

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

School of Education

**American Board for the
Certification of Teacher
Excellence**

ABCTE Handbook

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Brief History of the School of Education

In 1963, Point Park College started the Early Childhood Education Program. In 2004, we became Point Park University. Since then, we have continued to grow, offering programs to prepare educators for all levels Pre-K - 12, including special education. In 2014, our first class of Doctoral Students entered the newly created doctoral program. We became the School of Education on September 5, 2018, and our programs, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral have continued to expand. We now offer a wide variety of programs online as well as face-to-face.

Faculty and Staff Directory

The School of Education, under the leadership of Dr. Darlene Marnich, the Founding Dean of the School of Education, continues to grow and prepare future, professional educators. A full list of The School of Education faculty and staff can be found: [School of Education Faculty and Staff](#) .

American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence – ABCTE

Point Park University is the only Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) approved institution in Pennsylvania to offer the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence Program – ABCTE, which is an alternative path to teacher certification in Pennsylvania. In order to meet the requirements for certification in Pennsylvania, all candidates are required to complete all phases and steps of the program – no exceptions.

There are three main phases, passing the American Board Exams, completing the two required graduate classes, and completing a minimum of 60 consecutive days of full-time, full-day teaching in the candidate's certification area. Candidates are also required to submit documentation in phase 2.

Cost of the Program is set by the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence, Point Park University, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Candidates must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

Areas of Certification

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, working with Point Park University, has given approval for candidates to obtain an Instructional 1 Certification in the following areas:

- Special Education PreK – 12 (*PreK – 8 content exam **and** Special Education exam)
- PreK – 4

- Secondary grades 7 – 12
 - Biology
 - Chemistry
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Physics
 - Science
 - Social Studies (US History and World History Exams)

All candidates are required to pass the content exam/s and the Professional Teaching Knowledge (PTK) exam.

REQUIRED Phases of the Program

All Candidates are required to complete all steps and phases of the program in sequence in order to be recommended to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for Instructional I Teaching Certification.

Phase 1

1. Candidates start with the [American Board for Teacher Excellence](#) and register for the program. Prior to registering, candidates can sign up for a 7-day free trial. Candidates should pick one area only of certification. After registering for the American Board, candidates are required to complete the [Verification of Registration for the American Board](#) . All candidates are required to verify they received and read the Handbook and will follow the Handbook. The Handbook is available at www.pointpark.edu/abcte step #1.
2. After passing the American Board content and Professional Teaching Knowledge Exams, candidates are required to submit a copy of the test results to [Mrs. Beverina-Moore](#), Director Student Placements. After passing both exams, candidates are required to complete the background check through the American Board. Candidates can find the directions on their American Board dashboard. After the background check is complete, the American Board will mail the Passport to Teaching. Candidates cannot move to phase 3, the teaching portion of the program, without this document. Pennsylvania Department of Education requires passing test scores and the Passport to Teaching.
3. After candidates pass both exams, they can apply to Point Park University. To complete teacher certification through the ABCTE process, candidates must be admitted to Point Park University graduate program. Step-by-step directions for applying to Point Park University can be found at www.pointpark.edu/abcte step #3.

- a. Some candidates desire to study for the American Board Exams and enroll in the required courses at Point Park University at the same time.
- b. Candidates who wish to take this path are required to complete, sign the [waiver](#), and submit it to [Mrs. Beverina-Moore](#) via an email attachment.
- c. Candidates are only permitted to take their content exam and the Professional Teaching Exam three times. If the candidate cannot pass the tests, the ABCTE Program cannot be their path to teacher certification. Candidates can pick a traditional path to certification.

Phase 2

4. After being admitted to Point Park University, all candidates are required to register for two graduate classes. Each graduate course is 3 credits. Transfer credits are not approved for this program. The classes for the Special Education PreK – 12, PreK – 4, and Secondary Certifications are not the same, so it is important to pick the area of certification carefully to avoid additional tuition costs to finish the program. Go to www.pointpark.edu/abcte , phase 2, step #4, to review the list of required classes. Candidates need to earn a GPA of 3.0 or higher in order to be eligible for certification.
5. After being admitted to Point Park University, candidates are enrolled in a Canvas Course named Professional Development. Candidates are required to submit passing content and Professional Teaching Knowledge Exams in addition to their passport to teaching in step #5.
6. All candidates are financially responsible for this program. Candidates are required to sign the [Statement of Financial Responsibility](#) and submit it in step #6 in Schoology, Professional Development.
7. After successfully completing phases 1 and 2, candidates are required to request approval for the full-time, full 60-day teaching placement. Candidates are responsible for finding their own placements. The placement must consist of at least 60 consecutive days of full-time, full day teaching in the candidate's certification area. Part-time and cyber school placement are not acceptable. Candidates can complete the required teaching as a full-time teacher, a permanent substitute, or a student teacher with a cooperating teacher. The school needs to be approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Public and charter schools are automatically approved. Visit [PDE EDNA](#) for a list of approved schools. Candidates are required to submit the name of the school district and school, the school calendar, and the teaching schedule in Canvas step #7. The teaching schedule must include what the

- candidate is teaching each period of the day and time for each period. All candidates are required to teach full-time, full day in their certification area.
8. After Mrs. Beverina-Moore, Director of Student Placement, approves the placement (step #7) candidates. It is the candidate's responsibility to secure the principal's verification of the placement. The signed form is then submitted in step #8, Schoology. The form can be found at www.pointpark.edu/abcte and in Canvas step #8.
 9. All candidates are required to submit current [PA Criminal History, Child Abuse Clearance, and FBI Fingerprint Clearances](#). Click on the link for information about the clearances. All clearances are for employment and must be valid for the entire teaching portion of the program (Phase 3). Clearances are submitted in step #9, Canvas.
 10. All candidates are required to complete [Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated and Permissive Reporting in Pennsylvania](#) through the University of Pittsburgh. The certificate is uploaded to step #10 in Canvas.

Phase 3

11. APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY TEACHING PERMIT (TTP)

- a. After completing all of phases 1 and 2 (steps 1 – 10), with Mrs. Beverina-Moore's approval, candidates can apply for a Temporary Teaching Permit (TTP) through [PDE TIMS](#). The Temporary Teaching Permit (TTP) is a Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate that is valid for one year. It cannot be renewed. All candidates are **required** to apply for the Temporary Teaching Permit (TTP) in order to finish this program. Candidates will find [TIMS directions](#) on the website and step-by-step directions in Canvas.
- b. Create the TIMS account and complete the application (or use an existing account)
- c. Pay for the TTP with a credit card (Paying by mail will delay the application being approved.)
- d. Complete the [Temporary Teaching Permit Verification Form](#) and secure the superintendent's signature
- e. Upload the signed copy of the Temporary Teaching Permit Verification Form to their personal dashboard in TIMS
- f. Scan American Board Scores and Passport to Teaching into one document and upload to their personal dashboard in TIMS
- g. Request an official undergraduate transcript be [sent electronically to PDE](#).

- h. In Canvas:
 - i. Upload a copy of the signed Temporary Teaching Permit Verification Form
 - ii. Give permission to be registered for the mentoring/teaching portion of the program

12. RECEIPT OF TTP FROM PDE

- a. After PDE issues the TTP, all candidates are required to submit a copy into Canvas, step #12, and to start the mentoring on the next available start date. Visit www.pointpark.edu/abcte for a complete list of the 6 start dates. The Director of Student Placements will register the candidates for the mentoring.

13. All candidates are required to complete the 60 school days of full-time, full day teaching in their subject area. Prior teaching experience **DOES NOT** replace the required mentoring – teaching. All candidates are required to attend a Zoom Orientation. Mrs. Beverina-Moore, Director of Student Placements, will assign a University Supervisor. The mentoring starts on the next available date.

14. Candidates are required to:

- a. Write lesson plans as required by the district
- b. Submit a completed attendance card and log weekly in Canvas
- c. If working with a cooperating teacher, submit their Weekly Progress Report
- d. Write a lesson plan using the Point Park University lesson plan format prior to each of the 4 virtual and/or face-to-face observations (submitted in Canvas) and complete a reflection following each observation
- e. Complete and submit in Canvas
 - i. Four seminar assignments
 - ii. Professional portfolio
- f. With prior supervisor approval, submit the final attendance card that reflects 60 days of full-time, full day teaching in the classroom

Phase 4

Upon completing all phases 1 – 3, the candidate must apply through [TIMS](#) for the Instructional 1 Teaching Certificate. Learn more: [TIMS FAQ page](#)

Accessibility Services

It is the intention of Point Park University to provide appropriate, reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Amendments

Act of 2008, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Accommodation is coordinated through the Center for Student Success, located on the 5th floor of the West Penn Building. It is the student's responsibility to work with the Center for Student Success and provide information to the Director of Student Placements. Accommodation cannot be provided retroactively.

[Accessibility Services](#)

School District Policies and Procedures

Point Park University School of Education has developed positive, professional relationships with school districts, and we are expanding our reach to further develop relationships with school districts throughout the state. ABCTE candidates are required to adhere to all school district policies and procedures. The university supervisors and the candidate work cooperatively and collaboratively with the school district personnel to assure that the ABCTE candidate is following all district policies and procedures. We value our partnerships with the districts and realize how crucial these partnerships are to developing our future professional educators.

School District Calendar, Attendance, and Teaching Schedule

School districts have a board approved school calendar that is usually posted on their website. ABCTE candidates are required to follow the school district calendar (not the University calendar). The expectation is that the candidates are in school every teacher workday. Our aspiring teachers are required to follow the arrival and departure time of the faculty. They are required to arrive promptly and stay the entire teacher day.

Candidates are required to maintain an attendance card. They need to sign in and out with the time daily on the attendance card. The University Supervisor will check the attendance card weekly. ABCTE candidates are required to make-up any days absent. A PDE requirement is that the candidate teach full-time, full-day for 60 consecutive days in their certification area.

In the event of an absence, the candidate is required to contact the school office as well as the University Supervisor.

[Attendance Card](#)

Clearances, TB, etc. Required by the School District

When the placement is confirmed, all candidates are required to submit the following documents to the school office unless given different directions by the school:

- Child Abuse Clearance
- Criminal Clearance
- Fingerprint Clearance
- TB test results – follow the district requirement
- Other district-required documents

The clearances are only valid for one year. The clearances need to be valid for the entire mentoring placement. Clearances are for employment.

[Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse – Mandated Permissive Reporting in PA](#)
[Applying for Clearance Information](#)

Initial Meeting with Cooperating Teacher

If the ABCTE candidate is working with a cooperating teacher, the University Supervisor will schedule an initial meeting via Zoom or Microsoft Teams with the aspiring teacher and the cooperating teacher. This is a time for everyone to meet to discuss the expectations of ABCTE mentoring teaching and district requirements.

Cooperating Teacher Role for “Student Teacher” ABCTE Candidates

Some of our ABCTE candidates are working as “student teachers” with a cooperating teacher. We value our partnerships with the cooperating teachers. They are crucial to teaching our candidates and moving them from aspiring teachers to novice teachers who are ready to assume the role of the teacher in the classroom. The cooperating teacher will:

- Assure the ABCTE candidate can begin teaching with the following schedule:
 - Week 1 – some observation and begin to teach one class period
 - Week 2 – begin teaching three periods of each day
 - Week 3 – teach all day every day
- Complete the written Weekly Report for the student teacher each Friday, discuss the strengths as well as suggestions for growth, then give a copy to the student teacher. The student is required to upload this document to Canvas each week.
- Provide ongoing verbal feedback so the student teacher will continue to grow.
- Provide information to the University Supervisor so the supervisor can accurately reflect the student teacher’s progress.
- Communicate with the University Supervisor as needed.

- Alert the University Supervisors of situations that need immediate attention.
- At the conclusion of the mentoring-teaching, the University Supervisor will provide the Check Request form to the cooperating teacher. The cooperating teacher should complete (type) the Check Request form and return it via an email attachment to dmoore@pointpark.edu . The payment is made after the placement has concluded and in accordance with the Point Park University business office.

Weekly Progress Report

Role of ABCTE Candidate

The role of the candidate is to grow and learn during the teaching-mentoring experience. They are required to:

- Follow school district policy and procedures
- Follow teaching schedule, workday, and the school district calendar
- Report to school for all instructional, clerical, and staff development days
- Maintain an attendance card and makeup any days absent
- Act respectfully and professionally
- Always engage in student learning during the instructional day
- Submit assignments in Canvas Mentoring by the due date. Assignments are due on time.
- Respond to the University Supervisor within 24 hours

University Supervisor Role

The role of the University Supervisor is to provide ongoing support and recommendations so the candidate will continue to grow.

- Check the candidate's weekly submissions in Canvas and provide meaningful feedback.
- Observe the candidates at least 4 times (2 times before mid-placement and 2 times after mid-placement). Supervisors may observe face-to-face or virtually.
- Meet with the student post observation to review the PDE 430 and upload a written report in Canvas.
- Follow the requirements as posted in Canvas.
- Attend supervisor meetings and orientation.
- Notify the Director of Student Placements regarding any barriers to the student meeting the expectations and assist in problem solving to maximize the candidate's success.

- Complete all required paperwork.

Professional Dress

There is an expectation that candidates dress appropriately in a manner that is consistent with school professional staff expectations. They are aspiring professionals, and their dress needs to reflect business attire or business casual. Ask the cooperating teacher or your principal about the school district dress code for teachers and professional staff. If there is a school district policy, read and follow the policy. There is an expectation that the candidate follows district policies and procedures. Jeans, yoga pants, sweats, etc. are not appropriate professional attire. Your attire helps form first impressions about you as a teacher. Your teaching-mentoring is the longest interview of your career.

Cell Phone Use

Candidates should share their cell phone number with the school and University Supervisor. This will improve communication. Do not share your cell phone number with students or parents. Do not take calls from students or respond to text messages from students.

Candidates are not permitted to talk and text during the instructional day. The cell phone should be turned off during instructional time. Candidates are required to follow school district policy for cell phone use by professional employees.

Email

Candidates are required to check their Point Park University email at least one time a day and respond within 24 hours. If assigned to a cooperating teacher, the candidate is not to respond to parents or students without talking with the cooperating teacher first. If the school district issues a temporary email address, candidates should use that email address only for approved school correspondence. All emails need to be written in a professional manner.

Facebook and Social Networking

You are now at the beginning of your professional career. Remove any unprofessional posts or pictures from your social media accounts. Edit your social networking pages to remove any images or posting related to salacious, illegal, or personally controversial activities. Do not friend students or parents before, during, or after your mentoring-teaching experience. Do not post information about your students, parents, other professionals, or the school district.

Determine your place in social networking sites based on what you would talk openly about in class with an administrator present.

Often school administrators will search social media sites for prospective employees. If something inappropriate is found, this could negatively affect a candidate's future employment or placement.

Athletics, Extracurricular Activities, and Employment During Mentoring-Teaching

The ABCTE 60-days of teaching is extremely demanding and a full-time job. It requires the undivided time of the candidate. The greatest portion of time and energy needs to be devoted to the teaching experience. There is an expectation that candidates spend a great deal of time each night planning and preparing for their teaching. Candidates are not permitted to alter their teaching schedule to participate in athletics, extracurricular activities, or employment.

Orientation

Orientation is scheduled prior to the beginning of the mentoring experience via Zoom. Candidates are required to attend and participate in the entire orientation session. The camera needs to be on. The goal of orientation is to review expectations and answer all questions, so the candidates are well prepared for the professional experience.

Mentoring for ABCTE Canvas

Candidates are required to submit the following documents weekly in Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday:

- Weekly log
- Attendance Card
- If assigned a cooperating teacher, the weekly progress report

48 hours (about 2 days) before a scheduled observation, the candidate is required to upload the corresponding lesson plan so the supervisor can review the lesson plan and provide feedback. After the observation, candidates are required to submit a reflection. The University Supervisor will upload the PDE 430.

Candidates are required to submit four seminar assignments and a professional portfolio in addition to the weekly assignments. The required pacing calendar can be found in Canvas.

Planning, Preparation, and Instruction

As professional educators, the primary focus is student learning and achievement. Well developed, written lesson plans result in quality lessons and better student achievement. Lesson objectives developed using [Bloom's Taxonomy](#) results in deeper student learning. Candidates are required to follow the lesson plan expectations of the school. Candidates are required to use the Point Park University lesson plan format for each of the four required observations. Candidates can find the Point Park University lesson plan form in Canvas.

Classroom Environment

Candidates should build positive, professional (teacher-student) relationships with students. There is an expectation that the students engage in learning for the entire instructional day/period. The candidate needs to always manage student behavior. During the instructional time, the candidate should use proximity control and positive reinforcement to manage student behavior and engagement. The candidate will follow the school's procedures and expectations for student behavior as well as follow recommended district policy and procedures. A well-developed lesson plan leads to better classroom management.

Supervision of Students

Students, faculty, and staff need to be always safe. Candidates hold a TTP which is a valid teaching certificate, therefore, with school district approval, they may oversee students without another district employee present. Candidates should be aware of the school district emergency plan.

Professionalism

Candidates need to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Teaching is a profession. Adhere to the PA Code of Professional Practices and Code of Conduct for Educators. Any candidate whose behavior is considered unprofessional by the University Supervisor, Principal, Director of Student Placements, or Founding Dean of the School of Education may be removed from the placement and not permitted to continue the path to teacher certification.

[PA Code of Professional Practice and Code of Conduct for Educators](#)

The candidate is expected to:

- Assume primary responsibility for their progress
- Maintain ongoing, open communication with the school and University Supervisor
- Establish positive, professional relationships with all school district personnel
- Adhere to all school district and school policies and procedures
- Always present themselves professionally
- Embrace the mentoring-teaching experience as an opportunity to grow and accept constructive feedback
- Go the extra mile
- Take time to thank those who assist you in many ways
- Build positive professional teacher-student relationships
- Be prepared

Evaluation of ABCTE Candidate

Candidates are evaluated using the PDE-430. They will be observed four times by their University Supervisor. Observations will occur either in a face-to-face or virtual environment (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.). Candidates need to earn at least a 1 in each of the four domains of teaching on the PDE 430 to be eligible for an PA Instructional 1 Teaching Certificate. Those who successfully complete the teaching-mentoring experience will receive a P (passing) for the grade. Please note, the mentoring-teaching is no credit.

[PDE 430](#)

Resolving Conflicts

From time to time, conflicts may arise during the teaching experience. When there is a conflict, the candidate should attempt to solve the problem. If the problem is not resolved, the candidate should talk with their University Supervisor. If the conflict is still not resolved, the candidate needs to communicate via an email with the Director of Student Placements. Our goal is to resolve any conflicts quickly, so the teaching experience is successful.

Books, Materials, and Supplies

All school district books, materials, and supplies must be returned to the school. Candidates may need to reimburse the school district for lost or damaged books, materials, or supplies. University grades cannot be released until everything is returned to the school district.

Dismissal from Mentoring

When a candidate is dismissed from the mentoring-teaching experience, the teaching placement ends immediately. The candidate may follow the university policy to request a withdrawal as outlined in the university catalog. All candidates are required to follow the expectations outlined in the University Graduate Catalog as well as the Academic Integrity Policy.

[Course Catalog](#)

If the candidate believes they can meet the expectations of mentoring-teaching, and ***before the TTP expires***, they may contact the Director of Student Placements via email (dmoore@pointpark.edu) with the request for the new placement. The candidate will be required to register and pay for the second mentoring placement. Please note, the TTP is only valid for one year and cannot be renewed. The TTP needs to be valid for the entire teaching experience.

Labor-Management Disputes

If teaching experience is interrupted by any labor-management disputes (strikes, sit-ins, demonstrations, riots, walkouts), notify the University Supervisor immediately so the School of Education can provide guidance.

Letter of Reference

Candidates should request a letter of reference from professional educators who can attest to their skills as a teacher. The University Supervisor is an appropriate reference.

Pittsburgh Education Recruitment Consortium (PERC Job Fair)

The PERC Job Fair is scheduled in the spring of each school year in the Pittsburgh Area. All School of Education graduates as well as ABCTE Candidates are invited and encouraged to attend. Employers interview and hire educational professionals in a wide variety of disciplines many times on-site. This is an excellent job opportunity for our School of Education ABCTE Candidates.

[PERC Job Fair](#)

Applying for PA Level 1 Certificate

Candidates can apply for their Level 1 Teaching Certificate through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Teacher Information Management System - [TIMS](#) after completing the following:

- The mentoring experience
- Earn at least 1 point in each of the 4 domains of teaching on the PDE 430
- Recommendation to PDE by the University Certification Officer
- Passing Score on the American Board Exams
- Earn a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the two required graduate classes

What Is Next

Please remember to stay connected with the School of Education faculty and staff. We want to hear about your successes. These are the stories we provide to marketing for our website to highlight our alumni and their accomplishments. We look forward to having your story posted!

Upon completion of the ABCTE Program, you are a Point Park University Alumni. Consider signing up for the Alumni Association. [Alumni Association](#)

After PDE issues the Level 1 Teaching Certificate, candidates can add instructional areas to their certificate through testing. PreK - grade 4 candidates can add grades 5 and 6 by successfully passing the required exams. Below is the link to PDE regarding Instructional Add-Ons, Point Park University Graduate Program, and moving from Level I to Level II Certification.

[Adding Grades 5 and 6](#)

[Instructional Add-Ons](#)

[Point Park University Graduate Education Programs](#)

[Level 1 to Level II Certification](#)