

## **SOUTH CAROLINA PROGRAM OF ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION FOR EDUCATORS (PACE) GUIDELINES**

In 1984, to address critical teaching shortages in South Carolina, the South Carolina General Assembly provided for the establishment of an alternative route to certification in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-26-30(A)(8). The purpose of the program is to enable individuals who do not meet the regular certification requirements to be eligible for employment in the public schools. Eligible candidates are awarded an alternative route certificate for a total of three consecutive academic years based on successful completion of program requirements. Guidelines were last amended in April 2008 and are now amended by the State Board of Education on June 14, 2016.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

The following criteria must be met:

1. An earned bachelor's degree (or higher) from a regionally accredited college or university or an institution with a teacher education program that has been approved by the South Carolina State Board of Education for certification purposes, with a major or major equivalence in a certification area that is included in the alternative certification program.
2. A passing score on the content area examination(s) adopted by the State Board of Education.
3. Employment as a full- or part-time teacher in a South Carolina public school in the qualifying content area.

### **Statement of Eligibility**

The statement of eligibility indicates to a school district that the candidate meets all eligibility criteria for admission to PACE. The candidate must obtain a teaching position in the area(s) for which he or she is eligible for PACE and complete the next available pre-service institute to be eligible for an alternative route certificate. The statement of eligibility is valid for one calendar year (January 1–December 31) to allow candidates an opportunity to qualify for either a summer or winter pre-service institute for the same academic year.

## **Verification of Employment**

When a candidate obtains a position, the school district must verify employment with the South Carolina Department of Education's teacher certification office. This verification must include the signature of the designated school district official and the signature of the PACE candidate. The candidate will then be invited to participate in the next available pre-service institute.

## **PACE Program Requirements**

To be eligible to continue in the program, PACE candidates must complete the following requirements while employed in a South Carolina public school as an active participant in the PACE program:

- A. Candidates will successfully complete the program designed to prepare them for the instructional environment. The program components will include, but not be limited to, training institutes, designated course requirements, and professional development meetings.

An initial alternative route teaching certificate will be issued after the eligible candidate has met all alternative certification program admission criteria. This includes the submission of a complete certification application packet; presenting passing scores on the content area examination(s) adopted by the State Board of Education; employment in a South Carolina public school; and successful completion of the next available pre-service institute. The initial alternative route certificate is valid for one academic year. The certificate can be renewed annually for two additional academic years based on successful progress in completing the program requirements listed above and continuous employment in a South Carolina public school.

- B. To be eligible for a professional certificate, PACE candidates will successfully complete requirements as follows:
  - 1. Candidates will complete three successful years of teaching in a South Carolina public school including successful completion of the Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) process. This will include successful participation in an induction program that includes a mentoring program, successful completion of the formal evaluation process, and a successful formal or informal evaluation during the final year of program participation. Consistent with the ADEPT regulation (R.43-205.1), a candidate must not receive a continuing contract until he or she has completed all PACE requirements and is eligible to advance to professional certification.
  - 2. Candidates will successfully complete three courses from the list of core courses approved by the South Carolina Department of Education's teacher certification office on behalf of the State Board of Education. Courses identified for individual teachers will be based on the individual's experience, knowledge, and skills. Courses must be completed while an active participant in PACE or within three years prior to issuance of the first alternative route certificate.

The three required courses must be completed for college credit with an assigned grade of B or better. Courses must be completed at a South Carolina institution with a teacher education program approved by the State Board of Education for certification purposes. Eligible participants may request approval of courses from other regionally accredited colleges or universities provided the coursework is at the graduate level. However, no more than one of the courses (three semester hours) can be designated as a Professional Development (PD) course. Only the PD course may be completed on a pass/fail basis.

3. Candidates will earn a passing score on the appropriate level of the pedagogy Praxis II examination, *Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT)*, prior to advancing to the professional certificate.

### **Teaching Assignment**

Teachers with alternative route certification must be assigned to teach in their subject area at a minimum 0.5 full-time equivalency. Candidates who qualify in more than one subject area at the time of admission can enter and complete the program in up to two subject areas if they are formally evaluated (ADEPT) in each area and teach 0.5 full-time equivalency in each certification area.

If a candidate is employed as a part-time teacher, the teaching position must be at least a 0.5 full-time equivalency with 100 percent of their teaching time in one subject area.

### **District Supervision and Evaluation**

The school district must issue employment contracts, supervise, and evaluate the candidate in accordance with all State Board of Education regulations and guidelines for ADEPT. Consistent with the ADEPT regulation (R. 43-205.1), a candidate must not receive a continuing contract until he or she has completed all PACE requirements and is eligible to advance to professional certification.

### **Annual Renewal**

An alternative route certificate is valid for one school year and will be renewed for two consecutive years upon annual recommendation by the on-site instructors for the South Carolina Department of Education alternative certification training program and at the request of the school district verifying continuing employment.

### **Program Completion**

In order to be issued a professional certificate, a candidate must meet the following criteria: continuous employment as a teacher for three years; successful completion of all required institutes; recommendation for certification by the on-site instructors for the South Carolina Department of Education alternative certification training program; successful ADEPT formal evaluation and a successful formal or informal evaluation during the final year of program

participation; successful completion of the three designated courses; and a passing score on the PLT. Professional certification will be issued at the end of the third year if all requirements are complete.

Candidates who do not complete the program within three academic years due to extenuating circumstances may apply for a one-academic-year extension of the alternative route certificate. The extension year must be immediately following the third academic year of program participation. If approved, all program requirements must be completed within the fourth academic year.

A candidate that withdraws from the PACE program within the first three academic years based on extenuating circumstances may reapply for admission. Readmission is at the discretion of the South Carolina Department of Education. A teacher readmitted to the PACE Program may be required to start the program from the beginning.

### **Ineligibility for Program Admission or Participation**

Candidates who have attempted and failed student teaching in a traditional teacher preparation program will not be eligible for admission to PACE. Candidates who are denied certification or have their certificates suspended or revoked pursuant to State Board of Education Regulation 43.58 will not be allowed to participate in or be readmitted to the alternative certification program.

### **Exceptions**

Request for exceptions to these guidelines may be considered on an individual basis. Such exceptions must be proposed by the school district. Final approval rests with the South Carolina Department of Education.