

CHAPTER 327

AN ACT concerning teacher certification and supplementing chapter 26 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

C.18A:26-2.32 Paraprofessional educator preparation pathway.

1. a. The State Board of Education shall authorize a paraprofessional educator preparation pathway to expedite the teacher certification of persons who are employed to work in a school district as a paraprofessional or an instructional assistant pursuing a certificate of eligibility with advanced standing in a specific endorsement area.

b. The Commissioner of Education shall develop recommendations for the paraprofessional educator preparation pathway authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section and shall submit the recommendations to the State Board of Education. In developing the recommendations, the commissioner shall consult with representatives of the education community including, but not limited to, the New Jersey Education Association, the New Jersey School Boards Association, the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the New Jersey Public Charter Schools Association, the American Federation of Teachers New Jersey, the New Jersey Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Association of Schools and Agencies for the Handicapped (ASAH), and the State Professional Learning Committee.

c. In addition to any other requirements established by the State Board of Education, the pathway authorized pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall include the following:

(1) a candidate's direct classroom service while employed in a school district as a paraprofessional or instructional assistant, which shall meet the clinical practice requirements for the certificate of eligibility with advanced standing in the endorsement area they are pursuing, provided that the candidate is currently employed to work in a school district as a paraprofessional or instructional assistant and is providing direct classroom service, including tutoring, under the supervision of a mentor cooperating teacher who is teaching in the endorsement area being sought by the paraprofessional. Under these conditions, the direct classroom service shall earn the candidate full credit, if appropriate towards the clinical practice requirements found in N.J.A.C. 6A:9A et seq.;

(2) a requirement that the school district in which the candidate is currently authorized to work as a paraprofessional or instructional assistant make every reasonable effort to place the candidate in a classroom setting in the endorsement area the paraprofessional is seeking and with a certified educator who meets the requirements for a cooperating teacher at N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-4.4, so the paraprofessional may perform any required student teaching in the school district while, if possible, continuing employment as a paraprofessional or an instructional assistant; and

(3) allow educator preparation program providers to submit for approval by the Department of Education, preparation programs specifically for the paraprofessional educator preparation pathway.

2. Subsection b. of section 1 of this act shall take effect immediately. Subsections a. and c. of section 1 shall take effect upon the promulgation of regulations by the State Board of Education, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), necessary to effectuate the provisions of these sections. Requires State Board of Education to authorize alternate route to expedite teacher certification of persons employed as paraprofessionals in school districts.

Approved January 16, 2024.