

Notification to Georgia Educators Regarding Certificate Renewal and Professional Learning Units (PLUs)

Georgia educators will recall that several years ago the Georgia General Assembly enacted legislation (HB1307) which temporarily suspended a portion of the requirements to renew educator certificates. Under this law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-200[b][4]), for a period of five years, the certificate renewal requirement of demonstrating recency of study was suspended. This meant educators were not required (for certification purposes only) to earn 10 professional learning units (PLUs) or their equivalent (six semester hours) during the five year certificate cycle.

The clock has been ticking, and we are fast approaching June 30, 2016, the last date of certification expiration before the requirements of this law no longer impact certificate renewal. Educators are beginning to ask whether or not we will return to the previous requirement of 10 PLUs or the equivalent for renewal. The short answer is, “yes,” for those whose certificates expire in 2016 or 2017 (June 30th of either year), the educator will need to document 10 PLUs or the equivalent as a requirement for certificate renewal.

Georgia educators need to know, though, that resumption of the previous renewal process is a temporary measure that eventually will be replaced by new certificate renewal requirements. While PLU requirements were suspended, a legislative study committee met and recommended improvements to professional learning for educators. One of these recommendations relates to the certificate renewal process and resulted in another change to Georgia code (O.C.G.A. 20-2-200[b][4.1]). The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) will convene a Professional Learning Task Force in August that will develop requirements for professional learning as it relates to certificate renewal. By spring 2014 recommendations will be made to the Commission and we believe a new rule will be in place as early as April or as late as June 2014.

In addition, GaPSC has convened a Tiered Certification Task Force to design a new certification system that will include four to five certificate tiers for teacher certificates; each tier will contain renewal requirements linked to the recommendations of the Professional Learning Task Force.

In summary, GaPSC believes professional learning is an integral part of development for the education work force. Certificate renewal will require professional learning that, in the future, may or may not be documented through PLUs. Because the work to create new systems for certification and for certificate renewal will be taking place so close to the time the provisions of HB1307 expire, GaPSC will “grandfather” those educators whose certificates expire in 2016 and 2017, which means these educators will simply be required to earn 10 professional learning units (PLUs) or their equivalent (six semester hours) regardless of what new rules are developed. Certificates expiring after June 30, 2017, will be renewed under new GaPSC rules currently under development. As always, GaPSC will seek educator feedback during the rule development process.