

March 9, 2023

Educator Competencies and Related Training Requirements

Structured Literacy, Professional Ethics, & Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education

In 2022, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education and Legislature mandated that specific training requirements be incorporated into Local Education Agency (LEA) professional development plans through revisions to [Chapter 49](#) of the Pennsylvania Code and the passage of [Act 55 of 2022](#).¹

The Pennsylvania Department of Education was charged with developing educator competencies for each new content area. *The [Program Framework Guidelines](#), which detail educator competencies in [Structured Literacy](#), [Professional Ethics](#), and [Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education](#), are now available on PDE's website.*

Structured Literacy

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must integrate Structured Literacy into their continuing professional development programs for “professional employees who hold instructional certificates in early childhood education, elementary-middle level, PK-12 Special Education, English as a Second Language, and Reading Specialist”² beginning in the 2022-23 academic year.³

The training must address the [Pennsylvania Structured Literacy Competencies](#).⁴ These competencies are organized by area of instructional certification and focus on competency areas including at least six of the following for each certification area: essential principles and practices; phonological and phonemic awareness; phonics and word recognition; automatic, fluent reading of text; vocabulary; listening and reading comprehension; written expression.

To help LEAs meet this training requirement, PDE developed an online course, *Introduction to Structured Literacy*, that is available through the [SAS Portal](#). PDE estimates that the course takes approximately 10 hours to complete. LEAs are not required to adopt the PDE course; if they choose not to adopt the course provided by PDE they must incorporate training in structured literacy into their professional learning program in another manner.

Professional Ethics and Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education (CR-SE)

[Strategic Plans](#) submitted to PDE by LEAs must integrate Professional Ethics and CR-SE into their [professional education plans](#) for all educators beginning in the 2023-24 academic year and into their [induction plans](#) for new educators beginning in the 2024-25 academic year.⁵

¹ See the [“Pennsylvania Amends Regulations for the Certification of Personnel in Chapter 49” Advisory](#) for more details.

² [22 Pa. Code § 49.17.\(a\)\(6\)](#)

³ [Act 55 of 2022](#) requires the PA Department of Education to “establish a program of professional development and applied practice in structured literacy” beginning in the 2022-23 school year. Act 55 does not require LEAs to adopt this program to meet the training requirements.

⁴ Pennsylvania’s Structured Literacy Competencies are based on the first four [Knowledge and Practice Standards of Teachers of Reading](#) put forth by the International Dyslexia Association.

⁵ See respective Program Framework for details.

PDE developed competencies in both of these areas, as required by the Chapter 49 revisions.

- The [Pennsylvania Professional Ethics Competencies](#) include eight competencies for “standards of behavior, values, and principles that inform and guide professional decision-making.” These competencies reference both the [PA Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators](#) and the [Model Code of Ethics for Educators](#).
- The [Pennsylvania Culturally-Relevant and Sustaining Education Competencies](#) were adapted from the New America Foundation’s [Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Reflection Guide](#) and include several standards within nine broad competency areas: (1) cultural self-reflection, (2) systemic bias, (3) experiential learning, (4) differential and equitable success opportunities, (5) asset-based perspective, (6) authentic family engagement, (7) culturally and linguistically responsive communication, (8) high expectations, and (9) microaggressions.

PDE is expected to release learning opportunities related to these competencies on the SAS Portal in June 2023.⁶ PDE estimates that the Professional Ethics course will take approximately 5 hours to complete but has not yet shared an estimate for the CR-SE course. LEAs are required to incorporate the required content into their professional learning plans but are not required to adopt the specific PDE courses to meet the requirement.

Training Requirements

LEAs must incorporate training in all three competency areas into their existing professional education plans and, for CR-SE and professional ethics, new educator induction plans. **However, these requirements DO NOT increase the number of professional learning hours educators must earn to maintain an active certificate or change the requirements for an educator to move from a Level I to a Level II certificate.**

As PDE releases training opportunities to meet these requirements, some employers have assigned employees to complete the PDE-created courses.⁷ **Educators must complete training as assigned by their employer; however, employers must schedule professional learning within the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement. If an employer determines they must extend the work day or year or change other conditions of work to meet these training requirements, the employer must engage in the collective bargaining process.** Educators with concerns related to the new requirements for professional learning plans or an LEA’s implementation of those plans should begin by contacting their PSEA local leaders.

For More Information

For more information about educator competencies or related training requirements, please contact Dr. Gina Gullo in PSEA’s Education Services Division at Ggullo@PSEA.org.

⁶ Based on PDE report presented to the State Board of Education on November 9, 2022.

⁷ [22 Pa. Code § 49.17.\(c\)](#)