

Teacher Certification Rules Explained but still Confusing

By Tara STEWART-STANLEY

After a presentation Wednesday morning, UPEI education students left with more information, but some were also confused.

There were two presenters, first was Ian Scott, Registrar for the PEI Dept. of Education. The second, Brett Woodbury, holds the same post in Nova Scotia.

Scott first explained general information on how to get certified as a teacher in Prince Edward Island. Students seemed to be most interested in the different levels of qualifications and training.

Scott explained that on PEI there are 44 levels of pay for teachers doing the same work, based on a matrix system, depending on experience and training. Several questions were asked about certification levels.

To teach at the elementary level, students must have nine credit hours of social studies, six in pure science, three in math and six in English.

Students graduating from UPEI with a four-year B.A. and a two-year B.Ed. will have a level 5 certificate. The lowest level 4. There is a certificate 5A, which is a half-step between licenses. It allows teachers to get an increment in pay without completing a Master's program. However, it's the same amount of work as a Master's, but you don't have to write a thesis. Once you complete a Master's program, you reach a level 6.



Students eager to be taught by a qualified teacher.

Students asked about two-year programs in comparison to one-year programs. Both students who take a three-year B.A. and a four-year B.A. will start at a level 5. Students were concerned about the fact they are doing an additional year of study and wondered why they shouldn't, in some cases, get a B.A. from a one-year program.

This means in a second year teaching position, a new teacher could find he or she is teaching Math, when in fact he or she doesn't have much Math training at all.

"The two-year program has become an employment standard in the region," Scott says. "A high number of teachers in the province have been trained through this university. It is

very highly regarded in this province."

To get certification, you have to pay a \$50 one-time fee. You have to also get a license, produce a copy of both birth certificate and social insurance number. This has to be done where you did your schooling in order to seek employment in any other province or country. You also have to have official transcripts. UPEI has dropped the fee for transcripts. In addition, should you be applying somewhere other than Prince Edward Island, you will also have to follow the standards for that particular place.

"So, we have an agreement for teachers, which allows all teachers who hold certification in their province at the minimum of B.Ed. level to be recognized in any other jurisdiction," Scott says, "so that's an important thing, that it is an automatic thing, but it also means that you do have to go through the process because they want to know just where you fit on the certification levels."

The information on Nova Scotia was a bit more confusing. Woodbury explained each province has its own set of standards and history. In Nova Scotia, students require a minimum of five years of university to reach their first level certificate. They require three years of content courses, which is the three-year B.A., as well as two additional years in education with practicum. To teach different levels,

students will require specific education. To teach at the elementary level, students must have nine credit hours of social studies, six in pure science, three in math and six in English. To teach at the secondary level, students require a 30 hour major, an 18 hour minor, some social studies, math, science or English.

Starting in 2005, Nova Scotia is starting endorsed certificates. These new regulations put students in different categories. Anyone starting university in September 2000 must meet the new standards. There's a grandfather clause that brings forth a seven-year window, as it can sometimes take up to that amount of time to finish a B.Ed.

"Anyone starting September 1993 onward has seven years in which to complete the requirements for certification under the old rules," Woodbury says.

On PEI there are 44 levels of pay for teachers doing the same work, based on a matrix system, depending on experience and training.

He explained there are two groups who need to meet the new standards, they are the older student and those starting in September 2000. There's much less prescribed work in the old standard, there's the same schooling for different levels. In September 2005, employment in Nova Scotia will be linked to the certification. Woodbury says a teacher's first assignment will have to be predominantly in their field of endorsement. Any subsequent assignment might not be in that area of study. This means in a second year teaching position, a new teacher could find he or she is teaching Math, when in fact he or she doesn't have much Math training at all.

Anyone who is still confused or has more questions should check out the following websites for further information or contact numbers: www.edu.pe.ca/registrar and www.ednet.ns.ca

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