



UNIVERSITY OF
BRIDGEPORT

School of Education

How to Become a Teacher in Connecticut

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Introduction

Teachers are responsible for the academic, personal, and emotional development of their students. A good teacher can make a difference in the lifelong success of a child. Teachers do much more than teach their students how to read or solve an equation. They teach children how to adapt, self-regulate, ask questions, and become resourceful. This work requires passion, drive, and creativity. It also requires a bit of work and education. If you’re driven to teach, you may wonder how to become a teacher.

In this guide, you’ll learn what it takes to become a teacher in Connecticut. Read on to learn about the various education requirements expected of future teachers, in addition to the certifications and degree options available to prospective educators in the Nutmeg State. This guide will also help you differentiate among teacher preparation programs so that you can get your career started in an institution that aligns with your career goals. Teachers are in high demand, now more than ever. Begin your teaching journey with the knowledge and credentials needed to succeed.

Why Become a Teacher in Connecticut?

While teaching is a noble profession, the career has a reputation for being difficult and underappreciated at times. However, many teachers in Connecticut will tell you that, more often than not, there is a great reward. Connecticut teachers are well compensated, well respected, and in high demand.

Connecticut offers competitive compensation for educators¹. The average starting salary for Connecticut teachers is \$55,000. The average teacher salary, including teachers who have worked in the field for a while, is over \$78,000. The salaries earned by Connecticut teachers are the fifth highest in the nation! They’re also among the fastest-growing nationwide. From 2019 to 2020, Connecticut’s average teacher salary rose by 5.5%. In addition, Connecticut teachers receive excellent benefits². For example, teachers earn retirement funds through the state and if you’ve put in 20 years of service as a teacher, you can retire with full benefits at the age of 60. You can also retire at any age after 35 years of service as a teacher.

On top of retirement benefits and excellent pay, teachers in Connecticut school districts can receive tuition reimbursement and paid professional development. Tuition reimbursement can cover anywhere from three to six credit hours per year. In Connecticut, teachers are also supported by their community. The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) offers mortgage assistance to help teachers buy a home in Connecticut³.

Lastly, teachers are in high demand in the state of Connecticut. Since January 2020, 1,588 public school teachers have retired and an additional 831 have filed for retirement since July 2021⁴. Connecticut is especially in need of teachers in the areas of mathematics, special education, science, technology and computer education, bilingual education, and world languages. However, as positions continue to become available, new teachers will benefit from the job security that comes with a shortage.

All of these benefits make Connecticut an excellent state to work in as a teacher. But how do you become a teacher in Connecticut? Read on for more information!

Sources

1: <https://connecticut.teach.org/salary-benefits>

2: <https://portal.ct.gov/Services/Education/Teachers-and-Administrators/Teacher-Retirement-Resources-and-Benefits>

3: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Talent_Office/Teacher_Mortgage_Assistance_Program_October_2020.pdf

4: <https://ctexaminer.com/2021/06/16/wave-of-teaching-hires-challenges-connecticuts-job-market>

Connecticut Teacher Educational Requirements

In order to be a teacher in Connecticut, candidates must earn, at minimum, a bachelor's degree. Your bachelor's degree should, ideally, be in a field related to what you want to teach. However, there are many ways to become a teacher.

For Those Who Don't Have a Bachelor's Degree:

If you do not yet have a bachelor's degree, you should consider a program that offers a combined bachelor's and certification program. In some cases, you won't apply to your teaching program until you're in the second or third year of the degree program. Before you can apply to your teaching program, you'll need to have completed significant coursework towards the subject area in which you want to teach. This undergraduate teacher preparation program can help you get your career off the ground, however, all teachers in Connecticut are required to eventually earn a master's degree, so keep in mind this is just the beginning of your career path.

For First-Time Teachers with a Bachelor's Degree:

If you already hold a bachelor's degree in a subject area other than teaching, you can pursue one of two choices: a master's degree program or a post-baccalaureate program. In Connecticut, all teachers must earn a master's degree eventually. With that in mind, if you've earned a bachelor's degree, it's in your best interest to pursue a master's degree, as a graduate degree can qualify you for a higher starting salary, advancement opportunities, and the ability to gain experience in the field.

Required Coursework for Aspiring Teachers

Whether you earn a bachelor's degree or continue your studies through graduate school, there is specific coursework required of prospective teachers in Connecticut. These requirements depend on the subject or grade area in which prospective teachers wish to become certified. At a high level, future teachers are required to complete general education coursework that will prepare them for the field (e.g. classes in Lifespan Development and Curriculum Design). Those who wish to specialize in Elementary Education are required to gain extensive knowledge in a wide range of subject areas, including math, language arts, science, and social studies. Those wishing to specialize in Secondary Education must complete extensive coursework in a specific subject area, which will prepare them for certification in that area of study.



If you're brand-new to teaching, you should consider beginning your journey by signing up for a TEACH Connecticut advising call to learn more about how to get certified. You can also meet with an academic advisor during the course of your teacher preparation program.

Connecticut law requires all educators to hold a valid Connecticut certification in order to work in any public school or approved special education facility. Connecticut teacher certification eligibility is contingent on an applicant's completion of a state-approved educator preparation program, the passing of certification assessments, and various experiential requirements.

These requirements depend on the specific area in which you're interested in teaching. For example, if you're interested in teaching Elementary Education, you will be responsible for earning a degree in Elementary Education and passing the Praxis II Elementary Education exam, as well as the Foundations of Reading Test.

If you already have two years of teaching experience, you may be able to start teaching without having to take additional teaching courses. This experience is categorized as teaching in another state, another country, or a private school. You will be required to have at least 20 months of full-time teaching experience in the same school teaching in the area in which you desire to earn certification. You then must pass subject-specific Praxis II assessments and meet all coursework requirements.

Time to Complete Teacher Certification in Connecticut

There are multiple routes to teaching certification. As such, the time it takes to earn certification can vary. There are three varying levels of teacher certification: Initial, Provisional, and Professional. While some schools will certify candidates to teach through earning a bachelor's degree, Connecticut requires a master's degree to advance to the Professional Educator Certificate.

Initial, Provisional, and Professional Certification

As noted above, there are three levels of Connecticut teacher certification programs: Initial, Provisional, and Professional. Teachers in Connecticut are required to earn certification before they can lead a classroom. The first certification a teacher is eligible to earn is the Initial Educator Certificate. In order to advance through each tier of certification, aspiring teachers must gain years of experience and complete advanced coursework. Here is a breakdown of each level of teaching certification in Connecticut.



Initial
The Initial Educator Certificate is the first level of the three-tier system of certificates for Connecticut teachers. It is valid for three years. In order to earn this certificate, applicants must complete a state-approved program of preparation or have completed at least 20 school months of successful teaching experience in the same school.



Provisional
The Provisional Educator Certificate is the second-level certificate in the three-tier system. It is valid for eight years. Applicants must fulfill all the eligibility requirements for the Initial certificate and also complete at least 10 months of teaching experience while holding the Initial Educator Certificate or complete at least 30 school months of teaching in an approved non-public school or a non-Connecticut public school under a valid teaching certificate. They must also finish the TEAM Mentoring Program.



Professional
The Professional Educator Certificate is the final level of Connecticut’s certification tier system. In order to qualify for this educator certificate, applicants must complete at least 30 months of successful teaching in a Connecticut public or non-public school while holding the Provisional Educator Certificate. Additionally, applicants must complete advanced coursework (including graduate study) as detailed by the Connecticut certification regulations for the specific subject area or grade the applicant wants to teach. This certification is valid for five years, but renewable.

Teacher Examination Requirements in Connecticut

In order to earn certification, prospective teachers must pass various examinations and assessments. As part of their teacher preparation program, for example, candidates are sometimes required to pass the Praxis Core Academic Skills test in order to become certified. Note that some institutions require the Praxis Core Academic Skills test for admission, but other schools, like the University of Bridgeport, do not. Additionally, candidates must take various assessments in order to gain licensure. These tests depend on the area in which a candidate is hoping to become certified. Here are just a few examples of the specialty areas teachers may seek certification in, along with their required tests.

Elementary Education (Grades 1-6)

In order to become a certified elementary school teacher, candidates must pass the ETS Praxis II Elementary education test. This test covers subjects including reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The passing scores required of these subtests, in order, are 157, 157, 155, and 159. Additionally, elementary school teachers must take and pass the Foundations of Reading Test and the edTPA. The edTPA is a Teacher Performance Assessment that is completed during the final student teaching semester.

Reading Specialist and Consultant

Those wishing to earn certification as a Remedial Reading and Remedial Language Arts Specialist or Reading and Language Arts Consultant must take the Pearson Reading Specialist Test and pass with a score of 215 or higher.

Middle/Secondary School

Candidates hoping to gain certification in specific subject areas must pass Praxis II examinations in those subjects. For example, to teach English in grades 7 through 12, you must pass the Praxis II English Language Arts: Content & Analysis exam with a score of 168. All candidates must also pass the edTPA. The edTPA is a Teacher Performance Assessment that is completed during the final student teaching semester.

How to Choose a Teacher Certification or Degree Program

Once you've decided to pursue a teaching career in Connecticut, it's important to select the best preparation program for you. Becoming a teacher is dependent on the quality of education you yourself receive. Here are just a few key points to consider when choosing a teacher certification or degree program.



Accreditation

Your teacher preparation program must be accredited by the state and by the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation (CAEP) in order for you to be eligible for certification. The CAEP evaluates the curriculum and pedagogical techniques of teacher preparation programs. By doing so, they're able to ensure that prospective teachers are provided with an excellent education. Teaching programs' candidate success rate, experiential learning opportunities, and post-graduation skill level are all taken into consideration. Learn about UB's School of Education accreditation [here](#).



Flexibility

Candidates who are already successfully working as teachers may be hesitant to leave their careers in order to pursue graduate study. In this case, finding a school that offers flexibility to candidates is key. An online master's degree in Education, for example, can offer certified teachers a flexible option to enhance their professional skills, increase their earning potential, and open up the opportunity to earn their Professional Educator certification. Online M.Ed. programs allow certified teachers to earn their graduate degrees entirely online while working full time.



Degree and Certification and Options

It goes without saying that your teacher preparation program should offer credentialing in the grade or subject area you want to teach. Make sure, before applying to your future school, that the program in question offers the coursework that you need to be successful in the concentration area you're interested in teaching.



Hands-On Experience

All approved Connecticut teaching programs are required to provide clinical field experience. However, not all hands-on experience is the same. The ideal teaching preparation program will offer you multiple avenues to gain experience. For example, at University of Bridgeport, teacher candidates have the opportunity to gain experience by working full time in a school.

Additionally, UB students can pursue a tuition-paid internship which allows them to work in a school as a substitute teacher, assist in school projects, or mentor small groups of students. When a teacher preparation program offers multiple options for field experience, graduates are more likely to feel prepared for their first year in the classroom. Ask your future teacher preparation programs about their field work offerings and opportunities.



Preparation to Teach Diverse Populations

It has never been more important for teachers to be prepared to teach students with diverse learning styles, cultural backgrounds, as well as social and emotional needs. Consider enrolling in a program that will prepare you to successfully teach a wide variety of student demographics. This preparation can include coursework that addresses culturally relevant pedagogy, coursework dealing with the diverse needs of students, and training in how unconscious biases can cause negative outcomes for students.

Furthermore, a program dedicated to preparing students to teach a diverse population will ideally include pre-service experience in a variety of settings, including rural, urban, and suburban schools. Connecticut has more than 200 school districts, all in urban, suburban, and rural settings. About half of Connecticut public school students are students of color and over 135 languages are spoken by Connecticut students. It is vital that new teachers are prepared to serve all students, regardless of their background.

How to Get Into a Teacher Certification or Degree Program

Acceptance into a teaching certification or degree program can vary from school to school. However, general admission requirements typically include transcripts from previous educational institutions, letters of recommendation, and a statement of purpose. If you want to become a teacher in Connecticut, it is important that you apply to a state-approved program, such as those at University of Bridgeport. At University of Bridgeport, these are the requirements for admission to a graduate-level Teacher Certification Program:

Degree and GPA Requirements

A bachelor's degree is required in order to enter a master's or graduate-level teaching program. However, you may apply with courses still in progress as long as your bachelor's degree will be completed before the beginning of your graduate program. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 is preferred for applicants. However, the minimum cumulative undergraduate GPA is 2.67 (B-) to get into the educator preparation programs.

Coursework Requirements

Applicants to the master's degree in Elementary Education are required to have completed an undergraduate degree in various subject content disciplines. They must also have taken coursework in English, U.S. history, college algebra, natural science, social science, lifespan development, and fine arts or a world language. However, it's important to note that some certification areas have specific course requirements, and some schools may have specific course requirements different than the state. Generally speaking, those applying to the master's in Secondary Education are required to have completed an undergraduate degree in the subject area in which they desire to

teach or to have completed 30 undergraduate credits in the subject area plus 9 credits in a related area.

Work Authorization Requirements

Candidates who wish to participate in the tuition-paid internship portion of the master's degree program must be authorized to work in the United States.

Reference Submissions

Candidates for graduate study typically need to submit one or two letters of reference to the admissions office. These letters can come from employers, professors, or professional associates who have the ability to testify to your suitability as a prospective teacher.

Supplementary Materials

Applicants must submit a personal statement of 350 words or more detailing the reasons why they are interested in enrolling in the certification program of their choice. This statement must highlight any relevant experiences or professional goals. Additionally, applicants are required to submit a professional resume for review.

Explore Teaching Programs at University of Bridgeport

At University of Bridgeport, we offer three main types of teacher certification degree paths: Elementary, Middle, and Secondary Education. The Elementary Education program certifies teachers to teach grades 1-6. Middle (grades 4-8) and Secondary (grades 7-12) Education prepares teachers to teach in a specific subject area. Let's explore some of these programs further.



Elementary Education

The master's degree in Elementary Education prepares candidates to plan lessons and units according to state and national guidelines, pass the Praxis II exam for elementary school teachers (including the subject-specific subsections), differentiate curriculum for students with special needs, and pass the Connecticut Foundations of Reading Assessment exam. The curriculum taken in the master's degree in Elementary Education includes, but is not limited to:

- Pedagogical and Content Knowledge in Mathematics
- Pedagogical and Content Knowledge in Social Studies
- Pedagogical and Content Knowledge in Science
- Pedagogical and Content Knowledge in Language Arts
- Early Literacy Instruction
- Developmental Reading Instruction

Additionally, graduate students can take electives such as Children's Literature, Effective Planning & Instruction, and Instruction for the English Language Learner.

Students in this program must complete an internship or early field experience and 14 weeks of directed student teaching. Lastly, students must pass the content related Praxis II Test, the New Foundations of Reading Test, and the edTPA in order to become certified.



Secondary Education

The master's degree in Secondary Education prepares students to plan lessons according to state and national guidelines, pass the Praxis II content knowledge exam for secondary subject areas, pass the edTPA performance assessment, and differentiate instruction to suit the needs of a wide variety of students, including those with special needs. The curriculum in this degree program differs from that in the Elementary Education program in that it prepares students to teach in a specific subject area. General coursework may include:

- Advanced Instructional Methods
- Lesson Planning for effective teaching
- Graduate-level content
- Special Education

At UB, students can specialize in business, English, history and social studies, mathematics, science, and music. Coursework will depend on their area of concentration. For example, students in the Secondary Mathematics program will take classes in algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and more. Those wishing to earn an English certification, by contrast, may take classes such as American and British literature, grammar and linguistics, composition, and Shakespeare. Students can also complete electives in their area of concentration or in a related field.

Students in this program must complete an internship or early field experience and 14 weeks of directed student teaching. Lastly, students must pass the content related Praxis II Test and the edTPA in order to graduate and become certified.



In addition to these teaching certification pathways, University of Bridgeport offers supplementary professional certification programs for aspiring educators in the state of Connecticut.

These include:

- Computer Science Cross Endorsement
- Music Teaching Certificate (K-12)
- Reading and Language Arts Consultant Sixth Year Certificate (097)
- Remedial Reading and Remedial Language Arts Sixth Year Certificate (102)
- Education Administration and Supervision Sixth Year Certificate (092)

There is no doubt that teachers in Connecticut are highly sought after, well paid, and supported. Whether you're a teacher who wishes to advance in your career, or you're hoping to enter the teaching field after earning a bachelor's degree, you should consider entering a master's degree program. A graduate degree in the field of education, or a teacher certification program at the postsecondary level, can provide the training needed to become a difference-maker in the K-12 classroom.



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To learn more about the teaching certification
programs available at University of Bridgeport, visit:
www.bridgeport.edu/education

University of Bridgeport is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education.
The University also is accredited by the Connecticut Office of Higher Education.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) accredits University of
Bridgeport's School of Education. CAEP promotes excellence in educator preparation through
quality assurance and continuous improvement.

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