



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools
Directors of Endowed and Incorporated Academics
Directors of Approved Private Special Education Facilities
Directors of Regional Educational Service Centers
Directors of Public Charter and Magnet Schools
Personnel and Human Resource Directors

FROM: Nancy L. Pugliese, J.D., Chief
Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification

DATE: May 4, 2015

SUBJECT: Qualifications for Instructors of American Sign Language for World
Language High School Credit

In 2011, the Connecticut General Assembly passed an amendment to the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 10-16b, permitting local and regional boards of education to offer American Sign Language (ASL) for world language high school credit. Furthermore, the law also permits local and regional boards of education to employ noncertified instructors of ASL provided that:

- the ASL course is taught by a qualified instructor; and
- the instructor is under the supervision of a teacher who holds a valid certificate.

Section 10-16b Prescribed courses of study. (a) In the public schools the program of instruction offered shall include at least the following subject matter, as taught by legally qualified teachers, the arts; career education; consumer education; health and safety, including, but not limited to, human growth and development, nutrition, first aid, disease prevention, community and consumer health, physical, mental and emotional health, including youth suicide prevention, substance abuse prevention, safety, which may include the dangers of gang membership, and accident prevention; language arts, including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling; mathematics; physical education; science; social studies, including, but not limited to, citizenship, economics, geography, government and history; and, in addition, on at least the secondary level, one or more world languages and vocational education. **For purposes of this subsection, world languages shall include American Sign Language, provided such subject matter is taught by a qualified instructor under the supervision of a teacher who holds a certificate issued by the State Board of Education.** For purposes of this subsection, the "arts" means any form of visual or performing arts, which may include, but not be limited to, dance, music, art and theatre.

Since the fall of 2011, the Connecticut State Department of Education (Department) has been working with a stakeholder group to determine how to ensure an instructor of ASL is "qualified." The Department, with the consensus of the stakeholder group, has elected to use the **Praxis Assessment of Signed Communication - American Sign Language (Praxis-ASL)** exam to determine qualification.

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The exam consists of a 20 minute interview with a trained interviewer, selected by the state and trained by ETS to serve in this capacity. Candidates respond to five interview questions using ASL. The interview is videotaped. Candidates' responses are scored by trained scorers on a five-point holistic rating scale, with Level 1 representing very limited or no communication in ASL and Level 5 representing a very high proficiency level in ASL.

Following a pilot year, the stakeholder group convened to review the pilot data and determine a cut score. The group recommended the cut score be set at Level 4. However, considering both the pilot data, as well as supply and demand of qualified ASL instructors, **the Department has determined a cut score of Level 3 will be instituted for two years, until January 1, 2017, at which point the cut score will be raised to Level 4.** The stakeholder group may convene in December 2016 to review the test data from the previous two years to determine whether it is indeed appropriate to move to a higher cut score.

To clarify, this testing requirement will apply to any noncertified or certified teacher whom your district wishes to employ as an instructor of ASL as a world language which results in the awarding of high school credit(s). Teachers holding the following certifications: (1) hearing impaired PK-12 endorsement (#057); or (2) other world language-ASL endorsement (#024), are not required to take the new Praxis ASL exam because they are already authorized to teach ASL as a world language per their certification. However, the superintendent has the option of requiring teachers who hold the above certification endorsements (#057 and #024) to take and pass the Praxis-ASL exam.

All other certified teachers who wish to teach ASL for world language credit will be required to take the new Praxis-ASL exam and meet the cut score of Level 3.

For the Praxis-ASL exam, certification candidates and prospective instructors may register through the Educational Testing Service Praxis website at:
https://www.ets.org/praxis/ct/asc_asl/.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Amanda Turner at (860)-713-6737 or email her at amanda.turner@ct.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this important information.

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cc: Sarah J. Barzee, Ph. D., Chief Talent Officer