

Maryland State Department of Education  
Program Approval and Assessment Branch  
Division of Certification and Accreditation  
Alternative Preparation Providers State Network  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

May 25, 2006

July 15, 2006

*Questions appearing in italics emerged from the May 25, 2006 meeting and questions submitted after that date.*

1. **Where can I find the new regulations for the Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC)?**

The Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC) is guided by new regulations outlined in COMAR 13A.12.01.07. These can be located online at [www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/13a/13a.12.01.07.htm](http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/13a/13a.12.01.07.htm).

2. **What is the duration of the RTC?**

The RTC is issued for two school years and may not be renewed. For some current cohort whose residency begins before January 2007, the RTC will actually be valid for three years. Since there is no provision for a second year under the new regulations, RTC holders will actually receive the first year which begins in July 2006, and the two following years that are activated with the actual implementation of the new regulations.

**A. *What is the difference between the RTC and the traditional certificate earned at the completion of a traditional program?***

*The RTC is a transitional license. It allows a teacher to practice as a "highly qualified teacher" when teaching in the area of certification for which the RTC was issued under the rules identified by the No Child Left Behind Act. At the end of the two-year period and successful completion of all RTC requirements, a teacher is eligible for Maryland's Standard Professional Certificate I (SPC-I).*

*The SPC-I earned after one completes a traditional teacher education program is not considered to be transitional. It is issued after a teacher successfully completes a teacher preparation program and meets Maryland's certification testing requirements.*

**B. *When is the RTC issued?***

*The RTC is issued twice yearly, on July 1 and January 1. If a candidate becomes eligible for the RTC after the issuance date, the local school system can request an RTC dated retroactively. A school system may not request an RTC until the candidate has fulfilled all requirements for such issuance.*

**C. *What is an "APC"?***

*In Maryland, this acronym refers ONLY to the Advanced Professional Certificate which is issued to teachers in Maryland who move to it from the SPC level mentioned above. In Maryland, APC has no meaning for alternative preparation providers.*

3. **Is a resident considered “highly qualified” while on the RTC?**  
Yes, a resident teacher teaching under the RTC within the content area and grade band specified on the RTC is considered to be highly qualified, as long as the resident teacher continues to be actively enrolled in an approved alternative teacher preparation program.
4. **What happens in January 2007?**  
All programs utilizing the RTC that wish to continue operating after January 2007 must go through a program approval process and be granted Maryland state program approval.
- A. What alternative preparation programs have been granted program approval?**  
*A listing of approved providers may be found on the MSDE Home Page at [http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/certification/progapproval/Program\\_Approval\\_Section.htm](http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/certification/progapproval/Program_Approval_Section.htm) under the title Approved Alternative Preparation Provider Directory.*
5. **Does that mean that partnerships or individual LSSs or IHEs who were given permission in the past to conduct alternative preparation programs should immediately stop recruiting for such programs?**  
No, but MSDE is concerned that providers not put potential candidates who may currently be in the pipeline in jeopardy by inadequate preparation for program approval. MSDE staff will work with potential partnerships to complete the process in a timely fashion.
- A. What is the required format for proposals for new or revised alternative preparation programs seeking Maryland program approval?**  
*The format for submission will be available in draft form by August, 2006.*
- B. For how long is program approval granted?**  
*The approval will be valid for three years following its date of issuance (if issued in 2006 or 2007) contingent upon annual reporting and site visit outcomes. During the years between 2006 and 2009, MSDE will develop and implement the on-site review process to be consistent with the current approved program reviews.*
6. **Do all programs, those that are going to be revised as well as brand new ones, have to look exactly alike?**  
No. MSDE is excited about the range of delivery of programs demonstrated by the new programs funded by the Troops to Teachers grant. There are elements of each program that cannot be negotiated and MUST appear in each partnership program submitted for approval. However, creative approaches and expanded options are cornerstones of alternative preparation programs and are greatly encouraged. This is particularly true in designing internships that can be accommodated by the partnership and still meet the guidelines.

**7. Who is responsible for determining whether a candidate should be admitted to an alternative preparation program?**

The partnership is responsible for determining the protocol and requirements for application and admission to the program, within the parameters outlined in the regulations and guidelines. Some programs require candidates to be accepted by the school system and by the provider institution in two separate processes. Others utilize a single process that ranges in the level of collaboration required by participating partners.

**A. What is the acceptable GPA for entrance to an alternative preparation program? Can a partnership require a higher GPA?**

*The required GPA is a 2.75 in the area of certification requested. This GPA is the current average of teacher education program entrance requirements of the 22 four-year institutions of higher education (IHE) in Maryland. Partnerships may determine that a higher GPA is required for entrance to their programs. A partnership may also offer opportunities for remedial coursework to increase a candidate's GPA. (This GPA is a non-negotiable part of the alternative preparation process, and can change from year to year, as IHE requirements change.)*

**B. Which certification areas may be offered through alternative preparation?**

*All certification areas may be offered through alternative preparation, although most programs choose to focus on shortage areas defined as "critical" in the annual Maryland Teacher Staffing Report. Since RTCs are only issued by superintendents of LSSs to meet a specific need in that system, it makes sense for programs to concentrate on high needs areas of certification. RTCs are not issued to individuals, but are only issued upon employment in a specific LSS.*

*MSDE is now ready to work with partnerships who wish to offer special education certification, which must provide for dual certification in a content area as well as special education. This obviously requires an elongated process for the program.*

**8. Can a provider utilize existing courses formerly used as support for conditional teachers and others seeking to gain certification in their alternative preparation programs?**

Existing courses may be used; however, such courses should be reconfigured into courses or other segments that may have the same names and some of the same content as their originals, but which must now align with internships, residencies, and first-year mentoring programs that are designed collaboratively with all partnership members and which, in total, meet all the indicators of the INTASC (or EDoT) standards.

**9. Could an IHE offer the first several courses in an MAT program as the 90 hours of pre-employment training?**

Yes. However, for this scenario to be considered alternative preparation, those courses must be reconfigured in the same way as mentioned in #8, and must not require continuation in the MAT for admittance to the program. Alternative preparation programs

must be able to “stand alone” without further coursework required except for final required reading courses

**10. Why must the course be reconfigured?**

Career changers need “survival skills”, i.e., how the partner LEA requires lesson plans to be developed, the basics of classroom management, the nature of high-stakes testing, etc. Each LEA may approach these topics in very specific ways which is one reason why every partnership must be developed in collaboration with an LEA.

**11. What testing is required for the RTC?**

Candidates must pass Praxis I (Reading, Writing and Math) and Praxis II content area tests before a partnering LEA may request the RTC on behalf of the candidate. Candidates must pass Praxis II Principles of Teaching and Learning or the Praxis II pedagogy test (as required by certification area) prior to applying for the Standard Professional Certificate I.

**12. What is the difference between a “supervisor” and a “mentor” in the language of Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Programs?**

*In order to distinguish between the roles of those teachers directly working with RTC candidates during the internship and the residency, MSDE has elected to refer to the former as a “supervisor” and the latter as a “mentor”. Consequently, the “supervisor” is a teacher who is, under NCLB definitions, Highly Qualified and is the “teacher of record” for the internship period. The “mentor” may be an individual, or that role may be assumed by a team which takes responsibility for the newly hired Resident during the entire residency.*

**13. Can teaching on a conditional certificate or teaching as a long-term substitute “count” as an internship?**

A long-term substitute position or teaching under a conditional certificate may fulfill the required 4-8 week internship for the RTC if the following conditions are met:

- A 4-8 week “true internship” period, in which the intern is provided with daily supervision by a Highly Qualified teacher. *(See #12.) During this time, the highly qualified supervisor is named “teacher of record” for the intern’s classroom. In this arrangement, the internship is completed in the conditional/substitute teacher’s own classroom. A pull-out internship is not desirable due to the discontinuity that would be experienced by the K-12 students.*
- Documentation of supervision throughout the long-term substitute or conditional teaching experience (supervision of the type provided by a department chair, team leader, administrator, or other regular new teacher mentor, etc. is acceptable)
- Documentation of daily supervision during the 4-8 week period.

**14. What criteria will MSDE use to help providers decide which candidates require a full eight week internship or a modified internship ranging from four to eight weeks? Do the criteria apply to the program as a whole or to an individual candidate using the experience he or she brings to the program as a separate criterion?**

Through close monitoring of pilot funded projects and through monitoring of programs approved for application after January 2007, MSDE will examine various processes and

subsequent results in an effort to develop criteria for making these determinations. *Over the next year or two, MSDE will gather stakeholder groups in alternative preparation programs in a series of meetings that will lead to Standards of Practice. Standards of Practice will include indicators that will lead to consistent criteria for establishing parameters for all aspects of these programs, including those of the partnership. In the future, these Standards of Practice will guide the accountability process for alternative provider partnerships.*

**15. May providers be flexible in allowing potential candidates to enter and/or exit programs at different transition points in a program?**

Yes. MSDE strongly encourages this flexibility in support of all career changers, but particularly those who may be exiting the military for a teaching career.

**16. Do supervisors need to “match” their intern in content area?**

Yes. During the internship, supervisors must be Highly Qualified for the classroom in which the internship is occurring. The supervisor must be named “teacher of record” during the 4-8 week internship period.

During the residency, mentors are not required to “match” the resident teacher in certification area and grade band, but the mentor must be able to provide high quality mentoring throughout the residency.

**17. Can a supervisor be responsible for more than one intern?**

Yes. A supervisor can be responsible for more than one intern, provided that the requirement of daily supervision is met during the 4-8 week internship period. We suggest limiting the ratio to no more than three interns to one supervisor. School systems have the ability to determine the assignment of classes to teachers, and no state or federal requirements prohibit assigning multiple classes to one teacher of record or of establishing co-teaching arrangements.

**18. Does the time on an RTC count towards tenure?**

Yes, tenure time begins when a teacher begins teaching in the role of “teacher of record,” whether under a conditional certificate, an RTC, or any other teaching certificate. Typically, tenure is granted after two years and one day of teaching.

**19. How can an approved alternative preparation program add a new certification area?**

The program director should write a letter to Dr. Virginia Pilato, Director of Certification and Accreditation, requesting that a certification area be added. In the letter, please specify any program changes that will be made to support the new certification area, and provide evidence of the partnership’s capacity to provide appropriate internship and mentoring arrangements.

**20. Sometimes questions to MSDE seem to take several days to answer due to the need to “consult” with someone else. Why is this?**

Questions about this new process often bring to the surface issues that require not just an answer to an individual question, but what amounts to a “policy statement.” MSDE welcomes and encourages ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders in Maryland who have

an interest in alternative preparation of teachers, and continues to appreciate the patience of this new community as we work with potential providers to assure adherence to the new regulations and guidelines as well as consistency in policy development.

**21. How will MSDE hold partnerships accountable through a Program Approval process?**

Ultimately, all partnerships will need to provide evidence that they are operating using collaboratively-developed Standards of Practice, as mentioned above. Until that time, MSDE's approach will be to combine annual data collection that is tied to the same evaluation process being employed for the Troops to Teachers funded pilot projects with close monitoring of newly Approved Programs.

**22. Can providers expect some changes in requirements over the years?**

*This is possible. Just as Maryland IHEs experienced some change in the implementation of Professional Development Schools (PDS) in their teacher education programs after the development of the Maryland PDS Standards and Implementation Guidelines, providers of alternative preparation programs could expect that some practices would need to be modified as Alternative Teacher Preparation Standards of Practice are developed.*