

Webinar: 2/27/2026 – FAQs about Reading Specialist Programs

Questions from the webinar:

1. What counts toward the 105 hours? Do clinical experience and/or practicum hours outside of the school count toward the hours? [The 105 hours required for those with specific Instructional I certifications \(PK-4, ESL PK-12, Foreign Language PK-12, Grades 4-8, Special Education PK-12\) must be completed in a school setting \(LEA, other school entities\). These hours can be completed over time, not consecutively, and during the summer but must be completed in a school setting.](#)
2. There's a lot of talk about the mentor and "in a school"--What about practicums (clinic) that are outside the school? [Out-of-school clinics are not considered Stage 4 experiences. They may be used in Stage 3 experiences.](#)
3. Is a stage 3 required? [We will work with those in the field to discuss how Stage 3 can be met.](#)

PDE 430/Supervision and Mentor

1. Can the university supervisor complete the PDE 430? Someone trained to do the PDE 430? [The university supervisor or a university approved alternative can complete the PDE 430 for Reading Specialists.](#)
2. Sorry if this is a dumb question but is this NEW or is this how it's always been that Reading Specialist is Instructional I? I feel like I've been under the understanding for the past 30 years that it required a bachelor's degree first and then you could pursue this cert. [Reading Specialist has always been an Instructional I certificate. Reading Specialist programs can be undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, or Experience-Based Certificate \(EBC\).](#)
3. You mentioned they could "work alongside" a reading specialist and they could serve as the supervisor who would complete the PDE 430. Does this mean they don't need a mentor AND supervisor as separate roles like other Instructional Is? Sorry if I missed this. [Reading Specialist candidates, like other Instructional I candidates, need to have a mentor and a supervisor, unless they are on EBC \(they would only need a supervisor\).](#)
4. I am curious - In the email that we got, it said, "Historically, PDE's policy has been to not permit 100% online supervision..." I have never seen this policy anywhere. Can you help me understand why I never knew this? [Chapter 354 has been interpreted by PDE as not allowing for 100% online supervision. It is now clearly stated on our website. Please see \[Educator Preparation: Professional Education and Teacher Quality | Department of Education | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania\]\(#\) website. At the website go to "Approved Program Policies" and see "On-line Supervision."](#)
5. What exactly is an add-on? [Educators currently holding a valid Pennsylvania Instructional certificate may add subject areas by passing the appropriate content tests and applying in TIMS. Certification areas that may not be added via testing are Special Education \(all areas\), Cooperative Education, Health and Physical Education, and Reading Specialist. Educators currently holding a valid Pennsylvania Supervisory certificate may add a single area Supervisory certificate, excluding special education, by passing the current content test.](#)

6. Do the coops need to have a specific certification to be the mentor for the student teaching?
 - (2) Cooperating teachers trained by the preparation program faculty and who have the following:
 - (i) The appropriate professional educator certification.
 - (ii) At least 3 years of satisfactory certificated teaching experience.
 - (iii) At least 1 year of certificated teaching experience in the school entity where the student teacher is placed.
7. Is there language available that distinguishes the expectations/roles of a cooperating teacher/mentor and a university supervisor? Cooperating teachers mentor, observe, and contribute to the learning of the candidate. University supervisors are expected to grade the candidate in their completion of coursework, observe, and complete PDE 430s.
8. So, for folks pursuing this at the post-bacc or graduate level, do they need a mentor teacher AND a supervisor? Like we do a clinical practicum that is overseen by our clinical faculty who serve as the supervisor. But no mentor teachers in the traditional sense. Yes, at the post-bacc or graduate level candidates must be overseen by both a mentor and a supervisor. The only exception is if the candidate is enrolled in an EBC program.
9. In the Reading specialist guidelines, it defines Supervised this way (word-for word): face to face and/or virtual synchronous and/or asynchronous observations of candidates working directly with students. This is very confusing to me. This is on page 3. Supervision/observation in a brick-and-mortar school should be done face-to-face. If a candidate is placed 50% in a virtual cyber or an approved cyber charter, observation/supervision may be done virtually.

Out-of-State/Bordering State Questions

1. If a candidate has a PA certificate but teaches in a bordering state, can they complete the practicum in the bordering state and earn RS cert in PA...without a waiver? They would need a waiver for an over 50% out-of-state placement. Or is the waiver necessary to complete practicum hours out of state even with PA initial cert? Yes, the waiver is needed for completing a certificate outside of Pennsylvania even with prior PA certificate.
2. Can you provide clarity on an out-of-state student completing the program online. Are they able to take all the courses online with the exception of student teaching? An out-of-state student can complete an on-line program. Student teaching, however, cannot be completed online and out-of-state, unless a 100% waiver is granted. In the coming future, 100% waivers may only be approved for border states and extenuating circumstances (military relocation, illness of family member, etc.).
3. Relating to out of state folks doing Stage 4 in PA, they still need an initial PA Instructional I though, right? (Assuming it's a post-bacc RS program). Reading Specialist is an Instructional I certificate. It can be a candidate's first certificate.

4. Can you explain what you meant when you said they could request a waiver for a border state. [Candidates in an approved program can request a 100% waiver for placement in a border state \(within 2 hours or so of the EPP\)](#)

Undergraduate/Adding the Reading Specialist/Dual Programs

1. If we wanted to do an undergraduate RS program, could we do a double major (or a minor?) where they split the ST and do 6 weeks ERCH placement and 6 weeks Rdg. Spec? [Yes.](#)
2. But if you are working on PK-4 and reading specialist at the same time as an undergrad, could you do a split placement of 6 weeks and 6 weeks? [Yes.](#)
3. So then if they don't have an Instructional I, then the RS would still need to address the 9-credit special education and 3 credits ELL? [Yes. Reading Specialist is an Instructional I certificate. All certificates need to meet Chapter 49 guidelines.](#)
4. Can a person add the reading specialist certification by taking & passing the PRAXIS? [No. It is an exception and cannot be adding on by testing.](#) Adding certifications by testing is an option for several initial certs. This may be the source of some of the ideas that reading specialist could only be a post-bacc. [Other exceptions include Special Education, Cooperative Education, American Sign Language, Health and Physical Education. All of these could be initial certificates, delivered at the undergraduate, post-bacc, and EBC levels.](#)
5. Can a supervisor observe videos of in person instruction for the 430? [No.](#)
6. I am confused by what you said earlier regarding Instr. 1's having a 6-week requirement for stage 4 experience (i.e., student teaching), and the K-12 Framework requirement for a 12-week full-time stage 4 experience. See [Educator Preparation: Professional Education and Teacher Quality | Department of Education | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#) website. At the website see the "Approved Program Policies," and at this section, see "Stage Four Field Experiences Policy for Dual Instructional I Certification and Additional Instructional I Certifications."