

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
District Personnel Administrators

FROM: Mary Hipp
Director, Office of Educator Services

DATE: June 10, 2025

RE: Lifetime Retired Educator Certificate

Description

Effective July 1, 2025, the [Educator Assistance Act](#) amends the existing Retired Educator certificate into a credential without the need to earn renewal credits, enabling retired South Carolina educators to return to certified full- or part-time roles. This policy change expands the original purpose of the Retired Educator certificate, first established in 2018 to allow retirees to substitute teach, into a broader educator workforce strategy.

This update directly supports the recommendations of the Strategic Talent Acquisition and Retention (START) Taskforce, which called for practical solutions to reduce administrative barriers and re-engage experienced educators amid persistent staffing challenges.

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 and Procedures

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 with an expired Professional certificate may still 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.

Educators Holding the Previous Retired Educator Certificate for Substituting

The SCDE Office of Educator Services has begun the process of updating current, valid Retired Educator certificates that were issued for the sole purpose of substituting. This update will restore certification fields to the credential since it can now be used for the purpose of returning to certified employment on a full- or part-time basis.

Additional information regarding application procedures and required documentation is available on the [Retired Educator Certificate webpage](#).

Maintaining the Retired Educator Certificate

Once issued, the certificate is valid for five years. To maintain it, educators need only submit a simple request through My SC Educator portal. No renewal credits are required. Requests may be submitted as early as January 1 of the year the certificate is set to 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.

Contract Level and Compensation

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 teachers employed on a Continuing contract. Educators employed in a position requiring certification must be appropriately evaluated by the employing district.

For additional information concerning the Retired Educator Certificate, please contact Sherry Schneider, Assistant Director of the Office of Educator Services, at sschneider@ed.sc.gov.