

**Option 9 Frequently Asked Questions for Principals and Superintendents**

1. What is the Option 9 program?

Option 9 is a new alternative route to certification created by legislature that allows a candidate to complete a bachelor’s degree and initial teacher certification in a three-year period while working in a non-teaching position in a school district. This is the only alternative route that does not require a bachelor’s degree for admission (KDE (Kentucky Department of Education), 2022). This program is designed to meet the needs of the participating district and may include an emphasis in developing a teacher pipeline for the district's students, improving the numbers of underrepresented populations among the district's workforce, or focusing on increasing the number of teachers with certification areas that are in high demand.

1. How is this program different from a traditional undergraduate education program?

In the Option 9 program, candidates must complete similar requirements as traditional undergraduate education. The difference is that candidates will be employed in a partnering school district working as a paraeducator while they complete their degree and obtain a teaching license.

1. What are the district’s responsibilities for this program?

The district is responsible for the following:

* Employ the candidate in a residency or paraprofessional program within the school district for the duration of the program as long as the candidate is making successful progress in the Option Nine program
* Periodically releasing the candidate to complete required observation hours during the school day
* Ensure the availability of funding for each candidate for the duration of the candidate’s participation in the program as long as the candidate is making successful progress in the Option Nine program
* Ensure at least one (1) year of employment provides hands-on experience in the area in which certification is being sought
* Report mentoring hours yearly when employment recertification is sought from Option 9 Director
* Continue this partnership until the district’s employed candidates for Option 9 certification complete the program or are no longer employed by the district
* If the school district determines to end the partnership, the district shall no longer accept new candidates into the program

1. Who qualifies as a mentor?

The mentoring teacher should have:

* A valid teaching certificate for the grade and subject in which the Option Nine candidate will receive certification;
* At least two (2) years of teaching experience; and
* Time available to provide adequate mentoring to the candidate.
* The school district will be responsible for compensating mentors for their time spent working with the candidate(s).

1. How does a district choose a mentor?

When selecting mentors, the district will give first preference to a teacher who demonstrates:

* Effective classroom management techniques that promote an environment conducive to learning;
* Best practices for delivery of instruction;
* Knowledge and use of multiple forms of assessment;
* Mastery of the content knowledge or subject matter in which the Option Nine candidate will receive certification;
* Aptitude and ability to contribute to the mentoring and development of a candidate enrolled in the Option Nine program; and
* Creation of a learning environment that values and builds upon the diverse backgrounds of students.

1. How many mentoring hours must the candidate complete?

The candidate must complete 50 mentoring hours per year for the first two years. Verification of these hours will be submitted when the candidate recertifies their employment.

1. Do districts choose who participates in the Option 9 program at the district level?

Yes. Candidates can be selected by the district and recommended to the university. Candidates must submit employment verification before they are on the Option 9 track here at UC (University of the Cumberlands).

1. What if the school district decides to cancel the partnership?

Please notify the Option 9 Director to cancel the partnership. Once the partnership is canceled, the university will no longer accept candidates from the district.

1. Who should the candidate’s mentors be during their final school year at UC in the Option 9 program?

During the Fall or Spring semester before student teaching (the capstone semester), the candidate will be enrolled in EDUC 331 and EDUC 430/432 (for IECE: IECE 431, 434, and 436). These are the candidate’s capstone courses. The candidate will be placed with the cooperating teacher(s) they will student teach under during this year. During this year, those cooperating teacher(s) will serve as the candidate’s mentor(s). Candidates will be required to complete observation hours with trained cooperating teacher(s) during the capstone semester.

The district can handle observation hours during the capstone semester one of two ways:

1. Release the candidate to complete required observation hours during that semester, but require the candidate to serve as a paraeducator in their current position
2. Allow the candidate to work as a paraeducator under the assigned cooperating teacher(s)

During the Fall or Spring semester after the capstone semester, the candidate’s final semester at UC, candidates will student teach under their cooperating teacher(s). Candidates will be required to work exclusively with these cooperating teacher(s) until student teaching is complete.

1. May the district select cooperating teachers for the candidate’s final year?

Yes. The district may select the cooperating teacher(s) according to [16 KAR 5:040 (Section 1)](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/kar/titles/016/005/040/). The district must notify the Option 9 Director when the cooperating teacher(s) are selected. The cooperating teacher(s) must be selected before the candidate begins their capstone semester. The Option 9 Director will work with the district to ensure that the cooperating teacher is trained and selected before the beginning of the capstone semester.

1. What does student teaching look like during the candidate’s final school year?

During the Fall or Spring semester after the capstone semester, candidates will student teach under their cooperating teacher(s). Candidates will be required to work exclusively with these cooperating teacher(s) until student teaching is complete. The candidate will still be required to fulfill duties as an aide in your district during this time, but those duties may be slightly altered, as the candidate is expected to meet all student teaching requirements.

1. Is the district required to hire the candidate after they complete the Option 9 program?

No. The school district is not obligated to hire the candidate after they complete the program.

1. Who should I reach out to if I have questions regarding the Option 9 program?

Please contact Dr. Sheena Lawson ([sheena.lawson@ucumberlands.edu](mailto:sheena.lawson@ucumberlands.edu)) for questions about partnerships and the Option 9 program.