

**Maine School Administrative District #33**

**Professional Learning Communities Support System**

**HANDBOOK**



## **Section A**

MSAD #33 includes the towns of Frenchville and St. Agatha and is composed of one elementary school, one middle/high school, and the St. John Valley Technology Center. This Professional Learning Communities Support System (PLCSS) plan is designed to provide support to all teachers working under Provisional, Targeted Needs, Conditional, or Transitional certificates. Such teachers will be part of the Teacher Induction Program for up to two years and will follow guidelines toward certification specified in the MSAD #33 Certification Handbook. All attempts will be made to find professional development opportunities within the state of Maine that meet the needs listed on Professional Certification Action Plans. Teachers who hold Maine Professional Certification at the time of hire will not receive a mentor, but will be guided through the recertification process by their Certification Committee chairperson.

## **Section B**

The PLCSS will provide strong and appropriate support services in order to develop effective educational practice for all certified staff supported by this plan. The PLCSS will provide the Commissioner of Education with recommendations for educational personnel seeking professional certification, professional renewal, certification advancement, or educational technician authorization.

The PLCSS will have the following responsibilities:

1. The induction of new staff supported by this plan
2. Inform all new staff supported by this plan of their certification responsibilities and provide each with a copy of this PLCSS plan and associated documents/forms
3. Supervise the development and submission of:
  - a. Initial Professional Certification Action Plans and supporting documentation for new educators and for master teacher candidates
  - b. Renewal plans for teachers and educational specialists
4. The assignment of a mentor to new teachers and new educational specialists that require one

All decisions made by the PLCSS will be made in a professional, fair, and equitable manner. In the event that staff members do not follow procedures for recertification, the issue will be brought to the PLCSS Chairperson for consideration. A teacher who feels that any PLCSS decision is incorrect should outline his/her concern in writing and forward it to the chairperson. The concern will then be presented to the Certification Committee, as a whole, for re-consideration. If the staff member still does not deem the decision satisfactory, he or she may address the Committee in person. For each Committee decision, consensus will be utilized.

All materials gathered during the course of the certification process are to be considered legally confidential, including, but not limited to, self-assessments, observations, PCAPs, and recommendations. No materials, either written or verbal, may be divulged to any outside sources, including building principals, other administrators, other teachers, and any other staff, unless the individual expressly gives permission in writing. It is the responsibility of each PLCSS member to respect the individual's rights of confidentiality.

The PLCSS is comprised of a Certification Committee and Mentor Network. The PLCSS will be overseen by the Certification Committee. The Certification Committee will operate independently but may consult with the Superintendent of Schools and/or the Board of Directors as appropriate, and utilize the services of the Department of Education Office.

### **Certification Committee**

The Certification Committee of MSAD #33 will consist of four (4) teachers and one (1) administrator (the administrator to be appointed by the Superintendent), with representation from each building being the ideal. Administrators may not participate in discussions concerning candidates under their supervision.

The *chairperson* (also known as the PLCSS chairperson) must be a professionally certified teacher/educational specialist, and will be elected by the Certification Committee at the last meeting of each year to act as chairperson for the following year. The chairperson will be responsible for certification procedures throughout the district including those endorsed by the Certification Committee and Mentor Network. Duties of the chairperson will be as follows:

1. Coordinate the setting of Certification Committee and Mentor Network meeting dates and times.
2. Set meeting agendas.
3. Facilitate meetings.
4. Notify members of meetings and other necessary information.
5. Communicate with the State of Maine Department of Education and other necessary parties.
6. Officially respond to PCAPs and applications for certification action, with the advisement of the Recertification Team.
7. Ensure staff access to this PLCSS plan and associated documents/forms.
8. Assign a mentor from eligible mentor list for each new hire.
9. Prepare an annual committee budget for submission to the Superintendent of Schools.
10. Prepare a year-end report of the committee activities for submission to the Superintendent of Schools.
11. Act as the contact person for all Certification Committee members, as well as Mentor Network members.
12. Act as the official spokesperson for the district in regard to certification issues.
13. Respond to (approve/disapprove) all staff requests for work-related study leading toward recertification credit.
14. Provide maintenance of a cumulative confidential file containing required documentation.
15. Sign certification documents for the state.
16. Make a general presentation to all teachers by the end of September, each school year to provide information regarding changes, reminders, and updates in the certification process.

17. Provide orientation and training to new PLCSS members. This will be offered at the first meeting of the year, and then as needed.
18. Perform any other duties required to ensure the orderly operation of the Certification process.
19. Delegate responsibilities to Certification Committee and Mentor Network members.

The responsibilities of the *Certification Committee Members* are as follows:

1. Assist all staff supported by this plan in the recertification process.
2. Attend scheduled trainings and meetings.
3. Serve as a liaison to respective staff in all matters of professional growth related to certification.
4. Work closely with the district's leadership to determine areas of need for professional growth.
5. Maintain necessary records related to recertification of staff.
6. Report to the Superintendent of Schools and School Committee periodically.

The Certification Committee meetings will be held on a monthly basis. The monthly meeting dates will be determined for the entire year during the first meeting. Members must attend eighty percent (80%) of the meetings. In the case of poor attendance, a replacement will be selected from the pool of qualified staff, and the annual stipend for both individuals will be adjusted accordingly. (The Certification Committee, in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools, will consider special circumstances.)

### **Mentor Network**

Each provisionally certified or temporarily certified (targeted needs, conditional, and transitional) staff member supported by this plan will be assigned a mentor whose main task will be to coach his or her mentee in reaching a higher level of certification. These mentors must be formally trained through the Maine Department of Education approved training in mentoring skills. In doing so, mentors will provide guidance and support based on a professional learning community model. Mentors will also assist their mentees in developing collegial professional partnerships as the primary means of professional development and achieving action plan goals.

Qualifications of *mentors*:

1. At least three years of experience as an educator.
2. Working under a professional certificate.
3. Completed a mentor training program approved by the State of Maine Department of Education.

The responsibilities of each *mentor* are as follows:

1. Be a resource for the mentee either directly or indirectly.

2. Collaborate with the mentee to design a PCAP which will help the new educator provide documentation of meeting Maine's Ten Teaching Standards.
3. Conduct pre- and post-observation conferences.
4. Observe all aspects of performance (including at least three documented observations).
5. Meet on regular basis with the mentee to collaborate and determine the progress of the new educator.
6. Make a formal recommendation to the Certification Committee chairperson indicating whether or not the mentee has met the requirements for a higher level of certification.

### **Section C**

The PLCSS chairperson or designated representative from the certification committee will make a general presentation to all staff by the end of September, each school year, to inform teachers of their certification responsibilities and to provide information on accessing procedures and forms.

New staff supported by this plan will also meet separately with the chairperson for a formal orientation to discuss:

- Responsibilities
- Roles
- Procedures
- Available services
- Training and professional development
- Process for achieving a professional certificate

This plan and associated documents/forms will be distributed to these staff members so that they are aware of the procedures required to achieve and maintain certification or authorization.

PLCSS members will present information regarding staff development and activities that may be used for recertification. These include, but are not limited to:

- Coursework
- Workshops/conferences/seminars
- Independent studies
- Professional development days
- Participation on committees or task forces
- Educational research related to classroom practice
- Professional research internship
- Publication of educational articles or books
- Development of innovative classroom programs and/or units beyond regular teaching responsibilities
- Experiences outside the school setting which provide professional growth

## **Section D**

Appointment to the Certification Committee shall be made from a pool of qualified staff. In order for teachers to serve on the certification committee, a person must have three years of experience as an educator and hold a valid Maine teaching certificate at the professional or master teacher level. The majority must have completed at least one five year renewal cycle. In addition, committee members must complete a Maine Department of Education approved training program or verify to the Certification Committee that they have had equivalent training approved by the Department of Education.

Members of the Certification Committee will hold a two-year term. Administrators will rotate on a yearly basis and will be assigned by the Superintendent. Prior to the end of the term, a member can opt to continue in the position or resign. When multiple staff members from the same building are interested in a vacancy, the staff of the school will vote for the individual who they wish to represent their building. Upcoming vacancies on the Certification Committee will be announced via electronic or hard copy memo in April by the Committee Chairperson. Qualified teachers interested in serving on the Certification Committee need to submit their names in writing to the Committee Chairperson by **May 15**. The Certification Committee will recommend replacement members in May and submit the names to the Superintendent to be acted upon. Members of the certification committee shall be nominated by the Superintendent and approved by the School Board at the June board meeting.

The Chairperson of the Certification Committee for the next school year will be elected by the committee at the June meeting.

## **Section E**

Whenever a mentor is needed, the Certification Committee will appoint a mentor from the approved list. The PLCSS will make every effort to match qualified mentors with new educators requiring a mentor using the following prioritizing guidelines:

- 1) Location – School, building
- 2) Impact areas – Content area, grade level, specialization

Mentors are expected to work with the same mentee for the duration of the mentee's provisional (or temporary) certification period (usually two years). In the event of a match that does not proceed successfully, a change can be made (see Chapter 118, 2.8 (c)). The staff member seeking a change shall submit a written request to the PLCSS chairperson. Mentors may be replaced upon consideration of this written request from the certification candidate or the mentor.

Teachers seeking the Master Teacher Certificate, or its renewal, will work closely with a mentor, in consultation with the building Recertification Team member, to develop a Master Certificate Action Plan (or Master Certificate Renewal Plan) that supports the applicant in meeting the requirements established in Chapter 118, Section 7.1., including, but not limited to, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

## **Section F**

Professional Certification Action Plans will be prepared by each mentee in collaboration with his/her mentor.

A pre-conference, observation and post-conference will be conducted prior to the writing of the mentee's PCAP. The conferences and observation will provide the direction for the PCAP goals. Goals and strategies will be written to reflect Maine's Ten Teaching Standards. The goals and strategies for improving professional skills will be consistent with the certificate level or endorsement. By the end of the provisional certification period, evidence of meeting each of the ten standards will be required.

Teachers seeking the Master Teacher Certificate, or its renewal, will develop a plan as defined in section E.

## **Section G**

The delivery of services and technical assistance shall be ongoing for the staff through each assigned mentor or building representative. Mentors will recommend resources for services and technical assistance available to fulfill the goals and objectives of their mentee's PCAP. The Certification Committee will provide each renewing staff member with available materials, services, and ideas to help the individual meet the goals of his/her recertification plan.

In order for a staff member supported by this plan to renew a professional/master certificate, he/she must:

- Complete six (6) credits of approved professional development study within the five-year certification period.  
CEU's: 1.5 CEU's = 1 credit  
Contact Hours: 15 hours = 1 credit
- Document correlation between the study and Maine's Ten Teaching Standards (for professional), or the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (for master).
- Receive pre-approval for the study by the Certification Committee
  - Documentation of correlation to the standards, and pre-approval authorization will be summarized on the Professional Certification Renewal Plan (PCRP) form.
- Submit verification of completion of activities/courses to committee.

Recertification packets should be submitted early enough to allow for revision and re-submittal. It is strongly recommended that all recertification packets be submitted by April of the year in which they must be approved. A recertification packet includes the following items:

- A copy of the pre-approved plan
- Proof of completion of professional growth activities
- MDOE "Application for Certification Renewal" (blue and white form)
- A check, money order, or credit card information for the appropriate fee

It will be the responsibility of all certified and authorized staff supported by this plan to maintain a current certificate/authorization while employed by MSAD #33, as well as provide the district with a copy of the respective document.

### **Section H**

In addition to each temporarily or provisionally certified teacher having a mentor, all teachers and educational specialists are members of PLCs in MSAD #33. The new staff will receive support services and professional development based on the goals of the PLC and PCAP goals.

### **Section I**

A confidential file will be created for each staff member. It will contain PCAPs, records of observations, recommendations of the Certification Committee, a copy of the current certificate, and all other documentation required by the Certification Committee. These documents and reports will include information or documentation of meeting Maine's Ten Teaching Standards or the National Board Standards. This file will be kept in a secure location within the buildings of MSAD #33.

### **Section J**

The PLCSS will complete annual program evaluations to assure quality, effectiveness, and efficient management. Evaluation will be organized and directed by the Certification Committee. This will include a questionnaire at the mid-year and year-end mentor/mentee cycle, completed by both the mentors and mentees.

All of this data will be analyzed at the last meeting of the year to evaluate the PLCSS. Goals for the ensuing years will be established based on this analysis.

If necessary, the Certification Committee may meet during the summer to make changes that will be implemented for the next school year.

### **Section K**

The Certification Committee will provide training and orientation for potential mentors. Teachers who have completed the Maine Department of Education approved training program or equivalent training approved by the Department of Education will be included on the mentor list. Mentor training will be provided as needed. CEU's or contact hours may be given for completed training.

### **Section L**

This plan was adopted by the MSAD #33 Board of Directors on December 7, 2009.  
Revisions accepted on April 6, 2010.