

Public Notice

Education

State Board of Education

Notice of Action on Petition for Rulemaking

New Jersey Educator Preparation Programs

Certificate of Eligibility Educator Preparation Programs for Documented Areas of Teacher Shortage

N.J.A.C. 6A:9A

Petitioner: Robert Goodman, Ed.D., Executive Director, New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning Inc. (NJCTL).

Take notice that on January 6, 2026, the State Board of Education (State Board) received a petition for rulemaking from the above petitioner, requesting the State Board adopt new rules at N.J.A.C. 6A:9A to restore rules as they existed at N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 prior to being readopted with amendments in 2023.

The petitioner sought to adopt former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6, which allowed certificate of eligibility (CE) educator preparation programs to be developed to serve school districts to place teachers in documented areas of teacher shortage. The former section also allowed CE educator preparation programs to be established by New Jersey colleges and universities, educational organizations, or other entities approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Education (Commissioner). The former section further established the requirements for CE educator preparation programs for documented areas of teacher shortage to be approved by the Commissioner and for candidates seeking admission into the programs.

The section was amended effective May 1, 2023 (see 55 N.J.R. 843(a)) to replace the section heading with “Add-on endorsement programs for mathematics and science.” The Department of Education (Department) stated in the notice of proposal (see 54 N.J.R. 2242(a))

that the former heading did not capture the intent of the specialized programs, which were designed for certified teachers to gain content knowledge in high-need subject areas and not for new teachers to seek a CE through the existing pathway. As part of the 2023 readoption with amendments at N.J.A.C. 6A:9A, the Department changed the purpose of N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 to allow existing approved educator preparation programs within New Jersey colleges and universities, educational organizations, or other entities approved by the Commissioner to establish add-on endorsement programs designed to prepare current certified teachers to earn a CE in mathematics and/or science.

The petitioner indicated that NJCTL is approved, pursuant to former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6, to operate educator preparation programs in the shortage areas of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology through December 31, 2027, and has current educators in the program.

The petitioner requested that the former rules be reinstated — as a section at N.J.A.C. 6A:9A of the Department's choosing — to allow NJCTL to continue to operate its programs beyond December 31, 2027. The petitioner stated that reinstating the former rules would enable NJCTL to create additional programs and would encourage other institutions of higher education to develop documented shortage area educator preparation programs. The petitioner also states that these programs provide a professional pathway to becoming a teacher that, otherwise, is unavailable to participants pursuant to the current rule.

A notice acknowledging receipt of the petition was published in the February 17, 2026, New Jersey Register at 58 N.J.R. 1088(b). A notice of action stating additional time was needed to deliberate about this petition was published in the New Jersey Register on April 6, 2026, at 58 N.J.R. 1401(b). The Department needed additional time to evaluate the program-level impact of reinstating the former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 by examining both outcomes and equity across CE

educator preparation programs and to assess whether reinstating the former rules would create unintended inequities between CE educator preparation program models.

Another notice of action stating additional time was needed to continue deliberations about this petition was published in the New Jersey Register on July 6, 2026, at 58 N.J.R. 1773(c). The Department requested, and the petitioner consented to, an additional 60 days to review and analyze the additional information and data pertaining to the programs approved pursuant to the former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 that the Department requested and obtained from the petitioner during the 90-day deliberation period.

As a result of the additional deliberation, the Department has determined that granting the petitioner's request would result in uneven application of standards across educator preparation providers and undermine the comparability of educator preparation pathways.

Existing Instructional Certificate Requirements and Flexibilities

New Jersey's existing requirements for instructional certificates and related endorsements are intentionally structured to establish a clear sequencing between content knowledge and pedagogical preparation. Statute and regulation require candidates to demonstrate subject-matter competency first — typically through passage of the appropriate State test(s) of subject matter knowledge, which is also referred to as the Praxis II test — prior to entering formal preparation because subject-matter preparation is foundational to teacher readiness. Required content coursework and/or demonstrated content mastery are intended to ensure that candidates enter educator preparation programs with a solid grounding in the disciplines they will teach and that programs focus on developing instructional practice rather than remediating foundational content knowledge. Within this structure, educator preparation programs are designed to build pedagogical skills on top of that foundation, not to replace or redefine how core academic content is developed or assessed. This sequencing is intentional as content knowledge and

pedagogy serve distinct purposes, and each must be developed and assessed independently to ensure candidates are adequately prepared for teaching.

The Department recognizes that N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6, as amended in 2023, permits limited flexibility in how required content preparation can be satisfied for a limited group of candidates. Specifically, add-on endorsement programs in mathematics and science ensure that candidates already hold a CEAS or standard instructional certificate and demonstrate at least two years of successful teaching, while meeting minimum content credit requirements or equivalent hours. Although the equivalent hours may include content-based pedagogy, the flexibility offered pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 does not eliminate the expectation that candidates demonstrate subject-matter readiness and does not authorize preparation models in which pedagogical instruction serves as the primary vehicle for content acquisition.

Additionally, the statutorily authorized limited CE/limited CEAS pilot program at N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-8A.1 provides flexibility by waiving one of the existing requirements, while establishing other controls and preserving the overall structure and core safeguards of the instructional certificate framework. The limited CE/limited CEAS pilot program does not establish a model in which content mastery is developed concurrently with pedagogy as a substitute for demonstrating content readiness at entry.

NJCTL Programs Approved Pursuant to Former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6

NJCTL is the only provider offering an educator preparation program pursuant to the former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6; no other provider is approved and operating an educator preparation program that integrates content with pedagogy.

NJCTL's alternate route for non-majors programs in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and biology are designed as a three-phase pathway intended to serve individuals who were denied, or

otherwise do not currently meet requirements for, a CE and, therefore, cannot enter a traditional CE educator preparation program.

In Phase 1, candidates can complete NJCTL graduate-level content coursework to build subject-matter understanding and prepare to pass the required appropriate State test(s) of subject matter knowledge, attain 30 content credits, and/or attain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher to meet instructional certificate requirements, if applicable. Coursework completed in Phase 1 may later count toward instructional hour requirements for the CE educator preparation program. Candidates cannot begin the required pre-professional experience or proceed through the CE pathway until they meet all CE eligibility requirements.

In Phase 2, candidates who have obtained a CE complete the required 50 hours of pre-professional experience and begin seeking employment in a school district. Phase 2 is also where NJCTL's alternate route programs for qualified majors begins. Essentially, the non-qualified and qualified candidates merge together at this point in the phased program design.

In Phase 3, candidates complete the remaining program coursework and earn a master's degree. After securing employment and successfully completing the State's requirements for a provisional certificate, candidates can become eligible for a standard certificate.

Phase 1 is designed to prepare candidates to effectively teach NJCTL's "alternative program coursework in lieu of the courses required for endorsement" as a teacher of record, rather than exclusively building content knowledge and deep conceptual understanding of the subject matter. The alternative coursework is also used as part of the program's later phases.

NJCTL has also developed complementary high school curricula through its Progressive Mathematics Initiative (PMI) and Progressive Science Initiative (PSI). Courses in both the qualified and non-qualified majors programs are designed for candidates to learn the specific content and pedagogy that is necessary to deliver NJCTL's proprietary coursework.

Alternative Coursework in Lieu of Required Coursework

The prior model developed pursuant to former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 called for content-based alternative coursework in lieu of required coursework. When educator preparation programs integrate or blend content acquisition with pedagogical training for candidates who have not met minimum content thresholds, the programs depart from the design and intent of the Department's current instructional certification system by shifting toward remediation of academic content, rather than professional preparation and the required deep conceptual understanding of core content.

Allowing alternative coursework in lieu of required baccalaureate or graduate-level core content preparation also introduces variability in candidate readiness. Substituting prescribed subject-matter coursework with provider-designed alternatives introduces variability in how content knowledge is defined, delivered, and verified. Reliance on provider-designed subject-matter coursework creates challenges for maintaining consistency, comparability, and rigor across programs, particularly in content-specific teaching fields where depth, coherence, and disciplinary understanding are essential.

These concerns are amplified when alternative coursework is embedded within pedagogical training that is closely tied to a specific proprietary high school curriculum model. In such cases, preparation may shift from developing broad subject-matter understanding to learning how to implement a particular set of instructional materials. While this approach may provide candidates with structured, practice-oriented experiences, it risks narrowing the scope of their preparation, especially if it is effectively serving as a substitute for independent content study. School districts across the State have flexibility and autonomy in selecting and adopting their local curricula and instructional materials, which may present issues for candidates who

attempt to transition into new school districts or whose school districts adopt new curricula at any point.

This has important implications for candidates who enter educator preparation programs without a strong background in the content area. For these individuals, the absence of a robust, standalone content foundation can result in an overreliance on the particular curriculum as their primary source of knowledge. Rather than developing a deep, conceptual understanding of the discipline, candidates may learn to follow prescribed lessons, sequences, and materials. This can lead to a more procedural form of teaching, where instruction is tied to the structure of the curriculum rather than grounded in flexible, internalized content expertise. As a result, the limited data on candidate outcomes suggests that candidates may be less prepared to:

- Diagnose and respond to student misconceptions;
- Adjust or differentiate instruction in real time;
- Make meaningful connections across topics within the discipline;
- Evaluate and adapt instructional materials independently; and
- Respond to revisions made to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards – Mathematics and/or Science that must be incorporated into curriculum and reflected in instruction.

Over time, this can also affect candidates' confidence and professional growth. Without a strong foundation in the underlying content, candidates may come to view effective teaching as dependent on a specific curriculum rather than as a function of their own subject-matter expertise and instructional judgment.

The Department's concerns extend beyond any individual provider and reflect broader issues that were permitted pursuant to the former N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-5.6, which enabled educator preparation programs to rely heavily on a single curricular system as the primary vehicle for both

content acquisition and instructional training. While such models may provide candidates with a structured pathway into teaching, they may also limit opportunities to develop deep, transferable content knowledge and independent instructional decision-making. For candidates entering preparation without substantial prior content expertise, this structure can reinforce dependence on a particular curriculum as both the source of knowledge and the method of instruction. As a result, candidates may be less prepared to adapt their teaching across different curricula, student populations, and educational settings. The NJCTL program illustrates how these broader regulatory concerns may manifest in practice, highlighting the need for preparation programs that build both content mastery and flexible pedagogical skills.

While structured curricula like PSI and PMI can be valuable tools—particularly for supporting novice candidates—they are most effective when they complement, rather than replace, strong content preparation. Ensuring that all candidates, especially those without prior subject-matter backgrounds, develop deep, transferable content knowledge is critical to maintaining the integrity of the instructional certificate framework and supporting effective teaching across diverse instructional settings.

Conclusion

Program models that systematically combine content and pedagogy for candidates who have not yet demonstrated subject-matter competency are not aligned with the existing regulations or with established practices across approved educator preparation programs. Expanding this approach beyond the statutorily authorized limited CE/limited CEAS pilot program, or the limited authorization for add-on endorsements in mathematics and science, would represent a substantial departure from New Jersey’s current instructional certificate framework and could result in candidates progressing through preparation without a consistent or verifiable foundation in the subject areas they are preparing to teach.

Reinstating former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 would permit the integration of content and pedagogy within a single pathway for a specific educator preparation program provider and would reintroduce a model that is inconsistent with the existing structure of New Jersey's instructional certificate framework. Maintaining a uniform framework ensures that all candidates meet consistent entry requirements, preserves educator preparation program integrity, and upholds the Department's commitment to preparing educators who are both knowledgeable in their subject areas and fully prepared for effective instruction.

The Department has determined that restoring the former N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-5.6 would not support coherence among instructional certificate requirements, would not ensure equitable standards for candidates, and, instead, would reintroduce structural concerns that were intentionally narrowed by the amendments adopted in 2023.

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, after due consideration pursuant to law, the petitioner's request is hereby denied.