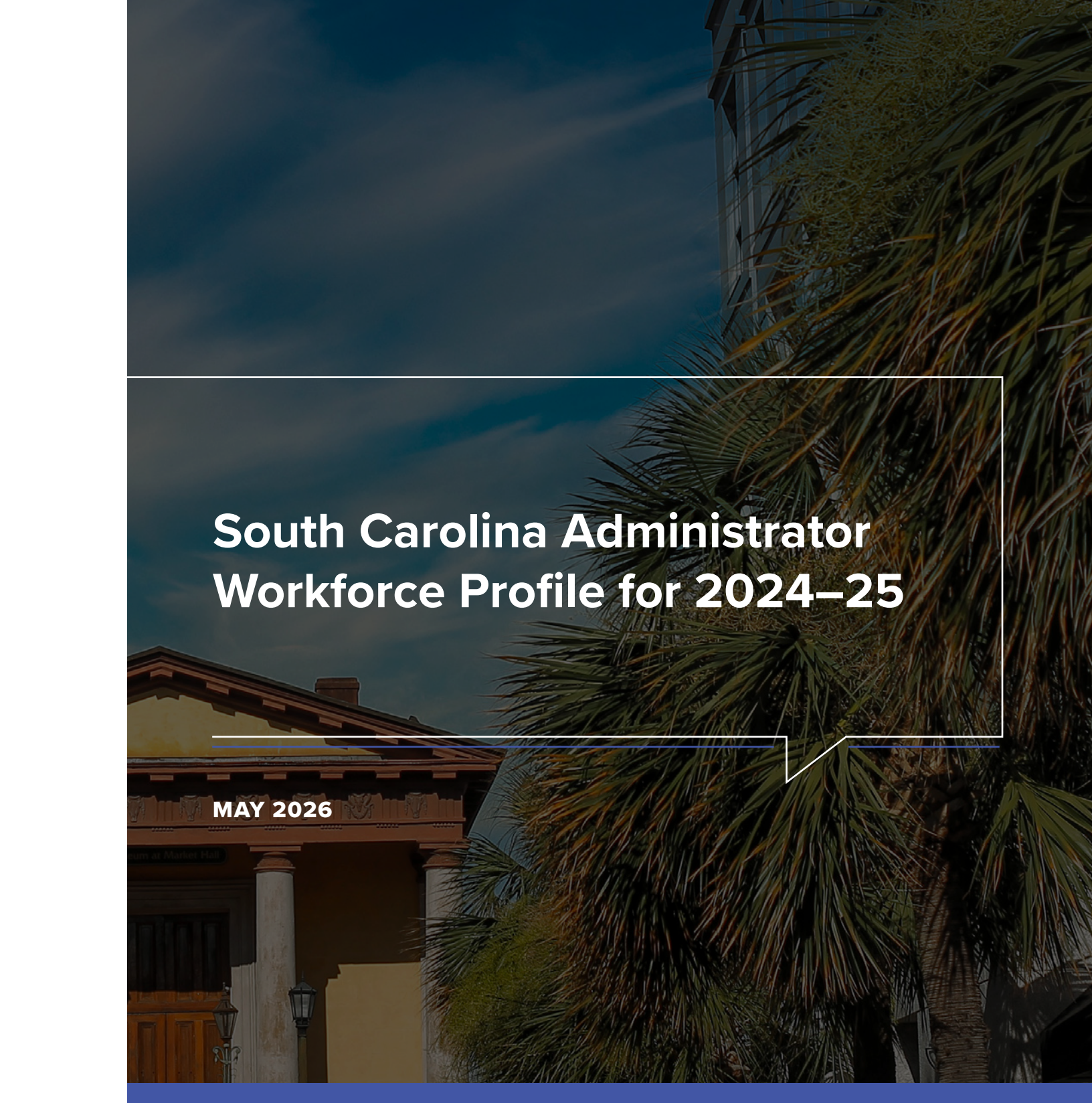
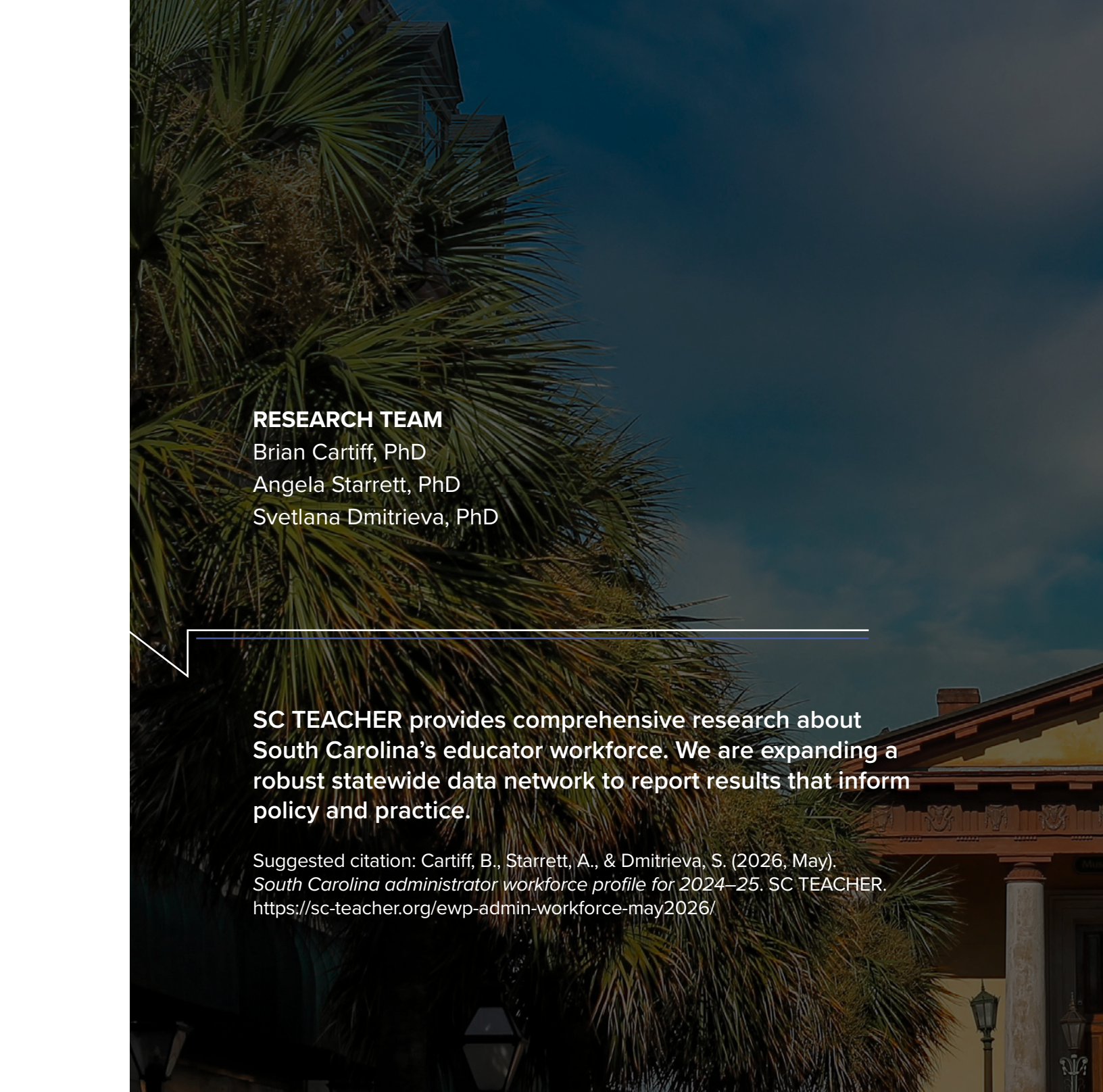




South Carolina Administrator Workforce Profile for 2024–25

MAY 2026



RESEARCH TEAM

Brian Cartiff, PhD

Angela Starrett, PhD

Svetlana Dmitrieva, PhD

SC TEACHER provides comprehensive research about South Carolina's educator workforce. We are expanding a robust statewide data network to report results that inform policy and practice.

Suggested citation: Cartiff, B., Starrett, A., & Dmitrieva, S. (2026, May). *South Carolina administrator workforce profile for 2024–25*. SC TEACHER. <https://sc-teacher.org/ewp-admin-workforce-may2026/>

Table of Contents

1 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Main Findings About the 2024–25 South Carolina Administrator Workforce

2 INTRODUCTION

- 6 Key Questions
- 7 Data, Variables, and Analyses

10 KEY QUESTION 1:

What are the personal and professional demographics of South Carolina's principals and assistant principals?

- 10 Characteristics of South Carolina Administrators

12 KEY QUESTION 2:

What is the profile of newly hired school administrators in South Carolina?

- 12 Eligibility Requirements for School Administrators in South Carolina
- 12 Entry Into the South Carolina Administrator Workforce in 2024–25
- 13 Experience and Age Profiles of New Administrators

15 KEY QUESTION 3:

What are the retention trends of school principals in South Carolina?

- 15 Trends in Principal Retention Rates Across South Carolina
- 15 State-Level Retention
- 16 District-Level Retention
- 16 School-Level Retention
- 16 Comparisons Between Principal and Teacher Retention
- 17 Principal Retention Across Organizational Levels

18 CONCLUSION

19 GLOSSARY

20 REFERENCES



Administrator Workforce Profile in South Carolina

+ HIGHLIGHTS

This report details South Carolina's public school administrator workforce for the 2024–25 academic year. The analysis draws on statewide data to examine the demographic characteristics of South Carolina's principal and assistant principal workforce. Findings are based on data from 1,385 principals and 2,351 assistant principals employed in South Carolina public schools in 2024–25. The report also incorporates data from previous years to track longitudinal trends, offering insight into workforce patterns. These findings can support data-informed strategies to strengthen administrator recruitment and retention, which in turn may contribute to broader efforts to improve the stability of South Carolina's educator workforce.

MAIN FINDINGS ABOUT THE 2024–25 SOUTH CAROLINA ADMINISTRATOR WORKFORCE

- Principals differed from assistant principals in experience and credentials, with higher rates of earning a doctorate and an additional 4 years of experience in public education on average.
- Assistant principals were generally younger than principals—more heavily concentrated in the 30–39 age range—consistent with assistant principal roles often preceding principalship.
- A total of 484 administrators entered the workforce in 2024–25, with approximately 85% entering as assistant principals, underscoring the central role assistant principals play in growing the workforce.
- Most newly hired administrators (69%) transitioned from another role within the South Carolina educator workforce. About three-quarters of these internal hires transitioned to the new role from within their current districts.
- Administrators entering their positions from outside the South Carolina educator workforce stepped into principal positions at higher rates and had more years of prior experience on average.
- Principal retention remained relatively stable over time, with declines following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and modest rebounds in more recent years. Relatively few principals moved between districts.
- Comparisons with teacher retention showed slightly lower retention among principals, likely reflecting differences in age profiles and career structure.
- Principal retention patterns differed across state, district, and school levels, with intradistrict mobility occurring at higher rates than interdistrict mobility.

+ INTRODUCTION

School administrators are pivotal to setting rigorous expectations, cultivating effective teaching, and ensuring positive outcomes for students and staff. Stable leadership underpins continuous improvement because organizational development unfolds over time (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Fullan, 2020). Research further shows that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-based factors influencing student achievement, with principals shaping instructional quality, school climate, and organizational coherence (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Miller, 2013). Findings from the most recent SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey indicate that administrator support is strongly associated with teachers' job satisfaction and intent to remain in their positions (Gao et al., 2025). For state and district decision-makers, understanding who leads schools, how those leaders are prepared, and how long they remain in their roles is essential for maintaining educational quality.

An examination of the personal demographics of school administrators, including race/ethnicity, gender, and age, provides important insight into statewide leadership patterns. National data indicate that the principal workforce in the United States remains disproportionately White compared to the increasingly diverse student population (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023), even as research indicates that leadership diversity can positively influence student experiences and perceptions, particularly for students of color (Grissom et al., 2021). Analyzing demographic differences at both the principal and assistant principal levels allows state leaders to assess the extent to which school leadership reflects the communities it serves. Examining age distributions helps identify whether large shares of late career administrators signal impending retirements and potential leadership shortages (Bartanen et al., 2019). Age profiles also provide context for understanding workforce composition and the potential for leadership transitions over time.



Professional characteristics, such as educational attainment and years of experience, offer additional insight into leadership capacity and stability. Research indicates that administrator effectiveness is associated with years of experience and level of educational preparation, making these characteristics useful indicators of leadership capacity (Clark et al., 2009; Herman et al., 2017). Distinguishing between principals and assistant principals is particularly important in this regard. Assistant principals represent the primary pipeline into principalship (Bartanen et al., 2021) and, in many contexts, tend to be earlier in their career and more demographically diverse than principals (Gates et al., 2019; NCES, 2023). Examining these roles separately clarifies career progression pathways and provides context for understanding differences in professional characteristics across leadership levels.

Research suggests that structured leadership development initiatives are associated with more effective and stable school leaders (Gates et al., 2019).

Patterns among newly hired administrators offer a timely window into the health of the administrator pipeline. Because most principals begin as teachers, transitions from classroom to leadership roles reflect broader patterns in how educators move through the profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; NCES, 2023). Research suggests that structured leadership development initiatives are associated with more effective and stable school leaders (Gates et al., 2019). Hiring sources also matter: Internal hires often bring institutional knowledge and continuity, while external hires may contribute new perspectives. The balance between internal and external recruitment can reflect the structure of local leadership pipelines, particularly in hard-to-staff contexts (Béteille et al., 2012).





Age profiles among newly hired administrators provide additional context for understanding workforce dynamics. Principal turnover tends to be highest early in tenure and near retirement (Baker et al., 2010; Grissom et al., 2021). Younger entrants into the administrator pipeline may offer greater potential for long term continuity, whereas late career entrants may be expected to have shorter tenures. Considered alongside experience, age profiles sharpen forecasts of leadership stability and workforce sustainability (Grissom & Mitani, 2016).

Principal retention trends at the state, district, and school levels provide critical indicators of leadership stability. State-level analyses offer a broad view of workforce dynamics, while district-level analyses can reveal variation in working conditions, compensation, and support systems (Levin et al., 2020). Because administrator turnover most directly affects the schools in which administrators work, examining school-level retention is also crucial. School-level retention rates may better illustrate issues tied to school climate, workload, accountability pressure, or community context (Levin & Bradley, 2019). They may also reflect district-mandated shifting of administrators from one school to another to account for enrollment changes or other factors that affect staffing needs.



Research has documented that principal retention rates may differ across elementary, middle, and high schools (e.g., Grissom & Bartanen, 2019; Knight et al., 2025; NCES, 2024a). These differences may be linked to leadership team structures that vary substantially by school level. For example, middle and high schools are more likely to employ assistant principals (and to have multiple assistant principals) than elementary schools, affecting support capacity, task distribution, and access to mentoring (Goldring et al., 2025). Principal retention may also differ across organizational levels because contextual differences affect how principals at different levels allocate their time. Elementary administrators typically devote a larger share of time to instructional work than their counterparts in middle or high schools, while middle school leaders spend more time addressing student management demands (NCES, 2026). High school administrators, who typically oversee larger and more complex organizations, spend comparatively more time on internal administrative tasks (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; NCES, 2026). Together, these contextual differences provide motivation for examining retention patterns separately across school levels.

For educational stakeholders and decision-makers, workforce profile data provide a foundation for understanding the current state of school leadership in South Carolina. This comprehensive profile of administrator demographics, entry patterns, and retention trends offers context for examining leadership development pipelines, hiring and promotion channels, preparation pathways, and workforce stability across schools and districts. Given the empirical links between school leadership and both student outcomes and teacher retention, systematic examination of these patterns contributes to a broader understanding of educator workforce dynamics statewide.

KEY QUESTIONS

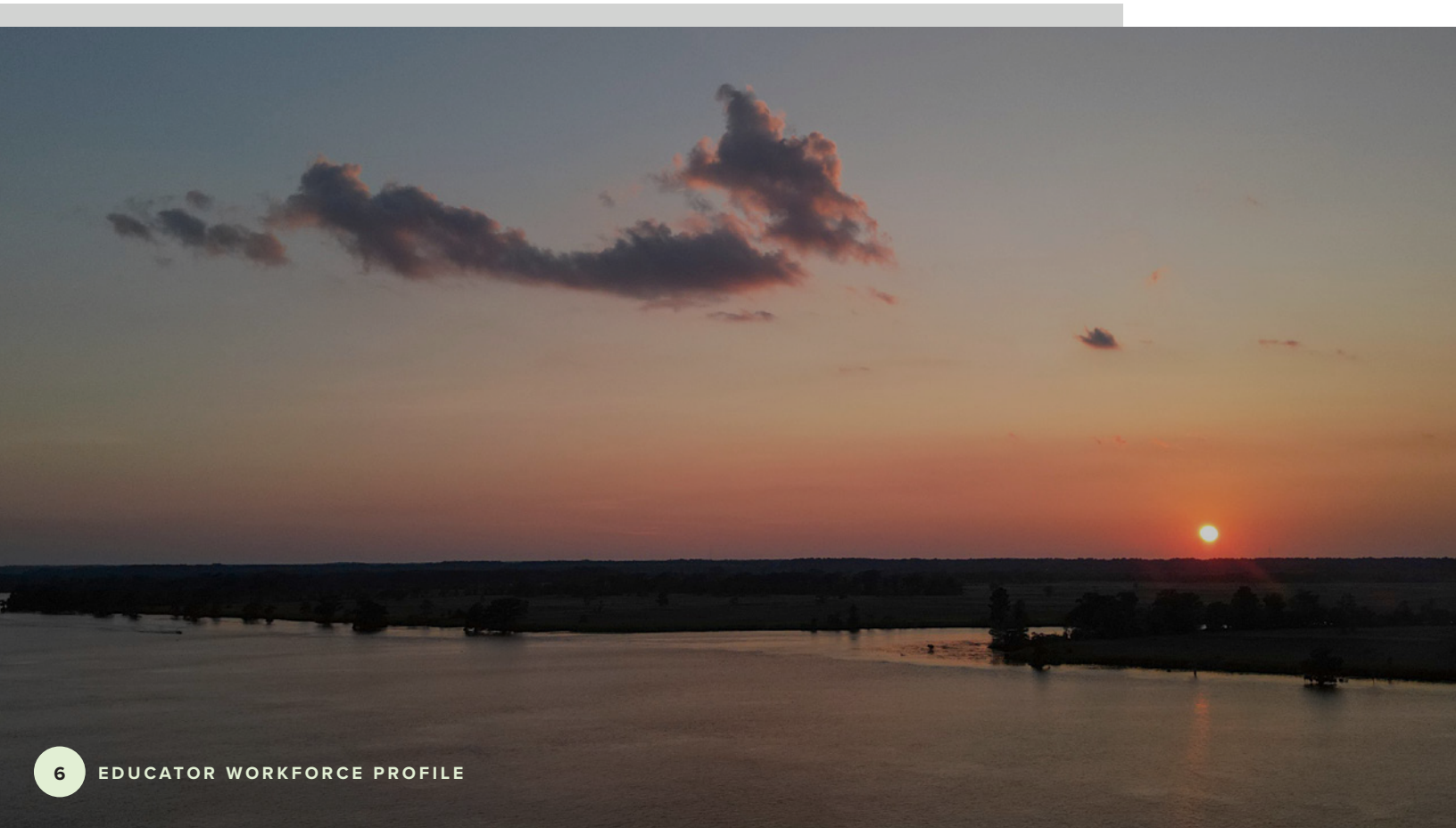
This report describes South Carolina's 2024–25 public school administrator workforce, presenting key personal and professional characteristics of principals and assistant principals. It also profiles newly hired administrators to inform statewide recruitment efforts and examines principal retention trends to provide a more complete view of the public educator pipeline.

These analyses are intended to support data-informed decision-making and may be used alongside other SC TEACHER reports to guide state- and district-level strategies for strengthening the educator workforce.

This report addresses the following key questions:

1. What are the personal and professional demographics of South Carolina's principals and assistant principals?
2. What is the profile of newly hired school administrators in South Carolina?
3. What are the retention trends of school principals in South Carolina?

Key terms used throughout the report are defined in the Glossary (p. 19).



DATA, VARIABLES, AND ANALYSES

Data for the 2024–25 administrator workforce profile were provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) through a memorandum of understanding with SC TEACHER. This information included administrator-level data for the 2019–20 through 2024–25 school years to support longitudinal analyses.

The analyses primarily draw on data from 3,699 administrators employed in South Carolina public school districts during the 2024–25 academic year. Administrators are defined as individuals holding one of four position codes: principals (1), assistant principals (2), career and technical education (CTE) directors (13), and CTE assistant directors (14). Except where noted, principals and CTE directors were combined into a single *principal* group ($N = 1,385$), which also includes a small number of charter school directors who shared the same position code. Assistant principals and CTE assistant directors were similarly grouped into an *assistant principal* category ($N = 2,351$). The number of role assignments (3,736) exceeds the number of unique administrators because some individuals held more than one administrative role during the year, such as assistant principals who were promoted to principal midyear.

Because the dataset represents the full population of public school administrators rather than a sample, analyses focus on descriptive trends rather than inferential statistics. Percentages are calculated using available data when information is missing.





Our Key Questions



+ KEY QUESTION 1:

What are the personal and professional demographics of South Carolina's principals and assistant principals?

To address Key Question 1, data from 2024–25 were analyzed to describe key demographic characteristics of South Carolina principals and assistant principals, including gender, race/ethnicity, degree attainment, and years of experience in public education. The average ages and age distributions of both groups were also examined.

Characteristics of South Carolina Administrators

A comparison of 2024–25 demographic data for principals and assistant principals appears in Table 1. Approximately 61% of principals and 63% of assistant principals were female, compared with 79% of teachers statewide (Dmitrieva et al., 2026). Examining race and ethnicity, just less than two thirds of principals were White (62.9%), and slightly more than one third were Black (35.9%). These proportions differed from the teacher workforce, which was 76.5% White and 17.3% Black (Dmitrieva et al., 2026).

Professional characteristics differed more substantially. Approximately 18% of principals held a doctoral degree, compared with 11% of assistant principals, and principals averaged about 4 additional years of experience in the field (approximately 22 years total). These differences align with common career pathways in which assistant principals accumulate experience and credentials before assuming principal roles.

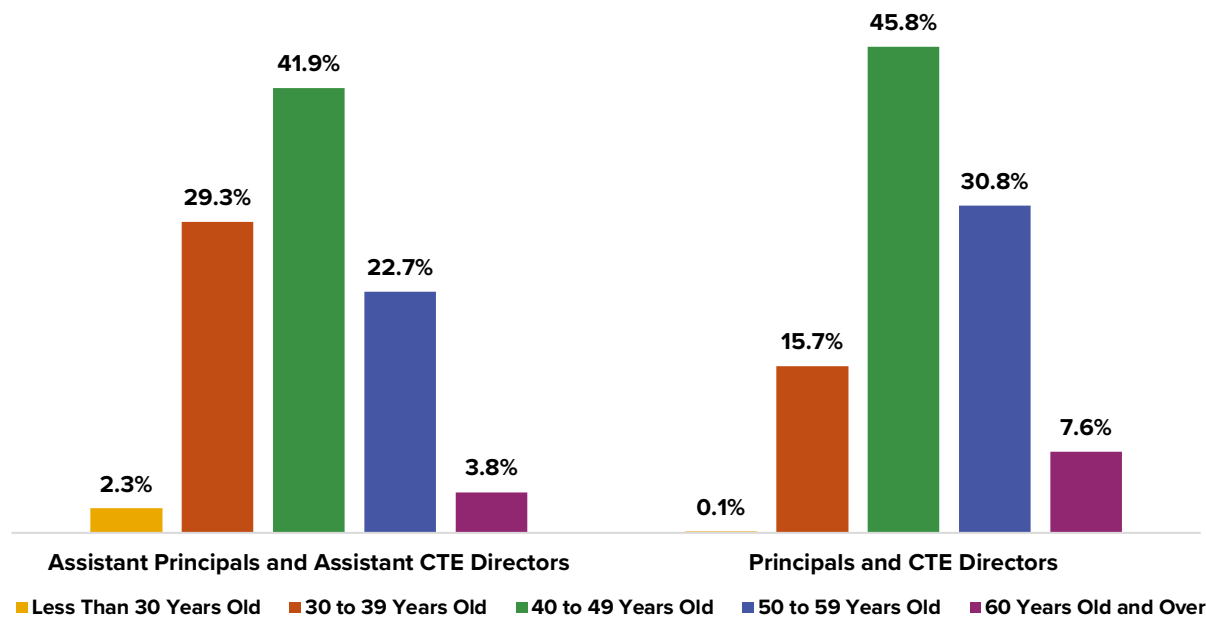
Table 1. Demographics of South Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals in 2024–25

	Principals/CTE directors (n = 1,385)	Assistant principals/assistant CTE directors (n = 2,351)
Female	60.5%	63.3%
White	62.9%	62.8%
Black	35.9%	35.5%
Other race/ethnicity	1.5%	1.7%
Holding a doctoral degree	17.7%	10.8%
Average years of experience in education	22.2 years	18.4 years

Note. CTE directors (n = 43) and CTE assistant directors (n = 23) were grouped with principals and assistant principals, respectively, due to their small numbers and similar duties. Percentages are based on available data; the denominator for each characteristic may vary slightly due to missing values.

Administrator age profiles further illuminate workforce sustainability. Principals had a mean age of 47.5 years, compared with 44.1 years for assistant principals. Few administrators were younger than 30, and assistant principals were nearly twice as likely as principals to fall within the 30–39 age range (as shown in Figure 1). This pattern reflects the assistant principalship as a primary entry point into school leadership.

Figure 1. *Age Distribution of Public School Administrators in South Carolina*



Overall, while principals and assistant principals in South Carolina exhibited similar gender and racial/ethnic compositions in 2024–25, they differed meaningfully in age, experience, and educational attainment. These variations underscore a structured leadership pipeline and provide important context for planning future administrator recruitment and development efforts.

+ KEY QUESTION 2:

What is the profile of newly hired school administrators in South Carolina?

To address Key Question 2, analyses focused on newly hired South Carolina school administrators in 2024–25 and the sources from which they entered administrative roles. These included administrators transitioning from in state teaching and other educator positions, with distinctions between hires from within the same district and those from different districts. Analyses also included administrators entering from outside the South Carolina educator workforce, such as out of state hires or individuals returning to the profession. Age profiles were examined to provide context for patterns of entry into administrative roles.

Eligibility Requirements for School Administrators in South Carolina

Employment as a school administrator in South Carolina requires meeting certification and preparation standards established by the SCDE. Candidates must hold a master's degree or higher, possess a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate, and complete a state-approved administrator preparation program. A minimum of 3 years of teaching experience is also required. South Carolina offers both a traditional certification route and a Tier 1 alternative route for eligible candidates with relevant experience. Full details about administrator certification requirements are available through the SCDE (n.d.) and Regulation 43-64 (South Carolina Board of Education, 2025).

Entry Into the South Carolina Administrator Workforce in 2024–25

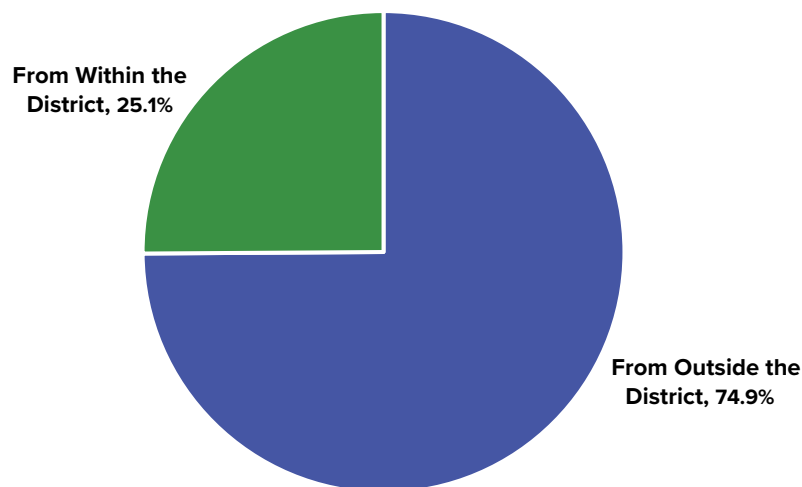
A total of 484 administrators were newly hired into administrative roles in South Carolina public schools in 2024–25, defined as individuals serving in principal or assistant principal roles who had not held an administrative position in the prior year. This group included individuals who transitioned from non-administrative roles within the state educator workforce, as well as those entering from outside the state educator workforce. Administrators who moved between administrative positions within the state, such as an assistant principal promoted to principal, are outside the scope of this analysis. Approximately 85% of newly hired administrators entered into assistant principal roles.

Entries From Within the South Carolina Educator Workforce

Of the 484 newly hired administrators, 334 transitioned from non-administrator roles within South Carolina school districts. Most of these individuals moved from teaching positions (57.8%), while the rest (42.2%) transitioned from non-teaching roles, such as instructional coaches. More than 90% of administrators entering from within the state educator workforce were hired into assistant principal positions.

Figure 2 shows that approximately three-quarters of administrators entering from within the South Carolina educator workforce were hired within the same district. These transitions indicate that many educators move into administrative roles without leaving their district. Although the district retains the individual, a school-level vacancy is created when an educator moves from a non-administrative role to an administrative role. The remaining 25% were hired into administrative positions in a different district than the one in which they previously worked.

Figure 2. *Entry of New Administrators From the South Carolina Educator Workforce*



Entries From Outside the South Carolina Educator Workforce

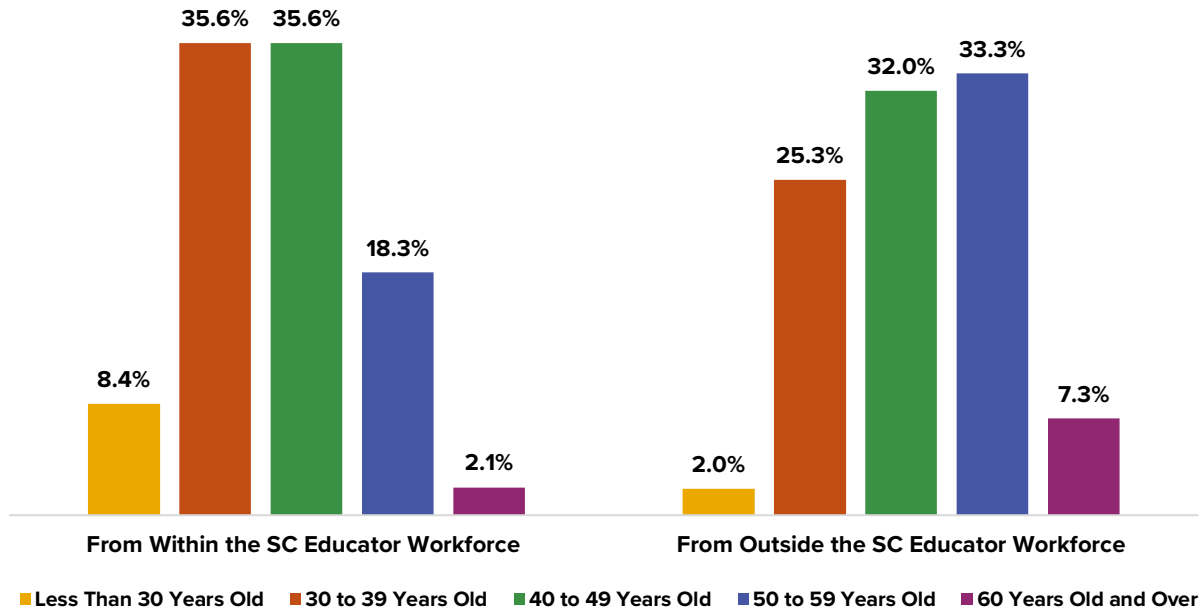
An additional 150 newly hired administrators entered their positions from outside the South Carolina public educator workforce, as captured in available records. These individuals did not hold an educator position in South Carolina in 2023–24 and likely primarily include administrators hired from out of state, as well as smaller numbers of individuals returning to the workforce after a period of absence. More than one third of these externally sourced administrators entered principal positions.

Experience and Age Profiles of New Administrators

Differences between administrators entering from within and outside the South Carolina educator workforce suggest that these groups may contribute distinct attributes to the workforce. Administrators entering from outside the state workforce had, on average, more prior experience than those transitioning from within the state workforce (17.6 years and 15.7 years, respectively).

These differences in experience were accompanied by differences in age profiles. Although the age ranges of the two groups were similar (25–69 for internal entrants and 28–68 for external entrants), administrators entering from within the state educator workforce were younger on average (mean age of 41.5 years; median of 40 years) than those entering from outside the workforce (mean age of 46.5 years; median of 47 years). Figure 3 illustrates these contrasts, showing greater concentrations of internal entrants in younger age groups.

Figure 3. *Age Distributions of New Administrators by Entry Source*



Taken altogether, these patterns indicate that newly hired administrators enter the South Carolina workforce through distinct sources. Administrators recruited from outside the state educator workforce tend to bring more years of prior experience, which may strengthen leadership capacity in the short term. In contrast, administrators transitioning from within the state educator workforce are, on average, younger, suggesting greater potential for longer term retention and leadership continuity. Balancing recruitment from both sources may therefore support both immediate workforce needs and the long term sustainability of the administrator pipeline.

+ KEY QUESTION 3:

What are the retention trends of school principals in South Carolina?

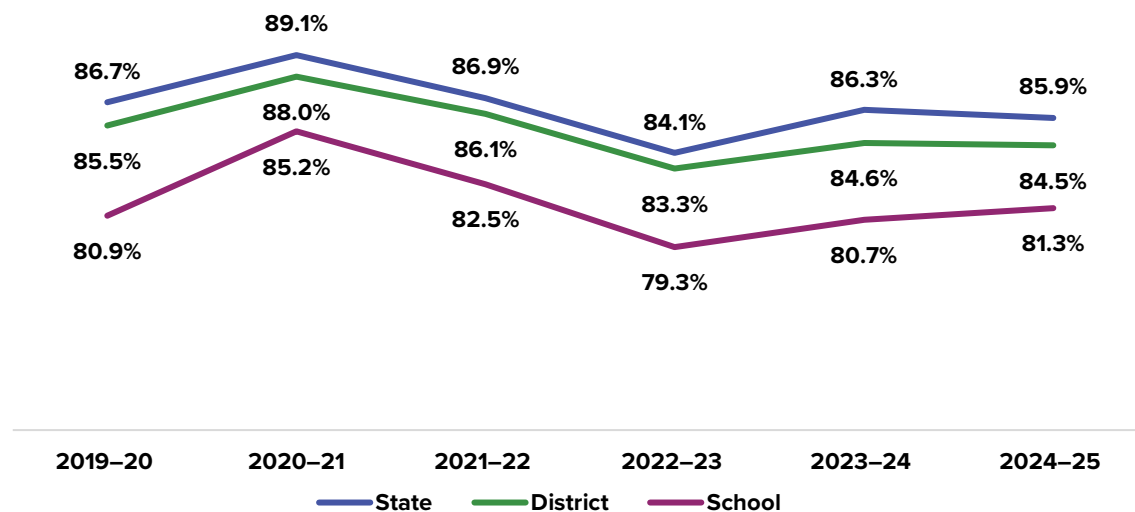
Key Question 3 was addressed in analysis by calculating 1-year principal retention rates for the 6 most recent academic years (2019–20 through 2024–25) and examining those rates at the state, district, and school levels to capture distinct patterns of principal mobility that may be obscured in single level analyses. CTE directors were included with principals. Assistant principals and assistant CTE directors were excluded because these roles often serve as pathways to the principalship, and departures from assistant principal positions may reflect expected career progression rather than leadership instability.

State-level principal retention rates were also examined by organizational level. Elementary, middle, and high schools operate in distinct contexts that may shape retention patterns, reflecting differences in leadership demands, organizational complexity, and student needs. Variation in working conditions across these settings may therefore be associated with differences in principal retention.

Trends in Principal Retention Rates Across South Carolina

Figure 4 presents state-, district-, and school-level 1-year retention rates for principals. Across all three levels, retention declined immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic and then rebounded modestly in 2023–24.

Figure 4. *Principal Retention Rates Across South Carolina*



State-Level Retention

State-level retention reflects the proportion of principals who remained in a principalship at any South Carolina public PK–12 school from one year to the next. Principals who changed schools or districts within the state were considered retained if they continued serving as principals. State-level retention recovered to near prepandemic levels in 2023–24 but declined slightly in 2024–25. In most years, around 15% of administrators did not return to a principalship in the state the following year; some of these administrators may have moved into district-level administrative roles.

District-Level Retention

District-level retention captures the proportion of principals who remained in the same district in a principal role from one year to the next, whether they stayed at the same school or moved to another within the district. District-level retention followed trends similar to those at the state level, but retention rates plateaued in 2024–25. The consistently narrow gap of around 1–2 percentage points between state- and district-level retention suggests limited interdistrict movement, indicating that principals who leave a district typically exit principalship statewide rather than transfer to another district.

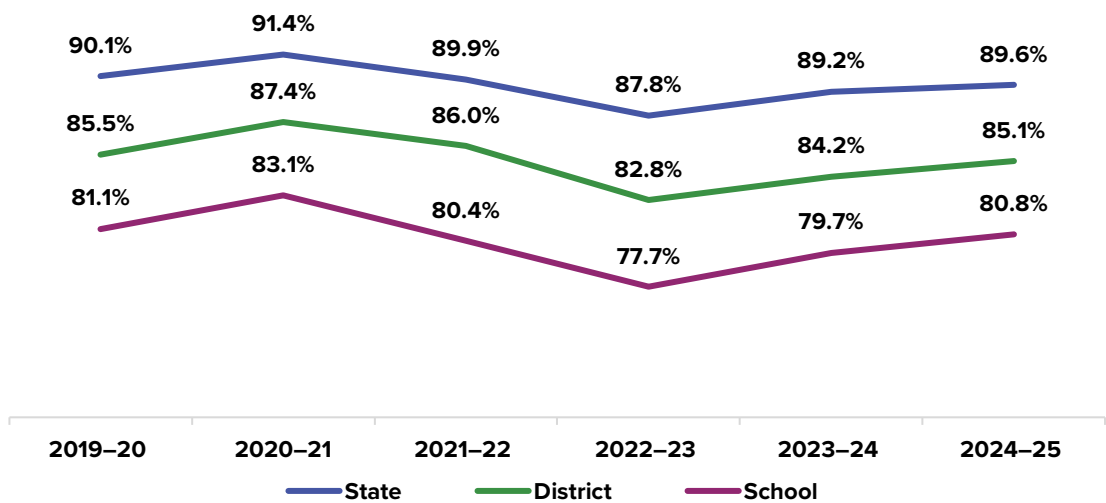
School-Level Retention

School-level retention captures principals who remained at the same school from one year to the next and reflects both voluntary movement and district-initiated transfers of principals. By 2024–25, school-level retention had returned to prepandemic levels. The difference between district-level and school-level retention, typically around 3–4 percentage points, reflects intradistrict movement of principals across schools within the same district.

Comparisons Between Principal and Teacher Retention

Prior research links principal turnover to negative outcomes, including lower student achievement (Burkhauser et al., 2012; Kearney et al., 2018) and increased teacher turnover (Bartanen et al., 2019; Buckman, 2021). Comparing principal and teacher retention patterns therefore provides valuable context for understanding educator workforce stability in South Carolina. Figure 5 presents state-, district-, and school-level teacher retention rates published in the *South Carolina Teacher Attrition, Mobility, and Retention Report for 2024–25* (Starrett et al., 2026).

Figure 5. Teacher Retention Rates Across South Carolina



Note. This figure is reproduced from Starrett et al. (2026).

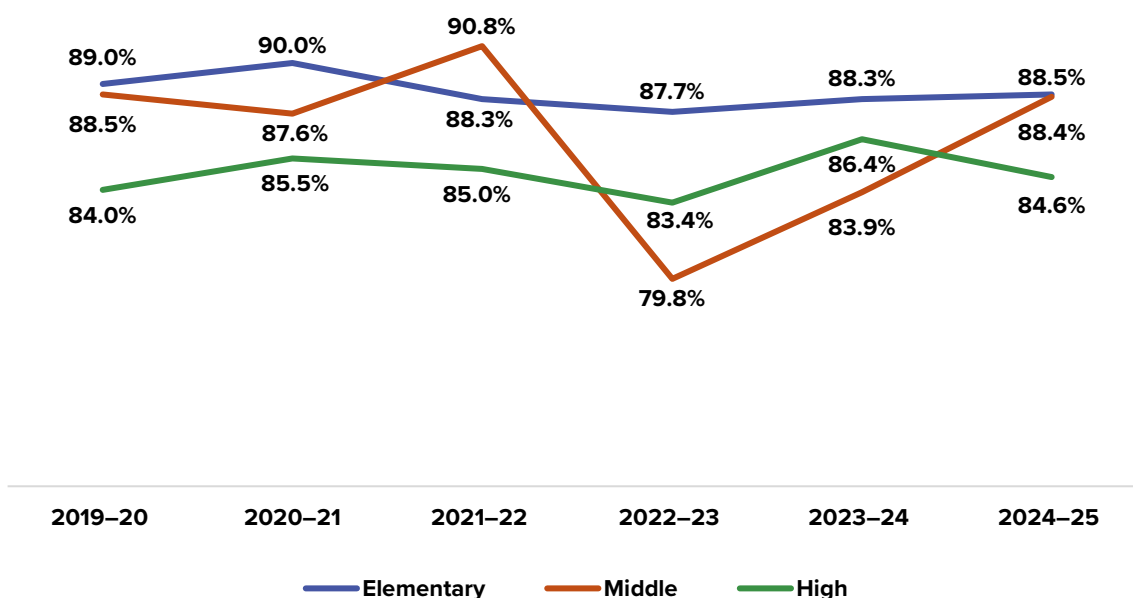
Retention patterns for principals and teachers were broadly similar, with postpandemic declines followed by several years of recovery. State-level principal retention was consistently 2–4 percentage points lower than teacher retention, likely reflecting the older age profile of the principal workforce. In 2024–25, 38.4% of principals were age 50 or older, compared with 29.5% of teachers (Dmitrieva et al., 2026). These patterns align with national data showing higher rates of leaving among principals (11%) than among teachers (8%) (NCES, 2024a; NCES, 2024b).

Teachers exhibited greater mobility than principals across both interdistrict and intradistrict contexts. Differences between state- and district-level retention rates averaged 4–5 percentage points for teachers, compared with 1–2 percentage points for administrators, indicating greater cross-district movement among classroom teachers. Differences between district- and school-level retention rates were narrower, but teachers remained more mobile, with gaps of roughly 4–6 percentage points, compared with 3–4 percentage points for principals. Lower mobility among principals likely reflects the limited number of principalships and the role’s status as a terminal position for many educators.

Principal Retention Across Organizational Levels

To calculate state-level retention rates by organizational level, principals at each level were identified and linked across years to determine whether they continued serving as principals in any South Carolina public school the following year. Retention rates for elementary, middle, and high schools are presented in Figure 6. CTE directors and principals at combined-level schools and early childhood centers were excluded due to small sample sizes and interpretive limitations.

Figure 6. State-Level Retention Rates of Principals Across Organizational Levels



Note. State-level retention reflects whether principals remained in a principal role anywhere in South Carolina the following year. Principals counted as retained may have moved to a different school or a different school level.

Over most of the period examined, high school principals were less likely to remain in the state principal workforce than elementary and middle school principals, consistent with national findings (Goldring & Taie, 2018). Middle school principal retention declined sharply from 2021–22 to 2022–23, mirroring patterns in middle school teacher retention (Starrett et al., 2026), before rebounding through 2024–25. High school principal retention showed slight variation over the 6 years examined and remained at prepandemic levels in 2024–25. In comparison, elementary school principal retention remained stable through the analyzed time period.

Overall, principal retention in South Carolina remained relatively stable over the 6 academic years examined in this report, with declines following the pandemic rebounding in subsequent years. Retention varied across state, district, and school levels, reflecting differences in the degree of mobility within and between districts. Comparisons with teacher retention indicate that principal retention followed similar broad trends but occurred at slightly lower rates, reflecting differences in workforce composition and career structure.

+ CONCLUSION

This report provides a comprehensive profile of South Carolina's public school administrator workforce during the 2024–25 academic year, with longitudinal comparisons going back to 2019–20. Analyses highlight key patterns in administrator demographics, preparation, entry pathways, and retention. The findings reveal a predominantly female workforce that is racially similar across principal and assistant principal roles. The administrator workforce is more diverse than the state's teacher workforce but remains less diverse than the state's student population. Differences in age, experience, and educational attainment between principals and assistant principals are consistent with a leadership pipeline in which assistant principal roles often precede the principalship. Age profiles further underscore both opportunities and challenges for workforce sustainability: Younger administrators entering through internal pipelines may offer longer-term leadership continuity, while concentrations of late-career principals signal the importance of proactive succession planning.

Analyses of newly hired administrators show that South Carolina draws leaders from multiple entry points, including transitions from within the state educator workforce and entry from outside the state educator workforce. These pathways are associated with distinct workforce characteristics: Internal entrants tended to be younger at the time of hire, while those entering from outside the state workforce had more years of prior experience on average. Analyses also indicate that principal retention remained relatively stable over the period examined, with declines following the pandemic largely rebounding in subsequent years. Retention patterns varied across state, district, and school levels, reflecting differences in the degree of mobility within districts, between districts, and out of the principalship or state altogether.

While this report documents the individuals serving as school leaders, how they enter these roles, and how long they remain, it cannot fully explain why administrators stay or leave particular schools or positions. SC TEACHER's June 2026 report exploring the results of the state's first SC Administrator Working Conditions Survey will extend this analysis by examining principals' and assistant principals' workplace experiences, including perceptions of their resources and demands. Together, these two reports will offer a more complete picture of South Carolina's administrator workforce, one that spans both workforce composition and on-the-job conditions.

+ GLOSSARY

Assistant Principal

An educational leader who assists the principal in the overall administration of a school, taking on various roles, including operational management, student discipline, instructional leadership, and teacher/student support. In South Carolina, assistant principals are designated with a position code of 2.

Career and Technical Education Center Assistant Director

An educational leader who assists the director in the overall administration of a career and technical education center. In South Carolina, career and technical education center assistant directors are designated with a position code of 14. In this report, these assistant directors have been analyzed alongside assistant principals and referred to as assistant principals because they share similar responsibilities with traditional assistant principals.

Career and Technical Education Center Director

An educational leader who oversees the planning, development, and implementation of a career and technical education center. Those in this role ensure compliance with regulations and coordinate with other departments and agencies to prepare students for careers and postsecondary education. In South Carolina, career and technical education center directors are designated with a position code of 13. In this report, these directors have been analyzed alongside principals and referred to as principals because they share similar responsibilities and evaluation requirements with traditional principals.

Position Code

A numerical designation assigned by the state or district to categorize an educator's role within the school system (e.g., classroom teacher, instructional coach, administrator). For this report, administrators are those with position codes 1 (principal), 2 (assistant principal), 13 (career and technical education center director), and 14 (career and technical education center assistant director). For the sake of simplicity, administrators in positions 1 and 13 are referred to throughout the report as principals, and those in positions 2 and 14 are referred to as assistant principals.

Principal

An educational leader and administrative head of a school, responsible for overseeing daily operations, managing staff, implementing policies, and ensuring a productive and safe learning environment for students, teachers, and staff. In South Carolina, principals are designated with a position code of 1.

Retention (Principal)

When a principal remains in the same position in a South Carolina public school from one year to the next. Retention can be analyzed at multiple levels:

- **State-Level Retention:** When a principal continues to serve in the same position in a South Carolina public school, regardless of district or school changes.
- **District-Level Retention:** When a principal continues to serve in the same position in the same district, even if they switch schools within that district.
- **School-Level Retention:** When a principal continues to serve in the same school.

Retention (Teacher)

When a teacher remains in the South Carolina public school teaching profession from one year to the next. Retention can be analyzed at multiple levels:

- **State-Level Retention:** When a teacher continues to teach in a South Carolina public school, regardless of district or school changes.
- **District-Level Retention:** When a teacher continues to teach in the same district, even if they switch schools within that district.
- **School-Level Retention:** When a teacher continues to teach in the same school.

Teacher

Any public school educator in South Carolina assigned a position code of 3–9. This includes PK–12 classroom teachers (i.e., prekindergarten, kindergarten, classroom), special education teachers (i.e., self-contained, resource, itinerant), and retired teachers returning to teach.

+ REFERENCES

- Baker, B. D., Punswick, E., & Belt, C. (2010). School leadership stability, principal moves, and departures: Evidence from Missouri. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(4), 523–557. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161x10383832>
- Bartanen, B., Grissom, J. A., & Rogers, L. K. (2019). The impacts of principal turnover. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 41(3), 350–374. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373719855044>
- Bartanen, B., Rogers, L. K., & Woo, D. S. (2021). Assistant principal mobility and its relationship with principal turnover. *Educational Researcher*, 50(6), 368–380. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x21993105>
- Béteille, T., Kalogrides, D., & Loeb, S. (2012). Stepping stones: Principal career paths and school outcomes. *Social Science Research*, 41(4), 904–919. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2012.03.003>
- Buckman, D. G. (2021). The influence of principal retention and principal turnover on teacher turnover. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*, 5. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1342371.pdf>
- Burkhauser, S., Gates, S. M., Hamilton, L. S., & Ikemoto, G. S. (2012). *First-year principals in urban school districts: How actions and working conditions relate to outcomes*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1191.html
- Clark, D., Martorell, P., & Rockoff, J. (2009). *School principals and school performance* (Working paper 38). National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509693.pdf>
- Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M. T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford Educational Leadership Institute. <https://wallacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Preparing-School-Leaders-Executive-Summary.pdf>
- DeMatthews, D., Carrola, P., Reyes, P., & Knight, D. (2021). School leadership burnout and job-related stress: Recommendations for district administrators and principals. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 94(4), 159–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2021.1894083>
- Dmitrieva, S., Cartiff, B., & Starrett, A. (2026, April). *South Carolina teacher workforce profile for 2024–25*. SC TEACHER. sc-teacher.org/ewp-teacher-workforce-april2026
- Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a culture of change*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Gao, R., Starrett, A., Cartiff, B., & Dmitrieva, S. (2025, June). *The 2025 SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. SC TEACHER. <https://www.sc-teacher.org/TWC-survey-report-june2025>
- Gates, S. M., Baird, M. D., Master, B. K., & Chavez-Herreras, E. R. (2019). *Principal pipelines: A feasible, affordable, and effective way for districts to improve schools*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2666.html
- Goldring, E., Herrmann, M., Moyer, A., & Rubin, M. (2025). Assistant principals. In D. Harris (Ed.), *Live handbook of education policy research*. Association for Education Finance and Policy. <https://livehandbook.org/k-12-education/workforce-administrators/other/assistant-principals/>
- Goldring, R., and Taie, S. (2018). *Principal attrition and mobility: Results from the 2016–17 Principal Follow-up Survey First Look* (NCES 2018-066). US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018066.pdf>
- Grissom, J. A., & Bartanen, B. (2019). Principal effectiveness and principal turnover. *Education Finance and Policy*, 14(3), 355–382. https://doi.org/10.1162/edfp_a_00256
- Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). *How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/principalsynthesis>

- Grissom, J. A., & Loeb, S. (2011). Triangulating principal effectiveness: How perspectives of parents, teachers, and assistant principals identify the central importance of managerial skills. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48(5), 1091–1123. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831211402663>
- Grissom, J. A., & Mitani, H. (2016). Principal turnover and student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(3), 449–472. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2013.05.004>
- Herman, R., Gates, S. M., Arifkhanova, A., Barrett, M., Bega, A., Chavez-Herrerias, E. R., Han, E., Harris, M., Migacheva, K., Ross, R., Leschitz, J. T., & Wrabel, S. L. (2017). *School leadership interventions under the Every Student Succeeds Act: Evidence review*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1550-3.html
- Kearney, W. S., Valadez, A., & Garcia, L. (2018). Leadership for the long-haul: The impact of administrator longevity on student achievement. *School Leadership Review*, 7(2), 24–33. <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr/vol7/iss2/5>
- Knight, D. S., Sun, M., Almasi, P., Candelaria, C. A., Shin, J., & DeMatthews, D. (2025). Educator retention in context: Understanding patterns in principal turnover in Texas and Washington state during the COVID-19 era. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737251367056>
- Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://wallacefoundation.org/report/how-leadership-influences-student-learning>
- Levin, S., Bradley, K. (2019). *Understanding and addressing principal turnover: A review of the literature*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/nassp-understanding-addressing-principal-turnover-review-research-report>
- Levin, S., Scott, C., Yang, M., Leung, M., & Bradley, K. (2020). *Supporting a strong, stable principal workforce: What matters and what can be done*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606480.pdf>
- Miller, A. (2013). Principal turnover and student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 36, 60–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2013.05.004>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). *Characteristics of public and private school principals: Condition of education*. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cls>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2024a). *Principal turnover: Stayers, movers, and leavers. Condition of education*. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/slb>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2024b). *Teacher turnover: Stayers, movers, and leavers. Condition of education*. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/slc>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2026). *Principals' average time spent: Average hours per week that K–12 school principals spent on all school-related activities and average percentage of time per school year spent on various school-related tasks, by school type and selected school characteristics: 2020–21*. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/estable/table/ntps2021_f105_a12n
- South Carolina State Board of Education. (2025). Regulation 43-64: *Requirements for certification at the advanced level*. South Carolina Department of Education. <https://ed.sc.gov/educators/certification/certification-legislation-and-policy/certification-regulations/regulation-43-64-requirements-for-certification-at-the-advanced-level>
- South Carolina Department of Education. (n.d.). *Adding leadership fields*. South Carolina Department of Education. <https://ed.sc.gov/educators/certification/add/adding-leadership-fields/>
- Starrett, A., Dmitrieva, S., & Cartiff, B. (2026, March). *South Carolina teacher attrition, mobility, and retention report for 2024–25*. SC TEACHER. <https://sc-teacher.org/epr-teacher-retention-mar2026/>



EDUCATOR WORKFORCE PROFILE

