

160-3-3-.10 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UNIT (PLU) PROGRAM APPROVAL.

(1) **DEFINITIONS.**

(a) **Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)** – the comprehensive plan of a school system or a school that directs all educational activities and informs all educational decisions, for all programs and all funding sources, state and federal. This plan represents the school system’s comprehensive, integrated plan for school improvement. The CSIP comprises the basis of the system’s Consolidated Grant Application.

(b) **Contact hours** – actual clock hours of formal instruction received during the preparation phase of a Professional Learning Unit (PLU) activity. Such contact may also include time spent in on-line computer courses where actual contact time can be verified. Contact may also include supervised practicums that are an integral and necessary part of an instructional program. Contact hours shall not include activities required for on-the-job assessment or mastery verification or non-class time to develop or produce class assignments.

(c) **Mastery verification** - an evaluation conducted during the preparation phase [see paragraph (1)(e) below] to determine whether participants have mastered the objectives of a PLU activity. Mastery verification may be completed in lieu of on-the-job performance.

(d) **On-the-job performance** - an evaluation conducted after the preparation phase of a professional learning unit credit activity to verify that the intent of the formal instruction has been implemented on the job.

(e) **Preparation phase** - formal instructional phase for professional learning unit credit based on contact hours of instruction.

(f) **Prior approval** – the approval of the Professional Learning Advisory Committee of a school system, or its designee, for a system employee to participate in a PLU activity for the purpose of the renewal of a Georgia professional certificate or to meet the requirements for paraprofessional certification.

(g) **Professional learning** – learning opportunities that are aligned with the approved CSIP of a school or school system.

(h) **Professional Learning Advisory Committee** - a representative committee that advises and assists the system (or program/agency)_coordinator in the assessment of professional learning needs, determination of priorities, content and

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quality of activities, evaluation of the program and modification of the CSIP (in the case of a school system) and the Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Credit Plan.

(i) **Professional Learning Unit (PLU)** - unit of credit based on 10 contact hours of formal instruction or its equivalent (preparation phase) and on verification that the intent of the formal instruction has been implemented on the job (on-the-job performance phase) or by mastery verification conducted during the preparation phase.

(2) PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UNIT (PLU) CREDIT PLAN. A local school system, or any public or private agency, or private school, may submit a plan to offer professional development programs for professional learning units (PLUs) to the Department for review and approval. A local public school system, regional education service agencies (RESA) or other statewide entities approved by the Department may, through the action of their Professional Learning Advisory Committee, approve individual professional learning activities for PLU credit for paraprofessionals, teachers and administrators. All other providers of professional learning activities for PLU credit shall submit each individual credit activity/course/program separately to the Department as an addendum to their PLU Credit Plan for approval through the processes delineated in this rule. Each school system, RESA or approved statewide entity shall develop three-year professional learning unit plans. For public school systems these PLU plans will be included in the school system's CSIP. The Department shall approve all three-year plans and conduct formative assessment of their progress. This plan shall be reviewed and updated annually by the applying organization. Local public school systems shall also review and update related budgets. For public school systems, assurances as to the content and execution of such plan shall appear in the system's consolidated application submitted for approval to the Department annually on a date specified by the Department. Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Credit Plans shall include the following.

(a) A list of student goals and corresponding educational improvement practices toward which PLUs will be directed.

1. Public school system goals and improvement practices shall be based upon the annual assessed needs of system certified personnel identified through an analysis of student data, the individual personnel evaluation process, an annual evaluation of system instructional programs, or other priorities set by the local school system or mandated by the State Board of Education or state law.

2. A non-school system applicant shall present criteria and procedures for gaining prior approval from a public school system for an individual or group to participate in activities for PLUs in order to meet the requirements of (2)(a)1 above before non-school system provider shall keep documentation of such approval on file for at

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least five (5) years following the delivery of the PLU activity. Such documentation shall include an indication of which of the restrictions on earned PLUs [paragraph (4)(b) of this rule] apply to the individual for each activity

(b) Procedures for conducting both external and self-assessment of the professional learning needs of education personnel.

(c) A description of the components of each PLU activity planned for PLU credit. As a minimum, these components shall include:

1. Goals of the PLU activity.
2. A description of how the goals of this activity will affect students, particularly student achievement.
3. Competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) to be demonstrated in this PLU activity.
4. Dates for the PLU activity (or the number of days and hours per day when specific dates are not known).
5. Instructor(s) and qualifications. If specific instructors are not known, the qualifications expected of an instructor(s) of the particular activity.
6. Location(s) of the PLU activity (where applicable).
7. Strategies, e.g. lecture/demonstration, hands-on activities, field or group work, simulations, practicum.
8. On-the-job performance verification (when, who and how) or mastery verification. If mastery verification is chosen, the description shall include a rationale explaining why mastery verification is being used instead of on-the-job performance.
9. Criteria and procedures to verify that the individual has completed the preparation phase at an acceptable level and has earned PLUs.

(d) For public school participants, prior approval by the system Professional Learning Advisory Committee, or designee, shall be received before participation in any professional learning activity for which PLU credit is sought. This approval indicates that the Professional Learning Advisory Committee, or its designee, has judged the quality and content of the PLU activity to be acceptable and that the activity is aligned with either the system CSIP or the individual's school CSIP. When the public school system is the provider of a professional learning activity,

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formal approval of the activity by the Professional Learning Advisory Committee constitutes automatic “prior approval.” In the case of a non-school system provider, a prior approval form shall be obtained from each public school participant and filed as part of the PLU activity records. The form shall include such information as indicated by the Department in state guidelines for PLU credit. Only that system’s Professional Learning Advisory Committee or designee may grant prior approval for an individual from its school system to participate in a professional learning activity.

(e) Procedures of the Professional Learning Advisory Committee appointed by the local board of education or superintendent. (In the case of RESAs or other approved statewide entity; the appointing authority shall be an appropriate governing body.) The advisory committee shall, at a minimum, ensure that each approved PLU no matter its origin, i.e. school system, RESA, college, other private or public provider, or the state, has been judged by the committee to be of high quality and appropriate content and that it will enable participating personnel to contribute to their school’s annual CSIP and/or the system’s annual CSIP. The committee may place such other restrictions on programs and activities it deems appropriate for PLUs under that system’s Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Plan. Non-school system applicants are not required to organize an advisory committee.

(f) Procedures for conducting an objective on-the-job performance verification regarding the demonstration of competencies set forth in the individual or group PLU plan or procedures for conducting an objective mastery verification.

(g) Designation of a local school system or agency person to coordinate the program for PLUs.

(h) A description of records and record keeping system to document and verify recommendations for PLUs. As a minimum, records shall include:

(i) A copy of the most recently approved Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Credit Plan. In the case of public school systems, this would be the PLU credit portion of their system’s CSIP.

(ii) A copy of the letter of approval for the PLU Plan.

(iii) A list of all PLU credit activities approved by the Professional Learning Advisory Committee for school systems, RESAs and approved statewide entities. The list for other providers is of PLU credit activities approved by the Department. The list maintained by providers other than school systems, RESAs and other approved statewide entities shall include approved activities for the previous five (5) years, including the date approved by the committee (or the Department) and the professional practices and competencies to be developed in each activity.

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(iv) Non-school system providers shall also retain the original letter of approval for each PLU.

(i) Procedures for participant appeals.

(3) ALTERNATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UNIT (PLU) CREDIT PLAN. A local public school system, or an individual school through the system office of the Superintendent of Schools, may submit for approval an alternative to the Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Credit Plan. The primary purpose of this option is to encourage the development of alternatives to the state definition of Professional Learning Unit (PLU) [see paragraph (1)(i) above] and to encourage the development of professional learning that is designed to more directly meet high standards of school improvement and student success through professional learning. At a minimum, the alternative plan shall include the following:

(a) If on behalf of an individual school, a cover letter from the local Board of Education and the Superintendent in support of the school's alternative plan.

(b) A list of student goals and corresponding educational improvement practices toward which the alternative practices will be directed. These goals and improvement practices shall be based at least upon the annual assessed needs of certified personnel and paraprofessionals identified through an analysis of student data, the individual personnel evaluation process, and an annual evaluation of system/school instructional programs.

(c) Address each of the "Georgia Standards for Professional Learning." [adopted November 2003, see www.k12.ga.us] This may be in the form of current practices in the school/system that address a standard, or the school's/system's mid/long-range plan to address a standard.

(d) A description of policies and procedures for awarding PLUs.

(e) A description of records and record keeping system to document and verify recommendations for PLUs.

(f) Procedures for participant appeals.

(g) A rationale for how this alternative will benefit students and the system/school staff.

(4) PLUs. The minimum for one PLU activity shall be 10 contact hours (one PLU). Training activities for more than one PLU shall be in multiples of 10 contact hours. Partial PLUs or fractions of PLUs may not be awarded. No more than eight

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contact hours of instruction shall be conducted per day with a maximum of four PLUs earned per week.

(a) **Exception to Contact Hours.** An exception shall be any single special requirement enacted into state statute for renewing a professional certificate. Such special requirements may earn PLU credit either through contact instructional hours as defined above or through the development and defense of a portfolio of material demonstrating the competencies defined in the special requirement and/or such other evidence as may be required in the specific legislation. The number of PLUs for a special requirement will be negotiated between the Department and the state legislature or its designee. PLUs under this exception shall meet all other requirements described in this rule. Portfolio development and defense shall not earn PLUs in any other circumstance.

(b) **Restrictions on Earned PLUs.** PLUs shall be earned by an individual only in the following four categories:

1. Field(s) of Certification
2. School/System/Individual Improvement Plan
3. Annual Personnel Evaluation
4. State/Federal Requirements

(c) **Alternative Weighted PLUs.** In order to encourage the direct integration of knowledge and skills gained from professional learning experiences into classroom or work place practice and to emphasize the expectation that new knowledge and skill will impact students, the following PLU weight system is offered to (not required of) public school systems as an add-on to their Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Credit Plan.

1. Standard PLU credit (10 contact hours) will earn one (1) PLU.
2. Evidence of the use of the professional learning in the classroom/work site will earn two (2) PLUs.
3. Evidence of the use of the professional learning in the classroom/work site and student impact linked to the professional learning activity will earn three (3) PLUs.

This alternative weighted PLU option is not required of school systems but is suggested to encourage system employees to make the most of their professional learning experiences. A school system may choose to implement paragraphs (c)1

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and 2 alone. No school within a school system or an individual within a school system may choose this alternative unless the school system has adopted it. If a school system chooses to adopt this weighted system, criteria for what will constitute “evidence,” procedures for collecting such evidence and procedures for recording weighted PLUs shall be included in the Professional Learning Unit (PLU) Credit Plan for approval by the Department. This alternative is not available to paraprofessionals, nor is it available to non-school system certified teachers or administrators.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167(a)(3); 20-2-182(h); 20-2-204; 20-2-210; 20-2-217; 20-2-230; 20-2-231(c); 20-2-232.

Adopted: November 13, 2003

Effective: December 8, 2003