Frequently Asked Questions about Becoming a Teacher!
(If you have obtained a hard copy of this document - Please go to http://www.pwcs.certification.schoolfusion.us/ then choose “Become a Teacher” to access each link referenced)

I want to become a Teacher, what should I do now?
A bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institute is required to become a teacher. It is recommended that anyone who wants to become a teacher enroll in a Virginia Approved Teacher Licensure Program, Career Switcher Program or a Teacher Education Specialization Degree Program now offered through many community colleges. EducateVA is a fast track for career switchers to obtain initial licensure in middle school and high school positions in the areas of Math, Science, English, Foreign Language and ESOL.

If I have completed an approved Teacher Education Program in Virginia, what documents do I need to provide to PWCS?
It is recommended that you include in your teaching application process for PWCS, a copy of your transcripts reflecting your student teaching and also provide a College Verification Form completed by your college indicating that you “successfully” completed the approved licensure program.

If I have earned a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institute but have not completed an approved licensure program or career switcher program, can I become a teacher?
It is becoming increasingly difficult to match up course work outside of a teaching education program with college transcript course work to meet the Virginia licensure requirements however if you have a degree major in some areas of endorsement offered by Virginia, you may be eligible for the provisional route to licensure in Virginia:

   Step 1: Determine the endorsement (subject area) you are interested in teaching.
   Step 2: Evaluate your transcripts to determine provisional license eligibility. See Endorsement Worksheets to perform a self analysis of your transcripts.
   Step 3: Consult with college advisors on Approved Licensure Programs or Career Switcher Programs if you are not eligible for provisional licensure.
   Step 4: If you determine you are eligible for at least the provisional route to Licensure, complete Teaching Application Process to be hired as a contracted teacher with PWCS. Be sure to submit supporting documentation of licensure eligibility with your teaching application process (transcripts conferring at least a Bachelors degree from a regionally accredited institute and reflecting all course work you have completed.)
   Step 5: You must apply for each vacancy posted in order to be considered for each vacant position.
   Step 6: Upon hire in a contracted teaching position, you will be given instructions on the licensure process. Once you are hired with PWCS as a contracted teacher, all licensure processes will be handled through the PWCS, Office of Certification. (In the state of Virginia, you must be hired as a contracted teacher to be eligible for a provisional license, you may not apply for licensure on your own.)
   Step 7: Although it is not required prior to hire, you are highly encouraged to complete any assessments associated for each endorsement area sought:

- Praxis II
- Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment (VCLA)
- Reading for Virginia Educators (RVE)

More information on assessment requirements and exemption criteria can be found at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/prof_teacher_assessment.pdf
I am not sure if some of my course work will be accepted by the VDOE to meet licensure requirements, can someone evaluate my transcripts for me?

PWCS is not a licensing agency and cannot provide transcript evaluations to applicants. If you did not complete an approved licensure program, it is recommended that you take your transcripts to a college offering an approved licensure program and speak with an advisor to determine what additional courses you will need to complete an approved licensure program. Completing an approved licensure program will be accepted by the VDOE to meet licensure requirements and will sometimes result in less coursework since most programs combine multiple requirements into individual courses.

Do I qualify for a professional license if I hold a valid out-of-state teaching license or have completed an approved teaching program from a regionally accredited college or university?

If you are coming to Virginia from another state, your may qualify for a Virginia teaching license with comparable endorsement (subject) areas if you meet at least one of the following options:

1. Completed a state-approved teacher licensure program from a regionally accredited University or college. You should include a College Verification Form completed by your college indicating that you “successfully” completed the program with your online teaching application process with PWCS.

2. Currently hold a fully certified, valid out-of-state teaching license with an endorsement comparable to an endorsement offered by Virginia in the area being hired. You should include a copy of your out-of-state teaching license with your PWCS online teaching application process. Additionally, if your out-of-state license is not “comparable” to a standard endorsement offered by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), you are encouraged to apply on your own to the VDOE at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/index.shtml for an official review of your licensure status in Virginia. The results of the official review performed by the VDOE should be included in your teaching application process with PWCS.

I am interested in becoming a guidance counselor, a school social worker, or a school psychologist, what are the requirements for licensure?

You will need a pupil personnel services license. The license required is a renewable five year license available to those who have earned an appropriate graduate degree from an accredited college or university in the endorsement (subject) area that you wish to be hired. The pupil personnel services license does not require teaching experience or assessment exams.

I am changing careers and have a bachelor’s degree, can I teach?

It depends on your degree major and the endorsement (subject) area you are interested in teaching. If you are interested in the alternative route to licensure you will have to meet the total number of credit hours in a specific endorsement (subject) area. (You will also have to satisfy all of the professional studies and assessment requirements in Virginia to obtain full licensure). You can compare your transcripts to the endorsement worksheet requirements found at http://www.pwcs.certification.schoolfusion.us/ then choose Licensure/Endorsement Worksheets. If your degree major does not match up to an endorsement area where a degree major is accepted for licensure, it is recommended that you enroll in a Virginia Approved Teacher Licensure Program, Career Switcher Program or a Teacher Education Specialization Degree Program now offered through many community colleges. EducateVA is a fast track for career switchers to obtain initial licensure in middle school and high school positions in the areas of Math, Science, English, Foreign Language and ESOL.

How can I meet licensure requirements if I do not meet the total number of credit hours in a specific endorsement (subject) area?

It is becoming increasingly difficult to match up course work outside of a teaching education program with college transcript course work to meet the Virginia licensure requirements. It is recommended that you contact a college offering an approved Teacher Education Program or a Career Switcher Program.
Completing an approved licensure program will be accepted by the VDOE to meet licensure requirements and will sometimes result in less coursework since most programs combine multiple requirements into individual courses.

What can I do to get started if I do not have a BA degree?
You can contact any of the local accredited four year universities offering Approved Teacher Education Programs or you can contact Community Colleges offering Teacher Education Specialization degree programs that will transfer to a four year college or university approved teacher education program.

Do I have to be eligible for full certification to be hired?
Full Virginia certification (renewable license) is only required for core subject areas in Title I schools and Gifted Education positions. You must be eligible for at least a provisional license in the area in which you would be teaching for most instructional positions. You must complete all content course requirements for all endorsements offered by Virginia except Special Education to be eligible for a provisional license. (Content and professional course requirements are reflected on the Endorsement Worksheets webpage.)

What are the minimum requirements to be hired as a Special Education Teacher?
The minimum requirements for provisional licensure in special education are:
1. You must hold at least a Bachelors degree from a regionally accredited institute and
2. Complete a course that covers the characteristics and legal aspects of Special Education (This course is sometimes referred to as Intro to Special Education, Orientation to the Exceptional Child or The Exceptional Student) If you have not met this requirement, refer to the approved list of courses.
3. You also must have a planned outline of study and show progress each year of completing the additional (24 to 42) credit hours of special education content course requirements for the special education endorsement area sought in order to maintain the provisional license.

Do I have to complete the assessments (Praxis II, Virginia Communications and Literacy, Reading for Virginia Educators) prior to becoming a teacher?
Assessment requirements vary depending on the endorsement (subject) area sought. It is not required that you complete assessments prior to being hired however it is highly recommended that those seeking an Elementary endorsement complete the Praxis II Elementary Education Content Knowledge Test Code 0014 or 5014 if taken before July 1, 2014 or Test Code 5031 if taken on or after July 1, 2014 prior to hire to meet the No Child Left Behind highly qualified requirements. (For more information on assessment and exemption criteria, please go to http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/licensure/prof_teacher_assessment.pdf)

If I hold an expired Virginia Teacher License, am I eligible for hire?
If you hold a fully certified, five year renewable license issued by the VDOE and you have been out of the teaching arena or teaching outside of Virginia for a period of time, you are eligible to be hired by PWCS. Upon hire, a one year extension to the license will be requested and you will need to earn the required 180 points by June 1st of the school year in which you are hired. If you do not hold a masters degree, at least 90 points must be earned with content knowledge college credit. It is recommended that you enroll in two courses to meet the required 180 points in a timely manner. Many online courses offered through accredited colleges meet the domains of professional competency in education and can be completed relatively quickly.
Quick Glance at Virginia Licensure

Qualifications for Licensure in Virginia

Applicants for licensure must:

- Must be at least 18 years of age
- Have an earned BA degree (with the exception of Technical Professional Licensure which requires 2 years of documented occupational work experience).
- Possess Good Moral Character as outlined in the Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel.
- Must be found eligible for at least a provisional license offered by the VDOE.
- Pay the required fees to the Treasurer of Virginia and complete the licensure application process with the Office of Certification upon hire in an instructional position.

You must be hired in a contracted teaching position to be eligible for provisional licensing.

Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition Training

The Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition Training is required prior to obtaining initial licensure or requesting another action at the Virginia Department of Education.

- This free online training which takes about one hour to complete is available at http://www.dss.virginia.gov/abuse/mr.cgi
- You will need to print your certificate as verification of completion of the requirement.

First Aid/CPR/AED Training

All initial license requests and license renewal will require training in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of automated external defibrillators. Documentation of completion of all three components must include your full name, date training was completed, signature and title of the organization or group that provided current national evidence-based certification. Only Part 1 of training is required to meet licensure requirements. A hands-on, skills assessment is not required to meet licensure guidelines at this time.

Dating of Virginia Licenses and Critical Licensure Deadlines

All licenses will be dated effective from July 1 in the school year in which the application is made to the Virginia Department of Education. For this reason, consideration regarding licensure deadlines and related licensure requirements should be made prior to accepting employment. The VDOE does not offer extensions to provisional licenses for any reason except Military Leave of Absence. Although a provisional license is issued for a three year block of time, per school division regulation a teacher must meet licensure requirements by February 15th of the year in which the license expires. Additionally a teacher hired late in a school year will need to meet licensure deficiencies in a shorter period of time. It is very important that a prospective new teacher evaluate their licensure status and/or program outline to ensure completion of all deficiencies by the February 15th deadline of the license issued.

Conditions for Licensure by Reciprocity

An individual coming into Virginia from any state may qualify for a Virginia teaching license endorsement area if the individual has completed a state-approved teacher licensure program from a regionally accredited four – year college or university, or if the individual holds a comparable valid out-of-state license with full credentials without deficiencies that must be in force at the time the application to VDOE is made for the licensure.

Individuals who hold a valid out-of-state license (full credential without deficiencies) and have completed a minimum of three (3) years of full-time, successful teaching experience in an accredited school (K -12) outside of Virginia, but within the United States will meet exemption criteria for assessments in Virginia.