

**Chapter 9C Regulations and Professional Learning: 2023-2024 and Beyond**​

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# **Background**

N.J.A.C. 6A:9C sets forth the requirements for the professional development (PD) of active educators. The rules govern professional development plans (PDP) at the school and district levels, as well as PDPs for individual educators. The chapter also establishes the rules for the required mentorship of novice teachers.

Revised regulations for educator PD were adopted by the New Jersey State Board of Education on April 5, 2023. The revisions include enhancements to mentoring requirements, revisions to the state’s PD standards, and clarification of “what counts” in PD. These, along with other amendments are meant to ensure educators and school leaders are better supported throughout their profession.

This resource aims to provide guidance on the changes which most impact PD for educators in their day-to-day operations.

A full text version of the adopted amendments and new rules to N.J.A.C. 6A:9C can be found [here](https://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap9c.pdf).

# **Major Changes to N.J.A.C. 6A:9C**

The major changes made to the N.J.A.C. 6A:9C include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Strengthening Support for Novice Teachers
2. Increased Requirements for the Development of the District Mentoring Plan
3. Increased Specificity of What Counts in PD for Teachers
4. Required PDPs for Educational Interpreters and Preschool Paraprofessionals
5. Revised New Jersey Standards of Professional Learning

## Change 1: Strengthening Support for Novice Teachers

Revised regulations require one-to-one mentoring that includes consistent, planned and in-person contact time between the mentor teacher and the novice provisional teacher holding a certificate of eligibility (CE) or a certificate of eligibility with advanced standing (CEAS). These changes aim to provide critical individualized support to educators and provide local education agencies the best possible opportunity to retain novice provisional teachers and include the following:

* Nontenured teachers in their first year of employment will be provided individualized support and activities based on the nontenured teacher’s individual needs.
* Weekly, in-person contact time for a minimum of 30 weeks.
* Increased meeting frequency to twice per week for novice provisional teachers. The change will require the mentor teacher and novice provisional teacher to meet according to the following schedule:
  + Twice per week for the first four weeks for a novice provisional teacher holding a CEAS.
  + Twice per week for the first eight weeks for a novice provisional teacher holding a CE.

The combination of more consistent, regular contact time between the mentor and novice teacher, coupled with individualized support for novice teachers is intended to strengthen the support system for novice teachers.

## Change 2: Ensuring the District Mentoring Plan is a Collaborative and Transparent Process

The revised regulations require additional steps in the annual revision of district mentoring plans. These changes aim to provide a collaborative and transparent process in plan updates and include the following:

* The district mentoring plan shall include formal and informal resources and support to guide novice provisional teachers throughout the entire provisional period.
* The chief school administrator (CSA) or designee shall:
  + Collaborate annually with each School Improvement Panel (ScIP) to review the district mentoring plan, consider ways to support the plan at the school level, and take steps to ensure that all new teachers are receiving the necessary professional support.
  + Make available to staff an electronic copy of the current district mentoring plan
* Each ScIP shall oversee the school-level implementation of the district mentoring plan and shall communicate the plan to all nontenured teachers and their mentors.

Together these revisions are intended to ensure increased support for novice teachers as well as each individual school will have the opportunity to provide input on the plan to ensure it meets each individual school’s needs. In addition, the requirement of ensuring an electronic copy of the plan is provided to teachers and requiring ScIPs to oversee the plan implementation is intended to provide a more transparent process at each individual school building.

## Change 3: Increased Specificity on What Counts in Professional Development for Teachers

The revised regulations highlight key points of consideration in the 20-hour per year individual PD requirement and include the following:

* Each teacher must have at least 20 hours per year of qualifying experiences that support student achievement, including achievement in academic, physical, social, and emotional learning.
* Professional learning experiences may include in-person, virtual or remote courses.

Broadening the definition of PD available to teachers clarifies virtual or remote learning as an option, while clarifying what counts in the 20 hours of PD per year ensures these experiences will meet the intent of that requirement. For additional general recommendations on what counts, please see [Activities That Support an Effective Professional Development Plan](#_Activities_That_Support) below.

Change 4: Required Professional Development Plans for Educational Interpreters and Preschool Paraprofessionals

Regulations now establish rules for educational interpreters’ and preschool paraprofessionals’ individual PDPs.

### Educational Interpreters

The new rules for the educational interpreters’ PDP requirements include the following:

* An individual PDP must include at least 10 hours per year of qualifying experiences that support improved practice;
* The 10-hour annual qualifying experience shall be based on the length of full-time employment and reduced by a pro rata share reflecting part-time employment, or an absence, including the use of family or medical leave;
* The content of each individual PDP shall be developed by the educational interpreter’s supervisor in consultation with the educational interpreter; and
* The PDP requirements applicable to teachers at N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-4.4(c), (e) through (h), and (j) shall apply to educational interpreter PDPs.

### Preschool Paraprofessionals

The new rules for the preschool paraprofessionals’ PDP requirements include the following:

* Preschool paraprofessionals shall be guided by an individual PDP that must include at least 20 hours per year of qualifying experiences that support improved practice;
* The 20-hour annual qualifying experience shall be based on the length of full-time employment and reduced by a pro rata share reflecting part-time employment, or an absence, including the use of family or medical leave;
* The content of each individual PDP shall be developed by the preschool paraprofessional’s supervisor in consultation with the paraprofessional;
* The PDP shall include coaching by a preschool instructional coach, a preschool intervention and referral specialist (PIRS), and any other coach the school district assigns to work with the preschool paraprofessional; and
* The PDP requirements applicable to teachers at N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-4.4(c), (e) through (h), and (j) shall apply to preschool paraprofessionals.

## Change 5: Revised New Jersey Standards for Professional Learning

The revised New Jersey Standards for Professional Learning are based upon Learning Forward’s [standards](https://standards.learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning/). These standards continue to support ongoing, embedded professional learning with a more explicit focus on equity.

Each standard begins with “Professional learning results in equitable opportunities and excellent outcomes for all students when,” followed by each of their individual contributions to the overarching vision of a highly functioning professional learning system.

The cyclical and iterative nature of the standards work within a framework of three categories to create high-quality professional learning that results in improved educator practices and improved student results; and align to current evidence-based practices.

The three categories and their corresponding standards are as follows:

Rigorous Content for Each Learner: These standards highlight essential content for adult learning which leads to student results.

* Equity Practices: Educators understand their students’ historical, cultural, and societal contexts; embrace student assets through instruction; and foster relationships with students, families, and communities;
* Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction: Educators prioritize high-quality curriculum and instructional materials for students, assess student learning, and understand curriculum and implement through instruction; and
* Professional Expertise: Educators apply the NJSLS and research to their work, develop the expertise essential to their roles, and prioritize coherence and alignment in their learning.

Transformational Processes: These standards highlight processes which sustain significant changes in an educator’s knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets.

* Equity Drivers: Educators prioritize equity in professional learning practices, identify and address their own biases and beliefs, and collaborate with diverse colleagues;
* Evidence: Educators create expectations regarding, and build capacity for, the use of evidence from multiple sources to plan educator learning, and measure and report the impact of professional learning;
* Learning Designs: Educators set relevant and contextualized learning goals, ground their work in research and theories about learning, and implement evidence-based learning designs; and
* Implementation: Educators understand and apply research on change management, engage in feedback processes, and implement and sustain professional learning.

Conditions for Success: These standards describe the aspects of the professional learning context, structures, and cultures that strengthen a professional learning system.

* Equity Foundations: Educators establish expectations for equity, create structures to ensure equitable opportunities for access to learning, and sustain a culture of support for all staff;
* Culture of Collaborative Inquiry: Educators engage in continuous improvement, build collaboration skills and capacity, and share responsibility for improving learning for all students;
* Leadership: Educators establish a compelling and inclusive vision for professional learning, sustain coherent support to build educator capacity, and advocate for professional learning by sharing the importance and evidence of the impact of professional learning; and
* Resources: Educators allocate resources for professional learning, prioritize equity in their resource decisions, and monitor the use and impact of resource investments.

Collectively, the standards offer educators the latest knowledge and insight in designing, implementing, and sustaining high-quality professional learning. They are intended to serve as a guide for the development of all adult professional learning and can be seen throughout much of the New Jersey Department of Education’s (Department) work in the areas of professional learning and teacher and school leader evaluation. See the updated professional learning plan exemplars for more information on aligning professional learning to the standards.

# **Activities That Support an Effective Professional Development Plan**

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-128.a, districts are required to provide their teaching staff members with ongoing PD which supports student achievement as well as with an individual PDP. This shall include at least 20 hours per year of qualifying experiences that support student achievement, including achievement in academic, physical, social, and emotional learning.

The Department provides districts guidance and flexibility to ensure credibility for meaningful PD through a variety of ongoing and supported PD activities. Therefore, when planning, educators’ experiences should be a balance of varieties of PD opportunities that produce a valuable experience for the participant and culminate in enhanced student learning. The Department encourages educators to avail themselves of PD opportunities which encompass as many areas of PD as possible within the year.

The Department’s recommendation is that districts design their personal professional learning experiences to include district in-service and activities related to their staff’s collective PD goals with a focus on content knowledge and methods of enriching and broadening pedagogy and improving educator practice.

For individual educators it is recommended that a plan is created which:

* Is unique to their specific needs;
* Aligns with school and district goals; and
* Provides balance and includes a variety of PD activities.

There are two interdependent methods for accomplishing the requirements of PD. These include the approved district PDP and an individual’s PDP.

## Activities That Support an Effective Professional Development Plan FAQ

Q: Does the Department directly identify what counts towards the 20-hour requirement?

A. While the Department does not identify “what counts” towards the 20-hour requirement, regulations have specified that qualifying experiences must support student achievement, including achievement in academic, physical, social, and emotional learning. In addition, the Department has identified the following categories of PD:

1. Formal courses, offered in person or online, and conferences (including, but not limited to, workshops, seminars, institutes, and/or such programs) sponsored by colleges and universities, district boards of education, professional and/or research association, training organizations or other entities approved through the local district PDP process or as part of the provider registration systems.
2. Courses, seminars or other activities required to obtain standard licenses or certificates issued by the Department or other professional organizations.
3. Activities that support and/or enhance the profession including, but not limited to, educational research, writing and revision, grant writing, mentoring a preservice or novice teacher, professional service on boards or committees and teaching a course or workshop.

Q: How will districts determine the number of hours required for teachers working part-time or who are on leave for part of the school year?

A: A part-time teacher is defined as one who is employed on a regular basis for the school year, but for less than the full school day or week. The supervisor must prorate the hours required for a teacher working part-time or on leave for part of the school year. The hourly requirement is prorated depending on individual circumstances. For example, a teacher who works 30% of the day/week must earn 30% of the required 20 hours. A teacher who works half the year must accrue 10 hours, and a teacher who is out for an entire year is not required to earn any hours for the time away. The principal should work with the teacher to develop a plan that is reasonable for the individual's circumstances.

Q: How many PD hours are awarded for completion of a college course?

A: The number of hours for undergraduate or graduate courses is calculated by seat time. Hence, a teacher will typically earn 45 PD hours (15 weeks x 3 hours per week) for completion of a 3-credit course.

Q: How many PD hours should be awarded to a cooperating teacher who works with a student teacher?

A: The school and district administration may exercise discretion in determining the number of hours awarded to a cooperating teacher who is working with a student teacher. The Department will not issue a state-wide policy in this matter, because we believe districts need to consider their local contexts in making this decision.

Q: May districts count training in the teacher evaluation instrument as part of a teacher's 20-hour PDP?

A: As a regulatory requirement, training in the evaluation instrument would be included in the 20 hours of teacher PD; however, the 20 hours is only a minimum. It is important to ensure that all the other requirements for the individual teacher PDP are addressed as well. Please note that each teacher's improvement and/or growth needs, as identified through the evaluation process, must be addressed through the teacher's individual PDP pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.4(c). All professional learning opportunities must be aligned with the NJ Standards for Professional Learning and the definition of professional learning located at PD regulations.

Q: Is the PD requirement for ethics, law, and governance still in effect?

A: All PD plans for active school leaders serving on a permanent or interim basis whose positions require possession of the CSA, principal or supervisor endorsement must continue to complete appropriate training on school law, ethics and governance pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:26-8.2 and other statutory requirements related to student safety and well-being. Regulations stipulate that the specific training needs of each school leader will be reviewed annually and determined individually as part of PDP development.