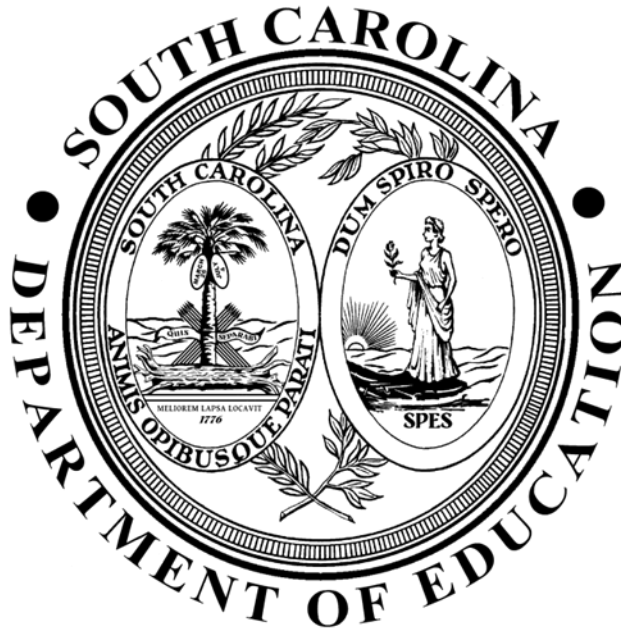


STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Annual Report on the American Board for the Certification of Teaching Excellence

Report addressed to the South Carolina State Board of Education
and General Assembly

Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-350

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Introduction

The American Board for the Certification of Teaching Excellence (American Board) is a self-sustaining, non-partisan non-profit 501(c)(3) organization established in 2001 through a grant from the United States Department of Education. In June 2007, the South Carolina General Assembly (GA) passed the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence Act, which allows school districts to hire individuals who have received a passport certificate issued by the organization. The statute, S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-310, authorizes the following content areas: “biology, chemistry, English, mathematics, physics, or science. Additional areas of certification may be approved by the State Board of Education upon review of the longitudinal information required in Section 59-25-350.” Current areas are secondary biology, chemistry, English, mathematics, physics, science, middle level language arts, middle level mathematics, and middle level science. Previously known as ABCTE, the organization is now known as the American Board and has relocated its headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Atlanta, Georgia.

Currently, South Carolina is one of eleven states that accepts the American Board for initial certification purposes. The other states include Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Utah. Arkansas was added effective September 1, 2015. Nevada is no longer accepting new American Board participants but is allowing those with current certificates to complete their requirements for their professional certification. Arizona no longer accepts the American Board for certification of elementary education. The approval of the secondary program in Arizona has expired, and the Arizona Department of Education anticipates that a decision on the program will be made in the next few months. The American Board also indicates on its website that individuals may be able to teach in independent and charter schools in some other states and countries.

The American Board recruits candidates through its website with a live-chat feature, through face-to-face information sessions in approved states, and in follow-up marketing e-mails with potential candidates. The full cost of the program is \$2,850; however, the American Board offers special pricing on a routine basis, and the advertised cost fluctuates based on weekly sales goals. As of February 13, 2017, enrollment was advertised at a cost of \$1,900 for a limited time. In order to secure promotional pricing, the candidate must submit a one-time payment at the time of enrollment. The American Board offers candidates an installment plan, financial assistance, and a discounted rate for military veterans. The sales team receives a set commission for all individuals that they enroll in the program.

The American Board website describes the program as self-paced and self-directed and indicates that most candidates complete the program of study for the exams within an average of seven to ten months. Candidates must pass the organization’s content area examination and Professional Teaching Knowledge (PTK) exam. These examinations are proprietary, and the organization does not provide states with information on the content of these tests. The exams have not been correlated to other certification examinations including the Praxis series approved for certification purposes in South Carolina.

The American Board in South Carolina

S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-330 states that a person who has received an American Board certificate in one or more of the subject areas approved for South Carolina and who has a minimum of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university or an institution with a teacher education program that has been approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) for certification purposes must be issued an appropriate alternate route certificate upon verification of employment in a South Carolina school district. The alternate route certificate is valid for one year and may be renewed annually for two additional years upon the successful completion of the hiring district's induction program as part of the state's program for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT). To obtain professional certification at the end of the three-year American Board eligibility period, the individual must demonstrate teaching effectiveness through the ADEPT summative evaluation process and must present a passing score on the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) examination, South Carolina's adopted pedagogy exam.

Per S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-350, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) submits annually by March 31 to the SBE and GA the total number of individuals employed in South Carolina with a passport certificate issued by the American Board by district, as well as non-privileged information collected on these individuals through the ADEPT reporting system.

American Board Certificates Issued in 2016–17

Individuals who pass the American Board examinations and who complete the South Carolina certification application process (application, fee, and FBI/SLED clearance process) are issued an American Board Statement of Eligibility which allows these individuals then to seek employment in a South Carolina school district. An Alternate Route – American Board certificate is issued to an eligible candidate upon confirmation of employment.

For the 2016–17 academic year, sixty-six educators have been issued an American Board certificate in the following approved content areas and are employed statewide in the districts as indicated. Table 1 indicates the number of certificates issued and Table 2 indicates the districts in which American Board teachers to whom those certificates were issued are employed during the 2016–17 academic year.

Table 1

Number of American Board Certificates Issued by Certification Area in 2016–17

Certification Area	Number of American Board Certificates Issued
Biology	7
Chemistry	0
English	12
Mathematics	14
Physics	0
Science	13
Middle Level Mathematics	5
Middle Level Language Arts	11
Middle Level Science	4
TOTAL	66

Note. Certificates reflected in this table may have been issued for teachers in their first, second, or third year of teaching. American Board certificates are re-issued the second and third years of teaching prior to advancement to a Professional teaching certificate at the end of three years after successful completion of summative evaluation requirements.

Table 2

Number of Teachers with American Board Certificates Issued in 2016–17 by School District

School District	Number of American Board Candidates Employed
Abbeville	1
Aiken	4
Anderson 1	1
Anderson 5	1
Beaufort	2
Berkeley	7
Charleston	9
Cherokee	1
Darlington	1
Dorchester 2	1
Florence 1	2
Florence 4	1
Georgetown	2
Greenville	1
Greenwood	1

School District	Number of American Board Candidates Employed
Hampton	1
Horry	3
Lancaster	1
Laurens 56	1
Lexington 1	1
Lexington 2	1
Oconee	5
Pickens	1
Richland 1	1
Spartanburg 2	2
Spartanburg 6	2
Spartanburg 7	1
Sumter	4
York 3	2
York 4	1
Public Charter School District	4
TOTAL	66

Note. Certificates reflected in this table may have been issued for teachers in their first, second, or third year of teaching. American Board certificates are re-issued the second and third years of teaching prior to advancement to a Professional teaching certificate at the end of three years after successful completion of summative evaluation requirements.

Teaching Effectiveness

All American Board participants must take part in South Carolina's ADEPT system. During their first year in the classroom, American Board participants—like all other first year educators—participate in a formative evaluation process which includes the district's induction program and the assignment of a mentor. The purpose of this formative process is to provide the appropriate assistance and support to facilitate the beginning teacher's effectiveness and classroom practice. While the intent is for teachers to complete the induction process during their first year of program participation, some are hired too late in the year to be placed on an induction contract. These individuals are employed on a Letter of Agreement but are still required to meet the induction and summative evaluation requirements specified for American Board participants in a subsequent year. Following participation in the induction process, American Board teachers must successfully complete summative evaluation requirements to be eligible for advancement to a Professional teaching certificate at the end of three years. Table 3 provides a summary of the ADEPT evaluation results of all teachers employed on a first-, second-, or third-year American Board certificate during the 2015–16 school year. For comparison purposes, the statewide percentage of Induction teachers with an ADEPT result of Met for 2015-16 was 90 percent, and the statewide percentage of teachers with a result of Met at the Annual Summative level was also 90 percent.

Table 3

ADEPT Results for Teachers with American Board Certificates in the 2015–16 Academic Year

Contract Level	ADEPT Process	Total Teachers	Evaluation Results			
			Met	Not Met	Incomplete	Not Reported
Letter of Agreement	Formative	5	2 (40%)	0 (0%)	2 (40%)	1 (20%)
Induction 1	Formative	23	22 (96%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Induction 2	Formative	2	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Annual 1	Summative	14	13(93%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Annual 2	Summative or GBE	2	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Note. First-year teachers with American Board certificates issued in 2016–17 are not reflected in this table. Data were retrieved from the SCDE ADEPT Data System from the 2015–16 academic year.

Advancement to a Standard Professional Teaching Certificate

Since the program's inception in South Carolina in 2007 through 2013–14, a total of ninety-three American Board participants have advanced from an alternate route credential to a Professional teaching certificate. In order to advance, these educators had to maintain employment, complete the three-year American Board program, meet all ADEPT evaluation requirements, and submit a successful score on the Principles of Learning and Teaching examination. Of these ninety-three teachers who advanced to a Professional certificate through participation in American Board, eighty-three are still employed in South Carolina public schools. Table 4 provides a summary, by program entry year, of the American Board participants who have had the opportunity to complete three years in the program. It shows how many teachers in a given program year have earned a Professional certificate after three years and how many in a given program year are still teaching in South Carolina.

Table 4

Status of American Board Participants with Opportunity to Complete Three-Year Program

American Board Participants	Program Entry Year							Totals
	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	
Entered System	5	22	31	17	26	9	27	135
Earned Professional Certificate	3 (60%)	13 (59%)	19 (61%)	13 (76%)	16 (62%)	8 (89%)	21 (78%)	93 (69%)
Still Teaching in SC	2 (40%)	11 (50%)	17 (55%)	12 (71%)	12 (46%)	9 ^a (100%)	22 ^a (81%)	85 (63%)

Note. Table includes two participants still teaching in South Carolina who do not yet have a Professional certificate (indicated by ^a), and therefore are not counted in the eighty-three teachers with Professional certificates mentioned on page 5 of this report. Percentages represent percent of teachers who entered the system in a particular program year. ^a Includes an educator who is completing the third year following a gap in employment and is seeking his/her Professional certificate.

Looking Ahead

SCDE staff met with a team from the new American Board headquarters in Atlanta in October 2016. At that time, the organization had employed a retired district administrator with school leadership experience to serve as its South Carolina State Director. Additionally, the American Board has also employed regional recruiters that host information sessions in their local areas and plans to expand recruiting by directly contacting school district personnel offices throughout the state. The American Board staff indicated that it was initiating an exam review process comparing American Board exams with other national exams approved for certification purposes and that the examination in the content area of history will be the first reviewed. A timeline for the completion of the review and communication of results to stakeholders was not shared.