



DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Charter School Certification Updated Guidance – April 11, 2018

Purpose of this guidance:

This guidance aims to clarify the interaction of state law and regulations on educator certification and state law and regulations on charter schools and assist charter school leadership in determining staffing and certification requirements. *Regulations Governing the Certification of Educators in Rhode Island* (revised April 8, 2013), promulgated by the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (“the Council”), set out certification areas and requirements for certification in Rhode Island. The Council has also promulgated *Regulations Governing Rhode Island Public Charter Schools* which set out the requirements for approval, operation and review of public charter schools in Rhode Island. While state law permits variances for charter schools from some of the requirements for traditional public schools, charter schools must still abide by many of the certification regulations. The Office of Educator Excellence and Certification Services and the Office of College and Career Readiness will continue to update guidance explaining how the regulations are implemented and the interaction of the certification regulations and the charter regulations.

The chart below identifies the following:

- Primary roles of educators in charter schools,
- Whether the role is required,
- The certification areas that correspond to the roles,
- Whether certification is required to serve in that role,
- Representative responsibilities for individuals who serve in that role, and
- Notes providing additional guidance or clarification for some roles.

While charter school organization, structure, and responsibilities may vary from school to school because of their unique and distinct nature, all charter schools are required to have certified teachers, certified administrators, and certified support professionals. There are several roles that are not required, but if the role is filled, the educator is required to hold appropriate certification. Whether a role requires certification based on the categories below will be determined by the responsibilities of that role, not the job title.

For all questions or clarifications pertaining to certification, please consult the Office of Educator Excellence and Certification Services.

For all questions or clarifications pertaining to charter accountability, please consult the Office of College and Career Readiness.

Teachers and Administrators

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
Chief Executive, Superintendent	No	Superintendent	Yes, if role is filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish and manage school governance, ▪ Lead and monitor community relations, ▪ Lead and monitor advocacy and fundraising efforts, ▪ Manage and facilitate organizational development, ▪ Support the recruitment of staff and students. 	State law permits charter schools to seek a variance from the requirement to have a superintendent. ¹
Instructional Leader: Chief Academic Officer, Instructional Administrator, School Leader	Yes	Building Level Administrator PK-12 <u>or</u> Superintendent	Yes, at least one per charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide instructional leadership, ▪ Recruit, develop, supervise, and evaluate staff, ▪ Recruit and supervise students, ▪ Lead, manage and evaluate school programs, ▪ Lead, manage, and evaluate school curriculum. 	What a charter calls its instructional leader is unimportant, but at least one individual who has instructional leadership at the school must hold a BLA PK-12 or Superintendent certification. The school leader and the person who hold this certification can be the same person, but it is not required.
Special Education Director	Yes	District-level Administrator, Special Education	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and evaluate programs for eligible students, ▪ Coordinate special education staff, ▪ Fulfill procedural requirements, ▪ Develop, manage, and evaluate the delivery of special education services. 	The IDEA requires LEAs to fulfill all requirements under federal law, regulations and state regulations. The fulfillment of the regulations must be administered by an appropriately certified special education administrator. ²

¹ See R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-10, § 16-77-1, § 16-77.2-3, § 16-77.2-7, § 16-77.3-2, § 16-77.3-7, § 16-77.4-2, § 16-77.4-7.

² [Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities](#) 300.157(b).

Teachers and Administrators (Continued)

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
Reading Specialist, Math Specialist	No	All Grades Reading Specialist, Consultant; All Grades Math Specialist, Consultant	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work in small groups or individually with students who need additionally support, ▪ Provide support and training to classroom teachers in subject, ▪ Design identification and intervention procedures for students in need of support. 	
Reading Coach, Math Coach	No	While a specific certification does not exist for coaches, the coach must have appropriate grade-range or subject area certification	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide support and training to classroom teachers in subject, ▪ Observe and provide feedback to classroom teachers. 	Even if coaches are non-instructional roles and only work with teachers, they still need to have a RIDE certification. ³
Curriculum Director	No	District-level Administrator, Curriculum & Instruction	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop, manage, and evaluate school curriculum ▪ Support staff development ▪ Support and provide instructional leadership 	For hybrid roles, RIDE makes a certification requirement decision based on a review of the job description <i>See Hybrid Role appendix for more information.</i>

³ *Susan Labutti v. R.I. Dept. of Ed.*, 0021-96, 7-8 (1996).

Teachers and Administrators (Continued)

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
Teacher	Yes	Certification in “respective position”	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide instruction of students ▪ Provide grades to students ▪ Supervise students ▪ Support curriculum development 	<p>Certified teachers are one of the requirements where charter schools cannot be exempt and cannot request a variance.⁴ Note that teachers must be properly certified for both the subject and grade span that they teach.</p> <p><i>See Grade Range Certification and Visiting Lecturer Certification appendices for more information.</i></p>
Physical Education Teachers	Yes	Physical Education	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop lesson plans to teach various physical activities ▪ Instruct students and provide grades to students ▪ Facilitate PE courses ▪ Coordinate with volunteers and coaches for extracurricular sports. 	<p>An individual who is the teacher of record for the students’ required physical education must hold the proper physical education certification.</p>

⁴ See RIGL §16-11-1; 16-77.2-7; 16-77.3-7; 16-77.4-7.

Support Staff: Requires Certification from RIDE

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
School Business Administrator	No	School Business Administrator	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develops and administers budget ▪ Develops and administers finance protocols and procurement protocols ▪ Manages insurance/risk management program 	<p>All charter schools must have designated financial contact, but that person need not be a school business administrator. The SBA certification is designed for those whose primary role is financial.</p> <p>RIDE examines the duties described in the job description to determine if the position requires certification. For hybrid roles, RIDE makes a certification decision based on the majority of tasks in the position.</p> <p><i>See Hybrid Role appendix for more information.</i></p>
Library Media Specialist	No	All Grades Library Media Teacher	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting use of instructional technology, ▪ Ensuring access resources in the library media center, ▪ Training students and faculty to locate and use available library resources. 	
School Counselor	No	School counselor	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides college and career counseling ▪ Supports student scheduling ▪ Consults with teachers to support students emotional needs 	<p>This position is also known as guidance counselor and is different from a social worker.</p>

Support Staff: Requires Certification from RIDE (Continued)

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
School Psychologist*	No	School psychologist	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess students for disabilities; Conduct data collection and analysis for ongoing progress monitoring; Provide behavioral and mental health intervention. 	DOH also licenses psychologists, but a DOH license does not entitle a licensee to practice in a school. A school psychologist must have certification from RIDE.
Speech & Language Pathologist*	No	Speech and Language Pathologist	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate, diagnose, and treat speech, language, or communication disorders, Provide training to caregivers and teachers to work with students in need of speech & language services. 	DOH also licenses speech language pathologists, but a DOH license does not entitle a licensee to practice in a school. State law “encourages” a district to employ at least one full-time certified speech language pathologist for every 40 students. ⁵ Visit health.ri.gov for more information.

Support Staff: Requires license from Department of Health

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
Occupational Therapist*	No	DOH Occupational Therapist	Yes, if role filled – DOH license only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist students recovering skills after injury, Help children with disabilities learn to participate in school settings. 	Charter schools may contract for services from licensed OTs. Visit health.ri.gov for more information.

⁵ R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-25.3-2.

Support Staff: Requires license from Department of Health (Continued)

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
Physical Therapist*	No	DOH Physical Therapist	Yes, if role filled - DOH license only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with students with physical disabilities to improve or restore mobility, Develop fitness and wellness programs for students to prevent mobility loss. 	Charter schools may contract for services from licensed PTs. Visit health.ri.gov for more information.

Support Staff: Requires license from Department of Health AND Certification from RIDE

Sample Role Title(s)	Role Required	Certification Area	Certification Required	Representative Responsibilities	Notes
School Nurse*	No	All Grades School Nurse Teacher; DOH Current Nursing License	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide care and care coordination for students in need of health services at school, Teach health-related subjects, Support student health and health learning. 	While a nurse is not required at every building for the school health program, nursing care must be provided by a school nurse teacher. This position requires both current nursing license from the Department of Health and teacher certification from RIDE even if the nurse is not teaching classes. ⁶
Social Worker*	No	All Grades School Social Worker; DOH CSW or LCSW	Yes, if role filled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in special education assessment process, Provide group and individual counseling, Provide behavioral and mental health support. 	This position requires both current social work license from the Department of Health and teacher certification from RIDE.

* Whether a school must employ student support professional (e.g. psychologist, social worker) may depend on the student population and the requirements in individual IEPs or 504 plans.

⁶ R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-21-7, § 16-21-8, *Cranston Teachers' Association v. Cranston School Committee*, 696 A.2d 281, 284-85 (1981).

Appendices

Hybrid Roles Certification

Charter public schools may have varying titles for similar roles, which may not correspond to titles in existing certifications; thus, RIDE examines the duties described in the job description to determine if the position requires certification. For hybrid roles, RIDE makes a certification decision based on the majority of tasks in the position.

Similarly, for a charter school leader whose role also includes curriculum director responsibilities, RIDE would look to the position description to determine if the person required a Building Level Administrator certification, a District-Level Administrator, Curriculum and Instruction certification or neither based on the majority of the role responsibilities.

Cross Grade Range Certification

Teachers must be certified for the grade range and/or subject that they teach. This is true even for a school that contains grades spanning elementary and secondary. A teacher may hold a certificate for middle grades only that is valid for grades 5-8 for a specialized content area. Alternatively, a teacher holding an elementary certification, valid for grades 1-6, may obtain a middle grade elementary extension into grades 7-8, or a teacher holding a secondary certification, valid for grades 7-12, may obtain a middle grade secondary extension into grades 5-6. For more information, see RIDE's [Middle Grades Overview](#), [Middle Grades Requirements for Full Certification](#), and [Certification Regulations](#).

Certification Reporting

All individuals that provide services in areas identified in this document that require certification must be reported through the Personnel Assignment System.

Visiting lecturer certification

According to the RIDE's certification regulations a visiting lecturer preliminary certificate is "a preliminary certificate awarded to individuals with distinctive qualifications and therefore a unique capacity to enhance educational programs in districts and who have been offered employment in districts." To qualify, the applicant must hold "unique qualifications that supplement school and district programs." The employing agency must offer the applicant employment and have developed a program of support to assist the lecturer with academic and classroom support. The agency must also provide to RIDE an assurance of regular observation, guidance, and evaluation of the performance of assigned duties.

Charter School Certification Guidance

An applicant can be granted a visiting lecturer certification in all secondary-grade and all-grade teacher certification areas. A visiting lecturer certification is valid only for the employing agency for *one* year and may be renewed annually based on the lecturer's performance, but it does not lead to full certification. A visiting lecturer cannot be the teacher of record.⁷

For example, if a school wanted to bring in a software engineer to teach coding, she could apply for a visiting lecturer certification from RIDE for that school year, provided the school met the other criteria. This individual would work with another certified teacher to enhance the curriculum and teach students within this specialized content.

⁷ http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Certification/Becoming-an-Educator/Visiting_Lecturer_Preliminary_Certificate_Overview.pdf.