

**COLORADO'S GUIDE to APPROVAL AND
ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER PREPARATION
PROGRAMS AND LICENSING OF EDUCATIONAL
PERSONNEL**

Approving and accrediting teacher education programs and the licensing of educational personnel are three interrelated but very distinct processes. It is easy to confuse the functions that come under these three areas, particularly when some states use the terms accreditation, licensing, and certification interchangeably. They are key points along a continuum of teacher preparation. The ultimate goal of the processes is to ensure quality teaching. This digest seeks to clarify these three important processes and identify the primary organizations involved in these areas.

DEFINING THE PROCESSES

Approval is an evaluation process that determines if a degree program seeking teacher education authorization meets state standards typically defined in statute. It is carried out by a designated state agency and includes initial approval and periodic review. Approval is required for any institution offering teacher preparation programs including public, private and out-of-state institutions. In Colorado, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHHE) is the agency designated to approve teacher and principal preparation programs. CCHHE's standards are performance-based. See C.R.S. 23-1-121

Accreditation is an evaluation process that determines the quality of an institution or program using predetermined standards. Accreditation is normally carried out on a peer review basis by competent, nongovernmental agencies such as national, regional, and/or local associations. It is, in essence, a collegial activity conducted by institutions that have voluntarily organized to form and to support an accrediting association. These accrediting agencies or associations prepare standards for education institutions and subsequently apply these standards when evaluating individual institutions seeking accreditation. The benefit of accreditation is that other states recognize that the graduates of an accredited institution meets standards and ensures licensure reciprocity for graduates who choose to practice in another state. National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is the U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting society in teacher education. NCATE accreditation is performance-based.

Licensing is the process by which a governmental agency grants a license - or permission - to an individual who has met specified requirements. The purpose of licensure standards is to assure the public that the licensed individual will do no harm. In the case of licensing teachers, the intent is to prevent individuals from doing harm in the classroom. The Colorado Department of Education licenses all teachers, educational support personnel, and administrators teaching in Colorado public elementary and secondary institutions.

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