

RI Department of Education (RIDE) RICERT TA Fact Sheet – March 2008

What is RICERT TA? It is a part of the RI Teacher Certification (RICERT) system related to teacher assistants (TAs). RIDE has established this computer-based system to track the qualifications, assignments & professional development (PD) of district/educational program personnel, including TAs.

Why was the RICERT TA system established? State & federal requirements make it necessary for RIDE & school districts/educational programs to ensure that all personnel, including TAs, are qualified & that they participate in ongoing PD. This system is an effective & efficient way for maintaining data on meeting these requirements at the local & state level as required by law. RICERT TA is being implemented in all districts, collaboratives, charter schools, state operated programs & non-public schools for students with special needs.

How does the system operate? This computer-based system has been used in RI with teachers for some time. It was simplified for use with TAs in 2006-07. Here is how it works.

1. Each district/program initiates system use for each TA it employs, working with TAs to confirm key information on a TA Profile.
2. After confirming the TA Profile, each TA completes a qualification worksheet.
3. The district/program verifies each TA's qualifications. For currently employed TAs, this information is already on file locally & is easy to verify. Information is added for new hires at the time of employment.
4. Each year, the district/program confirms each TA's assignment/where the TA is working & position funding.
5. Each TA establishes a PD portfolio within the system. As each TA completes PD, the TA enters this information into this computer-based system. The TA identifies the nature of the PD, key learnings, & how the PD applies to his/her job assignment. TAs can also indicate PD interests on which they would like additional PD. If the TA so desires, he/she can add information on PD they have taken in the past (prior to 2006-07) & thereby establish a comprehensive individual PD portfolio. This portfolio will always be in place through the RICERT TA system for them to add to as desired. Even if the TA leaves the district/program, he or she will be able to access the portfolio from a computer – in another district, from home, etc.

What are benefits of the RICERT TA system to the state, to the district/program & to TAs?

1. **RIDE & school districts/programs** have ready access to a simple, efficient & more accurate method for collecting, maintaining & reporting TAs' data for both documentation & planning purposes, e.g., for monitoring legal requirements, completing reports, & planning PD for TAs & those with whom TAs work.
2. Through the system, **individual TAs**:
 - Receive an official RIDE "Statement of Qualifications" verifying that the TA is qualified in accordance with state & federal law. The system generates this statement & emails to each TA. TAs can download from this computerized system additional copies of this Statement at any time.
 - Have a simple & efficient way to maintain their personal profiles & qualification information.
 - Have an easy-to-use resource to identify & communicate TA PD interests to their building, district/ program & the state that will hopefully lead to more TA PD opportunities, particularly at the local level.
 - Have a PD portfolio that can be a useful resource to TAs should they decide to seek another position or to further their own professional growth. For example, the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) has a portfolio review process that provides an opportunity for CCRI students to get credit for "prior learning" including PD that they take prior to enrolling in CCRI. RIDE staff worked with CCRI to align RICERT TA PD reporting with the CCRI portfolio elements where feasible so that RICERT TA information can be a foundation on which to build a CCRI portfolio.
 - ALL have an email address & access to a computer. That is, system operation necessitates that districts/programs make sure that each TA has an email address (either their own or one assigned by the district/program) & access to a computer. Email addresses for TAs provide a means for districts/programs & for RIDE to expand communication directly with TAs.

What are resources to support RICERT TA implementation? The RICERT TA Manual & various supporting resources are available on the TA Website at <http://www.ritap.org/ta> on the Resources webpage.

For more information, locally, contact the TA contact in your district/program. You can find out who this person is by going to www.ritap.org/ta & clicking on Networking. At RIDE, contact the Office of Educator Quality & Certification – Karen Cooper, Karen.cooper@ride.ri.gov, 222-4694, or Charlotte Diffendale, Charlotte.Diffendale@ride.ri.gov, 222-8808.