



Retired Educator Certificate Guidelines 2025

Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 59-26-45 as amended by the
Educator Assistance Act of 2025

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Legislative Mandate

S.C. Code Ann. §49-26-45.

(A) A retired educator certificate is a lifetime certificate established in regulation by the State Board of Education that allows a retired South Carolina educator to be eligible to maintain certification for the purpose of returning to employment with a school district on a temporary or full-time basis. A person is initially eligible for a South Carolina retired educator certificate if he:

(1) held a valid South Carolina renewable, professional educator certificate at the time of retirement;

(2) is either a:

(i) retired member of the South Carolina Retirement System; or

(ii) current or former participant in the State Optional Retirement Program who would have met the eligibility requirements for retirement under the South Carolina Retirement System had he participated in that system rather than the State Optional Retirement Program;

(3) does not hold another valid South Carolina educator certificate and has never held a valid South Carolina educator certificate that has been suspended, revoked, or voluntarily surrendered; and

(4) meets all other qualifications to serve as a certified educator as specified in state statute, regulation, and guidelines.

(B) An individual meeting the eligibility requirements and desirous of a retired educator certificate must submit the request in the manner specified in regulation and guidelines.

(1) A retired educator certificate approved and issued is valid for five years from the date of each issuance.

(2) Once issued, a retired educator in good standing must provide written notification of their desire to continue an active certificate to the department at the end of every five-year period.

(3) Department guidelines shall include the timeline, forms, and a process for submitting a request to maintain an active retired educator certificate.

(C) Any new certificate is invalidated upon issuance of any other South Carolina educator certificate.

(D) An educator who works under the retired certificate must work under the agreement and rate of pay established for this purpose by the hiring district. Section 59-25-150 shall apply to any retired educator certificate.

(E) A retired educator certificate is not subject to requirements for professional certificate renewal established by regulations of the State Board of Education.

(F) Nothing in this section exempts an educator from taking part in professional development that is required by a local school district.

(G) The State Board of Education shall develop regulations for, and the department shall establish guidelines and procedures for, the implementation of this section.

Description

In 2018, the South Carolina General Assembly first authorized the Retired Educator certificate to allow retired South Carolina educators to maintain certification for the purpose of substituting without having to meet renewal requirements.

The Educator Assistance Act of 2025 amends the Retired Educator certificate to become a lifetime credential, allowing a retired South Carolina educator to maintain certification for the purpose of returning to employment with a school district on a full- or part-time basis. The Retired Educator certificate is initially issued for a period of five school years and may be maintained every five years by submitting the required request to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).

Eligibility Requirements

An educator is initially eligible for the Retired Educator certificate if that individual

- held a valid South Carolina renewable, Professional certificate at the time of retirement;
- does not hold any other valid South Carolina educator certificate;
- has never held a valid certificate that has been suspended, revoked, or voluntarily surrendered;
- meets all other qualifications to serve as a certified educator as specified in state statute, regulation, and guidelines; and
- is either a retired member of the South Carolina Retirement System or a current or former participant in the State Optional Retirement Program who would have met eligibility requirements under the South Carolina Retirement System had the individual participated in that system instead.

Application Timeline

Educators with a Valid Professional Certificate

A retired educator who holds a current, renewable Professional certificate may apply for the Retired Educator certificate beginning May 1 of the year in which the Professional certificate will expire on June 30. To be issued the Retired Educator certificate with an effective date of July 1 that same year, all application requirements must be on file with the SCDE Office of Educator Services by November 1. For example, a retired educator whose Professional certificate will expire on June 30, 2026, may apply for the Retired Educator certificate as early as May 1, 2026. To be issued the Retired Educator certificate with an effective date of July 1, 2026, all required documentation must be on file with the SCDE Office of Educator Services no later than November 1, 2026.

Educators with an Expired Professional Certificate

A retired educator whose Professional certificate has expired may apply for the Retired Educator certificate provided the credential was valid at the time of retirement. The educator must submit all required documentation for issuance of the Retired Educator certificate and complete the fingerprinting process pursuant to Section 59-25-115.

Application Procedures and Requirements

To apply for the Retired Educator certificate, the individual must:

- complete an application through My SC Educator Portal;
- submit the related application fee, payable through the portal;
- upload a copy of a verification of retirement letter, or comparable documentation, issued by the South Carolina Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA) that confirms the date of retirement; and
- if required, complete the fingerprinting and criminal records check process.
 - Individuals with an expired South Carolina Professional certificate at the time of application for the Retired Educator certificate must complete the fingerprinting and criminal records check process.
 - Individuals who still hold a valid South Carolina Professional certificate at the time of application for the Retired Educator certificate are not required to complete the fingerprinting and criminal records check process.

Maintaining the Retired Educator Certificate

Beyond the initial five-year validity period, an educator is eligible to maintain the Retired Educator certificate without meeting certificate renewal requirements in State Board Regulation 43-55, *Renewal of Credentials*, by submitting a request through My SC Educator Portal for each subsequent five-year period. The request to maintain the certificate may be submitted as early as January 1 of the year during which the Retired Educator certificate will expire on June 30.

Professional Development and Employed Retired Educators

Retired educators who are employed in a South Carolina public school district must still participate in district-required professional development. Nothing in the Educator Assistance Act exempts an educator from taking part in professional development required by the public-school employer.

Compensation, Contract Level, and Evaluation

An educator employed by a South Carolina public school district under the Retired Educator certificate must work under the agreement and rate of pay established for this purpose by the hiring district. The provisions of the Employment and Dismissal Act apply to any teacher employed on a Continuing contract. An educator employed in a position requiring certification must be appropriately evaluated by the employing district.