

BECOMING A CERTIFIED EDUCATOR IN ILLINOIS

The [Guide to Requirements for Certification](#) on the State Board of Education website provides detailed application information for those individuals who have completed an approved teacher preparation program in Illinois or in another state or country. Individuals seeking an Illinois teacher, school service personnel, or administrative certificate to work in the public schools must provide official documentation that confirms completion of an approved professional preparation program at an accredited teacher education college or university.

HOW TO ENROLL IN AN ILLINOIS APPROVED PREPARATION PROGRAM

You must complete an approved teacher preparation program at an accredited college/university in Illinois or other state. Illinois has 60 accredited institutions that offer a wide range of approved programs leading to certification (early childhood, elementary education, secondary education, special areas such as art and music, special education, school counselor, school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker, and various administrative levels). Please see the Illinois [Directory of Approved Programs for the Preparation of Educational Personnel](#) for detailed information on each Illinois accredited institution, including contact information for the institutions' enrollment offices.

With a bachelor's degree, you have the options of considering a certification-only program, a Master's degree in education program, or an alternative route to certification program. The majority of institutions that are approved to offer graduate-level teacher preparation programs provide "certification-only" and Master's degree programs.

Currently, sixteen Illinois institutions offer alternative certification teacher preparation programs for individuals who have a degree(s) and work experience. Western Illinois University offers an alternative route to administrative certification for school superintendents. The Directory lists the programs that have been approved and the institutions' contact information. Please note that the State does not have an alternative certification process for preparing school service personnel (school counselor, nurse, psychologist, social worker, or speech-language pathologist).

To learn what you will need to complete to qualify for an Illinois certificate, please consider selecting a few higher education institutions that are within a reasonable drive of your residence. It is recommended that you carefully consider the types of programs offered, the cost, instructional resources, faculty, and the program requirements. The expectations may vary because institutions have learned through experience that certain expectations help ensure their education candidates are prepared for their chosen professional roles.

Contact the Department/School of Education at your chosen institutions and ask to speak with an advisor. The institution will need to review your official transcripts and any materials you may have which validates related work experience. It would also be helpful to decide if there is a particular age group, ability level, and/or subject that appeals to you so the advisor can determine what would be required for you to achieve certification.

The following sites provide a complete list of Illinois approved teacher preparation institutions and detailed information on the certification requirements.

Resources	Website
Directory of Approved Programs and Institutions	www.isbe.net/profprep/PDFs/Directory.pdf
Guide to Requirements for Certification	www.isbe.net/certification/requirements/toc.htm
Illinois Certification Testing System	www.isbe.net/certification/html/testing.htm
Illinois Alternative Certification Information	http://www.isbe.net/profprep/alternative.htm

Comparison of Illinois Teacher Certification Programs Traditional Teacher Preparation with Alternative Teacher Preparation

Traditional Teacher Preparation:

For the purpose of this comparison, **traditional** teacher preparation refers to completing the certification requirements through a full undergraduate program of study or an approved graduate-level teacher preparation program after completing at least a bachelor's degree.

Individuals with degrees have the option of enrolling in an approved program that requires completion of the professional preparation coursework and experiences that are aligned with the certificate, and if applicable, additional content area study. These programs are commonly referred to as *certification-only* programs. Individuals may also choose to earn a Master's in Education/Teaching. The traditional teacher preparation programs require full-time student teaching experience.

Alternative Teacher Preparation:

Alternative certification programs can only be offered by Illinois colleges and universities that are accredited and approved to offer teacher preparation programs. These programs are designed to address the needs of individuals who hold at least a bachelor's degree and are to take less time to complete than the traditional program, while ensuring the state requirements and standards are met.

The alternative certification program includes an initial course of study that addresses the professional preparation expectations (Phase I), a year-long internship (Phase II), and a comprehensive assessment (Phase III) at program completion. Based on individual performance, additional coursework may be required.

Applicants to these programs must provide evidence of five years of work experience in the content area. The work experience requirement is waived for preparation programs that are designed in collaboration with the City of Chicago schools.

	Traditional Certification Program	Alternative Certification Program
Course of Study	Complete a preparation program that ensures candidates meet the Illinois Standards for All Teachers and the applicable Content-Area Standards, and includes coursework addressing <i>the psychology of, the identification of, and the methods of instruction for the exceptional child, including without limitation the learning disabled.</i>	An intensive course of study that ensures candidates acquire the content and skills required in the "traditional" program. <u>Phase I:</u> Intensive course of study including coursework in educational theory, methods, and practicum. <u>Phase II:</u> Year-long internship and additional coursework. <u>Phase III:</u> Comprehensive assessment
Major	32 semester hours in an area of specialization or a major in the field as identified by the accredited institution.	A bachelor's degree in the content area aligned with the certification area and additional content study if need is determined by the accredited institution.
Field Experiences	Pre-student teaching field experiences	Practicum completed as part of Phase I
Student Teaching (25.620)/ Internship (25.27)	Student teaching at the grade level(s) and in the area of specialization appropriate to the certificate sought and after completion of the sophomore year. (25.620)	Year-long internship in the certification area (Phase II)
Payment: Student Teaching or Internship	Not paid - unless the student teacher is serving on a transitional bilingual certificate, a provisional vocational certificate, a temporary provisional vocational certificate, or is employed in a school that is not required to employ certified teachers. (25.620)	Paid year-long internship
Assessment - Basic Skills	Prior to admission to the program (25.720)	Prior to admission to the program (Phase I)
Assessment - Content-Area Test	Prior to program completion or as required by the institution. (25.720)	Prior to application for the provisional alternative teaching certificate (Phase II)
Assessment of Professional Teaching	Option of requiring the assessment prior to entitlement or progression among the components of the program (25.720)	Option of requiring the assessment prior to entitlement or progression among the components of the program (25.720)
Assessment – Program Completion	As determined by the institution and/or program.	Comprehensive assessment of the candidate's performance by the institution, and if applicable, program partners.
Length of Time	Undergraduate: 4-4 ½ years Graduate: 1½ to 2½ years	Shall be less time than required for the institution's approved program(s). Currently – programs range from 1½ to -2½ years.
Certification	Initial Certificate (type and area determined by program individual completed)	5/21.5b – Initial Alternative Certificate 5/21.5c – Initial Certificate