

Educator Certification Handbook 2015



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



Produced by
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Educator Certification Committee
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Mid Council Ministries
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Educator Certification Handbook – 2015

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Introduction

The Handbook

This handbook has been developed primarily for the use of Educator Certification Advisors as they work with persons seeking to be Certified Christian Educators or those seeking to be enrolled as Christian Education Associates. A print version of these materials can be placed in a binder and kept for use when helping an educator who asks about certification or when someone is identified for whom the certification process would seem appropriate. Other helpful materials can also be added to enhance the work of educators in the Presbytery. All of this content can be found online at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators. This website can be a helpful source when looking for a particular form or specific information related to educator certification.

Although the Educator Certification Committee has made every attempt to work out the details of the process, we recognize that there may be omissions or errors in the handbook. From time to time, you may receive notifications about revisions to the handbook. The most recent version will always be 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 Teaching Elder. Over the ensuing decades, their gifts and services as "educators" in the church have 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 to enhance the ministries of persons employed as professional Christian educators by certifying them as Certified Christian Educators or Certified Associate Christian Educators, or by enrolling them as Enrolled Educational Assistants. Certification was then granted at the end of an intensive process of preparation, study, service, and examination.

Now, as we live into the twenty-first century, 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 insure 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 enrolling 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 on-going 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.
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 or its equivalent (previously achieved the level of Certified Associate Christian Educator, Enrolled Educational Assistant or Christian Education Associate)
- **Christian Education Associates (CEA)** – formerly Enrolled Educational Assistants - are not required to hold a degree but have entered the process of formal preparation for certification by successfully completing a number of basic requirements

In recognition of the fact that there are only select places where someone may go to receive a master's or bachelor's degree in Christian education, the certification process has been designed so that many qualified persons who have entered the field through volunteer service and part-time employment in the field, may become certified. In fact, it is possible for a person who does not hold any baccalaureate degree to become certified. To do so, one must complete rigorous programs of continuing education and multiple-step examination processes designed to ensure that those who complete this process are equipped in training and skill as those who hold the degrees.

Both formal and informal academic preparations are considered in the certification process. In addition, significant emphasis is placed upon competent performance, exhibited by experience. The process is designed to be a means of growth for the educator; not only measuring the educator's competence but also helping the educator define needs for additional education. In all cases and at both levels, an educator who is certified, enrolled, or otherwise engaged in the process of preparation for certification is a person who has submitted his or her credentials to a third party, in this case, to the Educator Certification Committee (ECC) through the Coordinator of Educator Certification/OGA Staff person (hereafter, Coordinator) for an independent, peer review of his or her gifts for this ministry.

The Church and Christian Educators

The certification process outlined in this handbook attempts to faithfully fulfill the requirements for preparation, examination, and admission to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the Certified Christian Educator as described in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). As you read and use it, you will note that the Form of Government, one of the sections of the Book of Order, addresses the ministry of Certified Church Service as well as specifying the skills and training of the Certified Christian Educator. It is the constitutional provision for the Certified Christian Educator and the former level of Certified Associate Christian Educator. The entry level for certification, Christian Education Associate (formerly Enrolled Educational Assistant), is not reflected in the Form of Government. It is an entry level whereby educators who hold no degree may enter the process and work toward certification if they so choose, and is a way the church recognizes the gifts and ministries of persons while encouraging them in their continuing education. As such, there are steps in the ongoing process of lifetime learning common to all educators.

The constitutional provisions describing the preparation, examination, and rights of certified Christian educators are found at the end of chapter two of the Form of Government (G-2.11 Certified Church Service). The relevant sections are as follows:

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 or councils. They shall have skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, human development, faith development, religious educational theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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.

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 for pastoral calls and Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery;

G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders 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 teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, 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 six 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 many are Teaching Elders, the majority of Educators who are certified or enrolled are not Teaching Elders. They are seeking certification as a way of enhancing their own continuing 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. The Educator Certification Committee and the presbytery choose the Educator Certification Advisor in partnership. 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
- A willingness to participate in training (training is available at selected events and through an online process at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators)

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

- To become and remain informed about the certification process, and to provide this information to educators, sessions and committees of the presbytery
- To meet with each applicant for certification or enrollment to review the process and the requirements, and to advise the applicant regarding the appropriate level for which to apply
- To review with the applicant all applicable qualifications, and to assist the

Educator in finding ways to satisfy unmet requirements

- To assist the applicant for certification in the selection of a Reference Group and to serve as one member of that Reference Group as the presbytery's appointee
- To go to the Session or appropriate council, with the Educator, to explain the process and to advocate for support (i.e., time and money) for this process of continuing education
- To inform the Coordinator that the Advisor is satisfied with the educators' readiness to proceed to the exam phase using the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*
- To convene and moderate the Reference Group as it reviews and evaluates the Educator's responses to examination questions, and to process the results of that review. **PLEASE NOTE: The Educator Certification Committee will not accept exams for reading if they have not been approved by the Reference Group and the Advisor**
- To obtain verification of ministry (employed or volunteer) of the Educator upon completion of the examination or readings
- To assist the Educator in fulfilling other requirements and responsibilities established by the presbytery, which might include preparing and presenting a statement of faith, assisting in the writing of a position description, and reviewing the adequacy of compensation with the denominational council
- To plan with the Educator and the presbytery an appropriate service of recognition of the certification
- To identify ways in which the Educator can overcome deficiencies identified by the ECC upon receipt of the evaluation of the Educator Certification Committee.
- To function as an advocate for the certification process as a means for insuring excellence in the educational ministry of the church - especially for the presbytery's churches, pastors, and educators
- To fulfill any other requirements outlined by the presbytery

The person serving as the Educator Certification Advisor should be someone who thoroughly understands the Presbyterian system and knows both the structure and functioning of the particular presbytery in which he/she serves. The person 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.

More detail on the role of the Certification Advisor is available in the section of the Handbook entitled "The Certification Advisor."

The Reference Group

The Reference Group will include:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (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 is expected to:

- Meet various times with the Educator to provide support and encouragement;
- Review and comment on the Educator's exam before it is sent in its final form to the Educator Certification Committee;
- Provide insight into the Educator's ministry and personal competencies via use of the *General Reference Group Comments* form at the end of the examination phase;
- Decide to recommend or not to recommend the Educator for certification to the Educator Certification Committee.

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

The Educator Certification Committee (ECC)

The Educator Certification Committee is made up of nine persons serving four-year terms at the appointment of the appropriate agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Criteria for ECC Membership (in order of importance):

1. All members will be members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
2. All members will have skills in evaluating educational competencies.
3. All members, when possible, shall be Certified Christian Educators.
4. Representation by men and women, lay and clergy, and racial/ethnic.
5. Representation from as diverse geographical areas and across age lines as possible.

To fulfill the above, the following criteria have been established for ECC membership:

1. At least one person who currently serves as a Director of Christian Education.
2. At least one person who serves, or has served, on the staff of a mid-council.
3. At least one pastor serving a church that employs a church educator.
4. At least one faculty or staff member of a PC (USA) theological school.
5. At least one associate pastor who serves primarily in Christian education.
6. At least one racial/ethnic representative.

In addition, appointed members represent a Presbyterian Seminary which provides a degree program in Christian Education and the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE).

The ECC meets at least once yearly, usually in the late fall or late spring, with 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 Coordinator, as a staff person of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is responsible for all administrative functions within the application and certification process. Nominations to the Educator Certification Committee take place through the General Assembly Nominating Committee process. Applications are available at www.pcusa.org/nominations.

The Coordinator of Educator Certification

The Coordinator is a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of the General Assembly staff. The Coordinator receives and processes applications, transcripts, examinations, and evaluations. The Coordinator makes 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 Coordinator will delay any further action until the ECC can review the application.

The Coordinator attends Educator Certification Committee meetings and assists ECC members as they review the files of applicants. The Coordinator communicates ECC decisions to those affected by them, and submits lists of Certified Educators so that they may be included in the online directory provided by the Office of the General Assembly and the APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators) communications.

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

The Coordinator of Educator Certification can be contacted at:
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396
Telephone: (502) 569-5751
(502) 569-5870 (fax)
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 her/his Session when beginning the CCE/CEA 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 course work in order to meet the educational requirements. In addition, the Session can be an advocate for the Educator as he/she continues the process.

There are several places in the process when the Session will be formally involved:

1. When the Educator has made 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. At this same time, if the Educator is a volunteer, there will be verification requested.
2. When the Educator is ready to begin the examination phase of the process, the clerk of 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 for the Educator.
3. During the Examination Phase, a *Verification of Ministry Form* will need to be completed and signed by the individual to whom the Educator is most directly accountable. This may be one of several people such as the Church Business Administrator, Christian Education Committee Chairperson, the Personnel Committee Chairperson or the Moderator.
4. When CCE/CEA is granted, the Clerk of Session will be formally notified. This notification suggests the appropriateness of the congregation/Session, agency or council formally recognizing the Educator's achievement.

The Presbytery

The Form of Government of the PC (USA) (G-2.11, G-3.0303, G-3.0307) provides that the presbytery:

1. encourage those called to service to meet or prepare to meet the certification requirements;
2. shall encourage sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to those seeking certification;
3. shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing a service of recognition at the time of certification;
4. shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators;
5. shall provide access to the area of presbytery that oversees ministry (G-3.0307)
6. shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery;
7. facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Certified Christian Educators;
8. settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.

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.

While these passages do not establish a specific process for presbyteries to follow in the certification of church educators, they do make clear the presbytery's right and responsibility to provide oversight for the educator certification process. Some presbyteries take this responsibility very seriously, placing Educators under care of the presbytery while they prepare for certification, requiring a statement of faith to be presented to the presbytery. The following suggestions may be helpful as your presbytery considers its role in relation to the certification process:

1. Decide which committee of presbytery the Educator Certification Advisor(s) will function within. Encourage and support Certification Advisors to participate in the training offered by the Office of Certification.
2. Discuss the certification process with concerned individuals in the presbytery. If they feel additional requirements or other means of supporting educators through the process are necessary, write these up as supplementary to the certification process.
3. Prior to the presentation of an individual educator, involve the whole presbytery to look at the certification process and to approve any addenda added as a result of (2) above. Listen seriously to questions and concerns and if possible make adjustments to accommodate them.
4. Be vigilant in balancing "requirements" with "benefits." Remind presbyters that the main reason for presbytery's involvement in the process is to support the Educator and to recognize the importance of his or her contribution to the presbytery and the church.

The Certified Christian Educator

Ministry Experience and Educational 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
- 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 certification-approved courses in the following knowledge/skill areas (a list of approved courses for PC (USA) educator certification can be found on-line at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators) –
 - At least 3 course credits each:
 - Biblical Interpretation - This area includes exegetical skills, but does not include a requirement to know and use the Biblical languages of Hebrew or Greek.
 - Reformed Theology - Note the emphasis on "Reformed" theology and the constitution's emphasis on the "Confessions" as a basis for defining Reformed theology. The Educator Certification Committee looks for indications that courses included the Confessions and/or extensive reading in the works of Reformed theologians;
 - Religious Education Theory and Practice - This area should be current and demonstrate an ability to integrate theory with practice.
 - Worship and Sacraments – This area includes knowledge of worship and sacraments within the Reformed tradition and the ability to interpret worship and the sacraments in the educational ministry of the church. Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged.
 - Human Growth and Faith Development (within the last 15 years) - Work in this area must be life-span, 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 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.
 - Presbyterian Program and Mission - This area includes knowledge of current resources and mission emphases of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of current employment or volunteer work 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 examination;

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: This area includes knowledge of worship and sacraments within the Reformed tradition and the ability to interpret worship and the sacraments in the educational ministry of the church. Prior completion of coursework in Biblical Interpretation and Reformed Theology is suggested and encouraged.
- Completion of an additional course in Human Growth and Faith Development if the previous course was not completed within fifteen (15) years.
- Completion of a certification exam under the direction of the Educator Certification Committee.
- Completion of Reference Group process.
- Verification of employment or volunteer work 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 examination.

* NOTE: 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).

Steps in the Certified Christian Educator Process

The process leading to certification varies according to one's educational background, previous experience, and level of certification. 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 searches the website **www.pcusa.org/christianeducators** and electronically acquires the application and an informative overview of the certification process.
- B. Educator looks over the list of approved Certification Advisors from the website **www.pcusa.org/christianeducators** and selects an Advisor from the Educator's presbytery. If this is not possible, contact an advisor who is geographically close.
- C. Educator then contacts the Presbytery-approved Educator Certification Advisor who will work with him or her throughout the process and communicates with Head of Staff and/or Session or head of agency or council explaining why and how certification will benefit all.
- D. Educator obtains transcripts from previously completed Master's and/or Bachelor's Degree Programs as well as verification of previous Educator Certification Courses.
- E. Educator and Advisor prepare the application form when transcripts are in hand. Advisor and Educator review academic background, previous levels of certification achieved, and the requirements for certification at the appropriate level. The Advisor and Educator identify any missing knowledge and skill areas. Together they create a tentative plan for additional courses using the list of approved courses found at **www.pcusa.org/christianeducators** and any additional seminary and college course offerings. They submit the plan with transcripts and any other materials (such as syllabi) to the Coordinator. The Educator ordinarily should wait to begin coursework until after the courses are reviewed and approved by the Coordinator.
- F. Educator sends to the Coordinator:
 - Application Form with Educational Requirements Worksheet
 - Transcripts and Verification of Educator Certification Courses
 - Position Description (Volunteer or Employed)
- G. Coordinator sends a letter to the Educator's Session, agency or council, with a copy to the presbytery, informing them that the Educator has entered the certification process and requesting their support.
- H. Coordinator reviews materials sent by the Educator and the tentative plan for addressing the requirements. Coordinator also checks for any problems or gaps other than those identified by the Educator.
- I. If additional work is needed, Coordinator reviews and approves (or recommends changes in) the tentative academic plan and advises the Educator and Advisor.
- J. Educator completes course work; checks with Advisor to be sure all requirements are met; and submits relevant transcripts, syllabi, and/or CEUs for any additional courses taken.

K. Advisor notifies the Coordinator when satisfied with the Educator's plan for proceeding to the exam phase by completing the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.

L. Coordinator writes to Session, council or agency to which the Educator is accountable, advising it of the applicant's progress and advising them to appoint a representative to the Reference Group. Copies are also sent to the Educator, the Advisor and mid-council staff.

M. Coordinator sends a letter to the Certification Advisor with instructions to begin the Reference Group process.

N. Educator and Advisor together select other persons to serve as a Reference Group. The Reference Group includes:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or agency/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 applicable)

O. Educator and Advisor set date for first meeting of Reference Group.

Step Two — Examination

A. Educator chooses dates for the examination and submits a written request for the examination from Coordinator.

Note: The examination process, including final meetings of the Reference Group must be completed within six (6) months of the date the examination is sent by the Coordinator.

B. Coordinator sends Educator:

The Exam
A Reflection on Learnings Form

C. Coordinator sends Advisor:

Instructions for Examination and Reference Group Process
Exam Evaluation forms for the Reference Group and Advisor
Guidelines for Reference Group Meeting
General Reference Group Comments Form
Exam Evaluation for Advisor Only Form
Verification of Ministry Form

D. Educator completes examination at least four (4) weeks prior to the meeting of the Reference Group in order to have time for possible revisions; sends copies as follows:

To Advisor
To each member of Reference Group (including copy of exam instructions and *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam* from Advisor)

E. Reference Group meets:

- Examination is discussed
- Exam evaluation forms are discussed and completed
- Educator receives recommendations for revisions to his or her examination **or** Reference Group makes a recommendation for approval to the Certification Committee through the Coordinator.
- Evaluation forms are given to Advisor to be compiled and sent to the Certification Committee.

F. Educator completes revisions if requested. Reference Group reviews changes and decides to approve exam to be sent to the ECC or recommends that an extension should be sought.

G. Advisor and educator meet to reflect on the process and learnings:

Advisor writes evaluation of educator in context of process;
Educator reflects on his/her learnings as a result of process.

H. Educator submits the examination electronically to **certificationexams@pcusa.org**, along with the *Reflections on Learning* form to the Coordinator.

I. Advisor sends *Exam Evaluation Form for Advisor Only*, *Advisor's Summary of Evaluation*, and completed *Verification of Ministry* Form to Coordinator.

J. Coordinator sends examination to three readers — one independent reader and two members of the Educator Certification Committee.

Step Three — Certification

A. Educator Certification Committee meets and reviews all evaluations.

B. Educator Certification Committee makes its recommendations, which could be either:

1. The ECC grants certification.
2. The ECC does not grant certification due to specific deficiencies in the examination.
3. The ECC grants certification pending Verification of Ministry (for those who cannot verify employment or volunteer work at the time of the examination).

C. If certification is not recommended, Coordinator writes to Educator with copy to Advisor, outlining additional work to be completed. The letter shall specify how that work is to be submitted for review and subsequent action on certification.

D. If certification is recommended, the Coordinator sends an official letter to the Educator with a copy to Advisor.

E. The ECC's action 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.

F. Coordinator sends Certificate and suggested Service of Recognition, together with letter of explanation to the appropriate presbytery staff. The Service of Recognition includes an opportunity for the Educator to present a Statement of Faith to the Presbytery after which the

Presbytery presents the certificate to the Educator.

G. Communication and appropriate service of recognition is sent to Moderator/Clerk of Session or appropriate person in the Educator's responsible agency or council.

H. Coordinator also advises:

Advisor

Association of Presbyterian Church Educators

The CCE Integrative Examination (Exam)

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

When the Coordinator notifies the Educator that all requirements are completed and the Advisor has submitted the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only* to the Coordinator, the Educator may request the examination. It is a "take-home, open book" examination that must be completed within a six month time period. As a result, ALL work must be original to the exam 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 his or her materials prior to their submission to the Educator Certification Committee. The Reference Group can and should offer suggestions to the Educator for improvements in his or her materials. 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.

If an Educator endures serious illness or a critical personal hardship during the six month exam period resulting in the inability to complete the exam during this time frame, the Educator and the Certification Advisor can contact the Coordinator to discuss the possibility of a Leave of Absence.

In searching for indications of one's mastery of the required knowledge and skill areas, the examination focuses on the Educator's application of content to practical settings. Examination 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.

For the examination, the Reference Group will receive a packet of information from the Advisor, including a copy of *Guidelines for the Reference Group meeting* and a copy of the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. The Coordinator will send the examination to one independent reader and two ECC members for evaluation prior to the Committee meetings. **All evaluations by independent readers and ECC members are anonymous** – that is to say that the readers have no knowledge of who the Educator is, where they live, what type of situation they are in, or any other detail that might give a reader any insight into the identity or makeup of the Educator. The evaluations by these readers provide the basis for the ECC's decision and recommendations.

In writing the examination, the Educator needs to be careful to avoid or remove all specific references to a particular congregation, location, person's names, his/her own name, etc. in order to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the process.

The Educator also needs to refrain from quoting the work(s) of others without proper attribution. Plagiarism is intentionally presenting any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were his/her own without giving proper credit to the original source and with disregard for proper academic research procedures. For proper academic research procedure, refer to *Turabian's Manual for Writers of Theses, Term Papers and Dissertations*, 7th edition. If examination readers identify plagiarism within the exam, the writer will be asked to rewrite the plagiarized Part of the exam.

Educator Certification Committee Reading and Evaluation

Examinations will be reviewed by the ECC as they are received. Exam results will ordinarily be given no later than two months after all parts were submitted to certificationexams@pcusa.org.

When Certification Is Granted

When the action of the ECC is to grant certification, the Educator and the Advisor are notified. A certificate and a suggested *Service of Recognition* are sent to the Executive Presbyter of the presbytery, with notification to the Advisor, the Educator and the Moderator or Clerk of the Session of the church or comparable board, council or agency in which the Educator serves. Following action by the Committee, the name of the newly Certified Educator is sent to the Office of the General Assembly for inclusion in the list of Certified Christian Educators.

When Certification Is Not Granted

For many Educators the certification process will conclude with positive evaluations of most, but not all parts of the examination (certification) or of the responses to readings (enrollment). In those cases certification/enrollment 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 Educator Certification Committee may require that an Educator rewrite one or more parts of the examination. This usually indicates a serious deficiency. It may involve rewriting a particular part. This action may delay certification until a subsequent meeting of the Committee.
2. The ECC may suggest that the Educator participate in additional continuing education in a specific area before retaking the examination or part of the examination.
3. The ECC may suggest that the Educator complete additional readings in a specific area before retaking the examination or part of the examination.

The examination and reading processes are designed to be learning/growing experiences as well as evaluative experiences. Therefore, an Educator may be asked more than once to rewrite all or part of an examination, or complete additional continuing education or additional readings. 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 not granted certification 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. The Advisor may need to confer with a Session or presbytery committee that is concerned about the qualifications of an Educator who is requested to rewrite. If appropriate, the interpretation should help them see the value of an Educator who seeks to be professionally accredited, to do whatever is required to aid professional growth and development, and to round out his/her abilities as an Educator.
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 at least one of the original readers. Following the receipt of the exam rewrite, readers will ordinarily submit comments to AC within 2 months.

If at any time, the requirements are unclear, or if the Advisor and the Educator have questions about interpreting the action of the Educator Certification Committee, the Coordinator should be contacted.

The Christian Education Associate (CEA) – formerly *Enrolled Educational Assistant (EEA)*

Ministry Experience and Educational 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 job. Throughout the years, many of these persons have attended or even led a variety of related workshops. The goal of the process of enrollment is to recognize and affirm these accomplishments, introduce the educator to some important writers in related fields 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 enrollment as Christian Education Associates (CEA) must complete the following requirements:

- Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
- Experience (Volunteer or Employed) of one year full-time or its equivalent in Christian educator ministry within a PC (USA) congregation, council, or agency. *
- Completion of all four courses of *Opening Doors to Discipleship* (www.openingdoorstodiscipleship.org) to fulfill coursework. CEA candidates will meet with their Certification Advisors after completion of each module to discuss their journals and ways this course informs their educational ministry.
- Reading of six selected books and responding to questions. *The Christian Education Associate Reading List* is sent to each Educator who completes the application for Christian Education Associate. The reading list contains titles including some “classics” and some contemporary titles.

The Reading List for the Christian Education Associate consists of two parts. The first part lists eight “foundational” books. Five of these must be selected as **required reading**. The second part lists recommended readings from which to select books to further educational development. A sixth book is selected by the educator from the second list to complete the reading requirement. The reading lists provide the basic content outline for one's study at this level.
- Verification of gainful employment or volunteer work for at least ten (10) hours per week, accountable to a board, agency, or council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

* NOTE: 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).

Steps in the Christian Education Associate Process

The process leading to CEA 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 with the experience.

Step One — Application

- A. Educator searches the website **www.pcusa.org/christianeducators** and electronically acquires the application and general information of the process.
- B. Educator looks over the list of approved Certification Advisors from the website **www.pcusa.org/christianeducators** and selects an Advisor from the Educator's presbytery. If this is not possible, contact an advisor who is geographically close.
- C. Educator contacts a Presbytery-approved Educator Certification Advisor who will work with him/her throughout the process. The educator and the advisor prepare the application form.
- D. Advisor and Educator analyze the Educator's background and experience. They develop a plan for continuing education.
- E. Educator sends to the Coordinator:
 - Application form with Educational Requirements Worksheet
 - Three letters of reference
- F. Coordinator acknowledges receipt of the application and sends the Educator the reading list and questions for response along with instructions for submission following completion of educational requirements.
- G. Coordinator sends a letter to the Educator's Session, agency or council, with a copy to the presbytery, informing them that the Educator has entered the certification process and requesting their support.
- H. Educator completes educational requirements: completion of each module (there are four courses) of *Opening Doors to Discipleship* (www.openingdoorstodiscipleship.org); meet with Certification Advisor to discuss their journals and ways this course informs their educational ministry; submits completion to Coordinator with confirmation by the Advisor.

Step Two — Readings and Responses

- A. The Educator and Advisor decide which books from the approved list will be most helpful for the Educator's professional growth. The Advisor assists the Educator in locating the books.
- B. The Educator reads the selected books and responds to questions related to the readings.
- C. The Advisor and Educator may meet to review responses.
- D. When all educational requirements have been met, the Educator sends the responses to

questions related to the readings to **certificationexams@pcusa.org**.

E. The Coordinator acknowledges receipt and advises the Educator and Advisor of dates of the next ECC meeting and sends *Verification of Ministry Form* to the Advisor.

F. The Advisor returns completed *Verification of Ministry Form* to the Coordinator.

G. The Coordinator sends responses to the readings to two ECC members for evaluation.

Step Three — Enrollment

A. The Educator Certification Committee reviews the reader's evaluations and makes its recommendations:

1. The ECC grants the CEA.
2. The ECC does not grant the CEA due to specific deficiencies in the submitted materials. In the case of termination of position during the process, the ECC may grant the CEA pending future receipt of a current *Verification of Ministry Form*.

B. If CEA is not recommended, the Coordinator will write to the Educator with a copy to the Advisor, outlining additional work to be completed. The letter will specify how that work is to be submitted for review and subsequent action.

C. If CEA is recommended, the Coordinator sends an official letter to the Educator. Letters are also sent to the Advisor and Clerk of Session or equivalent. A letter and certificate is sent to the staff of the Educator's Presbytery.

The CEA Examination

The examination phase for the **Christian Education Associate** is quite different from the other certification level. Please be certain the Educator follows these instructions in completing the requirements for enrollment.

1. Reads five books from the “Required Reading List” on the *Christian Education Associate Reading List*.
2. Based on conversations with the Certification Advisor, the Educator’s particular area of interest or work, and the perceived need for additional learning, the Educator selects and reads *one additional book* from the “Additional Reading Suggestions” list.
3. The Educator writes the following for all **six** books (minimum one page per book)
 - a. Summarize what is considered to be the basic theme(s) of the book.
 - b. Identify new insights gained from the book.
 - c. Suggest ways to apply learnings from the book to his/her work in Christian education.
4. The Educator also writes a response to the following:
 - a. List three concepts from the Educator’s readings that either affirm or challenge previous learnings or understandings.
 - b. In light of the Educator’s readings and being enrolled as a Christian Education Associate, what are the Educator’s future plans for continued ministry development?
5. Responses are sent to:
certificationexams@pcusa.org

Two members of the Educator Certification Committee read the examinations. Their recommendations become the basis for the ECC’s decision concerning granting CEA.

Educator Certification Committee Reading and Evaluation

When the Coordinator has received all papers, they are submitted to the ECC at its next meeting. After carefully reviewing all evaluations from the exam readers, the ECC will make a decision as to whether:

- papers are complete and the educator has satisfactorily met the requirements; or
- papers are complete, but additional attention needs to be given to certain parts of the process. The ECC may grant CEA, but suggest that the Advisor and Educator review its comments in the interest of the continuing ministry development of the Educator. In such cases, no further work is required; or
- papers are complete with relatively minor problems. In these cases, the ECC will require that certain portions of the readings be rewritten. The details are spelled out in a letter and if there are no serious deficiencies, corrections can sometimes be addressed with a minimal amount of work.

When CEA is Not Granted

In the case of termination of position during the process, the ECC may grant the CEA pending future receipt of a current *Verification of Ministry Form*.

For many Educators the enrollment process will conclude with positive evaluations of most, but not all parts of the responses to readings. In those cases CEA 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 ECC may require the Educator to rewrite his or her responses to the assigned questions.
2. The ECC may require the Educator to read an additional book in a specific area and respond to questions regarding that book.
3. The ECC may require the Educator to answer additional questions about a specific book.

The examination 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 indeed see rewriting and additional continuing education as opportunities to develop professionally.

The Educator Certification Advisor, in working with an Educator who is not granted CEA is asked to:

1. Interpret to the Educator and, as necessary, the Session and presbytery, the comments, concerns and requirements of the readers, and/or the Educator Certification Committee. The Advisor may need to confer with a Session or presbytery committee that is concerned about the qualifications of an Educator whose exam was not approved. If appropriate, the interpretation should help them see the value of an Educator who seeks to be professionally accredited, to do whatever is required to aid professional growth and development, and to round out his/her abilities as an Educator.
2. Encourage the Educator to pursue whatever additional requirements have been outlined.

If at any time, the requirements are unclear, or if the Advisor and the Educator have questions about interpreting the action of the Educator Certification Committee, the Coordinator should be contacted.

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. The Educator Certification Committee and the presbytery choose the Educator Certification Advisor in partnership. 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 Presbyterian Church(USA)
- Experience in educational ministry and, if possible, a certified educator
- A willingness to participate in training (training is available at selected sites and through an online process at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators)

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

- To become and remain informed about the certification process, and to provide this information to Educators, sessions and committees of the presbytery
- To meet with each applicant for certification or enrollment to review the process and the requirements, and to advise the applicant regarding the appropriate level for which to apply
- To review with the applicant all applicable academic and experience qualifications, and to assist the Educator in finding ways to satisfy unmet requirements
- To assist the applicant for certification in the selection of a Reference Group and to serve as one member of that Reference Group as the presbytery's appointee
- 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 examination
- To inform the Coordinator that the Advisor is satisfied with the Educator's readiness to proceed to the exam phase using the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.
- To convene and moderate the Reference Group as it reviews and evaluates the Educator's responses to examination questions, and to process the results of that review. **PLEASE NOTE: The Educator Certification**

Committee will not accept exams for reading if they have not been approved by the Reference Group and the Advisor.

- To obtain verification of ministry of the Educator when the examination or readings are completed.
- To assist the Educator in fulfilling other requirements and responsibilities established by the presbytery, which might include preparing and presenting a statement of faith, assisting in the writing of a position description of a call, and reviewing the adequacy of compensation with the responsible agency or council.
- To plan with the Educator and the presbytery an appropriate service of certification.
- To identify ways in which the Educator can overcome deficiencies identified by the ECC upon receipt of the evaluation of the Educator Certification Committee
- To function as an advocate for the certification process as a means for insuring excellence in the educational ministry of the church - especially for the presbytery's churches, pastors, and educators
- To fulfill any other requirements outlined by the presbytery

The person serving as the Educator Certification Advisor should be someone who thoroughly understands the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) system and knows both the structure and functioning of the particular presbytery in which he/she serves. It would be most helpful if the Advisor has **direct and regular access to whatever committee of presbytery carries responsibility for the certification process**. The person 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 person who serves as the Educator Certification Advisor will maintain close contact with the Coordinator and can expect support and counsel from the Coordinator throughout the process. An educational component for the online training of Certification Advisors is available at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators.

Steps Along the Path Toward Certification/Enrollment

A. Application

The entry point for the Advisor in his or her relationship with the Educator is in the **application process**, especially in evaluating credentials. Educator Certification Advisors will be expected to confer with applicants as they decide what level of certification is appropriate for them. The Advisor may also 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. In consulting with

Educators about the level of certification they should seek, please keep in mind that the validity of any certification process is the degree to which its standards are upheld. Regardless of which level of certification or enrollment the Educator seeks, both the process and the title should be honored as a measure of attainment. Advisors should be ready to press Educators to seek the level that is appropriate for them. The very fact that the Educator is open to subject his or her ministry experience and educational background to this type of evaluation is an accomplishment, and should be applauded by the Advisor, the presbytery represented, and the Session or responsible agency or council.

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 key tool is the Educational Requirements Worksheet prepared by the Educator. It should make it clear to both the Educator and the Advisor what the appropriate starting point will be. If there are doubts or if the Advisor and the Educator disagree, do not hesitate to forward the paperwork to the Coordinator for a decision. The Advisor role is to guide the Educator through the process, not to become the interpreter of standards. Defer that role to the ECC.

B. Developing A Study Plan

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. This is often a point at which great sensitivity on the part of the Advisor will be a critical requirement. Sometimes the applicant is seeking affirmation and approval of extensive experience in either academic or church settings. Many people have entered the field of Christian Education in spite of their lack of formal preparation because they were willing to respond to a critical need in a particular situation. Now, often many years later, they may feel under-appreciated because they are being asked to prepare themselves academically to do a job they have learned in "the trenches." In other instances, persons with advanced degrees in education often resist the idea that their preparation is lacking because it does not include religious education, Reformed theology, polity, and so forth. Some will, at first, deny the benefit of or the need for continuing ministry development, often citing time or other pressures. Educators know the importance of continuing education for others, but sometimes forget their own need to keep growing through academic pursuit. There are those for whom applying for certification is a way of facing career or volunteer goals in a new way. They may subconsciously be asking, "Is this the time to take a leap of faith — go back to school and get that degree? Has the time come to acknowledge the call of the church for excellence in education, and to commit myself to refining my God-given talents in order to respond to that call?"

Words of encouragement from an Advisor, or willingness to do some of the work in finding opportunities and/or funding, ability to approach Sessions or other responsible agencies or councils with the Educator to explain this call, could make all the difference both to the Educator and to the church. This is also a point at which to try to pick up signals of some **practical concerns** that may be on the mind of the Educator, for example, the **cost of the program**. If costs of continuing education seem to be a concern to the Educator, the Advisor may want to help by:

1. Identifying possible sources of funds in the presbytery or synod that can be used for continuing education for the Educator.
2. Speaking to the pastor of the church, or arranging to meet with the Session or other appropriate committee of the church, to emphasize the importance of their Educator's professional development to improving the ministry of their congregation, urging them to provide funds to defray some of the costs.

The Certification Advisor may also have a role in relationship to the Educator's Session or responsible agency or council. Its members may worry that their Educator's certification will increase the cost to the church or encourage him or her to consider leaving for a better situation. Either of these worries may make them less than enthusiastic about certification. The Advisor can stress that there are usually benefits to the church when one's staff is engaged in meaningful continuing education.

In relation to **working with an educator's Session**, there are specific requests to be made and a number of "**common sense**" rules Certification Advisor's will want to follow.

Educator Certification Advisors should:

1. Encourage the Educator to notify the Session of his/her intentions as early in the process as possible.
2. Serve as liaison/interpreter for the Session, if necessary, regarding the goals and process of certification.
3. Enlist the Session's participation in the process, encouraging them to appoint their representative to the Reference Group.
4. Enlist the Session's support in the process by encouraging them to provide adequate time and finances for Continuing Education and time for writing the examination.
5. Maintain contact with the Session's appointee to the Reference Group regarding his/her role, responsibilities, meeting times, etc.
6. Be responsible for obtaining a completed *Verification of Ministry Form* from the Session.
7. Serve as interpreter to the Session if certification/enrollment is not immediately granted and additional continuing education is required.
8. Encourage the Session to recognize the Educator's certification or enrollment in a meaningful way.

During the study phase of certification, many Educators become discouraged and are vulnerable to the temptation to drop out. Study can be a lonely process, especially when done at home in the midst of an already busy lifestyle with no colleagues with whom to share the experience. The Advisor can play a crucial role as mentor, cheerleader, and attentive friend. Please stay in touch with the Educator, set goals for work to be completed by particular dates, and check off progress with him/her.

C. Forming the Reference Group for the CCE Level

- Once pursuing certification has been determined for the particular Educator; and
- once a plan of study has been formulated; and
- when the Application Form, Educational Requirements Worksheet, transcripts and/or course syllabi, and Tentative Academic Plan (if needed) have been sent to the Coordinator; and

- following the completion of the Educator's educational requirements and the submission of the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only* it is time to work with the Educator towards the formation of the Reference Group. Instructions will be sent from the Coordinator.

The Reference Group consists of:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian Educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or agency/council to whom the Educator is responsible;
- The Educator Certification Advisor, who serves as moderator/convenor of the group;
- A representative from the appropriate committee of presbytery (if available)

Training for Reference Group members is available in an online format at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators. Certification Advisors may choose to send a link to this training experience as Reference Group members begin their service, or may use the training as part of the Groups' first gathering.

D. Working with the CCE Examination Phase

When all the educational requirements are completed, the Advisor must submit the *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*, indicating the Educator's plan and readiness to move to the examination phase. Following acceptance by the Coordinator, the Educator may move on to the final phase of examination.

When the Educator's examination is sent, the Advisor will receive a notice that will include the date by which the examination, including the report from the Reference Group, must be returned to the office in Louisville. In consultation with the Educator, the Advisor is asked to set target dates for the completion of the first draft of the examination and a meeting of the Reference Group. It is recommended that the Reference Group review the first draft of the exam several weeks prior to the deadline to allow for revisions and reworking.

E. Verification of Ministry

1. The certification process seeks to measure both academic preparation and professional or volunteer experience. For that reason, ordinarily, a person cannot be certified without at least a year's full-time experience or its equivalent as an active Christian Educator, either voluntary or by employment. PLEASE NOTE: An application may be submitted at any time (even prior to the completion of one year's ministry experience). The examination may not be requested until this experience requirement is fulfilled.

PLEASE NOTE: Ordinarily, at the time of certification/CEA, applicants for Certification as Christian Educators and Christian Education Associates must be serving in educational ministry for ten (10) or more hours per week in a church or agency of the PC (USA).

2. Determining Service and “effective performance”

The Reference Group process will be the primary means of determining effective performance of an applicant. This group consists of persons who know first-hand the service of the Educator. The examination, including an autobiographical statement and a faith statement, will furnish a framework for conversations about the educator’s ministry.

The Reference Group will write evaluations on the Educator, which will reflect their perceptions of the Educator’s effectiveness. The Educator Certification Committee regards a positive evaluation by the Reference Group as a fulfillment of the requirement for “effective performance.”

3. A *Verification of Ministry* Form will be sent to the Advisor. It is the advisor’s responsibility to have this form completed and to return it to the Coordinator with evaluation forms. In a case when this verification is not possible, the Advisor should inform the Coordinator of the situation. The ECC may grant the CCE/CEA pending future receipt of a current *Verification of Ministry* Form.

F. Tips for the Educator Certification Advisor

There are a number of resources that will be helpful to the Advisor during the examination and Reference Group phase of this process with the Educator. Forms available at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators include:

1. *Guidelines for Reference Group Meeting*
2. *General Reference Group Comments* and the *Advisor’s Summary of Evaluation Forms*
3. *CCE Guidelines for Readers*. These guidelines are used by the ECC and Independent readers to evaluate the exams and are for your information. Please be sure that the educator has followed ALL of the instructions given in the exam.

All of the evaluations and relevant supporting papers should be gathered by the Advisor and sent to the Coordinator.

G. Tips for Working with Presbytery to support Educators

Some specific ways in which the presbytery might support the certification of Christian Educators:

- If not already present, arrange for a fellowship group for the Educators of the presbytery.
- Develop minimum salary requirements for the Certified Christian Educator and those who are maintaining the Certified Associate Christian Educator level, which include cash, pension coverage, Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, etc.
- Develop and maintain a roll of Certified Educators serving within the bounds of Presbytery.
- Provide a way by which the presbytery recognizes the fact that an Educator has **begun** the certification process. This may be in the form of taking the person under care of the presbytery, or it may simply be an expression of support and concern.
- Identify sources of financial support both to help the Educator complete certification

requirements and to provide ongoing continuing education.

- Obtain and provide access to books on the *Christian Education Associate Reading List*. Consider gathering Educators together in a reading group as they study these books.
- When an Educator is about to be certified, arrange a meeting between the Educator and the Presbytery committee charged with the responsibility for care and oversight of Educators, wherein they may discuss the process, complete any other requirements of presbytery, and hear and respond to the Educator's statement of faith.
- Review the Recognition services and adapt them to be specifically meaningful to the Educator and to the presbytery.
- Make sure adequate time is allotted on the agenda when an Educator is to be certified, and plan other ways in which the presbytery can participate in the celebration of this event. Consider inviting other Educators who may not ordinarily attend presbytery to be present.
- Develop a call form or a covenant, which includes a position description and details regarding salary, continuing education and other forms of the call. Require that the appropriate committee of the presbytery submit a completed form for approval.
- Assure that the Educator has access to the appropriate mechanisms and processes within the presbytery for pastoral care and counseling per the Book of Order (G-3.0307).

H. Preparing the Educator for Examination for 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 encourage the Educator to complete the four modules of the online program *Opening Doors to Discipleship* including the review of journals, the readings, and the written material for the ECC. If the Advisor is willing to do so, it is often helpful to do an informal review of his/her written materials with the Educator prior to submitting the material to the ECC. The Advisor is also responsible to help obtain the *Verification of Ministry* information.

The Reference Group

A. Purpose of the 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 personal character.

B. Accountability of the Reference Group

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.

C. Formation of the Reference Group

It is suggested that the Educator Certification Advisor offer to meet with the Session or responsible agency or council to interpret the certification process and elicit support for their Educator once the Application Form and supplemental material (Educational Requirements Worksheet, Transcripts, etc.) have been sent to the Coordinator.

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 *Exam Readiness Form for Advisor Only*.

The Reference Group will include:

- A staff colleague (selected by the Educator). This individual should *not* be the spouse of the Educator;
- Another Christian Educator, preferably certified, who knows the Educator's work (selected by the Educator);
- Representative appointed by the Session or employing agency/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)

Training for Reference Group members is available in an online format at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators.

D. Responsibilities of the Reference Group during the Examination Phase of the Process

The following process best assures that these responsibilities are carried out:

1. Prior to Beginning Review of the Exam

Step a. – With the Educator and in consultation with other Reference Group members, select dates on which the Reference Group will meet. The first meeting of the Reference Group with the Educator is to clarify the purpose of the meeting, the role of the Reference Group in the certification process and to ask questions. Allow Reference Group members a chance to become more familiar with the process and their

expectations. Share with the Reference Group the online training module for Reference Groups.

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

Group members should receive a copy of the completed examination from the Educator a few weeks prior to the meeting date. Reference Group members will also receive from the Educator a copy of *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam*. Each member of the Reference Group is to carefully and critically review the exam, complete the *Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam* and the *General Reference Group Comments*. **It is at this stage of the examination process where an insightful, discerning critique from Reference Group members will be most helpful. Any rewrites deemed necessary at this stage may prevent rewrites to be mandated by the exam readers after submission.**

3. The Reference Group Meeting With the Educator

Step c. – Meet with the Educator, review responses from Reference Group Guidelines for Reading the Exam and the General Reference Group Comments.

The Educator Certification Advisor will convene and moderate the meeting.

Step d. – At the meeting, the Reference Group should also discuss the Educator's plans for future ministry development.

Step e. – The Reference Group may excuse the Educator if they desire, and proceed to discuss all evaluations and to decide to recommend or to not recommend certification.

Step f. – The Educator will be invited to return and will be informed of the Reference Group's decision with appropriate follow-up (i.e., parts that need to be rewritten).

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

4. Following the Reference Group Meeting with the Educator

Step g. – Following the meeting of the Reference Group, the Educator Certification Advisor will meet once more with the Educator to reflect on the entire application, examination and Reference Group process. The Advisor will then complete the evaluation form and the Educator will complete his/her Reflections on Learnings form.

Step h. – The Educator Certification Advisor will email the Summary of Educator Seeking Certification, and the Examination Evaluation Form for Advisor Only to the Coordinator.

NOTE: The Coordinator will not send the examination to readers until the Reference Group process has been completed to the satisfaction of the Advisor and the Coordinator has received the *Examination Evaluation Form for Advisor Only*.