SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program Annual Report

Pursuant to Act 30 of 2025-26

S.C. Code Ann. § 59-18-1115

November 2026

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Legislative Mandate

Act 30 of 2025-26, signed by the Governor effective May 15, 2025, established **S.C. Code Ann. § 59-18-1115** and directed the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to establish a five-year pilot program that will permit a school to hire noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to ten percent of its entire teaching staff. The legislation authorizes the State Board of Education, through the SCDE, to approve guidelines for implementation of the pilot. Unless extended by the General Assembly, the pilot will expire June 30, 2030.

Reporting Requirement

Beginning November 1, 2026, the SCDE is directed to submit an annual report to the General Assembly with recommendations for improving, expanding, or continuing the Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program. The annual status report submitted by November 1, 2029, must include a recommendation regarding continuance of the program beyond June 30, 2030.

Pilot Description

Pursuant to Act 30 of 2025–26, the SCDE was directed 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. By design, the pilot allows participating school districts to fill a percentage of teaching vacancies with individuals who have at least five years of work experience, have earned at least a bachelor's degree in the subject area, and have an expressed interest in becoming certified teachers. Within three years of employment, a participant must demonstrate enrollment in an approved educator preparation program, traditional or alternative route.

The **Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program Implementation Guidelines** were approved by the State Board of Education on October 7, 2025. These guidelines establish criteria and procedures for districts to enroll in the pilot and for noncertified teacher candidates to apply for and be issued a registration as a pilot participant. These guidelines further outline district responsibilities for the support of pilot participants and for candidate progression toward enrollment in a preparation program and teacher certification.

The pilot program is limited to classroom-based teaching positions in designated certification fields and 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. The following teaching fields requiring specialized preparation to meet the needs of PK-12 students have not been included: Driver Education, Early Childhood Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Literacy, and Montessori Education.

Program Implementation

In addition to the development and approval of the pilot guidelines, the SCDE Office of Educator Services established priorities necessary for implementation of the pilot.

Fingerprint-based Background Checks for Pilot Participants

S.C. Code Ann. § 59-18-1115 mandates the use of fingerprint-based federal and state criminal history reports for determining participant eligibility in the pilot. The Office of Educator Services engaged the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) to determine requirements for the review and approval of the statue by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). To initiate the approval process, Superintendent Ellen Weaver submitted a formal request to SLED for issuance of an Originating Agency Identifier (ORI) specific to the statute authorizing the noncertified teacher pilot and distinct from the ORI already established for the sole purpose of teacher certification. SLED then submitted the statute and the SCDE request to federal authorities for consideration and subsequent approval. Following issuance of the new ORI for the noncertified teacher pilot, Educator Services worked with colleagues at SLED to establish the ORI with the state-authorized fingerprinting vendor, test transmission of background reports under the pilot ORI, and ensure that all procedural requirements were met. After final testing and notification from SLED, the Office of Educator Services received full approval for candidates to apply for pilot registration and submit fingerprint-based background reports as part of the pilot. On March 3, 2026, the State Board of Education approved at second reading Policy BBCDC *Criteria for Review of Applicants for the Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program*.

Additional Programming of Data Systems

Implementation of the pilot program has required substantive programming changes to the SCDE educator information system, SC Educator. Educator Services worked with application developers to identify system updates necessary for program implementation. These programming updates enable the candidate application process, district submission of documentation, issuance of pilot program registrations and correspondence to participants, tracking of candidate progress, and reporting requirements.

Technical Assistance to School Districts

Educator Services held virtual information sessions for school districts beginning in January 2026 and provided technical assistance to districts to information their decisions about opting into the Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program. As part of the registration process, districts were required to submit program assurances and a list of participating schools and the number of eligible pilot positions based on the total number of teaching positions in each school. Once the eligible positions were confirmed by the SCDE Office of Finance, Educator Services notified districts and engaged in additional technical assistance sessions in March 2026 for participating districts. For the 2025-26 academic year, three jumpstart districts enrolled in the pilot: Darlington, Lee, and Lexington Two. For the 2026-27 academic

year, twenty-three districts have opted to participate in the Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program.

Program Staffing

The Office of Educator Services has assigned a staff member to facilitate the Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program and provide ongoing guidance and support to participating school districts and candidates.

Program Requirements

Registration Validity

Pursuant to the Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program Guidelines, the pilot 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 all eligibility requirements and is a full 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. This registration cannot be transferred to employment in another school district. It is not equivalent to an educator certificate and cannot be presented to the educator credentialing authority of another state or jurisdiction for reciprocity purposes.

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.

Participating Districts and Registrations Issued

The following tables summarize districts participating.

Table 1. 2025-26 Registrations Issued by District

Table 1 indicates registrations issued by participating district for the 2025-26 academic year.

School District	2025-26
Darlington	0
Lee	0
Lexington 2	2
Total	2

Table 2. 2025-26 Registrations Issued by Certification Field

Table 2 indicates the number of registrations issued by certification field during the 2025-26 academic year.

Certification Field	2025-26
Elementary	1
Physical Education	1
Total	2

Table 3. 2026-27 Registrations by Participating Districts

Table 3 indicates the number of registrations issued to noncertified teachers in participating districts as of October 16, 2026.

School District	2026-27
Anderson 4	0
Barnwell	0
Beaufort	1
Cherokee	0
Chester	2
Colleton	1

School District	2026-27
Darlington	0
Fairfield	0
Florence 1	0
Florence 2	0
Florence 5	0
Georgetown	0
Greenwood 51	0
Jasper	5
Kershaw	0
Lee	1
Lexington 2	1
Lexington 5	0
Richland 2	0
York 3	1
Pickens	0
Spartanburg 5	1
Spartanburg 6	0
Spartanburg 7	0
Union	0
Williamsburg	6
Total	19

Table 4. 2026-2027 Registrations Issued by Certification Field

Table 4 indicates the number of registrations issued by certification field as of October 16, 2026.

Certification Field	2026-27
Agriculture	0
Art	2
Biology	1
Business and Marketing Education	1
Chemistry	0
Dance	0
Earth and Space Science	0
Economics	0
Elementary	6
English	4
Family and Consumer Science	0
Geography	0
Health	0
History	1

Certification Field	2026-27
Industrial Technology (i.e., Technology and Engineering Education)	0
Mathematics	0
Middle Level Language Arts	0
Middle Level Mathematics	0
Middle Level Science	0
Middle Level Social Studies	0
Music	2
Physical Education	1
Physics	0
Psychology	0
Science	0
Social Studies	0
Sociology	0
Theatre	1
World Language (excluding American Sign Language)	0
Total	19

Continuing Implementation

During the 2026-27 school year and beyond, the Office of Educator Services will continue to provide technical assistance for districts participating in the pilot program as well as information sessions for prospective districts. The office has engaged with TeachSC to increase awareness of the program and strengthen recruitment efforts. TeachSC is a collaboration between Teach.org, the SCDE, and the SC Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA). The organization supports candidates interested in becoming teachers and helps them identify preparation programs aligned with their interests and goals. The Office of Educator Services will continue to evaluate pilot program data to make appropriate recommendations for improvement and expansion and will solicit feedback from participating districts.