



Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program Implementation Guidelines

Pursuant to Act 30 of 2025–26,

S.C. Code Ann. § 59-18-1115

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Legislative Mandate

Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program, requirements, duration, implementation

SECTION 1. Chapter 18, Title 59 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

Section 59-18-1115.

(A) The Department of Education is directed to establish a five-year pilot program by May 1, 2025, that will permit a school to hire noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to ten percent of its entire teaching staff. This pilot does not include individuals seeking employment as work-based, career, and technical education teachers. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, shall approve guidelines that at a minimum include the following:

(1) the requirement that a noncertified teacher must possess a suitable baccalaureate or graduate degree for the position he is hired to teach and must have at least five years of relevant workplace experience;

(2) procedures for requiring noncertified teachers to participate in the evaluation process pursuant to Section 59-26-30(B)(4) and (5);

(3) initial and ongoing training and support requirements; and

(4) the requirement that a noncertified teacher must demonstrate enrollment in an educator certification program within three years of employment, including any state-approved alternative or traditional route program.

(B) Participation in the pilot program is optional, and the decision to participate rests solely with the Department of Education and the school principal, upon approval of the district superintendent. Participating schools and districts are encouraged to collaborate on recruitment, training, and implementation of the pilot program and to assist the Department of Education with establishing best practices.

(C) The Department of Education shall establish a separate code in the professional coding system to capture noncertified teachers and shall continue to report this information on school report cards.

(D) Beginning November 1, 2026, the Department of Education shall submit an annual report that includes recommendations for improving, expanding, or continuing the pilot program to the General Assembly. The annual status report submitted by November 1, 2029, shall include a recommendation regarding continuance of the program beyond June 30, 2030.

(E)(1) The Department of Education shall establish procedures for the registration, clearance, and approval of all noncertified teachers working in any public school pursuant to this section. Teachers shall submit the required documentation and fees to the Department of Education, which shall include, but are not limited to:

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- (a) a completed registration form;
- (b) any associated fee; and
- (c) transcripts, which shall be subject to review.

(2) An individual applying for registration as a noncertified teacher must undergo a state criminal records check, supported by fingerprints, by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, and a national criminal records check, supported by fingerprints, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The results of these criminal record checks must be reported to the Department of Education. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are authorized to retain the fingerprints for identification and certification purposes and for notification of the department regarding criminal charges. Costs of conducting a criminal history background check must be borne by the applicant. The Department of Education shall keep information received pursuant to this section confidential, except that such information may be disclosed to the State Board of Education as may be necessary. The results of these criminal record checks must not be shared outside the department.

(3) An individual whose South Carolina educator certificate has been suspended or revoked shall not be employed as a noncertified teacher during the term of suspension or revocation. If a noncertified teacher is dismissed, resigns, or is otherwise separated from employment with a district following allegations of misconduct, the district superintendent shall report to the Chair of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Education the educator's name and registration information. Upon a finding of just cause as defined in Section 59-25-160, the State Board of Education is authorized to revoke the noncertified teacher's registration.

(F) The Department of Education shall not add a full-time equivalent (FTE) position or partial FTE position to implement the provisions of this section.

State agency criminal history record check requests

SECTION 2. Chapter 3, Title 23 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

Section 23-3-90.

(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, this section governs the authorizations and procedures that apply when an agency in this State is authorized by statute to request state and federal criminal history record checks to be conducted by the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), supported by fingerprints.

(B) SLED is authorized to retain these fingerprints and to provide notification to authorized recipients of any criminal history record changes. Retained fingerprints may be searched by

future submissions to SLED, including latent fingerprint searches, and appropriate responses may be sent to authorized recipients.

(C) SLED, upon the request of an authorized recipient, may submit fingerprints collected to the FBI's Next Generation Identification (NGI) system and the FBI is authorized to retain these fingerprints within the NGI system. Retained fingerprints may be searched by future submissions to the NGI system, including latent fingerprint searches, and appropriate responses may be sent to SLED and authorized recipients.

(D) The results of these criminal history record checks and notifications must only be reported to SLED and authorized recipients and cannot be further disseminated.

(E) SLED may charge a reasonable fee for the collection and retention of fingerprints. SLED may charge an additional reasonable fee to agencies who elect to receive notifications from the NGI system.

(F) The following definitions apply to this section:

(1) "Agency" means offices, departments, bureaus, and other subdivisions associated with a particular government agency's organizational structure.

(2) "Authorized recipients" means the agency authorized to receive criminal history record information (CHRI) by a statute that has been approved by the FBI pursuant to Pub. L. 92-544 or any other applicable federal law.

Construction of act

SECTION 3. Nothing contained in this section may be construed to repeal, replace, or preclude application of any other statute.

Time effective, Pilot Program expiration

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor. Section 1 of this bill shall remain in effect until June 30, 2030, unless extended by the General Assembly.

Purpose

Pursuant to Act 30 of 2025–26, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is authorized to establish a five-year pilot program allowing a participating school to hire noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to ten percent of its entire teaching staff. Within three years of employment, a participant must demonstrate enrollment in an approved educator preparation program, traditional or alternative route. These guidelines establish requirements for implementation of the pilot program.

The pilot is limited to classroom-based teaching positions in designated certification fields. It does not include individuals seeking employment as work-based, career and technical education (CTE) teachers. Additionally, due to restrictions in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the pilot program does not include individuals seeking employment as special education teachers.

Unless extended by the General Assembly, the noncertified teacher pilot program will end June 30, 2030.

District and School Eligibility

All South Carolina public schools are eligible to participate in the pilot program; however, participation is optional and requires the approval of the school's principal and the request of the district superintendent.

A local superintendent may choose one of the following options:

- The district may elect not to participate in the pilot.
- The district may request all schools participate in the pilot.
- The district may request for a limited number of its schools to participate in the pilot.

The SCDE has final authority to approve the schools and districts participating in the pilot and to remove schools for noncompliance with pilot requirements.

District Application Requirements

Using procedures and timelines established by the SCDE, the superintendent must submit the district's application to participate in the pilot program and specify the following:

- **Participating Schools and Principals.** The application must list each school in the district seeking to participate in the pilot and the name of the principal of each participating school. The principal of each participating school is expected to provide feedback and recommendations to the SCDE concerning the pilot.
- **Total FTE classroom teaching positions.** The application must indicate the total number of FTE teaching positions at each participating school, to include both filled positions and vacancies. For purposes of the pilot, the total FTEs must be the sum of

classroom-teaching positions in the school designated by the following SCDE Compensation system staffing codes: 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, and 09.

- Eligible number of noncertified positions. For purposes of the pilot, a participating school may hire noncertified teachers at a ratio up to 10 percent of the total teaching FTEs in the school. In determining this number, a district may round up any number .5 or higher. For example, if a school has 26 total teaching positions, the principal may hire up to three noncertified teachers in the pilot.
- District Facilitator. The application must identify the district-level staff member who will oversee the district's participation in the pilot, monitor participant progress toward certification, maintain all required documentation, and ensure compliance with all state requirements and reporting.

District and School Assurances

In submitting the district's application to participate in the pilot, the superintendent must agree to the following assurances.

- The district and school must ensure that each noncertified teacher hired to participate in the pilot meets all eligibility requirements and completes the SCDE's registration process within 60 days of hire.
- The district and school must ensure that the number of noncertified teachers hired to participate in the pilot falls within the 10% ratio established in the authorizing statute. Any school exceeding a 10% ratio of noncertified teachers in position codes 03-09 may be subject to removal from the pilot.
- The district must submit the initial confirmation of employment (COE) for each noncertified participant within 30 days of hire and subsequent COEs by June 30 annually. The SCDE will not issue a registration for any noncertified participant without all application requirements and a confirmation of employment.
- The district and school must assign each noncertified teacher an assistance team which includes, at minimum, the principal or principal's designee and an appropriately trained mentor. The school must establish an appropriate training and support plan tailored to meet the needs of each individual teacher in the pilot.
- The school and district must monitor the teaching performance of each noncertified teacher according to procedures established by the SCDE Office of Leadership Effectiveness. This evaluation process must provide appropriate support, assistance, and formative feedback.
- The district and school must maintain a three-year plan for each participant in the pilot and monitor the individual's progress toward enrollment in an approved preparation program and certification. The plan must be updated no later than April 30 annually and available for review by the SCDE upon request.
- The school and district must assist the noncertified teacher in identifying an approved educator preparation program, traditional or alternative route, that best meets the teacher's needs and goals.

- The district and school must ensure that each participating teacher becomes fully enrolled in a South Carolina approved program within three years of employment.
- The district and school must provide notification to parents concerning the noncertified teacher’s status if required to do so under Title I or other mandates.
- The district and school must meet all annual reporting requirements established by the SCDE.

Eligible Certification Fields

For purposes of the pilot, districts may hire eligible noncertified teachers in the following certification fields:

- Elementary (Grades 2–6)
- Middle Level (Grades 5–8)
 - Middle Level Language Arts
 - Middle Level Mathematics
 - Middle Level Science
 - Middle Level Social Studies
- High School (Grades 9–12)
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Biology
 - Chemistry
 - Physics
 - Earth and Space Science
 - Social Studies
 - History
 - Economics
 - Geography
 - Psychology
 - Sociology
 - Business and Marketing Education
 - Family and Consumer Science
 - Agriculture
 - Industrial Technology (i.e., Technology and Engineering Education)
- PK-12 Fields
 - Art
 - Music
 - Dance
 - Theatre
 - Physical Education
 - Health
 - World Language (excluding American Sign Language)

The following certification fields are NOT included in the pilot:

- Work-based, CTE fields
- Special Education fields
- Driver Education
- Early Childhood Education
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Literacy Fields (Literacy Teacher, Literacy Coach, Literacy Specialist)
- Montessori Education
- Service and Leadership Fields

Participant Eligibility

Academic Requirements

For participation in the pilot as a noncertified teacher, a candidate must possess a baccalaureate or graduate degree earned from a college or university meeting State Board of Education accreditation requirements with a major or major equivalence directly related to the certification field. The SCDE Office of Educator Services maintains and will publish a list of certification fields and qualifying related majors. For the purposes of the pilot, a major equivalence is defined as a minimum of 30 semester hours of academic credit in the certification field, including at least 15 hours at the upper level (i.e., 300 or 400 level courses). Courses within a major equivalence must have been completed with a grade of C or better.

Elementary Education. No other academic major is comparable to a degree in Elementary Education. A candidate seeking to participate in the pilot in this certification field must have a total of five years of post-secondary work experience and have earned at least a baccalaureate degree from an institution meeting State Board accreditation requirements.

Work Experience Requirements

An eligible candidate must document five years of post-secondary work experience, to be verified by the employing district. The work experience that qualifies a candidate for the noncertified teacher pilot is distinct from and may not be sufficient subsequently to fulfill certified teacher experience credit requirements.

Exclusions

An applicant who meets any of the following conditions is not eligible to participate in the pilot as a noncertified teacher.

- An individual who has completed a teacher preparation program, traditional or alternative route, but has not met requirements for issuance of a standard South Carolina educator certificate.

- An individual whose educator certificate has been suspended or revoked by the South Carolina State Board of Education shall not be employed as a noncertified teacher during the term of the disciplinary action pursuant to S. C. Code Ann. § 59-18-1115.
- An individual whose educator certificate has been suspended or revoked by the educator licensing authority of another state or jurisdiction is not eligible for registration as a noncertified teacher during the term of the disciplinary action.
- An individual whose application for educator certification has been denied by the State Board of Education is not eligible for participation in the pilot during the term of the denial.
- An individual whose registration application to participate in the pilot as a noncertified teacher is not approved by the State Board of Education.

Noncertified Teacher Application and Registration Requirements

Pursuant to Act 30 of 2025–26, the SCDE will issue a noncertified teacher registration to an eligible candidate participating in the pilot. The candidate is responsible for completing all steps in the application process and submitting all required documentation within 60 days of employment.

Application Materials. The candidate must submit the following application materials within 60 days of employment:

- Registration application with processing fee through My SC Educator Portal,
- Official transcript from each college or university attended, and
- Professional practice review including background assurances and fingerprinting.
 - For registration as a noncertified teacher in the pilot, the candidate must complete the SCDE’s fingerprinting requirements using the authorizing agency identifier (ORI) issued to the SCDE by federal and state law enforcement agencies for this purpose only. The SCDE is not authorized to receive or use background reports completed under another ORI or for any purpose other than registration as a noncertified teacher in the pilot program.

District Confirmation of Employment. The employing district must submit an electronic confirmation of employment form verifying the following:

- School and subject area/grade level at which the noncertified teacher will be employed,
- Certification field,
- Assurances that the district has determined the candidate meets academic and work experience requirements for participation in the pilot.

Professional Practice Review

The SCDE will follow procedures and criteria established under the State Board of Education’s Rules of Governance for the review of registration applications and the related fingerprint-based background reports. Background reports submitted as part of a

candidate's registration as a noncertified teacher are used solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for issuance of the registration and cannot be used for any other purpose, including teacher certification.

When subsequently applying for an educator certificate, including student teaching clearance, a noncertified teacher must reapply and repeat the fingerprinting process under the ORI issued to the SCDE solely for the purpose of determining eligibility for teacher certification.

Noncertified Teacher Registration

Once approved, the registration will be issued for a period of three school years and will expire on June 30 of the third year. The registration signifies that the individual has met eligibility requirements and is a registered participant in the pilot. The registration document issued to the noncertified teacher will indicate the certification field for which the individual qualifies academically and the sponsoring school district. The registration cannot be transferred to employment in another school district. The registration is not equivalent to an educator certificate and cannot be presented to the educator credentialing authority of another state or jurisdiction for reciprocity purposes.

Registration Validity

The registration becomes invalid upon its expiration date, subsequent issuance of an educator certificate, separation from employment in the sponsoring district, or State Board of Education disciplinary action. The district must notify the SCDE Office of Educator Services if a noncertified teacher leaves employment. The SCDE will then set the registration to noncurrent status.

Pursuant to Section 59-18-1115(E)(3), if a noncertified teacher is dismissed, resigns, or is otherwise separated from employment with a district following allegations of misconduct, the district superintendent must report to the Chair of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Education the educator's name and registration information. Upon a finding of just cause as defined in Section 59-25-160, the State Board of Education is authorized to revoke the noncertified teacher's registration.

Transition to Approved Educator Preparation Program

Within the three-year registration period, a candidate must demonstrate full enrollment in an approved educator preparation program. For the purpose of the pilot, full enrollment is defined as follows:

- **Alternative Route Educator Preparation Program.** The candidate has met all admission, eligibility, and preservice training requirements of an alternative route EPP approved in South Carolina and qualifies for issuance of the first Alternative Route certificate. Standard procedures for issuance of an Alternative Route certificate apply, including an

application for certification through the specific provider and updated fingerprinting requirements.

- Traditional Educator Preparation Program. The candidate has been fully admitted to a college- or university-based teacher preparation program approved for certification purposes. For a candidate enrolled in a traditional preparation program, the noncertified teacher registration may be extended annually for two additional school years at the request of the employing district and with documentation of enrollment and successful progress in the preparation program.

Employment Information

A noncertified teacher must be employed in the identified certification field and work under the agreement and rate of pay established for this purpose by the hiring district. While participating in the pilot, the noncertified teacher must participate in collegial professional development offered by the school and district. According to procedures established by the SCDE Office of Leadership Effectiveness, the school and district must monitor the teaching performance of each noncertified teacher and provide appropriate support, assistance, and formative feedback. Performance evaluations conducted during the pilot are intended to support the professional growth and development of the noncertified teacher and inform decisions about the individual's continued employment and ongoing participation in the pilot. Evaluations conducted as part of the pilot cannot be used for certificate advancement purposes once the individual qualifies for issuance of an educator certificate.