

South Carolina Alternative Route Teacher Pipeline Report for 2023–24

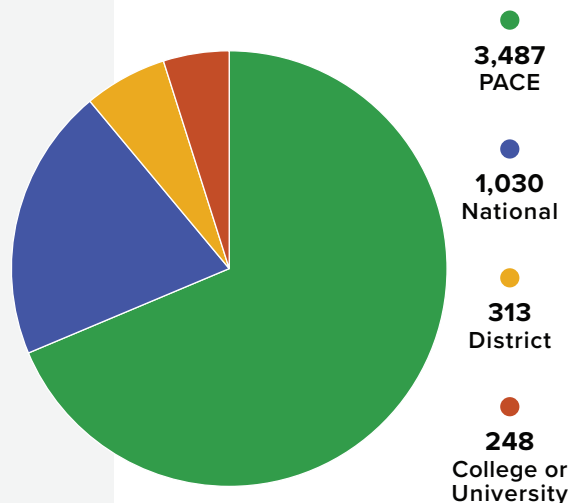
AUGUST 2025

This overview highlights takeaways from the South Carolina Alternative Route Teacher Pipeline Report for 2023–24, a statewide analysis of individuals entering the teaching profession through one of South Carolina’s 15 approved alternative certification programs. With educator-level data from 2019–20 to 2023–24, the report explores trends in preparation, certification, and retention. Additionally, it examines differences by program type and recruitment pathway. These findings offer a more detailed understanding of alternative certification, able to further inform strategies for strengthening the educator workforce.

For the full analysis of South Carolina’s alternative route teachers, read the report at www.sc-teacher.org/EPR-alt-route-aug2025.

Distribution of Alternative Route Teachers

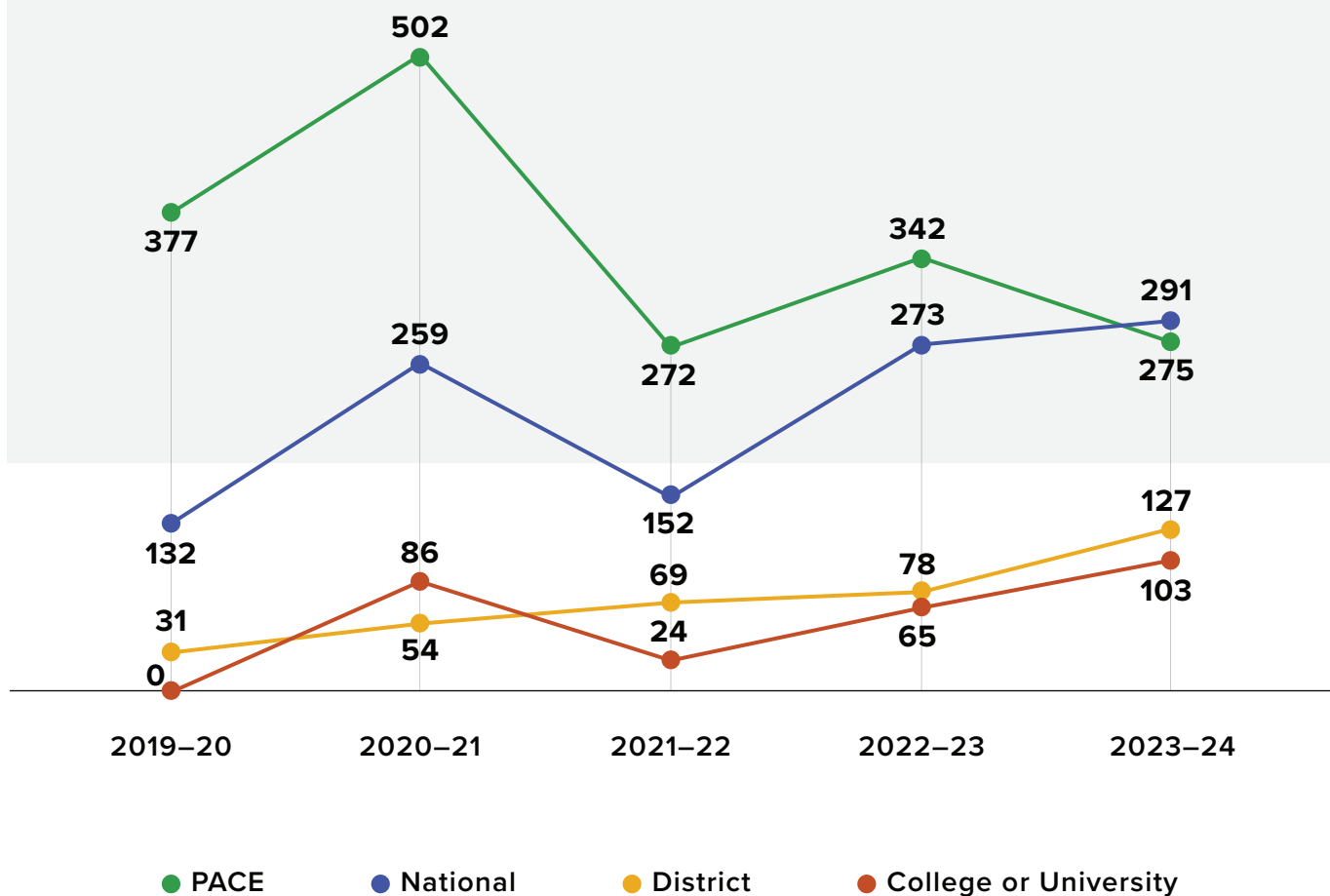
In 2023–24, nearly 70% of alternative route teachers were affiliated with the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE), the state’s oldest and largest alternative certification program. National programs accounted for a little more than 20%, while college and university-based programs—newer to the state—had the fewest participants. Distribution varied by district, with some, like Charleston County School District and Greenville County Schools, relying more on locally administered programs. As more programs gain approval, some districts are beginning to draw on a wider mix of providers, including higher education institutions.



Note. In this overview and report, *alternative route teachers* refer to all individuals affiliated with alternative certification programs (candidates and completers). *Candidates* are working toward completing an alternative certification program. *Completers* have met program requirements and advanced to a professional certificate.

Trends in Number of Newly Enrolled Candidates by Program Type

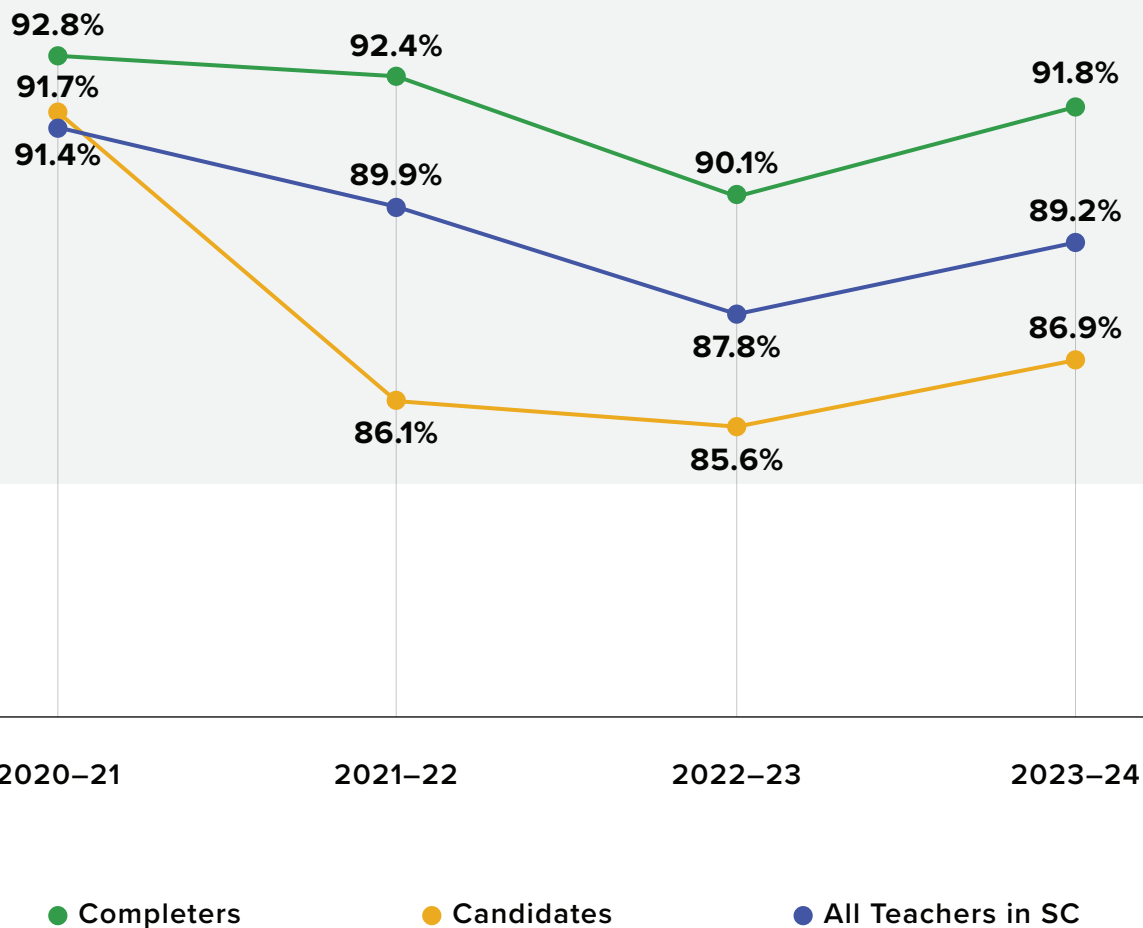
Enrollment in alternative certification programs has shifted in recent years. In 2023–24, national programs collectively enrolled more new candidates than PACE for the first time. Additionally, district, college/university, and national programs have all grown in enrollment over the past 2 years, while PACE saw a slight decline. These trends may reflect ongoing changes in how districts approach teacher preparation following disruptions from the pandemic.



Note. During the analyzed time frame, several alternative certification programs were approved by the South Carolina Department of Education and began enrolling candidates.

Trends in Retention for Alternative Route Completers + Candidates

For alternative route teachers in South Carolina, 1-year retention rates closely follow those of the overall teacher workforce. Program completers consistently had retention rates higher than 90%, slightly exceeding the state average for all teachers. In contrast, candidates had lower retention rates, likely reflecting their earlier stage in the profession and ongoing certification requirements. These trends highlight the importance of achieving professional certification for teacher stability.



Key Findings For Alternative Route Success

ATTAINING PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

- Of the 638 individuals in 2019–20 who began an alternative certification program, 439 (69%) earned a professional certificate by 2023–24.

CERTIFICATION OUTCOMES BY RECRUITMENT PATH

- In the 2019–20 cohort, 74% of candidates from within the educator workforce earned professional certification by 2023–24, compared to 66% of those from outside the workforce.

RETENTION FOR PROGRAM COMPLETERS

- For the 2019–20 cohort, the majority of teachers who attained professional certification have remained in the profession: 92% were still teaching in South Carolina public schools in 2023–24.

Summary and Next Steps

This overview and report provide new insights into the role alternative certification plays in shaping South Carolina's teacher workforce. By examining data on more than 5,000 teachers affiliated with alternative route programs, the study sheds light on who is entering the profession through these pathways, how they are progressing toward professional certification, and whether they remain in the classroom over time. Differences by program type and recruitment background offer a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the alternative certification landscape. Looking ahead, further research is needed to identify which program features most effectively support teacher certification and long-term retention. A more detailed understanding of how candidate experience, preparation models, and district context influence outcomes could help shape policies and practices to further strengthen South Carolina's teacher pipeline.



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