



What are Professional Qualifications According to ESSA?

Professional Qualifications are the requirements established by federal, state, or local agencies. According to ESSA, State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must ensure teachers and paraprofessionals meet applicable state certification and licensure requirements [Sections 1111(g)(2)(J); 1112(c)(6)].

How are Professional Qualifications Defined?

- The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) determines state certification requirements in Georgia. These requirements are used by all Traditional School Districts.
- LEAs may not waive federal professional qualification requirements for paraprofessionals or state professional qualification requirements for service for special education teachers aligned with the student's IEP.
- Regardless of charter or strategic waiver status, all LEA teachers and paraprofessionals must hold a Clearance Certificate (*O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-82, 20-2-211.1, 20-2-2065, SBOE Rules 160-4-9-.07 and 160-5-1-.33, GaPSC Rule 505-2-.42*).
- Under OCGA § 20-2-2065, Charter and Strategic Waiver LEAs can waive state certification for most teachers, meaning that each LEA that waives certification must establish professional qualifications (PQ) for their teachers.

How are Professional Qualifications Established?

Georgia LEAs may submit applications to waive provisions of Title 20 Education Law including certification requirements as determined by the GaPSC. For the GaDOE to ensure that LEA teachers meet state certification requirements, all LEAs must outline LEA professional qualification requirements that align either with GaPSC requirements, approved charter or strategic waiver applications or a combination of the two. LEA professional qualifications are submitted annually in the CLIP by responding to the following areas:

- For the current fiscal year, based on the flexibility granted under Georgia charter law [OCGA 20-2-2065] or State Board Rule – Strategic Waivers [160-5-1-.33], does the district intent to waive teacher certification – Yes or No? [ESSA Section 112(e)(1)(B)(ii)]
- If the LEA waives certification, specify whether, in the current fiscal year, certification is waived for all teachers (except Special Education service aligned with the student's IEP), or for a select groups of teachers, the response must address the content fields and grade level bands (P-5, 4-8, 6-12, P-12).
- If the district waives certification state the minimum professional qualifications required for employment of teachers whose certification is waived (example: Bachelor's Degree, Content Assessment, Coursework, Field Experience, etc.) If not, requirements exist beyond a Clearance Certificate, please explicitly state so. [Section 112(e)(1)(B)(ii)]

How are Professional Qualifications Reviewed and Monitored?

GaDOE reviews each LEAs professional qualifications annually in the Consolidated LEA Improvement Plan (CLIP) and monitors established professional qualifications every four years during the cross-functional process. Failure to adhere to LEA PQ requirements may result in a finding.