

In November 2014, the Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB) informed certificate holders that plastic cards, produced as proof of the annual practice fee being paid and certification status, would no longer be issued and that *Learn* magazine would no longer be printed and mailed. Both will still be accessible online through the TRB website. The changes will be beneficial from a child safety, cost-saving and environmental perspective. The TRB received both positive comments on the changes and some expressions of concern. The following question and answer format provides additional information that addresses the concerns raised.

**Q1. What is the purpose of the regulatory structure?**

A. The regulatory structure of the teaching profession in BC consists of separate and distinct entities: the Director of Certification, the Commissioner for Teacher Regulation, the BC Teachers' Council, the Disciplinary and Professional Conduct Board, and the Independent School Teaching Certificate Standards Committee. Their work is guided by a legislative mandate (i.e. the *Teachers Act*) to ensure that educators who hold a BC teaching certificate meet and maintain the standards of competence and conduct required to keep students safe and foster public trust and confidence in the teaching profession. A BC teaching certificate ensures that the holder is well-educated and prepared for working with children in BC. BC certificate holders play a critical role in the intellectual, emotional and physical development of BC's children and spend more time with their clients than professionals in any other occupation. Since parents, and the public as a whole, entrust their children to the care of certificate holders for a lengthy period of time, it is important that standards are upheld and that those who continue to meet and maintain them are held in the high esteem they deserve. You can find out more about the [regulatory structure](#) on the TRB website.

**Q2. What does the Teacher Regulation Branch do?**

A. The Teacher Regulation Branch (TRB), part of the Ministry of Education, administers the regulatory responsibility for the teaching profession in British Columbia on behalf of the regulatory entities by assessing applicants for certification, evaluating teacher education programs, issuing teaching certificates and reviewing and enforcing standards for certificate holders.

**Q3. What is the Online Registry and what information is on it?**

A. To ensure that the public is well served by the teaching profession, only those who hold a valid BC teaching certificate in good standing are permitted to teach in BC's K-12 public and independent school systems. The [online registry](#) is the most accurate and up-to-date method to use to confirm a certificate holder's current certification status. The online registry provides names of certificate holders, certification status, a record of any certificate suspension or cancellation, and a record of any disciplinary agreements or decisions. It is, therefore, a reliable source of information to better protect children in BC's education system. The online registry has existed since 2007 when it was created by the *Teaching Profession Act*. The current *Teachers Act* stipulates that the Director of Certification must establish and maintain the registry. It is publicly available on the TRB website.

**Q4. How is the safety of children better protected by not issuing teacher cards?**

A. The information contained on the cards is only accurate at the time that the data is drawn from the TRB database. The cards can be used as confirmation of the annual fee being paid, but they are not an accurate indication of a person's certificate status after that date. Although the status of many certificate holders will not change in a school year, some may see their certificates suspended and/or cancelled because, for example, they failed to authorize a criminal record check or are the focus of a discipline matter. If a certificate is suspended or cancelled,

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the holder is unable to practice. This is not reflected on the card. The change to eliminate the distribution of teacher cards will encourage certificate holders, employers, and the public to use the online registry to gain more accurate information on individuals' certification status. Please note that the TRB invited feedback on the Ministry's intent to make changes to the cards from a number of education partners, including the BC Teachers' Federation, the Federation of Independent School Associations, and the BC Principals' and Vice Principals' Association. All of the partners who provided feedback supported the change.

**Q5. Why are you changing the format of the teacher cards?**

A. The intention of the change is to provide a more efficient way for certificate holders to check that the annual fee has been paid. In addition, the availability of confirmation of payment information online eliminates the cost to the TRB of producing and mailing the plastic card, the letterhead to which the card is adhered, and the envelopes. Certificate holders will have the option to log into the [Certificate Holders' Area](#) to print the information (which will include a coloured, wallet-size card), if they choose.

**Q6. What do certificate holders receive for paying the annual practice fee? What are the funds used for?**

A. The \$80 annual practice fee collected by the Teacher Regulation Branch from certificate holders is used to support the regulatory structure. As mentioned above, the structure is in place to ensure that certificate holders are not only well-educated, suitable and prepared for working with children in BC, but continue to meet and maintain the standards of competence and conduct.

**Q7. Will certificate holders see a reduction in the annual practice fee because teacher cards and *Learn* won't be printed and mailed?**

A. No. Even with the change in the format of the cards and the magazine, the annual practice fees collected from certificate holders do not fully cover the operating costs of the regulatory system. Other regulated professionals in British Columbia are charged more for their annual practice fee. For example, registered nurses and physical therapists pay over \$400 to the College of Registered Nurses of BC and the College of Physical Therapists of BC respectively, pharmacists pay over \$500 to the College of Pharmacists of BC, dental technicians pay \$650 to the College of Dental Technicians of BC, and accountants pay \$900 to the Certified General Accountants Association of BC.

**Q8. How will my employer be able to check that my certificate is still valid?**

A. Employers can find a certificate holder's status in the online registry. They can also check the status of any certificate holder they employ through the secure online Employers' Area. Both are accessible from the TRB website.

**Q9. How will I know when my employer has remitted the annual practice fee on my behalf?**

A. Certificate holders employed in the BC public or independent school system are payroll-deducted in the spring. In the summer, after the Financial Services Unit of the TRB has reconciled all fee payments, the TRB will email the payroll-deducted certificate holders to notify them that an acknowledgement of payment is available through the Certificate Holders' Area on the TRB website. Individual certificate holders who pay their annual practice fee directly to the TRB throughout the year will also be able to access an acknowledgement from the Certificate Holders' Area. Certificate holders who log into the Certificate Holders' Area will be able to view and/or print the acknowledgement letter, which will include a coloured, wallet-size card. Both will show proof that the annual practice fee has been paid.

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**Q10. Many businesses and/or retailers require proof of being a certificate holder before they will offer discounts. If certificate holders don't have a teacher card, how can they receive the discounts?**

A. A letter that acknowledges that the annual fee has been paid, which will include a wallet-size card, will be available in the Certificate Holders' Area. Certificate holders then have the option to print the information if they choose. Proof of certification status is easily accessible in the online registry, which could be shown, for example, from a tablet or smartphone for those who require it. In addition, certificate holders who are employed in the public or independent school system and who are issued ID cards may be able to show this identification to retailers.

**Q11. I heard about the changes but didn't receive any correspondence about them. Will any other information be distributed about the changes?**

A. A notice about the changes to the cards will also be included in the fee notice correspondence that is sent out from the TRB in the spring of 2015. Please log into the Certificate Holders' Area and update any contact information in your profile, including your email address, to ensure that you receive future correspondence from the TRB. In addition, we suggest that you may want to add the following TRB email addresses to your Safe Senders, Safe Recipients or Trusted Addresses list in your email client (such as Microsoft Outlook or Gmail): **trb.no-reply@gov.bc.ca**, **trb.certificateservices@gov.bc.ca**, and **trb.certification@gov.bc.ca**. Adding these addresses will help to ensure you receive emails containing notices and news that could affect you as a BC educator.

**Q12. What is the purpose of *Learn* magazine?**

A. The magazine serves as a means of connecting with all teachers, education partners, pre-service teachers in teacher education programs and parents to outline the role of the regulatory structure and to support the transparency requirements under the *Teachers Act*. *Learn* aims to engage certificate holders to build a shared professional identity and to ensure they are aware of current standards and other professional matters. It is also a vehicle to share Ministry initiatives and to showcase educational best practice and innovation.

**Q13. Why are discipline outcomes published?**

A. The purpose of publishing discipline outcomes is to enhance the transparency of the processes and outcomes with respect to complaints and reports made about certificate holders. Publishing also serves to articulate the standards expected of certificate holders and provides the public with the confidence that educators who fail to meet the standards for educators are held accountable.

**Q14. The ads in the magazine for educational field trips, resources and programs were helpful. Could there be a column in the magazine that offers this type of information?**

A. The practice of carrying advertisements in magazines for certificate holders was initiated at the previous BC College of Teachers, which was not a part of government. The Teacher Regulation Branch is a branch of the Ministry of Education; therefore, commencing with the winter 2014 issue of *Learn* magazine, we no longer carry advertisements to ensure that our communication vehicles align with government policy and direction.

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