

### INTRODUCTION

The PECS portal ([pecsconnect.org](https://pecsconnect.org)) will allow teachers to apply for certification, track contact hours, and renew certificates through completely digital processes. This user guide will provide basic pointers for both current and new certifications. Details related to certification requirements can be found in the PECS manual, which is available on the SCACS website and accessible in PECS Connect.

### FIRST TIME ACCOUNT CREATION

Invitations to apply for PECS Connect certification are made through the school administration:

- Your school administrator will communicate with you regarding the PECS process. This initial communication will alert you to future emails from PECS.
- Your administrator will either provide your school email address to the PECS office or invite you to create an account through the school dashboard.
- You will receive an invitation from PECS to create an account (check spam folder if necessary).
- As you enter the PECS portal, the system will require you to create an account using your personal email address and a password; the certification will follow the teacher, so using a personal email allows portability should a teacher move to a different school.

### EXISTING CERTIFIED TEACHERS

If you are already a certified teacher at a SCACS school, basic steps will allow the PECS office to verify your certification without going through the initial process.

- As an existing certificate-holder, your administrator has sent your information to PECS.
- After receiving a general informative email from your school, PECS will send the account invitation. The invitation will include a school code that ties you to your current institution.
- Once you create your account with a personal email and password, you will be directed to complete the profile page. Please complete this in its entirety before moving on.
- In the dashboard, select “Add Existing Certificate”
- After appropriate information is verified, the PECS office will approve your certificate which will be available as a PDF in the portal. The renewal date attached to your current certificate will remain unchanged.
- Existing certificate holders have already paid certification fees, so no financial transaction will be required until renewal time.

## NEW CERTIFICATE APPLICATIONS

Teachers seeking certification for the first time should work through their school's administration.

- The administrator will send an account creation invitation to the teacher through their school email account.
- The teacher will be prompted to create an account using a personal email address and password.
- After completing the user profile, the user should select “New Certification Application.”
- Before beginning the process, collect pertinent information—education, experience, and transcript.
- The next window will allow the user to select the requested certificate, enter college information (including dates attended, degree, and major/minor), upload transcripts, and record experience (school, address, dates, position, and total years of experience).
- Please follow all instructions carefully and complete the appropriate fields. For the experience section, please keep the descriptions simple. The most important information needed is the total number of years of experience; additional information can always be requested if needed.
- Assuming all information is entered correctly and all fields are completed, the system will take you to the payment page. With Stripe, the teacher can pay the certification fee using various payment options.
- The PECS office will validate the application and either approve the certificate or request additional information.
- A digital copy of the certificate will be available in the user account and can be printed if desired.

## RENEWAL PROCESS

Once the certificate is approved, teachers will be able to track contact hours and renew certification digitally.

- From the dashboard, you can access the renewal page in one of two ways—(1) select the “view” icon of your current certificate which opens a window with a “submit renewal hours of this certificate” button OR (2) Select “renewals” in the left menu bar and then select “view” for that certificate.
- The renewal page reminds you of the needed hours required for your certificate and keeps track of the total hours submitted so that the user can easily assess progress.
- To add hours, select the “Add Renewal Hours” button. A new window will ask if you are adding contact hours or semester hours.
- For contact hours, enter the session date, length, title, and category. For a teacher’s convention or other extended conference events, enter the last date of the event, the total hours of sessions you attended (such as 10), the name of the convention for session title, and a description such as “various speakers” for session instructor. Upload the PDF document or JPEG that verifies your attendance and select save.

- For semester hours, enter the date, number of hours, course name, and institution that provided the course. Semester hours require transcript verification which can be uploaded using the “choose file” button.
- User Hint: If you use your phone’s browser to log in to PECS Connect, the “choose file” option will allow you to select a photo from your library, take a photo, or choose a file. *Using a phone and taking a picture may be the quickest and simplest way to upload your forms.*
- After you save the renewal information, the renewal dashboard will show submitted semester hours and submitted contact hours. The approval will read as “pending” until the PECS office verifies and approves that the continuing education qualifies.
- When all required contact hours have been completed, the user can select “Add Renewal App” to renew their certificate. Changes such as upgrading the level or adding titles and endorsements can be requested at this time. The updated certificate will appear in the user dashboard once the PECS office approves the renewal and the fee has been paid.

## **SCHOOL TRANSFER**

PECS-certified teachers who transfer to another school that utilizes the PECS platform can change their school affiliation through a mutual request-accept process. To accomplish the transfer, either a school may request the transfer and a teacher accept or a teacher may request the transfer and the school accept. The transfer may also occur by contacting the PECS office.