Educator Certification Handbook 2025-2026

To assist
CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
to become
CERTIFIED CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATES

Produced by
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Educator Certification Committee
100 Witherspoon Street • Louisville, KY • 40202-1396
Certified Christian Educators

Mid Council Ministries
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Educator Certification Handbook – 2025-26

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Introduction

The Handbook

This handbook has been developed to assist participants in the educator certification and endorsement processes. Other helpful materials can be found online where important forms, documents, and links are located.

Although the Educator Certification Committee makes every attempt to address the details of the process, we recognize that there may be omissions or a need for more specification. As a result, this handbook is updated annually, with the most recent version available on the website.

Why Certification?

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, continuing development in the field of Christian education brought about the emergence of professionally trained leaders whose focus in ministry was on the nurture and education of persons in their faith. Some were pastors in the church, but many were skilled and dedicated persons who felt a call to ministry but not to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Over the ensuing decades, their gifts and services as "educators" in the church enriched the lives of countless numbers of people and contributed to the formation of a rich history of professional leadership by church educators. In recognition of that history and because of the importance of Christian Education to the total ministry of the church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sought to recognize and enhance the ministries of persons employed as professional Christian educators by certifying them as Certified Christian Educators or Certified Associate Christian Educators. Certification was then granted at the end of an intensive process of preparation, study, service, and examination.

Now, much has changed in the church and in the field of Christian Education but this does not mean that educational ministries in congregations have lessened in importance. In fact, it is critical that congregations have every opportunity for the very highest quality of educational ministry to ensure that disciples of Christ will continue to be made now and in the future.

As the church changes, so must the process of certification of Christian educators. To that end the PC(USA) still seeks to recognize and enhance the ministries of persons called to serve the church as Christian educators by certifying them as Certified Christian Educators or by endorsing them as Christian Education Associates.

The Purpose of this process is:

1. To continue to set standards for the preparation and performance of Christian educators, both professional and volunteer.
2. To acknowledge and clarify the mutual accountability between the denomination's councils and the Christian educator.
3. To set specific achievable goals for the ongoing development of Christian educators and to foster support for them as they pursue these goals.
4. To lift up the need for continuing education for Christian educators so that those providing oversight may provide time and money for this purpose.
5. To provide levels of educational leadership that will assist denominational councils in defining their own needs and in determining just compensation, commensurate with the level of their need.

Ordinarily,

- Those applying for the level of **Certified Christian Educator (CCE)** have a master's degree or a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or its equivalent (previously achieved the level of Certified Associate Christian Educator, Enrolled Educational Assistant or Christian Education Associate)
- Those applying for the level of **Christian Education Associates (CEA)** – (formerly Enrolled Educational Assistants) – may or may not hold a degree but wish to receive basic knowledge and study in educational ministries, resulting in an endorsement

The Church and Christian Educators

The Form of Government, one of the sections of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Order*, addresses the ministry of Certified Church Service as well as specifying the skills, training, and constitutional provisions of Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators. The entry level for certification, Christian Education Associate (formerly Enrolled Educational Assistant), is not reflected in the *Book of Order*.

G-2.1101 Forms of Certified Church Service

Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements in a handbook provided by a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.

G-2.1102 Presbytery and Certified Church Service

The presbytery shall encourage sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to those seeking certification, and shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing a service of recognition at the time of certification. The presbytery may grant the privilege of voice at all its meetings to persons in certified church service.

G-2.1103 Christian Educators

a. Skills and Training

Certified Christian educators are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of education in congregations and councils. They shall have skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, human development, faith development, religious education theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Certified Christian educators shall provide a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at leader every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet these two requirements.

b. Presbytery Responsibility

The presbytery shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and shall provide access to the area of presbytery that oversees ministry (G-3.0307). During their term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all its meetings. Certified Christian educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators shall provide to the presbytery in which they serve a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet these two requirements. Presbytery shall report a certificate of completion to the national certifying body for these two trainings.

Other sections of the Form of Government that apply to Christian educators are as follows:

G-3.0303c [Presbytery] Relations with Sessions

c. establish minimum compensation standards, including provisions for dissolution terms, for pastoral calls and for those serving in temporary pastoral service, Certified Christian Educators, and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery;

G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Its Pastors and Congregations

Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.

Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to its pastors, both ministers of the Word and Sacrament and, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service (also called commissioned pastors [also known as commissioned ruling elders]), as well as the certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, pastors, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.

G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4-3-1, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

Participants in the Certification Process and Their Roles

There are seven key participants in the certification process: the **Educator**, the **Educator Certification Advisor**, the **Reference Group,** the **Educator Certification Committee**, the **Coordinator**, the **Session,** and the **Presbytery**.

The Educator

Those who seek certification are professionals or volunteers with a call to a particular ministry within the church. While some are ministers of Word and Sacrament, the majority of educators who are certified or endorsed are not. They are seeking certification as a way of enhancing their own education, submitting their credentials for peer review, and maintaining the highest possible standards for ministry preparation, leadership, and accountability, thus uplifting the significance of educational ministry for the whole church.

The Educator Certification Advisor

The Educator Certification Advisor provides a link between the Educator Certification Committee, the presbytery, and educators seeking to become Certified Christian Educators or Christian Education Associates. Educator Certification Advisors are appointed by the presbytery and are trained and approved by the Educator Certification Committee. The Advisor works with the ECC in relation to the certification requirements, and with the presbytery, or its designated committee, in relation to the support and accountability of the presbytery for the applicant's educational ministry.

The Educator Certification Advisor should have the following qualifications:

- A heart for Christian education
- Member of the PC(USA)
- Experience in educational ministry and, if possible, be a Certified educator
- Knowledgeable about Presbyterian polity and the system and structure of the particular presbytery being served
- A willingness to participate in training (training through an online process)

More detail on the role of the Certification Advisor is available in the section of the Handbook entitled "The Educator Certification Advisor." Online training is available on the educator certification webpage.

The Reference Group

The Reference Group will include:

- Staff colleague, or equivalent, selected by the educator (*not* the spouse of the educator)
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the educator's work and is selected by the educator

- Representative appointed by the Session or denominational council to whom the educator is responsible
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

The Reference Group provides insight into the educator's ministry and competencies. As a support system, the Reference Group meets various times to provide encouragement and critiques and to review and comment on the educator's integrative project before it is sent in its final form.

More detail on the role of the Reference Group is available in the section of the Handbook entitled "The Reference Group."

The Educator Certification Committee (ECC)

The Educator Certification Committee is made up of nine persons who serve four-year terms and are nominated by the PC(USA) General Assembly Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Ordinarily, the ECC meets in person or in a hybrid format at least once yearly with at least three electronic meetings throughout the year. The ECC is funded by per capita through the PC(USA) Office of the General Assembly and its minutes are subject to review by that body. The ECC elects a moderator from among its members. The appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) provides a staff person who works with the ECC, oversees their budget, and is responsible for all administrative functions within the application and certification process. Structure and specifics about the work of this group are found within the Policies of the Educator Certification Committee. .

The Educator Certification Staff

The educator certification staff person is employed by the appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This person receives and processes applications, transcripts, integrative projects, and evaluations. Educator Certification staff make judgments about the adequacy of materials received and may correspond with the applicant and/or the Advisor. If there are any questions related to the information submitted on the application and its applicability to the requirements, the ECC is asked to review.

Educator certification staff attends Educator Certification Committee meetings and assists ECC members as they review the files of applicants. They communicate ECC decisions to those affected by them and submit lists of Certified Christian Educators so that they may be included in the online directory provided by the appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and APCE (Association of Partners in Christian Education).

While educator certification staff is prepared to assist applicants and Advisors regarding particular applications, staff does not make, nor is expected to defend the actions that are the responsibility of the Educator Certification Committee.

Current educator certification staff person is Manager of Ministry Education and Support,

Martha Miller, who can be contacted at:
Martha.Miller@pcusa.org

The Session

Generally speaking, “session” refers to the session of the congregation in which the educator serves. Some educators, of course, may not be directly related to a session. In such cases, the committee or board of the agency or council to which the educator relates will serve the same functions and will be involved at the same points as the session.

The educator should advise their session when beginning the certification or endorsement process. Early involvement is essential so that the session may be encouraged to provide continuing education assistance (time and funding) for the educator while completing coursework in order to meet the educational requirements. In addition, the session can be an advocate for the educator as they continue the process. There are several places in the process when the session will be formally involved:

1. When the educator has made a formal application, the clerk of session, or other appropriate agency or council, will receive communication asking for their support as the educator works through the process.
2. In the case of an educator in the CCE process, when the educator has met the initial requirements and is ready to begin the Integrative Project phase of the process, the clerk of the session, or other appropriate agency or council, will receive communication asking the clerk to appoint a representative to serve as a member of the Reference Group.
3. During the Integrative Project phase of an educator in the CCE process, a *Verification of Ministry Form* will need to be completed and signed by the individual to whom the educator is most directly accountable.
4. When an educator has been certified or endorsed, the Clerk of Session will be formally notified. This notification suggests the recognition of the educator’s achievement.

The Presbytery

The Form of Government of the *Book of Order of the* Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) refers to several responsibilities of the presbytery related to certified Christian educators

1. encourage those called to service to meet or prepare to meet the certification requirements (G-2.1101)
2. shall encourage sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to those seeking certification (G-2.1102)
3. shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing a service of recognition at the time of certification (G-2.1102)
4. shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and shall provide access to the area of presbytery that oversees ministry (G-2.1103b)
5. shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the requirements of boundary training requirements and shall report a certificate of completion to the national certifying body of these trainings (G-2.1103b)
6. establish minimum compensation standards, including provisions for dissolution terms, for pastoral calls and for those serving in temporary pastoral service, certified Christian educators within the presbytery (G-3.0303),
7. shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to ministers of Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators (G-3.0307)
8. facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators (G-3.0307)
9. settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient (G-3.0307)
10. preservation of the presbytery's minutes and records including the rolls of the presbytery's membership and registers of all certified Christian educators and ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service (G-3.0305)

In addition, during their term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all its meetings.

The Certified Christian Educator

Requirements for the Certified Christian Educator

Persons seeking certification as Certified Christian Educators (CCE) must meet one of the following minimum requirements scenarios:

Scenario One: No Prior Certification

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
- Hold a bachelor's or a master's degree from an accredited institution or completed the Christian Education Associate Level
- Experience (volunteer or employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian education ministry leadership within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency. *
- Completion of an online application at http://educator-certification.pcusa.org which includes the selection of, and connection to, an Educator Certification Advisor. All electronic transcripts and a current position description/confirmation of volunteer hours must be included at the time of application
- Completion of certification-approved courses in the following knowledge/skill areas (a list of approved courses for PC(USA) educator certification and standards related to their content can be found online) –
    - At least 3 course credits or 30 hours** in each of the following areas:
      Biblical Interpretation - This area includes exegetical skills but does not include a requirement to know and use the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek. Courses in Biblical Interpretation are designed to highlight the historic commitment of the Presbyterian tradition to the Scriptures, tying together an understanding of the "word of God written" (Confession of 1967, I.C.2) with "the true word of God" (Second Helvetic Confession 5.001-2). Presbyterian Christian Educators need a foundational comprehension of Scripture as well as the tools to appropriately exegete and interpret the Bible for the context in which they are serving. Courses will teach the basic principles of biblical interpretation through the lens of the Reformed Tradition and teach at least one exegetical method. Exegetical models will encourage historical and cultural readings of texts, and instructors will encourage and equip educators to do research using resources from various reputable sources, modern and historical. The goal of these courses is to ground educators in the method required to make them servants "rightly handling the word of truth" in accordance with the certification standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Successful completion of the Biblical Exegesis Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
      Reformed Theology - Courses in the area of Reformed Theology are designed to provide Presbyterian Christian educators with a clear understanding of the theology of the Reformed Tradition, especially as it is expressed in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions. Courses explore the content of those confessions, the historical contexts out of which they arose, and the contemporary significance those confessions have for the life of the church today. By means of varied teaching methods and learning activities (e.g., lectures, small group exercises, discussions, and personal research), students will be able to gain a personal understanding of the Reformed theological tradition. Courses will also allow participants to gain a balanced understanding of the broad landscape of Reformed theological understandings today. It is expected that a course will, minimally, include an in-depth study of the Book of

Confessions and/or cover extensive reading of the works of Reformed theologians.
Successful completion of the Theological Competence Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
Religious Education Theory and Practice - Courses in Religious Education and Practice are designed to provide Presbyterian Christian Educators with an understanding of the theory and theology that informs their basis of choice for education methods and materials. Courses will explore multiple theories for religious education and engage in reading of current literature on religious education theory and practice. They encourage critical engagement of practical experiences or situations to inspect the underlying theory and practice of education. A successful class participant will be able to relate their own educational activities with a religious education theorist or theory.
Worship and Sacraments – Courses offered in the area of worship and sacraments explore the theology and practice of Christian worship and sacraments from a Reformed perspective. In addition, courses explore the relationships between worship, sacraments, and education in a congregational context. Courses aim to enhance the participants' participation in, leadership of, preparation for, and teaching about worship and sacraments.
Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged. Successful completion of the Worship and Sacraments Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
Human Growth and Faith Development (course taken within 15 years of beginning the integrative project) - Courses designed to fulfill the Human Growth and Faith Development content area acknowledge that educational ministry encompasses people of every age. Across the lifespan, our learners' thinking, moral reasoning, and faith expressions change as they age. This course explores historical and contemporary developmental theories from a faith perspective. Participants are asked to critique and apply the theories to their educational ministry with all ages.
Work in this area must be lifespan, include exposure to faith development, and fall within a fifteen-year statute of limitations. It also should include the work of newer theorists especially in cognitive, social, and gender issues.

- At least 1.5 credits or 15 hours** each (usually offered as one 3-credit course):
Presbyterian Polity - The educator must be able to demonstrate both an understanding of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) polity and pastoral sensitivity in its application.
Successful completion of the Church Polity Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
Presbyterian Program and Mission - This area includes knowledge of current resources and mission emphases of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
Graduation from a PC(USA) seminary also fulfills this requirement.
Together, the courses in Presbyterian polity, program, and mission will integrate the study of the Presbyterian Constitution (Book of Confessions and Book of Order) and the Program and Mission of the PCUSA into the context of the educator. Scripture, polity, and the structure, mission, and program of the PCUSA, as it is described and resourced by presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly, usually provides the content for this certification course. Critical examination, guided exploration, and careful integration of those key resources provide educators an opportunity to draw upon the richness of the Presbyterian tradition as they take leadership roles in their congregations and ministries. The course will provide opportunities for educators to explore how the polity, program, and mission of the PCUSA will impact, guide, and influence their educational programs and events.

- Completion of the certification Integrative Project under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of current employment or volunteer work in educational ministry leadership for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) upon completion of the integrative project;

Scenario Two: Prior Certification as a Certified Associate Christian Educator (CACE)

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Experience (volunteer or employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian education ministry within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency. *
- Completion of a course in the following knowledge/skill area:
  Worship & Sacraments: See above for course description. Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged. Successful completion of the Worship and Sacraments Ordination Exam also fulfills this requirement.
- Completion of an additional course in Human Growth and Faith Development if the previous course was not completed within the last fifteen (15) years.
- Completion of a certification integrative project under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of employment or volunteer work in educational ministry leadership for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) upon completion of the integrative project.

***** In computing a year of experience, the following equivalents apply:
1 year of full-time ministry (at least 25 hours per week); OR,
2 years of half-time ministry (16-24 hours per week); OR,
3 years of third-time (10-15 hours per week)

** Certification courses require an instructor, a minimum of three participants (exceptions to the minimum number of participants may be considered by the ECC to fulfill necessary accommodations) and 30 hours of engagement (examples of engagement are preparation, reading, instruction, assignments).

There are 3 possible course delivery modes:

- Face-to-face
- Online: synchronous and/or asynchronous online engagement
- Hybrid: a combination of face-to-face and online engagement

Steps in the Certified Christian Educator Process

The process leading to certification varies according to one's educational background and previous experience. Getting as much information as one can as early in the process as possible will greatly simplify the process and reduce frustrations.

Step One — Application and Reference Group Process

A. Educator reviews the educator certification process and its requirements, obtains degree transcripts, verification of previous educator certification coursework, and current position description or volunteer verification

B. Educator submits an application by creating an account and entering the appropriate application information at https://educator-certification.pcusa.org/. As a part of the application, the educator will select an Educator Certification Advisor.

C. The advisor and educator identify any missing knowledge and skill areas and create a tentative plan for additional courses. Courses approved as meeting the educator certification requirements can found online. The Educator ordinarily should wait to begin coursework until after the courses are reviewed and approved.

D. Upon submission, the application will be reviewed and the information verified while also noting any missing information.

E. An email will be sent to the educator's session, agency, or council, with a copy to the presbytery stated clerk, informing them that the educator has entered the certification process and requesting their support.

F. Educator completes course work; checks with advisor to be sure all requirements are met; and submits relevant transcripts and syllabi for any additional courses taken, making updates in the educator's certification account.

G. When all initial requirements are confirmed, the educator and advisor receive an email detailing the next steps in the process.

An email is sent to the session, council, or agency to which the Educator is accountable, with a copy to the advisor and presbytery stated clerk, advising of the applicant's progress and requesting them to appoint a representative to the Reference Group.

Advisor submits the completed *Integrative Project Readiness Form for Advisor Only,* when satisfied with the Educator's plan for proceeding to the integrative project phase

Educator and advisor select other persons to serve as a Reference Group and set date for the first meeting of the group.

Step Two — Integrative Project

A. Educator sends an email with the specific date on which the integrative project is requested to be received.
Note: The integrative project process, including the planning, teaching, and evaluation of the educational design and final meetings of the Reference Group must be completed within six (6) months of the date the integrative project is sent. The educational design must be

original for the purposes of this project; not something that has been previously developed.

B. Instructions for the Integrative Project are received by the educator

C. Advisor receives instructions for Integrative Project and Reference Group Process with the forms available online

C.Educator completes the integrative project prior to the meeting of the Reference Group in order to have time for possible revisions; sends copies to the advisor and to each member of the Reference Group (along with the instructions used)

D. Reference Group meets to discuss the Integrative Project, complete the evaluation forms, and provide recommendations for revisions or a recommendation for approval

F. Educator completes revisions if requested. Reference Group reviews changes and approves integrative project is ready for the readers or recommends that an extension should be sought.

G. Advisor and educator meet to reflect on the process and learnings after which the Advisor completes evaluation forms and educator reflects on their learnings as a result of the process.

H. Using the instructions provided in the Integrative Project, the educator submits the integrative project electronically to **certificationproject@pcusa.org**.

I. Advisor sends *Integrative Project Evaluation Form for Advisor Only, Advisor s Summary of Evaluation,* and completed *Verification of Ministry* Form.

J. Integrative Project is sent to the IP readers who are members of the Educator Certification Committee.

Step Three — Certification

A. The Integrative Project readers submit evaluations and make their recommendation which could be either:
   1. that the readers approve the project for certification.
   2. that the readers do not approve all sections of the project at this time due to specific deficiencies.

B. If all parts of the Integrative Project are not approved, the educator and advisor receive an email outlining additional work to be completed.

C. If the Integrative Project is approved, that is communicated to the educator and advisor and the ECC grants certification at its next meeting. An official communication is sent to the educator and the advisor, along with an invitation to submit the *Reflections on Learning* form.

In specific cases, the ECC grants certification pending verification of ministry (for those who cannot verify employment or volunteer work at the time of the Integrative Project).

a. To be certified, an individual must be gainfully employed or volunteer for ten (10) hours or more per week in educational ministry leadership and be accountable to a board, an agency or a governing body of PC(USA) at the time of integrative project submission as represented on the Verification of Ministry Form.

b. According to ECC policies, an individual who has had at least one year of work experience may go through the process while unemployed. Upon completion of requirements, a letter stating that the educator is “certified upon verification of ministry” will be provided. There is a three-year limit between completion of certification requirements and verification of ministry. Employed persons may begin the certification process at any time.

D. Certification is reported to the appropriate council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The educator’s name is placed on the list of certified Christian educators on the PC(USA) website. That list will also include the status of required boundary training of certified educators.

E.The certificate and reference to the “Recognition of a Certified Christian Educator” in the Book of Common Worship, Pastoral Edition are sent along with a letter of explanation to the presbytery stated clerk.

F. Communication and a recommendation of recognition is sent to the Clerk of Session or appropriate person in the educator's responsible agency or council.

1. The Association of Partners in Christian Education is notified for recognition at its next annual event.

The CCE Integrative Project

The integrative project process is designed to be **a learning AND an assessment process**.

When the educator is notified that all requirements are complete and the Advisor has submitted the *Integrative Project Readiness Form for Advisor Only*, the educator may request the integrative project. The integrative project must be completed within a six-month time period, including the planning, teaching, and evaluation of the educational design. As a result, ALL work must be original to the project rather than material that has been previously a part of coursework or work in the church. A prominent feature of the process is feedback, especially from a Reference Group who will meet with the educator to review materials prior to their submission to the Educator Certification Committee. The Reference Group can, and should, offer suggestions to the educator for. Critical reflection is a key element in any learning process, indicative of the fact that one can gain insights from reflections upon the process as well as the content. It is essential that the Reference Group highlight any inadequacies in the project and require them to be addressed before submission for ECC review,

If an educator endures serious illness or a critical personal hardship during the six-month project period resulting in the inability to complete the project during this time frame, the educator and the Educator Certification Advisor can contact the educator certification staff to discuss the possibility of a leave of absence.

The educator, with approval from their Reference Group, may request translations, accommodations, or alternative means to complete the areas covered in the integrative project. Requests that are approved by the Reference Group shall be forwarded to the Educator Certification Committee for final approval. Requests shall be sent to certicationproject@pcusa.org.

In searching for indications of one's mastery of the required knowledge and skill areas, the integrative project focuses on the educator’s application of content to practical settings. Readers look for signs of the educator's relational skills, communication skills, planning skills, educational

resource skills, integration of a knowledge base with practice, integration across disciplines, and consistency within the Reformed tradition.

After the Reference Group approves and the project is submitted electronically, it will be read by two ECC members for evaluation**.** Readers use only the background voluntarily shared by the educator within the integrative project. The materials and information shared with them provide the basis for their evaluation.

Educator Certification Committee Reading and Evaluation

Integrative projects will be reviewed by the integrative project readers as they are received. Results will ordinarily be given no later than two months after all parts are submitted.

When Certification Is Not Granted

For many educators, the certification process will conclude with positive evaluations of most, but not all, parts of the integrative project. In those cases, certification will not be granted without some additional work. The educator and the Advisor will receive a copy of a letter outlining the ECC's decision and remaining requirements.

Possible Outcomes

1. The readers may require that an educator rewrite one or more parts of the integrative project. This usually indicates a deficiency. It may involve rewriting a particular part.
2. The readers may suggest that the educator participate in additional continuing education in a specific area before rewriting a part of the integrative project.
3. The readers may suggest that the educator complete additional readings in a specific area before rewriting a part of the integrative project.

The integrative project and reading processes are designed to be learning/growing experiences as well as evaluative experiences. It is the hope of the ECC that each educator will see rewriting and additional continuing education as opportunities to develop professionally.

The Educator Certification Advisor, in working with an educator who is asked for additional work and rewrites is asked to:

1. Interpret to the educator and, as necessary, the session and presbytery, the comments, concerns, and requirements of the readers, the Reference Group, and/or the Educator Certification Committee.
2. Encourage the educator to pursue whatever additional requirements have been outlined.

In most cases of a rewrite, the educator will be given three months to complete the rewrite. This submission will be read by the original readers**.** Following the receipt of the project rewrite, readers will ordinarily submit comments within two months.
(When the project is resubmitted to the Committee, ordinarily it will be read by the same readers who read the original project. If the two readers come to different conclusions regarding the rewritten sections, a third reader will be asked to evaluate the rewrite.)

If at any time, the requirements are unclear, or if the advisor and the educator have questions about interpreting the action of the ECC, educator certification staff should be contacted.

The Christian Education Associate (CEA) –

formerly Enrolled Educational Assistant (EEA)

Requirements for the Christian Education Associate

The process for **Christian Education Associate (CEA)** is designed to recognize the role and status of the educator with or without formal academic training. The Educator Certification Committee (ECC) recognizes that many of those who are serving in educational ministries in churches and presbyteries have responded to a need and/or a call, even though they had little training or preparation for the ministry. The goal of the CEA endorsement process is to introduce the educator to basic knowledge and skills related to Christian Education and to whet their appetites so that they will want to pursue further course work and move toward the Certified Christian Educator level.

Persons seeking endorsement as Christian Education Associates (CEA) must complete the following requirements:

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Active in educational ministry within a PC(USA) congregation, council, or agency

- Completion of an online application at http://educator-certification.pcusa.org which includes the selection of, and connection to, an Educator Certification Advisor

- Completion of an online initial assessment for each content area of Biblical Interpretation, Reformed Theology, Religious Education Theory and Practice, Human Growth and Faith Development, Worship and Sacraments, and Presbyterian Polity, Program, and Mission. Results of the initial assessments will determine where further study is needed.

- The educator will be directed to develop a plan of study with their advisor using a variety of resources to deepen understanding in the content area.

- Successful completion of the online final assessment for each content area. All final assessments are to be completed within three years from access to the first assessment. If the educator has not completed the process within three years, the ECC will contact the educator giving the educator the opportunity to extend for 1-2 years or without response removed from the process.

Steps in the Christian Education Associate Process

Step One — Application

A. Educator reviews the material online to become familiar with the CEA endorsement process and its requirements.

B. Educator begins the application process by creating an account and entering the appropriate application information at https://educator-certification.pcusa.org/. As a part of the application, the educator will make connection with an Educator Certification Advisor.

C. The educator receives the instructions and access to the online initial assessments for all content areas.

D. Communication is sent to the educator's session, agency, or council, with a copy to the presbytery stated clerk, informing them that the educator has entered the endorsement process and requests their support.

Step Two — Online Initial Assessment

A. The educator completes the online initial assessment for each content area (choosing to take all initial assessments at once or focus on a particular content area).

B. The educator and advisor discuss the results of the initial assessments.

Step Three – Plan of Study

A. The initial assessment results will guide the educator and the advisor to design a plan of study in the content area using the resource lists provided by the Educator Certification Committee.

B. The educator uses the plan of study created with the advisor to deepen knowledge and skills in the content areas, using the advisor as a conversation partner.

Step Four — Final Assessment

A. Once the plan of study is completed, the educator meets with the advisor to determine readiness for the final assessment in that particular content area.

B. The educator requests access to the final assessment for a content area from educator certification staff and completes the final assessment. The educator may request an alternative testing method if needed.

C. The final assessment is submitted using the instructions provided.

D. The final assessment is read and reviewed by two members of the Educator Certification Committee and approves or requests a rewrite.

E. The educator may take the final assessment for each content area until each is successfully completed.

Step Five — Endorsement

A. Successful completion of the final assessments in all six content areas results in endorsement as a Christian Education Associate.

B. The CEA final assessment status and endorsements are reported to the Educator Certification Committee at each of its meetings.

C. The educator, along with the advisor and the educator's session, receive communication about the endorsement. A letter and documentation of the endorsement is sent to the Stated Clerk of the educator's Presbytery.

The Certification Advisor

The Work and Ministry of the Educator Certification Advisor

The Educator Certification Advisor provides a link between the Educator Certification Committee, the presbytery, and educators seeking to become Certified Christian Educators or Christian Education Associates. Educator Certification Advisors are appointed by the presbytery and approved and trained by the Educator Certification Committee (ECC). The advisor works with the ECC in relation to the certification requirements, and with the presbytery, or its designated committee, in relation to the support and accountability of the presbytery for the applicant's educational ministry.

The Educator Certification Advisor will have the following qualifications:

- A heart for Christian education
- Member of the PC(USA)
- Experience in educational ministry and, if possible, be a Certified Educator
- Knowledgeable about Presbyterian polity and the system and structure of the particular presbytery being served
- A willingness to participate in training (training through an online process)

The person serving as the Educator Certification Advisor will find it helpful to have a strong background in Christian education, to be certified or seeking certification, and/or be supportive of the concept and the process of certification. The person who undertakes this responsibility will need to be skilled in working with individuals, sessions, and committees, sometimes under awkward and potentially difficult situations.

The Educator Certification Advisor has a number of **key responsibilities**, including:

- To become and remain informed about the certification process, and to provide this information to educators, sessions, and committees of the presbytery

- To function as an advocate for the certification process as a means for ensuring excellence in the educational ministry of the church - especially for the presbytery's churches, pastors, and educators

- To meet with each applicant for certification or endorsement to review the process and the requirements, and to advise the applicant regarding the appropriate level for proceeding

- To review with the applicant all applicable academic and experience qualifications, and to assist the educator in finding ways to satisfy unmet requirements

- To serve as a conversation partner as the educator seeking endorsement as a CEA develops and completes the content areas 'plan of study and final assessments.

- To assist the applicant for certification in the selection of a Reference Group for certification and to serve as moderator of that Reference Group
- To go to the session or responsible agency, or council, with the educator, to explain the process and to advocate for support (i.e., time and money) for continuing education and time for writing the integrative project

- To submit the *Integrative Project Readiness Form for Advisor Only,* indicating that the educator is ready to proceed to the next phase*.*

- To convene and moderate the Reference Group as it reviews and evaluates the educator's Integrative Project and to process the results of that review. **PLEASE NOTE: The Educator Certification Committee will not accept Integrative Projects for reading if they have not been approved by the Reference Group and the advisor.**

- To obtain the educator's verification of ministry when the Integrative Project is submitted.

- To identify ways in which the educator can overcome deficiencies identified by the ECC upon receipt of the evaluation of the Educator Certification Committee and to review any resubmitted work to be sure that the deficiencies have been completely and appropriately addressed.To assist the educator in fulfilling any other requirements and responsibilities established by the presbytery, which might include preparing and presenting a statement of faith.

- To assist in planning an appropriate service of recognition along with the presbytery and the educator.

- To fulfill any other requirements outlined by the presbytery.

The Advisor's and the Path toward Certification/Endorsement

A. Application

The advisor may be called upon to interpret to the educator decisions by the ECC that educational preparation or ministry experience is not adequate for the level to which they believe themselves qualified. Advisors should be ready to press educators to seek the level that is appropriate for them.

Educator Certification Advisors should encourage the educator to notify the session about their interest in the process as early as possible, serve as a liaison with the session regarding the goals and process, enlist the participation and support of the session, maintain contact, and serve as interpreter to the session if additional information is needed.

An important part of the work of the Educator Certification Advisor is assisting the educator to recall and evaluate academic preparation. This includes helping the educator to evaluate studies already completed, identifying gaps in academic preparation, and helping the educator find ways to fill those gaps. The advisor role is to guide the educator through the process, not to become the interpreter of standards, which is the role of the ECC.

B. Developing A Study Plan

1. An important step in the process is planning a program of study, which must be shaped by the advice and the requirements set by the Educator Certification

Committee. If costs of continuing education seem to be a concern to the educator, the advisor may want to help by identifying possible sources of funds in the presbytery or synod that can be used for continuing education for the educator and/or speaking to the session or other appropriate committee of the church, to emphasize the importance of the educator's professional development to improving the ministry of their congregation, encouraging them to provide funds to defray some of the costs.

C. Forming the Reference Group for the CCE Level

The Reference Group ordinarily consists of:

- Staff colleague, or equivalent, selected by the educator (*not* the spouse of the educator)
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the educator's work and is selected by the educator
- Representative appointed by the Session or denominational council to whom the educator is responsible
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

D. Working with the CCE Integrative Project Phase

When all the educational requirements are completed and the *Integrative Project Readiness Form for Advisor Only* is submitted then the educator may move on to the final phase of certification: the integrative project.

Along with the educator's integrative project instructions, the advisor will also receive their own instructions with links to the necessary forms which are available online. In consultation with the educator, the advisor is asked to set target dates for the completion of the first draft of the project and a meeting of the Reference Group. It is recommended that the Reference Group review the first draft of the project at least four weeks prior to the deadline to allow for revisions and corrections.

E. Working with the Presbytery to support Educators

Educator Certification Advisors can support the certification of Christian educators by:

- arranging for a fellowship group for those serving in educational ministries within the presbytery
- advocating for minimum salary requirements for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators
- assisting presbytery stated clerks in maintaining the register of Certified educators serving within the bounds of Presbytery
- providing a way by which the presbytery recognizes an educator who has begun the certification process as an expression of support, concern, and care.

F. Preparing the Educator for Endorsement as a Christian Education Associate

The process for a Christian Education Associate is much less involved than for Certified Christian Educator. Since there is no Reference Group, the Advisor's primary role is to work with the educator in developing a plan of study, based on the online initial assessment results and the resources recommended. Once the plan of study is determined, the advisor encourages the educator and checks in regarding their progress.

The Educator Certification Reference Group:

The Reference Group is formed to encourage the educator in the certification process for Certified Christian Educator as well as to attest to and to promote the educator's professional competency and character. The Educator Certification Advisor and the Reference Group are responsible to the Educator Certification Committee (ECC) and the presbytery for the integrity of the process.

Formation of the Reference Group

The Educator Certification Advisor should work with the educator in the formation and contact of the Reference Group members following the completion of the educator's educational requirements and the submission of the *Integrative Project Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.

The Reference Group will ordinarily include:

- Staff colleague, or equivalent, selected by the educator (*not* the spouse of the educator)
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the educator's work and is selected by the educator
- Representative appointed by the Session or denominational council to whom the educator is responsible
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convener of the group
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

D. Responsibilities of the Reference Group during the Integrative Project Phase of the Process

1. Prior to Beginning Review of the Project

Step a. –Select dates on which the Reference Group will meet. The first meeting of the Reference Group is to clarify the purpose of the meeting, the role of the Reference Group in the certification process. and to ask questions, allowing Reference Group members a chance to become more familiar with the process and their expectations.

Step b. – Between meetings, members of the Reference Group are to maintain contact with the educator to offer support and encouragement.

2. Prior to Reference Group Meetings with the Educator

Reference Group members should receive a copy of the completed integrative project from the educator two weeks prior to the meeting date. Each member of the Reference Group is to carefully and critically review the project and complete the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Integrative Project.* **It is at this stage of the project process where an insightful, discerning critique from Reference Group members is essential. Any rewrites deemed necessary at this stage may prevent rewrites mandated by the project readers after submission**.

3. The Reference Group Meeting with the Educator

Step c. – With the Educator Certification Advisor moderating the meeting, the Reference Group meets with the educator and review responses from *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Integrative Project* and discusses the educator's plans for future ministry

development

The educator may be excused from sensitive discussions of evaluation and to decide whether to recommend certification or not.

Step d. – With the Educator present, talk through the Reference Group's decision with appropriate follow-up

PLEASE NOTE: The project should not be sent on to the Educator Certification Committee without Reference Group approval of the project. It will not be accepted for reading without this approval.

4. Following the Reference Group Meeting with the Educator

Step e. – Following the meeting of the Reference Group, the Educator Certification Advisor will meet once more with the educator to reflect on the entire certification process. The advisor will then complete the necessary evaluation forms.

Step f. – The Educator Certification Advisor will complete the appropriate forms for submission.

The integrative project will not be sent to the readers until the Reference Group process has been completed to the satisfaction of the Advisor and the *Integrative Project Evaluation Form for Advisor Only* has been received.