Pennsylvania School Certification FAQs
For Working SLPs

This is a Summary of Information from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Website www.pde.state.pa.us

How do I become School-Certified in PA?

To be certified by the PA Department of Education you need the following:

American Citizenship: If you are not an American citizen, you can sign a document claiming that you intend to become an American citizen. You have six years to obtain your citizenship.

Required Coursework:

- Undergraduate: You need six semester credits of computational math, three credits of American literature, and three credits of writing. These can all be undergraduate courses, however, you have to have them.

- Graduate: You need a master's degree in communication disorders or equivalency with a total grade point average of 3.0 or higher. Your coursework must include a class in school law/IDEA regulations. "Equivalency" is determined by either the institution/university granting you the certificate of equivalency or if multiple institutions are involved, by PDE. If you have something in writing stating that you have the course work that is "equivalent" to a master's degree in SLP/Communication Disorders, include it with your application. If you do not, print out and complete PDE form 338M Letter of Equivalency for Master's Degree, request various transcripts and include an additional $40 money order for this service.

- Internship: Your training must include a 12-week, full-time internship with a grade of B or better as a speech-language pathologist (not a classroom teacher) under the supervision of an ASHA certified CCC-SLP clinician. During this experience, you will need to be evaluated twice (midterm/final) with the PDE 430 and 430A forms. These can be found on the PDE website (see below). Start documentation on the PDE 430A on the first day of your placement. Previously, placement had to be in the state of PA but recently this requirement has been adjusted. If you were placed at a school by your university and your university deemed it an "appropriate" school, then the state will accept it.

PRAXIS Exams

- You need passing scores on the state required PRAXIS exams. You need the following:
  PRAXIS I passing!! scores: Reading (172), Writing (173) and Math (172). Often, applicants will do very well on two of the three, but struggle to pass that third exam. As a result, the state is now accepting a Total Composite score of 521 as long as you have a minimum of 171 on both the Math and Reading tests and 170 on the writing.

  PRAXIS II passing scores: Fundamental Subjects: Content Knowledge (150) and Teaching Speech to Students with Language Impairments (590).

  Passing scores change periodically. If you pass the exam when you take it, but the score minimum is then increased, you will be expected to retake the exam. Scores are acceptable for five years from the date it was taken.

Five tests in all, and they are not cheap, so budget when you take them in clusters, the price is reduced. Sylvan Learning Centers in PA offer these tests by computer. They are national tests, so you can take them anywhere in the nation. Save your documentation. Note that PA does not require that you take the National Exam for Speech-Language Pathologists (NESP) exam-this is required for ASHA certification- and PA state licensure, but that is a different issue/ document than school-based certification.

Application Paperwork:

The application packet you submit must include:

- GENERAL APPLICATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA 338G. This is posted on the PDE Website: http://www.pde.state.pa.us. On this home page, scroll down to Find Documents (on the left margin) and click on Forms. This page will have a list of forms; scroll down to the form you need.

- Note that you must have a current physical exam, i.e., within 12 months of your application (if it is more than one year old, your application will be rejected). The physician must state that you have had a TB test with negative results, therefore, go in four days before your appointment and get your TB shot. Then your results can be read at your appointment. (Note: If you are pregnant you should not have this test!)
  Attach a Money Order made out to The Commonwealth of PA for $40 if in-state and $80 if out-state. This is the only form of payment accepted by the state.

- If you are a PA graduate, you will also need a College/University Verification. Form PDE 338C. This is in addition to the PDE 338G. Complete the top portion and your university clerk completes the bottom portion;

- If you did not attend graduate school in PA, you will need to include PDE 338A Applicants Prepared By Non-PA Colleges/Universities. This is in addition to the PDE 338G form. This form must be sent to your out-of-state university, completed by them, and returned to you for your packet. If you have any documentation showing that you are or were school certified in the past (expired or current), enclose copies in your application!

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In a nutshell:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you graduated from a PA school, your package will include:</th>
<th>If you graduated from a NON-PA school, your package will include:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PDE form 338G General Application with current physician’s signature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. PDE 338C College/University Verification Form partially completed. The university/institution you are mailing these materials to will complete the document.</td>
<td>3. Completed PDE 338A Applicants Prepared By Non-PA Colleges/Universities Form.</td>
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<td>4. Transcripts (check with your institution - you may not need these) showing required coursework and a master's degree. Sometimes the SLP/Communication Disorders Department will verify your coursework and grade point average for the Dept. of Education clerk so no transcript would be needed.</td>
<td>4. Evaluation paperwork from your internship experience would be a bonus. Technically, your university form covers this, but you should include your final evaluation. This is particularly useful if you have not been school-certified in the past.</td>
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<td>5. Evaluation paperwork from your internship/student teaching experience. The midterm and final PDE 430 and 430Adocuments are expected. Send originals.</td>
<td>5. Original documents showing required PRAXIS I and II test scores less than five years old.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Original documents showing required PRAXIS I and II test scores less than five years old.</td>
<td>6. Any previously issued documentation of school based certification (current or expired) from any state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Any previously issued PDE or other state documentation of school-based certification (expired is fine).</td>
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Copy everything and then send the whole packet (registered mail) to The Department of Education at the PA institution you graduated from. They review, approve and mail your application to Harrisburg. You should get your certification within four to six weeks.

Clearances:

You will need to have your Child Abuse Clearance and Criminal Records clearance for employment. These do not get mailed to the state but the school you work for will need to see these documents and keep files on record proving that you are "safe."

- **Act 151: PA Child Abuse Clearance:** download form from www.dpw.state.pa.us/ocyf/ocyfChildAbuseHistInst.asp. Cost is $10 payable to the Department of Public Welfare in the form of a certified check or money order. You must mail this form - it cannot be filed electronically and it takes about three weeks to process.

- **Act 34: PA Criminal Records Check.** This can be done on the web www.psp.state.pa.us/psp/cwp/view.asp?A=4&Q=48275 with a credit card ($10). Be sure to print out the RESPONSE, not just the invoice that shows that you have paid.

- If you have not lived in PA for the last two years, you also must obtain a **FBI criminal record check ($24).** The FBI check requires payment in the form of a certified check or money order payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Call your local police department to make an appointment to be fingerprinted. They will send in your prints. You will receive a document confirming your lack of criminal record.

Clearances are now only good for **ONE YEAR** from date of issue so these will need to be renewed annually. Keep the original forms in a "safe spot" as you will need to show these to your supervisor/school administrators when you begin employment with any PA school district.

I hope this has helped. Let me know if you have additional questions. I can be reached at 814-732-2192 or shegel@edinboro.edu.

Susan Hegel, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, PSHA Vice President of Professional Development