-12)
Special Populations (English as a Second Language)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Special Populations (Interventionist; Modified, Comprehensive, Vision, Hearing, Gifted)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Health and Physical Education (K-8; 6-12; K-12)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Specialists (Pre-K-12)			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

Experience and Staffing

Experience Verification

Experience earned by teaching in a Tennessee public school is entered electronically in TNCompass by the district at the end of each school year. It then appears under the *Experience* section on the *Licensure* tab under the educator profile in TNCompass.

In the event that experience must be verified for the purpose of licensure advancement prior to the annual district update in TNCompass, or if data was incorrectly reported for previous years, educators may request that the district complete the [Experience Verification Form](#). Once completed by the district, the educator must upload the form to their educator profile in TNCompass on the *Licensure* tab, as an attachment.

Please note that the information provided on this form will not change what is reflected in the Experience section of the educator's TNCompass profile. However, analysts will be able to access the documentation for the purpose of experience verification, and the department recommends that any additional experience added via this form is considered by districts when calculating current salary, pursuant to any local policies.

Staffing Assignments

Staffing changes, including changes to the historical staffing record, must be completed at the district level by a user with evaluation administrator or superintendent designee permissions. Educators with inaccuracies in their staffing records must reach out to the district for these corrections. Staffing assignments, including historical staffing changes, will not be reflected in the experience record.