

**2026-2028
NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**PROFESSIONAL
GROWTH
HANDBOOK**

**GUIDELINES FOR SALARY LANE CHANGE
REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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Important dates to remember if you are changing lanes!!

2026-27 school year dates for lane changes:	
IMPORTANT date:	Why this date is IMPORTANT:
<i>November 1, 2026</i>	Unit A and Unit B members, please submit your intent to make a lane change : for Unit A, no later than November 1, 2026, for lane changes effective September 1, 2027; and effective July 1, 2027, for Unit B.
<i>April 1, 2027</i>	No equivalency credit applications will be accepted after this date. Equivalency experience must have ended before this date. Submit as a single PDF.
<i>May 1, 2027</i>	Last day PDF lane change applications (including cover sheet checklist) may be submitted to the PGC for review to qualify for a fall 2027 lane change. Send the single PDF to your building rep as an attachment (include all Equivalency credit materials in the single PDF). <i>*Print the signed cover sheet and submit this to your building rep.</i> **To be considered for a lane change for 2027/2028, you MUST submit a PDF with a completed cover sheet by this deadline, whether or not you still have courses to complete in the summer.
<i>August 31, 2027</i>	All coursework MUST BE completed for the September lane change.
<i>October 31, 2027</i>	All original transcripts MUST BE received by the Professional Growth Council District Coordinators: Sigrid Methot- Elementary Schools Luke Darling- High Rock, Pollard, and High School

Completed equivalency credit applications and lane change packets may be submitted earlier than the deadlines listed above. Please contact your building PGC representative with any questions.

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PROFESSIONAL GROWTH COUNCIL REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Professional Growth Council (PGC) is composed of representatives from each of Needham's Public Schools. The primary purpose of the PGC is to review graduate credit documentation, consider Equivalency Credit Applications, grant equivalency credit when deemed appropriate, and substantiate documentation for salary lane changes submitted by Unit A staff members to the PGC Building Representative. The Council is empowered to grant equivalency credit, but NOT graduate credit. Staff should be aware that courses, workshops, and other endeavors awarding PDPs may not automatically receive equivalency credits. PDPs are units for re-licensure. They may or may not fulfill Needham's equivalency requirements. The council strongly recommends that staff members direct questions to the PGC before submitting an application for equivalency approval. Course approval through Human Resources does not automatically mean approval by the PGC for graduate credit or equivalency credit. Please refer to the criteria outlined on pages 7-17 for credit approval criteria concerning the lane change process.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH COUNCIL 2026-2027*

Alexandra McNeil	Administration
Luke Darling	Co-Coordinator of HS and Middle
Sigrid Methot	Co-Coordinator of Elementary
Beth Avery	Broadmeadow
Juliet Slotnick	Eliot
Abigail Berry	High School
Richard Ayache	High School
Geoff Watts	SWES
Sigrid Methot	Newman
Luke Darling	Mitchell
Christine Leete	Pollard
Lisa Mancino	Pollard
Luke Darling	High Rock

The Professional Growth Council will meet once per month.

**APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITIES
FOR LANE CHANGE APPLICATIONS**

Each staff member is responsible for identifying all requirements for a salary lane change. The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and the PGC Building Representatives are willing to help and advise interested staff regarding Professional Growth rules and procedures. When considering a lane change, it is strongly recommended that Unit A members meet with their PGC representative early in the school year to review the lane change requirements.

All Applicants are required to complete the [Commitment Attestation](#), print their receipt, and add it to their lane change application PDF, right behind the cover page.

All lane change PDFs will be submitted as a single PDF with signatures and equivalency credit materials included. Directions for how to accomplish this in preview can be found [HERE](#). Here is a video for [virtual signing](#).

Staff members will send the single PDF through email, as an attachment (please do not share), to your building rep.

REMEMBER:

- Check DUE DATES and make sure all paperwork and documentation are passed in on time.
- Make sure that all graduate and equivalency credits have been earned and are being used within 10 years. Use your oldest credits first.
- Check the limit on the number of equivalency credits that may be used for each lane change and what you have used in previous lane changes.
- When applying for equivalency credits, group them in 15 or 30-hour increments, if possible, and submit them as soon as possible to your PGC Representative for Council consideration and approval.
- MAKE A COPY OF EVERYTHING FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS. Make sure the copy includes all appropriate signatures.
- Staff members moving to the Master's or Doctorate level **do need** to submit a Lane Change Letter of Intent and a Lane Change Application by the May deadline with the conferred degree.. These lane changes follow the same procedures as all other lane changes.

FIRM DEADLINES FOR LANE CHANGES

- By November 1:

Letters of Intent for all lane changes, including Master's and Doctorate levels, must be submitted electronically. To submit electronically, you need to access the Google Form link located on the NPS website under the Human Resources Department.

*****No Letter of Intent submitted after November 1 will be accepted.**

See your building representative if you have questions about your current salary lane (you will need to know this information to complete your Letter of Intent).

After completion of your electronic Letter of Intent, a confirmation will immediately appear on screen. Save this confirmation and maintain it for your records.

If, for any reason, you do not complete your pending lane change requirements, **you must REAPPLY by SUBMITTING** a new letter of intent by November 1 of the following year *and* submit a completed lane change application by the deadline dates.

- By April 1:

All applications for equivalency credit.

No equivalency credit application will be accepted after this date.

- By May 1:

All lane change applications must be submitted as a single PDF with a completed cover sheet with requisite signatures to your building representative. Applications with pending spring and summer coursework and documentation may be resubmitted when courses are complete. However, the pending courses must be listed on the cover sheet as "pending."

Due to course cancellations and/or other unforeseen circumstances during the summer, course substitutions may need to be made to complete a lane change application that has already been approved as "pending" by the PGC. When this occurs, the lane change application will be resubmitted as a revised single PDF with an edited original cover sheet to the PGC by October 31 for re-evaluation and acceptance before a lane change will be honored.

Records such as letters of hire can be found in your [PS Employee Records account](#).

- By August 31: All pending coursework MUST BE completed for the September lane change.

- By October 31: All pending transcripts MUST BE received by the Human Resource Office.

CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR SALARY LANE CHANGE

***Note:** The Professional Growth Council and the Administration have agreed to a change in practice regarding the transfer of credits from one lane change to another. Effective September 2003, the 15 credits beyond the Master's Degree **MUST BE** earned after completion of the Master's Degree.

Effective Fall 2024: All lane change applications/PDFs will be submitted virtually as a single PDF. Here is a video explaining how to complete this task in Preview: [preview to combine PDFs.mov](#)

**Master's and Doctorate degrees should be submitted directly to the PGC. If you are in a program complete the request for degree program approval.*

NOTE: Go to [Graduate Credits](#) for information regarding preapproval process.

The following graduate credits and/or equivalency credits must be earned for each salary lane (*single or double lane change as noted on the lane change cover sheet*):

B+15	15 graduate or equivalency credits (No more than 4 equivalency credits)
M+15	15 graduate or equivalency credits (*No more than 4 equivalency credits)
M+30	30 graduate or equivalency credits (*No more than 6 equivalency credits)
M+45	45 graduate or equivalency credits (*No more than 9 equivalency credits)
M+60	60 graduate or equivalency credits (*No more than 12 equivalency credits may be used)

NOTE: Equivalency credit allocation for school psychologists, counselors, speech & language pathologists, board-certified behavior analysts, and nurses:
M+15=9, M+30=15*, M+45=21*, M+60=27*

**These numbers represent the cumulative total of equivalency credits used for all lane changes.*

ALL CREDITS FOR A NEW LANE CHANGE MUST HAVE BEEN GRANTED WITHIN TEN YEARS OF APPLICATION.

SCHEDULE FOR LANE CHANGE PAY INCREASES

- If you are approved for a lane change, it means you received approval through an email verification from the PGC. *It does not mean that the lane change has been processed through the HR payroll system yet.* Questions on whether someone made it onto the list for the month should be directed to the PGC co-coordinators. There is a contractual expectation that lane changes will be processed for the first pay in November. (It is the second Friday of the month.)

**We understand that staff members are eager to see their lane changes reflected in their pay. Pay for staff members who have accepted lane change applications will see the change in their pay retroactive to the start of the school year.*

Lane changes may be distributed in the first paychecks of the month depending on when the Professional Growth Council has deemed your lane change application complete and submitted the information to HR for processing, but no later than the first paycheck in November.

PROCEDURES FOR SALARY LANE CHANGE

1. Meet with your PGC Building Representative to obtain forms and information.
2. Complete the "Lane Change Letter of Intent" (found on the website for Needham Public Schools/ Departments/ Human Resources/ Professional Development & Growth) by November 1st. If any possibility exists that you may accrue enough credits to complete a lane change, submit your Letter of Intent. **Note: NO Letters of Intent will be accepted after November 1st. Save the confirmation email and keep it for your records.**
3. If you are applying for equivalency credit, complete the Application for Equivalency Credit. Be sure to attach all original substantiating data, which should include the date, time, and duration of the course/workshop. No credit will be given for a workshop or course given during the school day (for example, during the afternoon of an early dismissal day).

- If you are applying for equivalency credits for categories other than those listed in this handbook, include in your request a description of the value to you and your students, as well as information about the time and duration of the activity. Staff members are always welcome at PGC meetings and may present any requests for equivalency credits in person for the council's consideration. You need to meet with your Building Representative between October and March to review your application materials. Your Representative will present your request for equivalency credit at a PGC meeting.

***NOTE:** *Not all PDPs earned can be used for equivalency credit.*

4. Assemble your Application for Salary Lane Change as a single PDF. The [Application for Lane Change cover sheet](#) containing the list of courses and your **principal's/director's signature** should be the first page of the PDF. Be sure to include the following:

- receipt of the [*Commitment Attestation Form](#)
- official originals of all transcripts and equivalency credit documentation for this lane change (no online printouts)
- cover pages from all previous Needham Public School Salary Lane Change PDFs (with all signatures, including the PCG coordinator's, showing the Lane change PDF was approved)*
- cover sheet(s) for equivalency credits used for prior lane changes*
- verification of hiring at an advanced level with a list of courses presented at the time of hire, if pertinent*
- transcript of Master's Degree if applying for M+15*
- evidence that online asynchronous courses meet criteria, or include HR approved Professional Learning Activities Reimbursement form
- signed Request for Degree Program Approval form (if applicable)

***NOTE:** Please see your building representative if you need assistance in obtaining prior lane change applications.

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5. Meet with your Building Representative between October and March to review your Salary Lane Change PDF. Representatives must be sure all information is correct, complete, and on current forms before signing the cover page and submitting their lane change PDF to the PGC for review in May. It is not necessary to wait until May to submit lane change PDFs. PDFs that are complete except for documentation of completion of spring or summer courses may be submitted at any time before May 1.

All coursework must be completed by August 31. ORIGINAL, OFFICIAL transcripts and documentation must be submitted no later than OCTOBER 31.

GRADUATE CREDITS

Graduate-level courses awarding graduate credit from accredited universities or colleges are valid for 10 years.

Except for summer courses, a full-time staff member may take up to two graduate courses in one school semester for School Committee approval (or recognition).

If you are part of a degree cohort that holds more than two courses per semester for Master's, M15, M30, M45, M60, or Doctorate, you need to seek approval from the Director of Human Resources to complete more than 2 courses per school year semester. Please complete the Request For Degree Program Approval form linked below and submit it to the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources.

[Request for Degree Program Approval form](#)

Graduate credit earned before employment by the Needham Public Schools will be accepted as long as the credit was:

- Earned within 10 years.
- Earned after completion of Master's Degree if moving to M+15 or beyond.
- Not used to determine initial hiring salary level.
- Documented by official, original transcripts from an *accredited university or college.

*Program accreditations must be accepted by DESE.

Graduate credit earned in whole or in part during the school day cannot be used towards a salary lane change.

Staff members must earn a C or higher for the graduate credit to count toward a lane change.

NOTE: The PGC and the Administration have agreed to a change in practice regarding the transfer of credits from one lane to another. Effective September 2003, the 15 credits beyond the Master's Degree MUST BE earned after completion of the Master's Degree.

ONLINE GRADUATE COURSES

Online graduate courses will be considered by the PGC if the credit earned is from an accredited university or college. Documentation must be an official, original transcript.

The PGC ONLY ACCEPTS credits for salary lane changes from accredited universities and colleges. It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure that credits earned from courses taken, especially courses from online Staff Development sites, are courses eligible for graduate credit. Several transcripts have been denied by the PGC because the credit earned was not graduate level. When in doubt, get documentation in writing from the university or college that the credit granted is indeed graduate level, before registering for the course.

Graduate Course Eligibility Criteria

- **In-Person and Hybrid Courses:** In-person courses include online face-to-face meetings. Hybrid courses that have both an online face-to-face component and an asynchronous component are also considered “in person”.
- **Online Fully Asynchronous Graduate Courses:** These will only be accepted when they meet the following criteria:
 1. The online course has a specific start and end date, with a minimum of 15 hours of work for 1 graduate credit
 2. The online course is not designed as a self-paced “module” course with no specified beginning and ending date
 3. The online course requires regular weekly interaction with the professor, i.e., discussion boards that require the class members to log in and participate in discussions
 4. The online course has regular weekly interactions with other students, i.e., discussion boards that require the class members to log in and participate in discussions
 5. The online assignments are regular, posted, and graded by the professor
 6. The online course has a graded mid-term and/or final examination or project
 7. The online course offers graduate credit.

****Courses that do not meet the above-required criteria may still qualify for workshop, audit, and/or conference/professional learning activities reimbursement:** [MA DESE Non-Degree Eligible Graduate Credit](#)

****Program accreditations must be accepted by** [MA DESE](#).

*Applicants are responsible for submitting **documentation that provides proof that the above criteria have been met**. Please **highlight and number** where each of the corresponding criteria from the checklist can be found in the submitted documents. If you have not done this, your building PGC representative will return your lane change PDF and ask that you complete this. [EXAMPLE](#)

*If the Assistant Superintendent has approved a self-paced (asynchronous) course for credit, **the course**

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description must include the language below in PS Professional Learning:

The credit for this asynchronous course is eligible to be used towards a lane change under the following conditions:

- You submit a certificate of completion or evidence of a passing grade, and*
- You provide evidence of your online participation in the course (e.g., course discussion board, final projects, assessments...)*

**** Applicants who have sought Reimbursement for Professional Learning Activities and have been approved may have already satisfied these requirements. Please attach the approval form to your lane change packet.**

GRADUATE COURSES EARNED AT FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS

Where teachers choose to engage in graduate coursework at foreign institutions, it is important that you first verify with the institution that you will be earning graduate credit that is equivalent to graduate credits earned in the United States. Once the transcript is issued, you must have the transcript evaluated for equivalency by an authorized agency. Please note that the fee charged by the agency is the responsibility of the employee.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides a list of agencies that perform the equivalency service. Please visit [MA DESE Foreign Degree and Credit Equivalency Report Requirements](#) for a list of these agencies you may use.

It is important to note that the time to complete the requirements when taking graduate coursework at foreign institutions will be significantly longer than US graduate coursework. Typically, it takes longer for the institution to produce the transcript, and it will take additional time for the transcript to be evaluated for equivalency. Please plan accordingly when taking graduate courses at foreign institutions.

EQUIVALENCY CREDITS

Equivalency credit is awarded to Unit A teachers by the Professional Growth Council only for certain courses and educational experiences. Applications for equivalency credits are reviewed at monthly PGC meetings. NO applications will be considered after April 1.

Equivalency credit may be granted for experiences outside of normal school hours and that are not funded by the Needham Public Schools. The PGC will award one equivalency credit per 15 hours of invested time. No one endeavor shall earn more than 2 equivalency credits.

Some courses listed on the Professional Learning site cannot be used toward equivalency credit. Check "Credits" under individual course listings for this information or check with your PGC representative. Examples: The full-day induction for new teachers receives PDPs but cannot be used for equivalency credit. PDPs awarded for curriculum or committee work cannot be used for equivalency credits.

The Professional Growth Council may award equivalency credit for online courses. The course should have credits granted from an accredited college or university and must be a graduate-level course. Equivalency credit may also be granted for an online professional development program offered through the district via PS Professional Learning, but, like a graduate course, it must require the student to produce a work product that is evaluated for quality. Webinars, for example, would not be accepted for Equivalency Credit. All other provisions regarding Equivalency Credit apply to online courses.

Experiences such as in-service courses will be considered for equivalency credit. Like graduate credits, equivalency credits must be earned and used within 10 years. Formal written request must be made to the PGC on the **"Application for Credit Equivalency Form."** The applicant must include original, official substantiating documents and attendance.

Note: No equivalency credits will be awarded for experiences completed before employment by Needham Public Schools.

Some experiences or work related to education may be considered for equivalency credit. The experience must meet specific requirements and be of direct benefit to the teacher in their work in the Needham Public Schools. Documentation must be submitted by the teacher that explains how their teaching has been enhanced by the experience, and which explains the impact on the students and/or staff of the Needham Public Schools. Original, officially signed documentation must accompany all applications.

Equivalency credit allocation for school psychologists, counselors, speech & language pathologists, board-certified behavior analysts, and nurses:

$M+15=9$, $M+30=15^*$, $M+45=21^*$, $M+60=27^*$

**These numbers represent the cumulative total of equivalency credits used for all lane changes.*

EQUIVALENCY CREDITS *cont'd*

To ensure that a request for equivalency credit will meet the requirements, the PGC strongly recommends that staff members seek PRIOR approval from the PGC. **With substantiating documentation, up to 2 equivalency credits may be awarded only once for any one endeavor.**

**SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
FOR EQUIVALENCY CREDIT APPLICATIONS**

All equivalency credit applications must be substantiated with ORIGINAL, OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION with appropriate signatures when applicable. No application will be accepted for consideration after April 1. Equivalency experience must have ended before this date.

1. Student Teacher/Intern Supervision: 2 equivalency credits

- a. Lasts a minimum of one full semester of direct supervision (full-time)(½ credit for Speech and Language Pathologists accepted for part-year internships)
- b. Reported by applicant on Student Teaching/Intern Supervision Form (page 14)
- c. Includes all appropriate, signed documentation from the sponsoring institution that clearly defines responsibilities and duration of experience.

NOTE: As of September 1, 2010, equivalency credits awarded for student teacher/intern supervision can be used only ONCE during the Master's – Master's +60 salary lane change process.

2. Educational Organization Leadership Position: up to 2 equivalency credits (to be used only once)

- a. Exists outside Needham Public Schools
- b. Lasts at least 1 year and is unpaid
- c. Include leadership documentation/report explaining specific role and responsibilities signed by an official representative of the organization
- d. Examples: ASCD, IRA (International Reading Association)

3. Professional Publication: up to 2 equivalency credits (to be used only once)

- a. Completed within the previous 2 years
- b. Submitted published document to PGC
- c. Contributes to the professional growth of the author in his/her current position

4. Work Experience: up to 2 equivalency credits (to be used only once)

- A. Contributes directly to the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom
- B. Reports the length of employment, name of employer, and application to the classroom
- C. Includes signed documentation from the employer explaining the job description and duration of employment.
- D. Not funded by the Needham Public Schools

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5. Educational Workshop Presentation: up to 2 equivalency credits (can be used only once per lane change)

- a. Occurs outside regular school hours and is not paid for by the Needham Public Schools
- b. Documented with workshop content and time involved
- c. Organized and planned by the teacher requesting credit
- d. One equivalency = 15 teaching hours
- e. Signed documentation defining the applicant's role, responsibilities, length, and number of workshops

6. Educational Workshop Attendance: up to 2 equivalency credits

- a. Occurs outside regular school hours
- b. Documented with workshop content, dates, time involved, and proof of attendance/ completion

7. Graduate Course Instruction: can be used only once per lane change

- a. Granted only once for a given course
- b. Equivalency credits = number of graduate credits: for example,
2 credit course = 2 equivalency credits; 3 credit course = 2 equivalency credits

**NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS'
APPLICATION FOR EQUIVALENCY CREDIT**

Please submit a separate form for each type or category requested.

Applications must be **submitted by April 1.**

NAME: _____ TITLE: _____ SCHOOL: _____ DATE: _____

CHECK ONE

- _____ Student Teacher/Intern Supervision - Report on Student Teacher/Intern Form attached with appropriate signature of college supervisor and documentation from sponsoring institution
- _____ Educational/Organizational Leadership Position - Report attached with appropriate signatures
- _____ Professional Publications - Copy of published writing attached
- _____ Work Experience - Report attached with all substantiating documentation and signatures
- _____ Graduate Course Instruction - Documentation attached
- _____ Educational Workshop Presentation - Documentation/report attached
- _____ Educational Workshop Attendance - Certificate of attendance from presenter including title, date, time and description. Please list workshops and hours below.

No Equivalency Credit Application will be considered without all appropriate original, official documentation and signatures.

Workshop Title (grouped in 15 or 30 hour increments, if possible)	Hours
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPROVED FOR _____ CREDITS:

PGC COORDINATOR: _____ DATE: _____

**NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REPORT ON STUDENT TEACHER/INTERN SUPERVISION**

This COMPLETED AND SIGNED form must accompany all requests for Student Teacher/Intern Supervision Equivalency Credits.

To: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH COUNCIL

From: COOPERATING TEACHER _____

SCHOOL: _____ DATE : _____

TITLE: _____

STUDENT TEACHER/INTERN: _____

PERIOD OF OBSERVATION: FROM _____ TO _____ NUMBER OF WEEKS: _____

NUMBER OF DAYS PER WEEK: _____ TIME: from ____ : ____ to ____ : ____

DESCRIPTION OF STUDENT TEACHER/INTERN EXPERIENCE:

On a separate, attached sheet, provide a detailed description of your role in providing a variety of teaching and learning experiences for your student teacher/intern. (please type)

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

College Supervisor's Signature _____ Date _____