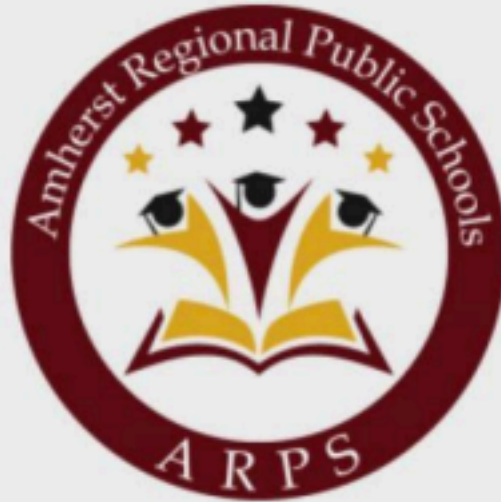


Amherst Regional Public Schools



Guidance on Professional Development and Maintaining Licensure

2025-2026 (rev.)

**By District Professional Development Committee
in collaboration with the HR Department**

Introduction

This document was created by the district Professional Development Committee (hereinafter referred to as the PDC). As specified in the Unit A contract, the PDC consists of one educator from each of the elementary schools, Amherst Regional Middle School, Amherst Regional High School, and Summit Academy, as well as representatives from Central Office.

The charge of the district Professional Development Committee (PDC) is four-fold:

- to create a handbook for Unit A staff with guidance on professional development and licensure;
- to conduct an annual survey on professional development interests and needs of the staff
- to advise on the annual district Curriculum Day; and
- to oversee the ARPSU process to support development of new courses, approve course proposals submitted, and award PDP's once documentation of participation and completion is submitted.

The document that follows is the updated 2025-2026 version of the professional development resource "handbook" mentioned above. The 2023-2024 version required an update from the district's use of Frontline to the use of PowerSchool Professional Learning. PowerSchool Professional Learning now enables educators to have coursework and professional learning documented and to accrue professional development points (PDP's) for ongoing licensure. The handbook is designed to support educators in better understanding PDP, licensure, and professional development documentation throughout their careers in the Amherst Regional Public Schools.

Should you have any suggestions regarding the handbook, or should you be interested in being considered to serve on the PDC, please reach out to the APEA President and the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Administration Office. PDC representatives earn one in-service credit and 15 PDPs for meetings and committee responsibilities occurring for a minimum of 10 hours for each full school year of service.

2025-2026 Professional Development Committee

Betsy Dinger, Wildwood Elementary

Amy Coulthard, Crocker Farm Elementary

Kerrita Mayfield, Amherst Regional Middle School

Erin Hutchinson, Amherst Regional High School

Jennifer Ortiz, Director of Human Resources

Yahdira Torres-Manzano, Human Resources Administrator

Stephanie Joyce, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Administration Officer

2026-2027 Committee member additions:

Georgia Lederman, Amethyst Brook Elementary

Lauren Mahoney, Summit Academy

Amherst and Amherst-Pelham Regional District colleagues are invited to reach out to a member, if interested in committee membership for the coming school year.

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Professional Development Points (PDPs) Overview

Some important points to note:

- **A wide range of PD activities can qualify for PDPs**, including but not limited to:
 - (1) ongoing participation in job-embedded activities (e.g. mentoring/coaching, school-based professional learning communities, PLC's);
 - (2) participation in a series of short-term activities in a given topic that equal 10 hours (e.g., workshops, seminars), and
 - (3) long-term activities (e.g., university courses). Please see Appendix B, p.32 in the DESE ELAR [License Renewal Guidelines](#) for additional examples.
- Educators begin collecting PDPs once their **Professional License has been awarded**.
- **Educators are obligated to keep track of their PDPs themselves**. Neither DESE nor a school district is responsible for doing that on behalf of educators.
- Activities that took place **more than five years** from the date of application may NOT be counted towards the requisite number of PDPs.
- Normally a professional development opportunity must be **at least 10 hours in length to qualify for PDPs and must include an assessment of learning**. However, educators may "bundle" several professional learning hours together from related activities or learning sessions when reporting their PDPs, provided they can demonstrate that these activities are related/similar in topic and support cohesive learning on that topic.

Documentation of PDP's on Powerschool Professional Learning (PSPL)

Our school system provides the platform on which educators can accrue and track their professional learning and professional development points (PDP's). The system is called PowerSchool Professional Learning. (PSPL)

Resources to Support Educators Use of PSPL:

1. [Learner Experience Quick Start Guide](#)
2. [Transfer Credit Request No Pre-Approval Quick Start Guide](#)

Process of PDP's earned in District entered on PSPL:

- Sign-in sheets from PD sessions and/or required documentation for professional learning attendance and work completion are submitted to the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA).
- A Transfer Credit Form is generated by the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.
- Approval of awarding the PDP's or credit is documented by a CIA or HR administrator. The credits are automatically transferred and entered into an educator's PSPL site and will generate a certificate. Educators check their PSPL page and keep track of PDP's and/or credits awarded upon successful completion of professional learning.

Process for PDP's outside of District professional learning:

- Required documentation for professional learning attendance and work completion are submitted to the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA).
- If approved, a Transfer Credit Form is generated by the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.
- Approval of awarding the PDP's or credit is documented by a CIA or HR administrator. The credits are automatically transferred and entered into an educator's PSPL site and will generate a certificate. Educators check their PSPL page and keep track of PDP's and/or credits awarded upon successful completion of professional learning.

PDPs and License Renewal

Educators with Professional Licensure must earn 150 PDPs over the course of the five-year duration of their license. PDPs should include these primary areas:

- At least 15 PDPs in content (subject matter knowledge)
- At least 15 PDPs in pedagogy (professional skills and knowledge)
- At least 15 PDPs related to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) or English as a Second Language (ESL)
- At least 15 PDPs related to training in strategies for effective schooling for students with disabilities and the instruction of students with diverse learning styles
- The remaining required 90 PDPs may be earned through any combination of "elective" activities that address other educational issues and topics that improve student learning, additional content, or pedagogy.

Additional area licenses:

If an educator wishes to renew a second professional license, a minimum of 30 additional PDPs must be earned. Of the 30, at least 15 PDPs in content are required.

The remaining 15 PDPs may be earned through either “elective” activities that address other educational issues and topics that improve student learning, additional content, or pedagogy. The renewal of an Invalid Additional area license requires the full 150 PDPs.

DESE provides comprehensive [License Renewal Guidelines](#) on Professional Development Points. More information is linked here: [Frequently Asked Questions - Professional Development and Licensure](#) [See question B2](#)).

General Educator Licensure Considerations

Each educator license issued has a specific period of validity. Educators are expected to take note of the amount of time for which each license is valid and work toward advancement of each license to its next stage, i.e., from Provisional to Initial or from Initial to Professional. Licenses at the Professional stage must be renewed every five years or else they become inactive/invalid.

NOTE: ***Educators are solely responsible for timely renewal of their license(s).***

DESE and the school district do not monitor and inform teachers when licenses must be renewed.

Validity Dates by License:

Temporary License - Valid for one year of employment (cannot be extended; must advance to Provisional or Initial)

Provisional License - Valid for five years of employment (cannot be extended, must advance to initial). Since July 1, 2019, individuals who hold more than one Provisional license will have no more than five total years of prospective employment under the Provisional licenses.

Initial License - Valid for five years of employment (may be extended once, then must be advanced to Professional)

Professional License - Valid for five calendar years (renewable every five years thereafter)

More information on the types and validity of MA educator licenses can be found at DESE's website [here](#). DESE also provides video explanations of many aspects of licensure at the DESE YouTube site [here](#). The [DESE Licensure Requirements Tool](#) is very useful for determining the requirements for a specific license.

The Massachusetts Teachers Association also offers licensure resources [here](#).

[Refer to the ELAR system at DESE](#) to apply for or renew a license through the Educator Licensure And Renewal (ELAR) system.

(Note: Initial Administrator licenses cannot be extended)

Initial Licensure Overview

General Requirements: an Initial License is valid for **five years of employment** (may be extended once, and then must be advanced to Professional) and is appropriate for individuals who:

- Have a Bachelor's degree
- Have passed all required MTEL tests
- Hold the SEI endorsement (core academic teacher, principal/assistant principal, or supervisor/director only)
- Have completed one of the following:
 - An approved educator preparation program in Massachusetts
 - Performance Review Program for Initial Licensure (PRPIL)

Out-of-state applicants are required to:

- 1) Hold a valid/comparable license from another state, or
- 2) Have completed an approved alternative educator preparation program and hold a valid comparable license, or
- 3) Have completed an educator preparation program comparable to the license sought, sponsored by a college or university outside of MA that has been approved/accredited by the state, CAOP, TEAC or NCATE.

Extending an Initial License

The Initial license is valid for five years of employment and may be extended at the discretion of the Commissioner for an additional five years. Educators who have been employed under an Initial license, are in their fifth (5) year of employment, and have not yet satisfied the requirements for advancing to the Professional license; have the option of applying for an Extension of their Initial license. 'Under a license' is defined here as meaning; "employment in the role and at the grade of the license from the date it was issued".

The quickest way to apply for an Initial Extension license is through the Educator Licensure And Renewal (ELAR) system linked above. Submitting a hard copy of the application is an option, but takes significantly more time to process.

Please refer to the [Extension of Initial License Guide and Template](#) for a form that may be used to verify that you plan to meet requirements for the Professional license.

Advancing an Initial License from Initial to Professional

To advance a license from Initial to Professional, educators will need to apply for the new type of license and send in all required documentation verifying that the requirements for the professional license have been met.

Professional Licensure Overview

A Professional License is appropriate for individuals who:

- Possess a MA Initial license in the same field as the Professional license sought
- Have completed at least 3 full years of employment under the Initial License
- Have completed a first year induction program and a 50 hour mentoring program beyond the induction year.

Note: ARPS provides the induction and mentoring programs. *Attendance in these programs is required to ensure the District is able to complete the School Based Employment Verification/Induction and Mentoring Form.*

- Possess MA Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Teacher Endorsement
- Have passed all required MTEL tests for specific certification.

(cont.)

- Have completed one of the following:
 - An approved licensure program for the Professional license sought as set forth in the Guidelines for Program Approval.
 - A program leading to eligibility for master teacher status, such as those sponsored by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and others accepted by the Commissioner.
 - For those who have completed any master's or higher degree or other advanced graduate program in an accredited college or university, at least 12 credits of graduate level courses each of which includes subject matter knowledge or pedagogy based on the subject matter knowledge of the Professional license sought; these may include credits earned prior to application for the license.

Reminder: Specific licensure requirements for each license category, type, and grade level can be identified by using the [Licensure Requirements Tool](#).

Renewing a Professional License

Professional licenses are valid for five (5) calendar years and must be renewed in order to remain active. Professional licenses that are either one (1) year from expiring or currently on inactive status can be renewed only if the required number of Professional Development Points has been earned. For the purposes of renewal of a Professional License, Individual professional development plans must include at least 150 PDPs as described on page 4.

Additionally: All incumbent core academic teachers of ELLs must earn a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Teacher Endorsement. All incumbent principals/assistant principals and supervisors/directors who evaluate core academic teachers of ELLs must earn an SEI Administrator Endorsement.

Regardless of when an educator is expected to renew their professional license, if employed the educator must obtain final approval of their individual professional development plan by their supervisor. The educator must have a minimum of 10 PDPs in a topic area in order to use the PDPs towards license renewal. Each additional license that an educator renews requires another 30 PDPs to be renewed.

The quickest way to renew your Professional license is through the Educator Licensure And Renewal (ELAR) system. After you [log into the ELAR system](#), select the “Apply to renew your professional level license” link on your Welcome to ELAR home page. Follow all of the prompts, pay the required fees (\$100 for primary license, \$25 for additional licenses), and your license(s) will be renewed automatically.

Do not send in any of your supporting documentation (verifying the attainment of the required PDPs) unless you are selected for an audit. If selected for an audit, you will be required to submit documentation in support of the license(s) that you renewed.

Please note that the Office of Educator Licensure no longer sends out hard copies of newly approved or renewed licenses.

Additional Licensure Resources

DESE Application & Guidelines

- [Application for Professional License Renewal](#)
- [License Renewal Guidelines](#)
- [Professional License Renewal Audit Packet Checklist](#)
- [Professional License Renewal: Audit FAQs](#)
- [License Renewal Activity Log Primary Area Form B-1](#)
- [License Renewal Activity Log Additional Area Form B-2](#)

DESE Regulations

- [License Renewal Regulations](#)

DESE Massachusetts Educators Licensure Series (MELS)

DESE has created a series of MELS Youtube Videos to guide educators through various processes. The videos include:

- [Advancing To Your First Professional Teacher License](#)
- [Overview of ELAR: Applying and Paying Online](#)
- [Overview of Academic Licenses Offered](#)

Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)

Tools for MTA Members: documents devised by the MTA to help guide members through the licensure process:

- [MTA Licensure Information](#)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Job-embedded professional development in our schools support teams of teachers to work in a **professional learning community (PLC)** to:

- enrich professional growth,
- refine and expand teaching and learning practices, and/or
- enhance school-based initiatives to benefit classrooms and the school community.

These collaborative teacher teams unite in their commitment to improving teacher practice and student learning by creating shared norms and values, and by making their practices public to one another.

Members of teacher collaborative teams develop a laser-like focus on student learning in which they:

- learn from looking together at student work, teacher work, and student performance data;
- acquire and engage in the habit of reflective discourse; and
- are mutually accountable to each others' success.

This accountability reminds educators of the responsibility to every child we serve.

Most significantly, teacher collaboration teams engage in on-going, continuous cycles of inquiry whereby teams engage in dialogue around a question or problem of practice, and seek and analyze evidence from this issue. From their collaborative exploration, team members then commit to making a change (or adjustments) in their practice, collecting evidence of the resulting impact on student learning, and bringing this evidence back to the group in order to determine how the change impacted and improved student learning. Other questions and areas for exploration emerge, and the cycle begins anew.

In addition to teacher collaboration teams, embedded professional development includes:

- literacy and mathematics instructional coaches in elementary schools that support teaching and learning;
- district-wide grade-level teams focused on developing collective understanding of the MA Curriculum Frameworks and standards;
- targeted professional development sessions and workshops at the building level facilitated by coaches, principals, and teachers; and inquiry groups, focused on such issues as co-teaching, time on learning, MTSS, and PBIS; and finally
- teacher participation in PLC's, in order to build capacity for collaborative practice and facilitative leadership in our schools.

PLC Roles and Responsibilities of Building Principals and/or Department Chairs:

- Explore needs of the staff to determine appropriate PLC's for their building.
- Establish PLC descriptions and invite staff to lead or co-lead a PLC of a particular topic or create instructor-led courses or self-paced courses.
- Share the list of all building-wide PLC's and enlist staff to sign up for their choice of a PLC for professional growth.
- Provide staff meeting time and available early release day time for PLC's to meet.
- Create participant lists for each PLC and attendance documentation process.
- Upon completion of a PLC cycle or yearly progress of full year PLC's, principals are required to provide the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with documentation that facilitates awarding PDP's to their educators.

Principals and/or Department Chairpersons submit the following documentation:

- Description of the PLC and learning outcomes for educators
- Participant lists for each PLC
- Attendance documentation for each PLC session with dates and names
- Evidence of impact on teaching and learning and/or the school community

Once principals or chairs submit approved documentation about PLC's to the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, this documentation generates a Transfer Credit. Form as described above in ***Documentation of PDP's in PSPL***.

DESE on PLCs

PLCs as a way to earn PDPs is suggested on the Department of Education website. Specifically, PLCs are mentioned in the department's [frequently asked questions section](#). The information below was taken from that site.

PLC Requirements

According to the DESE website, PD activities that qualify for PDPs include "job-embedded activities" such as "professional learning communities." These activities must meet the following criteria to indicate the professional development

- is offered by [...] a school district [...] [See question B2](#)
- must be at least 10 hours per topic
- must include an assessment of learning (this may be an end-of-course assessment or an observable demonstration of learning)
- has met the provider's criteria for mastery

[Participant Guide for PLC PDP Credit Submission](#)
[PLC Facilitator Checklist: PDP Credit Approval](#)

Bundling PLC/PDP

Educators who work on several PLCs may consider “bundling” their hours for PDPs. In order to do this, an individual will demonstrate that these activities are related or fall under a similar topic. Of course, the easiest way to accomplish this is to bundle PLCs of at least 10 hours of length. Additionally, one cannot receive PDPs via bundling unless they complete an additional follow-up activity demonstrating proficiency.

[See Question A2](#)

ARPS-U Courses:

Educator-to-Educator designed courses offer another viable opportunity for Amherst and Amherst-Pelham educators to enrich their professional growth and earn PDP's.

The ARPS-U Professional Development Program consists of a series of locally based courses offered by Amherst, Pelham, and/or Amherst-Pelham Regional staff to Amherst, Pelham, and/or Amherst-Pelham Regional staff designed to give educators an opportunity to further their professional development and earn in-service credits for movement to M+30/M+45 lanes. Faculty development for earning credits for the M+30/M+45 lanes may also include a cluster of other professional activities, such as mentoring and publishing.

The Professional Development Committee shall make final recommendations to the Superintendent for credit value of activities associated with the Staff Development Program. Educators providing ARPS-U courses are encouraged to provide school offices with course descriptions to be posted in staff workrooms in each school. The Office of Teaching and Learning will share ARPS-U course offering announcements with staff by email and/or building announcements or weekly updates.

The Program is administered by the Professional Development Committee. The PDC will be formed yearly to serve as the screening committee for all functions of the Amherst, Pelham, and Amherst-Pelham Regional Professional Development Program.

Other key provisions set forth in the APEA contract include:

- ARPS-U courses must involve substantial time and rigor, and include a final project or instructor-selected assessment instrument. At a minimum, an ARPS-U course must involve 15 hours of work including at least 10 hours of in-person class contact time (the remaining 5 hours can be for out of class work).
- For every 15 hours of work, participants who successfully complete all requirements become eligible for 1 in-service credit and 15 PDPs. These ratios also apply for courses that take more time. For example, participants in an ARPS-U course that involved 30 hours of work (at least 20 of which would need to be in-person class time) would become eligible for 2 in-service credits and 30 PDPs.

(cont.)

- Staff members may not receive credit for the same coursework twice.
- Professional Development Presenters (i.e., instructors for ARPS-U courses) will receive **double** the approved course credits the first time a course is offered, and the approved number of course credits thereafter.
- Compensation for Professional Development Presenters is in the form of course credits.
- All ARPS-U courses must be approved by the District Professional Development Committee **BEFORE the coursework begins**. The Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Administrator for the District is a permanent member of the Professional Development Committee, so all proposals should be emailed to the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment or presented to the committee by requesting to attend a PDC meeting.
- The District Professional Development Committee will provide assistance and feedback in the development of course proposals.
- Course proposals must include a syllabus and an anticipated participant product or evidence of demonstrating participant proficiency. Please see an example [here](#) of the kinds of elements that need to be included in a successful ARPS-U course proposal.
- The Professional Development Committee will review proposals at their monthly meetings. They will make recommendations for approval/disapproval of all proposals based on the completeness of the proposals and on their anticipated contributions to the fulfillment of School and /or District Improvement Plans.
- Participants in ARPS-U courses are expected to attend all course sessions and to complete coursework and projects as assigned. Participants are expected to arrange to make up coursework missed due to unforeseen illness or other unavoidable circumstances.
- After a course has been completed, the administrator of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment will review records of attendance, samples of completed coursework and projects, and participant feedback to make recommendations for credit. The presenters will submit required documentation of the course participants and successful completion of attendance and final projects to the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.
- A feedback form shall also be provided for all ARPS-U courses for the purpose of evaluating the quality and applicability of the course. Aggregate feedback data from each course will be compiled and reviewed by the Professional Development Committee.
- A Transfer Credit Form will be generated once documentation is submitted, and credits will be granted by the District and automatically entered on an educator's PSPL site.

Salary Lane Advancement

What is Salary Lane Advancement?

A Unit A staff member who earns graduate college credits or in-service credits (please see Article 12, Section C of the Unit A Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) beyond their Master's degree may be eligible for a lane advancement to MA+30 or MA+45. Unit A staff members who earn a Doctoral degree may be eligible for lane advancement to the Doctoral lane (see Article 14, Section L of the Unit A CBA below).

Article 14, Section B: Placement on Schedule

In assigning teachers to placement on the MA+30 or the MA+45 salary schedules, one (1) of the following criteria must apply to the college hours counted for this purpose:

- The college hours must be earned subsequent to receipt of the Master's Degree, OR
- The hours are part of at least sixty (60) college hours earned towards a Doctoral Degree, and the Master's Degree has been awarded in the process.

Article 14, Section L: Teacher Salary Schedules

Placement on the doctorate column will NOT be automatic with the earning of a doctoral degree from a college or university but will be subject to Superintendent's judgment of the value of the specific doctoral work to the district. Potential candidates for doctoral salary placement may request and receive an advance and binding judgment on this matter from the Superintendent prior to completing a doctoral degree program.

Article 12, Section C: In-Service Credits

In accordance with appropriate laws and legislation, the Districts shall endeavor to provide internal or external professional development training to participants to allow staff to relicense at low to no cost.

Article 12, Section C: In-Service Credit Guidelines

- Fifteen hours of work, including at least 10 hours of in-person class contact time, earn one in-service course credit and 15 PDPs. A similar ratio shall apply to independent projects.
- Credits will be granted by the District upon successful completion of the course/project.
- Professional Development Presenters will receive double the approved course credits for the first time a course is offered and the approved course credits thereafter.
- Compensation for Professional Development Presenters is in the form of course credits.

What is the Timeline for Salary Lane Advancement?

(Note: New January 31 Deadline)

APEA MOA (2022-2025)

Lane Notification Date. The parties agree to add a new paragraph 7 of Section L that reads, "Employees seeking to obtain a lane change must provide written notice of their anticipated eligibility for a lane change by January 31 for the following school year. If the transcript supporting the lane change is not submitted before the first payroll of the following school year, the lane change will be implemented beginning with the first payroll after the transcript is submitted and will not be paid retroactively."

For the 2023-2024 school year only, the district waived the Lane Notification deadline of January 31st. Transcripts submitted during the 23-24 school year that result in lane advancement for the current school year were processed as of the date the final transcript was received and were not paid retroactively.

What documentation needs to be provided for lane advancement?

Prior to enrolling in a graduate college course for credit, it is necessary to inform the Director of HR and request approval for the course credits to apply to the lane change credit.

Unit A staff members working towards lane advancement by earning graduate college credits beyond their Master's degree will be required to submit their official college/university transcripts to the Human Resources Department (e-transcripts will be accepted).

Unit A staff members working towards lane advancement earned through ARPS-U courses will be required to submit their transcripts to the Human Resources Department.

The district will accept a combination of graduate college credits and ARPS-U in-service credits to be applied towards lane advancement.

May I use graduate credits I earned while working in another district?

Yes, as long as the graduate credits are earned through an accredited college or university. In-service credits earned in another district will not be applied towards lane advancement.

If you plan to keep track of your coursework, credits and transcripts, in personal records you compile in addition to the district use of **PSPL**, here is one example:

Course Number and Title Date Credits University/ College	Transcript sent to HR
EDUC 888 Fall 2025 3 UMass Amherst Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)	not yet
HIST-0598 Spring 2025 3 Westfield State College The Constitution and the Pursuit of Happiness: Institutions & Civic Dispositions	Emailed on 1/20/26
Total Credits Thus Far 6	