

A Career Guide for the Immigrant Professional

BECOMING A TEACHER

in Pennsylvania



Welcoming
Center *for*
NEW PENNSYLVANIANS

*Connecting immigrants, employers,
and communities*

This Career Guide for the Immigrant Professional includes a job description, job prospects, salary ranges, potential employers, and the certification process needed for entering the teaching profession.

The guide will cover the logistical information that you will need to prepare for a teaching profession in Pennsylvania and the seven steps to apply for your Pennsylvania teaching certification if you want to work in the public school system. In addition to reading this guide, you should seek a mentor for professional advice and to discuss the specific path you wish to take as a teacher in the United States.

Even if you have previously taught at a school in your home country, you will need to follow the guidelines found at the end of this Career Guide if you want to teach in the public school system in Pennsylvania. The certification process will take some time and will require you to take certain examinations and pay certain fees. While you are taking these steps, you may want to consider finding a survival-level job or look for alternative opportunities in your field. You will also find other options listed in this guide where you can use your skills in an educational environment without getting your public school certification.

NOTE:

Certified and non-certified teachers.

Pennsylvania has strict rules about which teachers need to be certified. Please see Sections D&E on pages 2 and 3 for more information.

A JOB DESCRIPTION

What does a teacher do in the United States?

Teachers work with students to help them develop intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Preschool teachers instruct students under the age of 5 in small group settings on basic social skills, language development, and simple math and counting. Kindergarten teachers generally teach students ages 4-6 in the basic lessons of speech, letters, numbers, and science and nature awareness.¹ Elementary school teachers teach students basic academic, social, and formative skills. Middle school teachers teach students one or more subjects at the middle school level. Secondary (high school) school teachers instruct students in one or more subjects at the secondary level, such as English, mathematics, chemistry or a foreign language. There are also specialized jobs in education such as speech therapists, reading specialists, guidance counselors, librarians, and special education teachers which also require specific skill sets, degrees, and often additional certifications.

Teachers in the United States generally work a nine- to ten-month school year beginning around the end of August and ending around the beginning of June. They usually have the summers off and many teachers spend this time tutoring, teaching summer school classes, traveling, working part-time, or preparing their lessons for the next school year. Most teachers work in school classrooms. Class size can vary depending on the type of school and school district.

B JOB PROSPECTS

What are my job prospects as a teacher in Pennsylvania?¹

Employment of teachers in Pennsylvania is expected to grow from approximately 165,010 in 2004 to approximately 174,810 in 2014. Teachers can expect about 4,725 total annual openings in 2014. Job prospects should be best in inner city and rural areas because these areas have more difficulty finding enough teachers. The projected number of jobs available in Pennsylvania in 2014 will be:²

Teacher Type	Openings Per Year (2014)	Projected Total (2014)
Preschool	424	18,410
Kindergarten	80	6,050
Elementary	1,687	68,130
Middle	678	24,870
Secondary	1,856	57,350

¹ Pennsylvania Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006 Edition. PA Department of Labor & Industry. <http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/paooh/5-teachers.pdf>

² Pennsylvania Career Guide 2007-2008. PA Department of Labor & Industry. http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/carguide/CG_07-08_Part_2.pdf. pgs. 35, 36

C SALARY RANGE

What kind of salary can I expect?³

Salaries vary widely depending upon the school where you teach. Public schools often pay more than private schools. Teachers may receive additional pay for coaching sports or leading extracurricular activities like student council or a student-interest club like a math club or world affairs club.

Teacher Type	Pennsylvania Entry-Level Wage	Pennsylvania Average Wage
Preschool	\$14,800	\$21,710
Kindergarten	\$31,170	\$49,490
Elementary	\$32,590	\$50,470
Middle	\$35,760	\$53,010
Secondary	\$33,530	\$50,320

D POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Who employs teachers?

Teachers have many options and may work for a number of institutions:

Public school districts, such as the School District of Philadelphia or the Lower Merion School District. You need to be certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to teach in the public school districts.

Private elementary, middle and secondary schools, such as the Philadelphia Archdiocese Catholic schools and independent private schools like William Penn Charter School and Germantown Academy. Some private schools are religiously affiliated, while others are non-religious. Some may be single-sex institutions and others are co-educational, meaning they teach both boys and girls. You do not necessarily need to be certified by the Pennsylvania Board of Education to teach in private schools.

Tutoring and test preparation centers, such as Sylvan Learning Centers and Kaplan Test Preparation Centers.

Child day care centers

Religious organizations, such as synagogues and churches that hold religious education or language courses.

3 Pennsylvania Career Guide 2007-2008. PA Department of Labor & Industry. http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/carguide/CG_07-08_Part_2.pdf. pgs. 35, 36

E CERTIFICATION

Do I need to be certified to teach?

As you begin to explore the field of teaching in Pennsylvania, you must decide whether you want to become certified. **If you are planning to teach in Pennsylvania's public schools, by law you must have a teaching certificate.** Some private schools may require a teaching certificate as well. Acquiring your teacher certification may take a few years. If you want to become certified, please see the section at the end of this career guide which outlines the steps you need to take to become certified in Pennsylvania. We also recommend that you begin working in the field of teaching while you are completing the steps of becoming certified. See section H, on the following page, to learn about employment opportunities in the field that do not require teacher certification.

For more information, you can also contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation, 717-787-3356 or <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us>.

F BACKGROUND CHECKS

The state of Pennsylvania requires that all persons who wish to teach or work in the public or private school system (including teachers, student teachers, librarians, janitors, administrators, cafeteria employees, office personnel, and others) and who will have direct contact with students must undergo three separate background checks. These are:⁴

1. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records Check (Act 34).
Applies to individuals hired after January 1, 1986.
2. Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History Clearance (Act 151).
3. Federal Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) in a manner prescribed by the Department of Education.⁵

Note: Total cost for all three background checks is about \$60. Be aware that they may take 30 days or more to complete. Some teaching jobs will require you to get your own clearances, while others will assist you with the process. Even if you received an FBI clearance in your immigration process, you will need to repeat the process.

G CREDENTIAL EVALUATION

If you received your degree from a university outside the United States, you may need to have a credential evaluation organization determine the equivalent degree in the United States. Many schools, both public and private, will need to know if your degree matches their requirements. If you decide to get an evaluation, World Education Services is a reputable organization that provides this service.

World Education Services

Bowling Green Station
P.O. Box 5087
New York, NY 10274-5087
PHONE: 212-966-6311
FAX: 212-739-6100
WEB: www.wes.org

⁴ "The State of Pennsylvania Background Clearance Page." Pennsylvania Department of Education.
<http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=13&q=125828&teachingNav=119141&teachingNav=119041>

⁵ Please see: <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=13&q=128075> for additional information if you have any questions regarding background clearance.

H JOBS IN EDUCATION

What are some positions in the field of education that do not require a teaching certificate?⁶

There are many ways of working in the field of education without becoming a certified teacher.

The following table provides a list of such positions with their respective salary ranges, responsibilities, and requirements. **Please note that all of these positions will require criminal background checks.**

Position	Salary Range	Responsibilities	Minimum Qualifications
Tutor	\$20 - \$70 an hour	Assist a variety of students with individual subjects, homework, and standardized test preparation. May work freelance or for Sylvan Learning Center, Kaplan Test Prep, etc. This is typically a part-time position.	Typically a Bachelor's degree or higher
Teacher Assistant (also called teacher's aide or paraeducator)	\$15,200 - \$22,200	Perform instructional duties and deliver direct services to students or parents. Serve in a position for which a teacher or another professional has ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of educational programs and services. This can often be a part-time position.	High school diploma or GED; often required to have previous experience working with children
Adult Literacy, Remedial Education and GED Teacher/Instructor	\$26,600 - \$45,400	Teach or instruct out-of-school youths and adults in remedial education classes, preparatory classes for the General Educational Development test, literacy, or English as a Second Language. Teaching may take place in a school, or in another venue such as a nonprofit organization, church, library, shelter, etc.	Bachelor's or higher degree, plus work experience; strong communication and interpersonal skills
Teacher (in private schools)	\$36,000 - \$61,000	Help students to develop intellectually, physically, and emotionally. Lead classes and instruct students in academic disciplines.	Bachelor's degree or Master's degree
Training and Development Manager	\$53,300 - \$94,700	Plan, direct, or coordinate the training and development activities and staff of an organization.	Bachelor's or higher degree, plus extensive work experience

Other positions that you may consider that also require skills related to teaching include counselors, social workers, childcare workers, coaches, public relations specialists, and librarians.⁷

There are many ways to find jobs in the teaching field that do not require teacher certification. One way is to identify the private schools in your area and visit their websites. School websites often have an "employment opportunities" section listing all current job openings. Another option is to create a profile for a recruitment or headhunter organization. The most popular headhunter organization for independent schools is Carney, Sandoe, and Associates. Information about their services can be found here: <http://www.carneysandoe.com>.

⁶ Pennsylvania Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006 Edition. PA Department of Labor & Industry. http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/paooh/occ_index.pdf

⁷ "Teachers – Preschool, Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle and Secondary." Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition. U.S. Department of Labor. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos069.htm>

I HOW DO I FIND A JOB?

In addition to this guide, the Welcoming Center has published *How to Succeed in the Workplace*, a general guide to conducting a successful job search in the United States. This guide is located at: www.welcomingcenter.org/documents/HowToSucceed.pdf.

The Welcoming Center has many years of experience working with immigrant professionals who are trying to rebuild their careers here in the United States. We have discovered that rebuilding your career requires accumulating social capital. Much like starting a business, where you must collect and save financial capital and resources, transferring your career to a new country requires collecting and building *social* capital. Social capital includes your knowledge of American business culture, your network of professional contacts, and similar resources.

Certification puts you in a strong position to work as a teacher in Pennsylvania. If you completed a course in the United States, you may already have made contact with a career mentor or a school administrator, and if so, he or she is in the best position to give you advice about where to apply for jobs.

In addition, you should look for opportunities where you can network with others in the teaching field such as career fairs, professional societies, public lectures, conferences or any other event which might attract teachers and school administrators.

The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians helps work-authorized immigrants with job placement regardless of your educational background and skill level. Please contact us at:

Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians

1617 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, 13th Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19103

PHONE: 215-557-2626

EMAIL: info@welcomingcenter.org

WEB: www.welcomingcenter.org

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Carney, Sandoe, and Associates: <http://www.carneysandoe.com>

“Education Job Vacancies in Pennsylvania.” Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/jobvacancies>

National Association of Independent Schools: <http://nais.org>

Pennsylvania School Boards Association: <http://www.psba.org>

The Pennsylvania State Education Association: <http://www.psea.org>

HOW TO BECOME CERTIFIED TO TEACH in Pennsylvania

If you are planning to teach in Pennsylvania's public schools, by law you must have a teaching certificate. Some private schools may require a teaching certificate as well.

HOW TO BECOME CERTIFIED TO TEACH in Pennsylvania

Internationally-Educated⁸ Teacher Certification Applications⁹

The Pennsylvania Board of Education provides detailed information on their website <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=22571&teachingPNavCtr=1&TNID=2537> about the education, documentation, and credentials needed for certification. They have very specific requirements for internationally-educated individuals. **Please read the information on this website carefully!**

1 EDUCATION

You must hold a higher education degree that is the equivalent of a baccalaureate degree earned in the United States. You must have earned the equivalent of a **3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA)**.¹⁰ Your GPA must be listed on your transcript. If you attended college outside the United States, a third-party credential evaluation organization, like World Education Services, will determine whether your educational background meets these requirements.

These courses are required by the Pennsylvania Board of Education:

- 6 semester-hour credits (or the equivalent) in college-level mathematics; and
- 3 semester-hour credits in college-level English composition; and
- 3 semester-hour credits in college-level English/American literature

(If all requirements except English/math credits are met, a Temporary Teaching Permit may be offered.)

2 TEACHER-PREPARATION PROGRAM

You must complete a teacher-preparation program that meets Pennsylvania standards.¹¹ Many of Pennsylvania's colleges and universities offer teacher-preparation programs. Contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education to find out more information.

3 EXAMINATION

You must obtain satisfactory scores¹² on the Pennsylvania Teacher Certification Testing Program. The PRAXIS series of exams have different requirements depending on whether you are seeking the certification as an elementary, middle, secondary, or foreign-language teacher. Please read the Praxis Exam Bulletin for full details.¹³

⁸ Please note that this guide uses the term "international" to describe education that took place outside of the United States.

You will also find some instances on government websites and certification information links where you see the term "foreign," although outdated, used instead. Please note that either term, when talking about education, will refer to degrees obtained outside of the United States.

⁹ "Out-of-State Graduates." Pennsylvania Department of Education. <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=22571&teachingPNavCtr=1&TNID=2537>

¹⁰ Grade point average is a number that measures the average grade that a student received during his/her time at an educational institution.

It is usually calculated according to the course s/he took, the credits associated with that course and the grade that s/he received for that course.

¹¹ For more details you can go to: <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=90&Q=32518&teachingNav=19311021>

¹² For a list of qualifying scores, you can go to <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=12&Q=108769&teachingNav=1931871>

¹³ The Praxis Series Information Bulletin 2008-2009. Education Testing Service. <http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/PRAXIS/pdf/01361.pdf>

Examination continued

If you are seeking **Elementary Certification**, you must complete the following Praxis exams:

- 10710 PPST Reading or 5710 Computerized PPST Reading
- 20720 PPST Writing or 5720 Computerized PPST Writing
- 10730 PPST Math or 5730 Computerized PPST Math
- 30511 Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge
- 10011 Elementary Education

If you are seeking **Middle Level Certification (grades 7-9)**, you must complete all testing requirements for Elementary Certification in addition to one of the following PRAXIS exams depending on your subject specialty:

- English teachers take Middle Level English Language Arts Test (10049)
- Mathematics teachers take Middle Level Mathematics Test (20069)
- Science teachers take Middle Level Science Test (10439)
- Social Studies teachers take Middle Level Citizenship Test (20089)

If you are seeking **Secondary Certification (grades 7-12)**, you must complete the following PRAXIS exams:

- 10710 PPST Reading or 5710 Computerized PPST Reading
- 20720 PPST Writing or 5720 Computerized PPST Writing
- 10730 PPST Math or 5730 Computerized PPST Math
- One of the Specialty Tests

4

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

International applicants must demonstrate their ability to understand the English language. This includes speaking, reading and writing English. The test is administered by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The test is called the English Language, Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI).¹⁴

5

CITIZENSHIP

To apply for a teaching certificate in Pennsylvania, you must either be a citizen of the United States or be a legal permanent resident. Other immigration statuses, including work-authorized categories, are not eligible for teacher certification.

Declaration of Intent

If you are not a citizen, you must file a declaration of intent to become a citizen, unless you are seeking certification to teach a foreign language.¹⁵

¹⁴ The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview. Language Testing International. https://www.languagetesting.com/acad_pa.cfm

¹⁵ "Application Forms." Declaration of Intent to Become a Citizen of the United States. Pennsylvania Department of Education. <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=15&Q=37936>

Documentation needed for TEACHER CERTIFICATION

In order to apply for certification in Pennsylvania, you must have your credentials in order. The following is a list of the documentation and procedures that you will need to follow.

Foreign Evaluation Report

If you were educated outside the United States, you must have your degree evaluated by a professional credential evaluation organization listed on the NACES website.¹⁶ Specify that you need a course-by-course evaluation with GPA. You must pay a fee to have your degree evaluated.

Foreign Credentials

Provide a notarized¹⁷ copy of your original foreign credentials (copy both front and back).

Translation

Provide a notarized English translation of your foreign credentials.

Praxis/ACTFL Scores

Official scores must be received in the Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality office directly from Educational Testing Service (ETS) or in an ETS-sealed, unopened envelope. These scores are only valid if you took the tests within a five-year period.

Affidavit

Completed affidavit of Declaration of Intent to Become a Citizen of the United States¹⁸ or completed Declaration of United States Citizenship.¹⁹

Work Authorization for the U.S.

Provide a notarized photocopy of the front and back sides of your Permanent Resident Visa (green card), if applicable.

¹⁶ "Current NACES Members." National Association of Credential Evaluation Services. <http://www.naces.org/members.htm>

¹⁷ This requires you to get these credentials certified by a licensed notary public. A notary public certifies, verifies and acknowledges important documents. You must pay a small fee (usually less than \$10) to have a document notarized. You can search for a notary in your area by going to the Pennsylvania Department of State at: <https://www.notaries.state.pa.us/Pages/NotarySearch.aspx>

¹⁸ Declaration of Intent to Become a Citizen of the United States. Pennsylvania Department of Education. <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=15&Q=37936>

¹⁹ Declaration of United States Citizenship. Pennsylvania Department of Education. <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=15&Q=37943>

English Proficiency Tests

Register to take the English Language Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). This assessment will measure your ability to speak English on a standard scale set by ACTFL. The assessment will take place as a telephone or in-person conversation between you and an evaluator. To begin the process, access the online application.²⁰

Documents

You are responsible as the applicant for proving the authenticity of documents. You are limited to one subject per application. This means that you need to fill out one application if you want to apply for certification in, for example, Middle Level Mathematics. If you want to apply for certification in another subject, like Music Education, you will have to fill out a separate application and pay an additional fee.

NOTE:

If you do not have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in the United States, you will not be able to proceed with the certification.

²⁰ "The ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview." Language Testing International. https://www.languagetesting.com/acad_pa.cfm

STEPS TO APPLYING FOR CERTIFICATION

There are seven steps that you need to take to apply for a teaching certification in Pennsylvania. Make sure that you have followed these steps exactly before you send your application for review.

1 COMPLETE APPLICATION FORM

Read the information provided in the Out of State Instruction Bulletin.²¹ This document is for applicants who did not attend college in the state of Pennsylvania.

Print the checklist on pages 5–6 of the Out of State Instruction Bulletin. This checklist contains everything you will need to submit with your application.

Complete the General Application Form PDE-338G.²² All PDE application forms must be submitted with original signatures. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will not accept applications with faxed or photocopied signatures.

2 COLLECT DOCUMENTATION

Collect the following documentation to support your application:

College/University Verification, Form PDE 338 A²³

You do not fill out this form. Instead, your certification officer (usually the dean or chairperson of the education department) of the preparing college/university must complete this form. This is an important part of your packet because it indicates you have completed a state-approved teacher education program and may qualify you for certification under an interstate agreement.

Verification of Experience, Form PDE 338 V

Candidates for Instructional and Educational Specialist certificates should include any previous professional certified experience, especially if you have taught for three years within the past seven years. Form PDE 338 V is included with PDE 338 A.

21 Professional Educator Certification – Applicant Prepared Outside of Pennsylvania. November 2007.

Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Certification Services. http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/lib/teaching/OutOfStateBK_11-07_.pdf

22 General Application for Pennsylvania Certificate Form PDE 338 G. Pennsylvania Department of Education.

http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/lib/teaching/FORMPDE338G_12-07_.pdf

23 College / University Verification Form PDE 338A For Use By Applicants Prepared By Non-PA Colleges / Universities.

Pennsylvania Department of Education. http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/lib/teaching/FORMPDE338AV_11-07_.pdf

Transcripts

Official transcripts are required for all college/university coursework. All college transcripts must be in a sealed college/university envelope. **Do NOT open the envelope(s)**. If you were educated outside the U.S., you should access the Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality's website at: <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=22571&teachingPNavCtr=I&TNI D=2537#2537> for special instructions regarding internationally educated candidates.

Educator certificates or licenses held in other states

If you have been a teacher in another U.S. state, send a legible, unaltered copy (front and back) of certificates or licenses you hold in that state.

Test Scores

Applicants for certification must complete the Pennsylvania testing requirements before submitting their application. To be official, test scores must be sent directly from Educational Testing Service (ETS) or in an ETS-sealed, unopened envelope, or from ACTFL.

Non-U.S. Citizenship

If you are not a U.S. citizen, you must enclose a notarized copy of your permanent resident card, or I-551 permit, which allows you to permanently work and reside in the United States. Additionally, with the exception of foreign-language teachers, you must submit a "Declaration of Intent to Become a Citizen of the United States" form. This obligates you to become a U.S. citizen within six calendar years from the signature date in order to maintain a valid Pennsylvania certificate.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR EXCHANGE TEACHERS:

If you are an exchange teacher in the U.S. in a bona-fide exchange program, do not submit this application. The employing Pennsylvania school district must apply for an emergency permit on your behalf.

3 SUBMIT APPLICATION

Assemble your application in the order listed in Step 2.

Place the \$80 U.S. money order (made payable to Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) on top of the application materials.

Important! Submit all application materials together in one envelope to:

Pennsylvania Department of Education

Bureau of School Leadership & Teacher Quality
333 Market Street, 3rd floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

The Bureau will review your application and determine whether you meet all necessary requirements for certification. This process typically takes 4-6 weeks.

NOTE:

It is very common for Pennsylvania to require internationally-educated teachers to take additional courses to be eligible for certification unless you have already received a degree in education or a teaching certification in your native country. The Bureau will specify exactly what you need to do to receive the teaching certificate.

How much it does it cost to become certified?

The following table outlines the major costs of applying for the Pennsylvania teaching certificate, including exam costs and filing fees. This does not include the cost of education, retrieving transcripts, postage, and other charges.

Credential Evaluation	\$160
Praxis - Prices vary according to certification	\$80 - \$160
English Language Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)	\$134
Certificate Application Cost	\$80
Total	Approx. \$534

For more information, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Teacher Certification and Preparation, 717-787-3356 or <http://www.teaching.state.pa.us>.

Founded in 2003, the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that works to promote immigrant participation in the region's economic, political, and social life. These individuals enhance the productivity, profitability, and stability of the region's businesses and contribute to the state's overall economic growth.

MAIN OFFICE

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www.welcomingcenter.org

Our United Way donor option
number is 14726.

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