Updated November 2026

Educator Licensing & Hiring

Technical Assistance for Principals/Charter Directors

Educator Licensing 101

Who is an educator?

Educators: Individuals with an educator license. Teachers, Counselors, Administrators, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, Speech Language Pathologists/Technicians, and Audiologists.

Not Educators: Paraeducators, Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Licensed Clinical Mental Health Therapists, and many more.

What are the license types?

Professional (PEL): The individual has completed ALL preparation activities, required tests, clinical experience (student teaching) and has obtained an unencumbered license. PELs are valid for 5 years and renewable.

Associate (AEL): The individual has completed SOME preparation activities and demonstrated minimal content knowledge competency (e.g., degree major, passed Praxis, college credits). The AEL is a temporary license that qualifies an educator for employment in Utah. AELs are valid for 3 years and not renewable; 2 year extension allowed in some cases.

LEA-Specific (LEA-S): The individual has not met AEL requirements, is employed as a general education teacher or administrator, and meets the LEA's requirements. LEA-Ss are valid for 3 years and renewable.

LEA-Specific Licensing Website (https://www.schools.utah.gov/licensing/leaslicensing.php)

Division Of Professional Licensing (DOPL): The individual has met degree and training requirements in one or more of the professions: Audiologist, Speech-Language Pathology (SLP), Certified Social Worker (CSW), or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).

Hiring Licensed Staff

All educators must have a valid educator license or DOPL license.
Educators must have a qualifying license area and/or endorsement for their assignment.

- ***Elementary School:*** Early Childhood (K-3) or Elementary (K-8)
- ***Middle School (6-8):*** Elementary (no endorsements required for 6th grade) or Secondary with Content Endorsement

- ***Junior High (7-9):*** Elementary with Content Endorsement (7-8) or Secondary with Content Endorsement (7-9)
- ***High School (9-12):*** Secondary or CTE with Content Endorsement
- ***Special Education:*** Special Education with Endorsement
- ***Special Education Math:*** Special Education with Special Ed Endorsement; Math Endorsement is not required
- ***CTE without a License:*** No license required; “long-term substitute”
- ***Speech Language Pathologist (SLP):*** USBE SLP or DOPL SLP
- ***School Social Worker:*** USBE School Social Worker, DOPL CSW or DOPL LCSWpe

Teaching Qualifications for Middle School & High School

Additional flexibility for middle and junior high schools can be confusing. The licensing requirements are detailed below. Refer to the *Grade-Level Qualification Matrix* on the next page for a brief summary.

6th Grade Teachers

- **In an Elementary School:** You only need an **Elementary license area**.
- **In a Middle School:** You need either an **Elementary license area** (no content endorsements required) or **Secondary license area** plus a **content endorsement**. You have three options to add a content endorsement:
    - **Professional Level:** Complete all requirements, then fill out the Endorsement Only application.
    - **Associate Level:** Complete part of the requirements, then fill out the Endorsement Only application.
    - **LEA-Specific Level:** Ask your school or district (LEA) to request an endorsement for you.

  Bonus: Once you hold a content endorsement, you can earn a **Secondary license area** without completing a separate teacher prep program (like APPEL). This qualifies you to teach your endorsement area in **grades 6–12**.

7th & 8th Grade Teachers (Middle School)

You need an **Elementary or Secondary license area** along with a **content endorsement**.

9th Grade Teachers

To teach 9th grade in a high school or junior high, you need a **Secondary license area** and a **content endorsement**.

- **Moving to Junior High?** If you already hold a Secondary license and endorsement for 9th grade, no extra steps are required—you are already qualified for grades 6–12.
- **Teaching Outside Your Subject?** If you hold a Professional license and Professional endorsement, you may teach up to **25% of your schedule** outside your subject area without earning additional endorsements.

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Educator License Area & Endorsement Assignment Matrix

This quick-reference matrix outlines educator placement rules based on Utah State Board of Education (USBE) licensing guidelines. It defines where educators with Elementary or Secondary licenses (with or without specific endorsements) are qualified to teach from 6th Grade through 12th Grade.

	Elementary License without Endorsement	Elementary License with Appropriate Endorsement	Secondary License with Appropriate Endorsement
6th Grade in Elementary School	✓ OK	✓ OK	✗ NO
6th Grade in Middle School	✓ OK	✓ OK	✓ OK
7th-8th Grade in Middle/Jr. High	✗ NO	✓ OK	✓ OK
9th Grade in Any School	✗ NO	✗ NO	✓ OK
10th-12th Grade in Any School	✗ NO	✗ NO	✓ OK

KEY FINDING:
Elementary License without Endorsement

Valid only for 6th grade in elementary or middle school settings; ineligible for 7th grade and above.

KEY FINDING:
Elementary License with Appropriate Endorsement

Expands teaching authorization to include 7th–8th grade in middle or junior high schools.

KEY FINDING:
Secondary License with Appropriate Endorsement

Authorizes teaching 6th grade in middle school through 12th grade in any school setting.

Gemini Notebook

*Image created using AI tool, NotebookLM, and verified by USBE staff.

Changing Grades or School Settings

Want to teach 6th Grade in an Elementary School (if you currently teach Middle School)?
You must hold or obtain an **Elementary license area**.

Want to teach 9th Grade (if you currently teach Middle School)?

- ***If you have a Professional Secondary License + Endorsement:*** *No action needed.*
- ***If you have a Professional Elementary License + Endorsement:*** *Submit a License Area Request (LER) Upgrade application to receive your Professional Secondary license.*
- ***If you have an Associate Elementary License + Endorsement:*** *Submit an Associate Educator License (AEL) application for Secondary.*

See all educator assignments with qualifying licensure in #2 on the CACTUS website (https://schools.utah.gov/licensing/adminsupportscactus).

Educator Funding

All Licensed Educators - USBE or DOPL

Educator Salary Adjustment (ESA): Each FTE that has a professional license and an assignment in CACTUS on October 13th generates a $10,660 (SY27) Educator Salary Adjustment.

Teacher Supplies & Materials: Each teacher with a license on June 29th generates $500 (Elementary) or $250 (Secondary) for Teacher Supplies & Materials

See all educator assignments with associated funding in #2 & #3 on the CACTUS website (https://schools.utah.gov/licensing/adminsupportscactus).

Special Educators

Special Educators with an AEL may only work for a maximum of three (3) years. They must have a Professional Educator License (PEL) to continue teaching. Your LEA may be required to provide compensatory services if you employ special ed teachers without a license or with an AEL for longer than three years.