




MEMORANDUM

TO: Educators, School Districts, and Educator Preparation Providers

FROM: Dr. Michael Johnson, Commissioner 

DATE: April 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Temporary Suspension of Certain Teacher Certification and Evaluation Requirements and Issuing of Emergency Certification and Renewal Waivers

Pursuant to the Declaration of Public Health Disaster Emergency issued by Governor Mike Dunleavy on March 11, 2020, and Alaska Statutes 26.23.020(g)(1) and (7), the Governor, under Order of Suspension No. 2, has suspended statutory and regulatory requirements that have become barriers for educators to gain or maintain Alaska certification and for districts to focus on the continuation of educational services to their students. The suspension of requirements applies to any applicant for Alaska certification and all certificated staff of Alaska school districts. Additionally, Commissioner Johnson has invoked his authority under AS 14.20.020 and 4 AAC 12.410 to issue emergency certification and waive requirements for the renewal of certification in light to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When Order of Suspension No. 2 is lifted, applicants who were issued an emergency certificate under this order must satisfy the requirements to qualify for subsequent certification.

Suspension of Basic Competency and Content Area Examination Requirements

Currently, Alaska educators and student teachers are required to submit passing scores on an approved basic competency examination in the area of reading, writing, and mathematics and examinations specific to their content areas. As a result of the pandemic, testing agencies have closed their testing sites making it difficult if not impossible for this requirement to be satisfied. In response, AS 14.20.015(b), AS 14.20.017(b), AS 14.20.022(c) 4 AAC 12.305(a)(2)(B), 4 AAC 12.305(a)(5), 4 AAC 12.388(b)(2), 4 AAC 12.388(e)(2), 4 AAC 12.395(a)(2) and 4 AAC 30.020(c) are suspended.

Suspension of Alaska Studies and Alaska Multicultural Coursework Requirements

Alaska educators are required to complete three semester hours of Alaska studies and three semester hours of Alaska multicultural or cross-cultural coursework within two years of gaining Alaska certification. With disruptions associated with the pandemic, educators may not be able to satisfy this requirement on the prescribed timeline. In response, AS 14.20.020(h), AS 14.20.017(b), 4 AAC 12.305(a)(3), 4 AAC 12.345(c), 4 AAC 12.346(d), 4 AAC 12.347(c), 4 AAC 12.355(c), 4 AAC 12.388(d), and 4 AAC 12.388(c)(4) are suspended.

Suspension of Notarization Requirement

Applicants for Alaska certification are required to have their applications notarized. As a result of the pandemic, social distancing, and the closure of many businesses, educators may have difficulty satisfying the notary requirement. In response, the notary portion of 4 AAC 12.300(a)(1) is suspended.

Suspension of Student Teaching Requirements

Alaska requires 500 hours over the period of 15 weeks of student teaching. Because of school closures, student teachers may not be able to fully satisfy this requirement. In response, 4 AAC 30.020(a) is suspended.

Suspension of Employee Evaluation and Reporting of Evaluation Results

Alaska school districts are required to annually evaluate their certified employees and summarize the level of district support provided to their certified staff annually. With the disruption of the 2019-2020 school year, many districts will not be able to complete the evaluation cycle prescribed by their evaluation system and report the results to the department. In response, AS 14.20.149(b)(2-5) and 4 AAC 19.055 are suspended for the 2019-2020 school year.

If you have any questions relating to this memo, please contact Sondra Meredith, Teacher Education & Certification Administrator, at sondra.meredith@alaska.gov.