



Pathways to Teaching in Ohio: An Overview

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INTRODUCTION

While it's widely recognized that teaching a class full of children is a complex and demanding job, a teacher's road to the classroom is less straightforward than many people think. The process of becoming a teacher is different in every state and includes unique requirements, tests, and pedagogical checkpoints. Within each state, the traditional teacher pathway is also complemented by various alternative pathways. In the past decade, for example, Ohio has expanded the opportunities available to aspiring teachers who haven't attended a traditional teacher preparation program but want to teach in Ohio schools. Each pathway, traditional or alternative, has both shared and distinctive requirements. This paper provides an in-depth examination of each of Ohio's teacher pathways.

TRADITIONAL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Choosing a program

As of 2014, the Ohio Department of Education acknowledges fifty-six education schools: thirteen public institutions and forty-three private ones.¹ Each of these institutions must be approved by the Ohio Department of Higher Education before they are permitted to educate teacher candidates, and existing programs are reviewed every seven years.

In an effort to share information with the public and potential teacher candidates, the Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Ohio Department of Education offer yearly performance reports that share data on teacher preparation programs such as licensure test scores, value-added numbers, and educator surveys. However, there are no minimum requirements that programs must reach, nor are there consequences for a program's low performance.

Getting accepted

Entry requirements on a candidate level are left up to individual institutions.² Many institutions require a minimum GPA, though whether this is a candidate's high school GPA or their college GPA prior to application, as well as the specific GPA required, varies based on the institution.

Coursework

Teacher candidates are required by state law to receive certain experiences and coursework during the completion of their education degree.³ While programs differ in the delivery of coursework and experience requirements, schools are required to align their courses and other student experiences with the following components:

1. The Ohio standards for the teaching profession, which outline the basic expectations for Ohio teachers⁴
2. Coursework in the teaching of reading and phonics if the license is designated for teaching children in grades K–6⁵

3. Preparation in implementing evidence-based instructional strategies addressing individual learner differences, and employing practices that address diversity
4. Specialized national professional association standards or state standards
5. The Ohio academic content standards and curriculum models adopted by the state board of education
6. Minimum standards for elementary and secondary schools⁶
7. The value-added progress dimension
8. A minimum of twelve weeks of full-time student teaching and a minimum of one hundred clock hours of field experiences prior to student teaching

In addition to what is required by law, teacher candidates typically complete classes that focus on areas such as classroom technology, assessments and data, and teaching strategies. Candidates also take courses based on the age group and subject area(s) they plan to teach. These courses are designed by each college of education.

LICENSURE PROCESS FOR TRADITIONAL CANDIDATES

Licensure tests

Teacher candidates must pass a series of tests before they can obtain a license that permits districts to hire them full-time. In the past, Ohio teacher candidates have taken Praxis II exams⁷ to determine whether they are qualified to receive teaching licenses. Beginning in September 2013, the Ohio Assessments for Educators (OAE)⁸ began to replace most Praxis II exams. The new assessments are designed to serve the same purposes as Praxis II exams: to measure professional, pedagogical, and subject-specific knowledge and skills.⁹ They are also aligned to Ohio's Learning Standards.¹⁰

Teacher candidates are required to earn passing scores on one assessment of pedagogical knowledge and content tests associated with each content area they intend to teach.¹¹ For example, a teacher candidate who wished to teach high school English language arts would need to pass the Assessment of Professional Knowledge: Adolescence to Young Adult (a pedagogy assessment that covers grades 7–12) as well as the English language arts content test.

There are, however, exceptions. For instance, mild-to-moderate-needs special education teacher candidates are not currently required to take content tests; instead, in addition to their pedagogy test (a multi-age test), they take a test that assesses their knowledge of special education as a whole. Similarly, early childhood education (PK–3) teachers are required to take a test that assesses their knowledge of early childhood education rather than specific content knowledge.

Resident Educator License

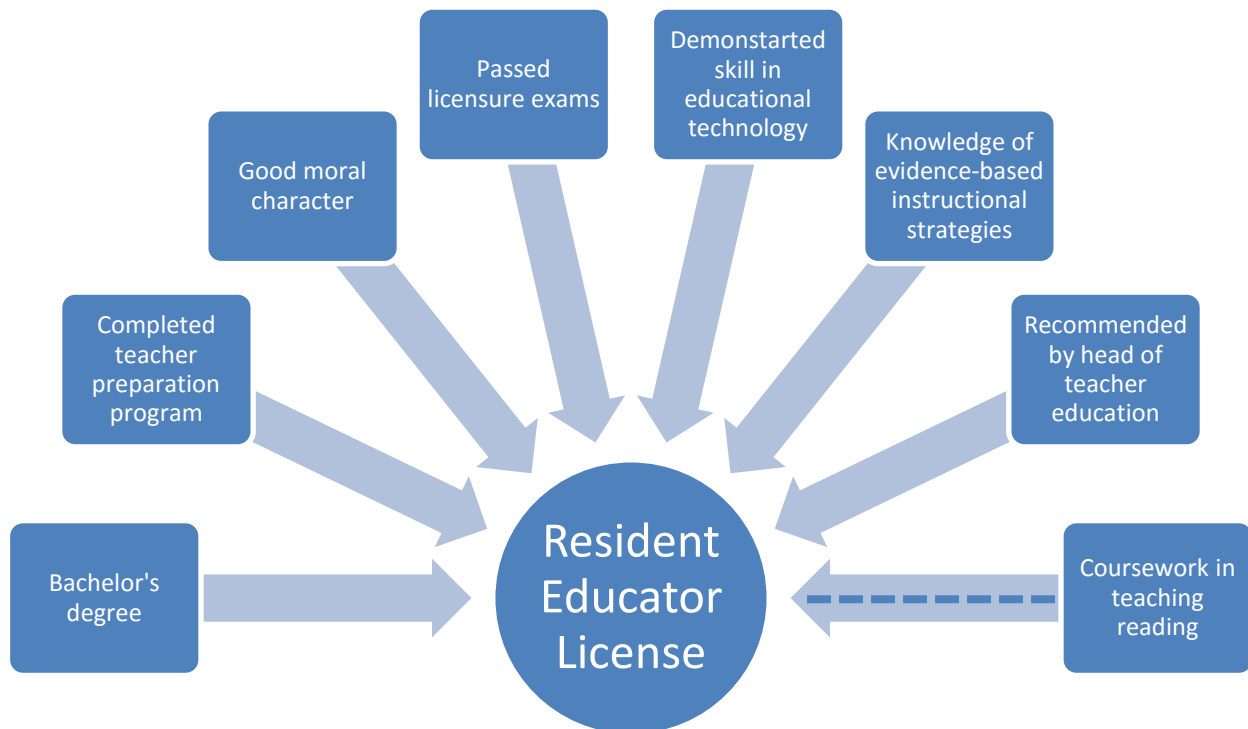
The Ohio Revised Code lists several requirements that a prospective teacher must meet in order to be issued an initial license.¹² These requirements state that a candidate must:

1. Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education

2. Successfully complete an approved program of teacher preparation
3. Be deemed to be of good moral character
4. Successfully complete the examinations prescribed by the state board of education
5. Demonstrate skill in integrating educational technology in the instruction of children
6. Be prepared to implement evidence-based instructional strategies addressing individual learner differences and diversity in culture, language, origins, and community
7. Be recommended by the dean or head of teacher education at an institution approved to prepare teachers
8. If the applicant plans to teach children in grades K–12 or the equivalent, additional coursework in the teaching of reading is required¹³

Once a teacher candidate has met these requirements, he or she can apply for a teaching license. While there are several types of licenses in Ohio,¹⁴ a brand-new teacher applies for a Resident Educator License. This is a four-year license that may be used for full-time or substitute teaching. The Resident Educator License is renewable and serves as the stepping stone to advanced licenses.¹⁵

Overall, the pathway to a Resident Educator License looks something like this:



License differentiation

Each license—whether initial or advanced—is differentiated based on the grade level of the students who will be taught.¹⁶ These divisions are:

1. The early childhood license, which covers grades PK–3. This license requires a minimum of twelve hours in the teaching of reading.
2. The middle childhood license, which covers grades 4–9. This license requires preparation in the humanities in addition to areas of concentration in two of the following: reading and language arts, math, science, and social studies. A minimum of twelve hours in the teaching of reading is required regardless of concentration areas.
3. The adolescence to young adult license, which covers grades 7–12. This license requires an academic major with advanced coursework in all areas to be taught and a minimum of three semester hours in the teaching of reading in the content areas. Licenses are issued in the following disciplines: earth sciences, integrated language arts, integrated math, integrated science, integrated social studies, life sciences, and physical sciences.
4. The multi-age license, which covers pre-K through twelfth grade. This license requires an academic major of advanced coursework in all areas that will be taught, along with a minimum of three hours in the teaching of reading. Licenses are issued in the following disciplines: computer science, bilingual education, dance, drama/theater, foreign language, health, library/media, music, physical education, teaching English to speakers of other languages, and visual arts.

Licenses for intervention specialists and career-technical instructors are also available. Special education teaching candidates are not differentiated by subject or grade level.

Resident Educator Program and RESA

In order to progress to a license more advanced than the Resident Educator License, teachers must complete four years in the Resident Educator Program.¹⁷ This program provides support to new teachers throughout their first four years, including mentorship, collaboration with veteran educators, professional development, and formative assessment feedback.

In addition to completion of the program, teachers must also pass the Resident Educator Summative Assessment (RESA). RESA is a performance-based assessment that requires a teacher to submit online a portfolio of evidence and completed tasks. The assessment measures a teacher's ability to design and deliver instruction that is engaging, emphasizes higher-order thinking, and uses data to drive practice.¹⁸ RESA is intended as a summative assessment for teachers in their third year of the Resident Educator Program, but a district or school has discretion over when its teachers take the test. A teacher's RESA submission is scored on a rubric that is aligned to the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession. Teachers may register to re-take any failed portion of the RESA.

Advanced Licenses

Once teachers complete the Resident Educator Program, successfully pass RESA, and reach the end of their four-year Resident Educator License, they must apply for a five-year, renewable Professional License. There are two additional options available for teachers who wish to advance their license past the Professional License.¹⁹

1. Senior Professional Educator License: This five-year, renewable license requires that the applicant:
 - Have a master's degree or higher from an accredited institution
 - Have nine years of experience, at least five of which must be under a professional license
 - Have successfully completed the Master Teacher portfolio. The portfolio requires that a candidate submit written explanation and evidence of five criteria: consistent leadership; focused collaborative efforts; a focus on students and environment; a focus on content, instruction, and assessment; and continued professional growth.²⁰

Applicants must achieve exemplary scores in four of the five areas on the rubric, which are then compared to determine a final score. The applicant must also submit two signed recommendation forms.²¹ If the applicant is successful, the Master Teacher designation can be renewed via a process that requires submitting written reflections and evidence.

2. Lead Professional Educator License: This five-year, renewable license has the same requirements as the Senior Professional Educator License, with an additional requirement: The applicant must hold active National Board Certification or must successfully complete the Master Teacher portfolio *and* the Teacher Leader Endorsement.²² This endorsement is valid for mentoring and coaching teachers, providing staff development, and assisting the principal. The Teacher Leader Endorsement is available through many graduate education programs and includes a practicum experience which requires teachers to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO LICENSURE

Alternative Resident Educator License

Ohio Revised Code permits four-year Alternative Resident Educator Licenses for grades K–12 to be issued to applicants who meet the following requirements:²³

1. Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution
2. Completed a minimum of twenty-four semester hours of coursework (including advanced coursework) in the subject area they plan to teach, with a GPA of at least 2.5

-OR-

If pursuing an integrated social studies, integrated language arts, or integrated science license, candidates must have completed forty-eight semester hours of coursework (including advanced coursework) in the subject area to be taught, with a GPA of at least 2.5. Integrated language arts teachers must include six semester hours in the area of teaching reading as part of their total hours.

3. Successful completion of required teacher licensure exams, such as content exams for the subjects to be taught
4. Pass required background checks²⁴
5. Successfully complete the Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute or a summer institute approved by the chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education

Alternative licenses are available for designated subjects in grades K–12, world languages in grades PK–12, intervention specialists for grades K–12, Montessori education, and career-technical workforce development.²⁵ Candidates for the career-technical workforce development alternative license are not required to hold a bachelor’s degree, but they must have experience in the career area to be taught.²⁶

In order to maintain licensure, teachers must participate in the Resident Educator Program, successfully complete at least twelve additional hours of professional education coursework from a college or university in specified areas, and successfully complete RESA. Teachers with Alternative Resident Educator Licenses are permitted to pursue advanced licenses such as the Professional Educator License.

Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute

The Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute (IPTI) provides nontraditional teacher candidates with instruction in the principles and practices of teaching.²⁷ Teachers who wish to obtain an alternative license must apply and complete IPTI in order to receive an alternative license.²⁸ IPTI includes three online, self-paced modules that focus on teaching as a profession, student development and learning, and the essentials of teaching practice. Participants must also complete twenty-five hours of field experience. Participants are responsible for locating a site for their field experience, and acceptable sites include public schools, private schools, before- and after-school programs, summer school, student intervention programs, camps, and for some applicants, preschools.²⁹ In some cases, substitute teaching may also meet the field experience requirement. The site must be approved by an IPTI instructor. Aspiring teachers must complete all the modules and their field experience within six months of their acceptance into the IPTI; the deadline cannot be extended.³⁰ All assignments in IPTI require a proficient rating, which is achieved by a minimum of 80 percent mastery. The fee for IPTI is \$200.³¹

Teach For America

Teach For America (TFA) is a national teacher corps of recent college graduates and professionals who commit two years to teaching in an under-resourced urban or rural public school.³² TFA operates two regional offices in Ohio: one in southwest Ohio that serves schools in Cincinnati, Dayton, and a small portion of Kentucky; and a second in northeast Ohio that serves schools in the Cleveland area. TFA is a standalone program that is not affiliated with the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

TFA teachers, called corps members, are not required to attend a traditional teacher preparation program. Instead, they are assigned to teach subject areas and grade levels based on qualifications such as their GPA, college major, and college coursework.³³ In Ohio, TFA corps members are required to hold a bachelor’s degree, must have a GPA of 2.5 or higher, and must pass the corresponding licensure exams (including content and pedagogy exams) for each subject area they intend to teach.³⁴ In addition, corps

members must successfully complete TFA's summer institute³⁵ and maintain their status as members of TFA. The state board of education is required to revoke the license of any corps member who resigns or is dismissed from TFA.³⁶ TFA is required to reach agreements with one or more accredited four-year higher education institutions to provide optional training for corps members with the purpose of allowing them to complete their master's degree. However, the completion of a master's degree is not a requirement of Ohio licensure or the TFA program.

If a corps member completes their two year commitment in another state and then moves to Ohio with the intent of teaching, the state board of education is required to issue that corps member a Resident Educator License and credit them as having completed two years of the Resident Educator Program.³⁷

OUT-OF-STATE TEACHERS

Teachers from out of state are permitted to obtain a license to teach in Ohio if they meet certain guidelines.³⁸ Applicants are required to have:

- Proof of an out-of-state teaching license or a letter of eligibility signed by the head or dean of a teacher education program
- Verification of any out-of-state licensure exams
- Verification of experience (if the applicant has three or more years of experience)
- An official transcript
- A record of any coursework completed outside the United States

Applicants must also complete background checks. Out-of-state teachers who completed a Praxis test for licensure before September 3, 2013 may use their Praxis results to satisfy licensure testing requirements.³⁹ Otherwise, all applicants must take any applicable Ohio Assessments for Educators tests.

ENDNOTES

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⁵ Ohio Revised Code § 3319.24.

⁶ Ohio Revised Code § 3301-35.

⁷ Educational Testing Service, Praxis II Overview, accessed January 6, 2015, <https://www.ets.org/praxis/about/praxisii/>.

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¹⁹ Ohio Revised Code § 3319.22.

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²¹ Ohio Department of Education, Master Teacher Candidate Recommendation Form, accessed January 6, 2015, http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Professional-Development/Master-Teacher/G_Ohio-MT-rec-Form-21108_finalsept09.pdf.aspx.

²² Ohio Revised Code § 3301-24-05.

²³ Ohio Revised Code § 3301-24-19.

²⁴ Ohio Attorney General, Background Check, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Services/Business/WebCheck/Webcheck-Community-Listing>.

²⁵ Ohio Department of Education, Intensive Pedagogical Training Institute FAQs, accessed March 19, 2015, <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Licensure/Resident-License-Options/Alternative-Resident-Educator-Licenses/Intensive-Pedagogical-Training-Institute-FAQs#FAQ688>.

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- ³¹ Ibid.
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- ³³ Teach For America, How We Place Corps Members, accessed March 19, 2015, <https://www.teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/where-and-what-youll-teach/how-we-place-corps-members>.
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