



# South Carolina Teacher Workforce Profile for 2024–25

APRIL 2026



EDUCATOR WORKFORCE PROFILE

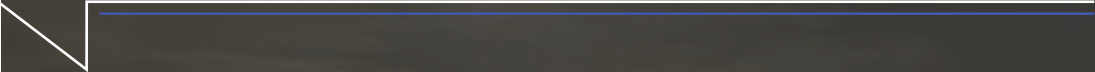


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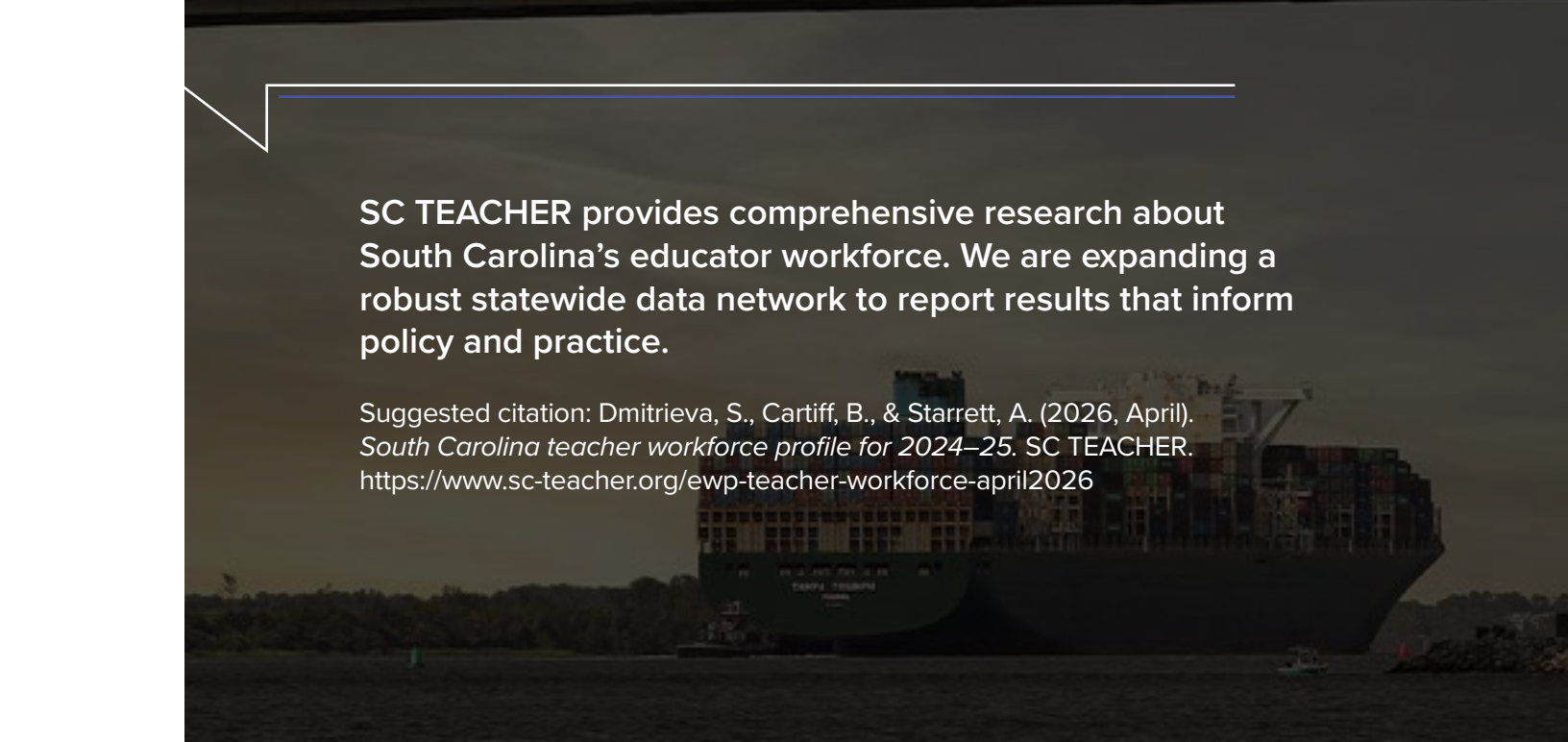
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**SC TEACHER** provides comprehensive research about South Carolina’s educator workforce. We are expanding a robust statewide data network to report results that inform policy and practice.

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# Teacher Workforce Profile in South Carolina

## + HIGHLIGHTS

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of South Carolina’s public school teacher workforce in 2024–25. Aligned with SC TEACHER’s mission, it offers data to support decision-making at both state and district levels. Using teacher-level information for 55,634 educators, this report describes key workforce characteristics and trends of classroom teachers (PK–12), special education teachers, and retired educators who have returned to the classroom.

In addition to exploring broad workforce patterns, the report highlights age profiles across different facets of the teacher workforce. Understanding the distribution of early-, mid-, and late-career educators is essential for anticipating retirement trends, identifying support needs for novice teachers, and informing long-term recruitment and retention strategies. This report also reviews recruitment patterns over recent years to guide efforts to strengthen the educator pipeline.

## MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE 2024–25 SOUTH CAROLINA TEACHER WORKFORCE

- South Carolina’s teacher workforce in 2024–25 remained stable in size and composition, with demographics closely aligned with those of prior years.
- Nearly half of all teachers (47%) entered through a traditional undergraduate pathway, while alternative certification and reciprocity together accounted for a sizable share (30%) of the workforce.
- About 20% of teachers were under age 30, underscoring the ongoing need for induction and mentoring supports for early-career educators.
- Age profiles were similar across general classroom, special education, and early childhood (prekindergarten and kindergarten) teachers, with special education teachers slightly older.
- Title I schools employed a higher proportion of teachers under age 30, while non-Title I schools showed a higher concentration of teachers aged 40–49.
- Among new alternative route candidates, the proportion of teachers entering from within the educator workforce has grown in recent years, narrowing the gap with entrants from outside of the existing educator pipeline.

## + INTRODUCTION

The teacher workforce evolves in response to social, economic, and policy factors. Although the national educator workforce composition has remained relatively stable in recent decades (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020), changes in local contexts may have practical implications for retention and recruitment. In particular, accurate, timely data about shifts in the personal and professional demographics and preparation pathways of the teacher population are essential for informing decisions about professional development, mentorship, and other supports.

Workforce demographic patterns also highlight broader trends and potential sources of instability. The age profile of the teaching population in the United States has long been a topic of concern. In the early 2000s, discussions centered around the “graying” of the workforce as the mean and median age of public teachers rose (Ingersoll et al., 2021). Recent evidence indicates that the national teaching force skews slightly younger than the workforce across all sectors (Schaeffer, 2024). Taken alone, this might signal a healthy replenishing of the teacher population. However, it may also be an artifact of the historical trend toward early retirement among a high proportion of teachers (Harris & Adams, 2007; Fitzpatrick, 2018). Research has consistently shown that age has a U-shaped relationship with teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), suggesting that a teacher population with high proportions of young and older teachers may experience greater instability.



Considering how characteristics such as age and entry pathway intersect can help to clarify differences in career longevity, support needs, and retention risks. For example, young novice teachers entering through alternative certification programs may face challenges that increase their likelihood of early exit without targeted induction and mentoring, whereas older teachers entering the workforce via reciprocity may require fewer and different resources to sustain their retention.

Certain subpopulations within the workforce also differ markedly from the overall teacher profile. Special education teachers, for instance, often face more demanding working conditions and historically experience higher attrition nationally (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Examining the age demographics of South Carolina's special education teacher population may provide insight into whether a similar vulnerability exists in the state. Likewise, teachers nearing retirement or those entering through nontraditional pathways may exhibit distinct patterns in mobility, stability, and long-term retention. Understanding how these groups differ from the broader workforce is essential for tailoring supports and anticipating areas where staffing pressures may emerge.

Although national analyses provide useful context, state-level policies and labor market conditions uniquely shape workforce dynamics in South Carolina. The composition of the state's teacher workforce reflects interactions among certification pathways, hiring practices, and staffing demand. Certain segments, such as early-career teachers, alternatively prepared educators, and those nearing retirement, may experience varying levels of stability over time, making it important to monitor their representation within the workforce.





## KEY QUESTIONS

This report examines key demographic characteristics of South Carolina’s public teacher workforce in 2024–25, with particular attention to age patterns across workforce segments. It also explores how age and preparation pathways intersect within the teacher population. In addition, the report analyzes the routes novice teachers took into the workforce in 2024–25, highlighting those in alternative certification programs and those entering through reciprocity. By providing a comprehensive picture of who teaches in South Carolina, the report supports policymakers and education leaders in developing strategies to strengthen recruitment, retention, and long-term workforce stability across the state.

This report addresses the following key questions:

1. What are the characteristics of South Carolina’s teacher population relative to personal demographics, educational attainment, and teaching certificate pathway and level?
2. How does the age profile of the teacher workforce vary across certificate pathways and school contexts?
3. What are the recruitment trends of newly hired novice teachers in South Carolina?

Key terms used throughout the report are included in the glossary beginning on p. 22.



## **DATA, VARIABLES, AND ANALYSES**

The analyses presented in this report were primarily based on data from 55,634 teachers employed by South Carolina public school districts in the 2024–25 academic year. The term *teacher* here includes any educators employed as PK–12 classroom teachers, special education teachers (including resource, itinerant, and self-contained positions), and retired teachers returning to the classroom. Through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with SC TEACHER, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) provided 2024–25 teacher-level data. The SCDE also provided data for 5 previous academic years (2019–20 through 2023–24) for longitudinal analysis.

Because the dataset included the full population of South Carolina public school teachers, this report focuses on describing trends and patterns rather than conducting inferential analyses. Some data elements were incomplete or missing for certain teachers; therefore, percentages were calculated using only cases with available information. For analyses involving teacher positions, total counts may exceed the number of individual teachers, as some educators held multiple positions.

A woman with short, wavy brown hair, wearing glasses, a black blazer, and a chunky gold chain necklace, is looking down at a stack of papers on a table. She is holding a pen in her right hand. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a meeting or conference setting with other people and lights.

# Our Key Questions



## + KEY QUESTION 1:

### **What are the characteristics of South Carolina’s teacher population relative to personal demographics, educational attainment, and teaching certificate pathway and level?**

To address Key Question 1, the analysis included calculating percentages of South Carolina teachers by personal characteristics (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity) and professional characteristics (i.e., highest degree attained, certification credentials).

#### **South Carolina Teacher Characteristics**

Classroom teachers in grades 1–12 represented the largest share of South Carolina’s public school teachers in 2024–25 (80.4%). Special education teachers, including those in resource, self-contained, and itinerant roles, comprised the next largest group (10.9%). Kindergarten and prekindergarten teachers accounted for 6.7% of the workforce, while retired teachers returning to the classroom made up the remaining 2.1%. The 121 teachers holding position codes in two groups (e.g., classroom teacher and special education teacher) were counted as members of both groups for these calculations.

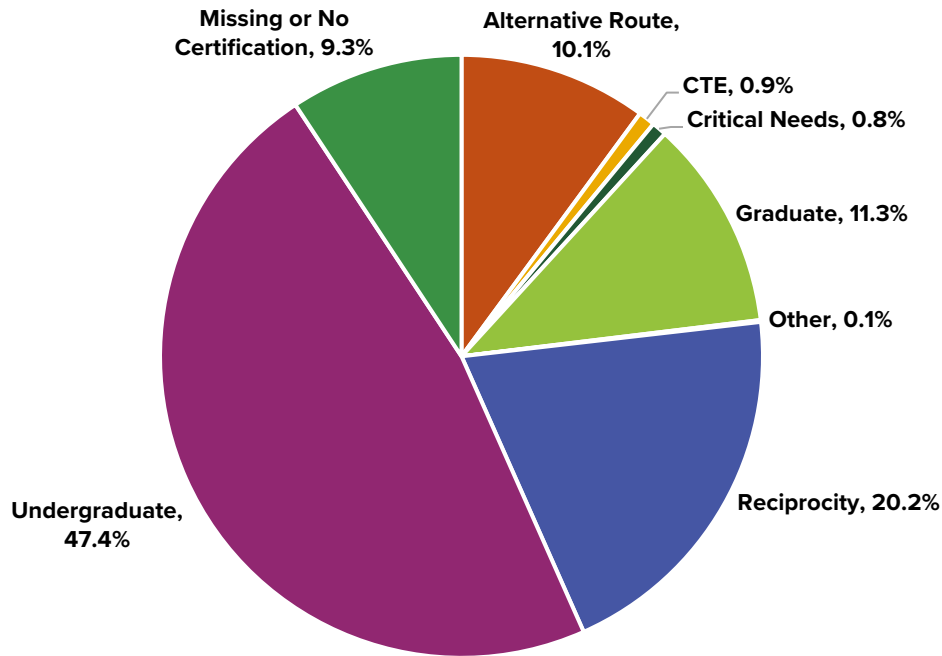
The composition of the state’s teacher workforce shows stable personal and professional demographics. In 2024–25, female teachers accounted for 79.3% of teachers in the state, and the racial/ethnic distribution was 76.5% White, 17.3% Black, 2.7% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian, consistent with patterns reported in prior years (see Cartiff et al., 2024; Starrett et al., 2025). Almost two-thirds of the teachers in the state (65.4%) held a postbaccalaureate degree.

#### **South Carolina Teaching Certificate Pathways and Levels**

To better understand teacher recruitment, we analyzed the distribution of teachers across certificate pathways and levels. In South Carolina, a teaching certificate pathway reflects how an individual enters the profession, while a teaching certificate level indicates their stage in the certification process.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of teachers across pathways in 2024–25. Nearly half of all teachers in the state (47.4%) entered the workforce through the undergraduate pathway after completing a traditional educator preparation program (EPP). Reciprocity teachers, those originally certified in another state, represented the second largest group (20.2%). Additionally, 11.3% entered through graduate programs, and 10.1% entered through alternative certification programs such as the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) or the Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Preparation (CarolinaCAP).

**Figure 1.** Percentages of South Carolina Teachers by Certificate Pathway in 2024–25

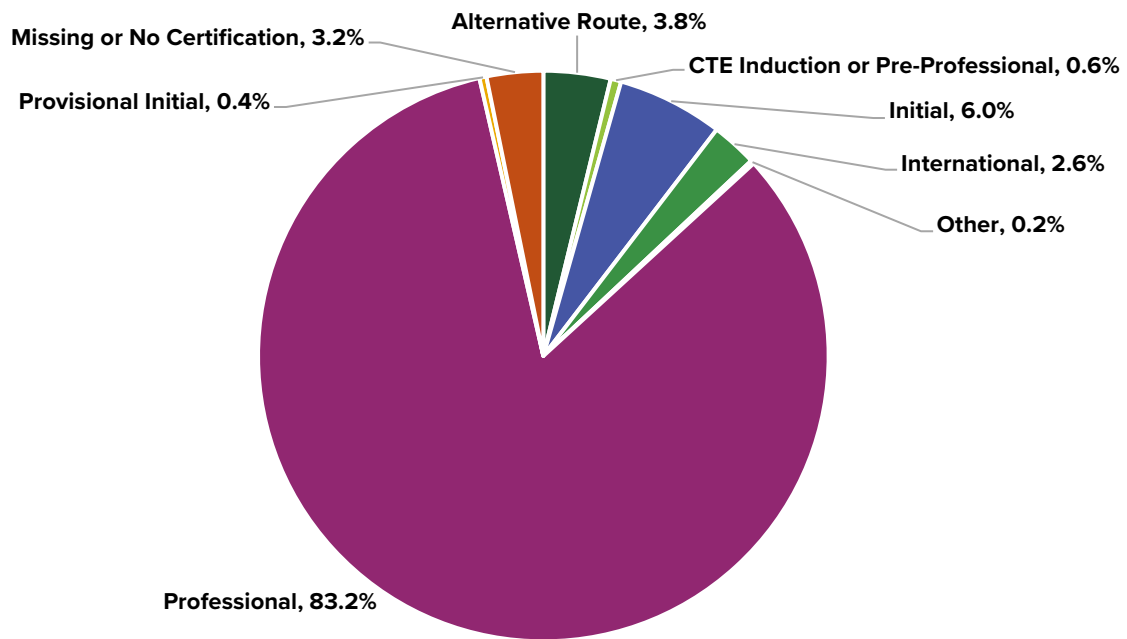


*Note.* CTE stands for career and technical education. The Other category includes adjunct, advanced fine arts, and Montessori certificate pathways, which represent specialized alternative certifications (SCDE, 2018).

All teachers, regardless of pathway, are assigned a certificate level that reflects their stage in the certification process. Initial certification serves as the entry point for graduates of traditional EPPs. To progress to a professional certificate, teachers must complete 3 years of teaching, participate in South Carolina’s Induction and Mentoring Program (SCDE, n.d.), and earn successful formative and summative evaluations. Upon meeting these requirements, they advance to a professional certificate, indicating full certification.

In South Carolina, alternative certification functions as both a pathway and a certificate level: as a pathway, it represents a nontraditional route into teaching, while as a certificate level, it denotes that a teacher is actively enrolled in an approved alternative preparation program and has not yet met the requirements for a professional certificate. Once those requirements are met, the teacher advances to a professional certificate, the same as those entering through other pathways. Figure 2 displays the distribution of certificate levels in 2024–25.

**Figure 2.** Percentages of South Carolina Teachers by Certificate Level in 2024–25



*Note.* CTE stands for career and technical education. The Other category includes the following certificate levels: adjunct, critical needs, interim, internship, limited professional, regular, retired, special subject, and warrant.

Most South Carolina teachers (83.2%) held a professional certificate in 2024–25, followed by 6.0% with an initial certificate, 3.8% with an alternative route certificate, and 2.6% with an international certificate. These proportions were consistent with the composition of the state teacher workforce in previous years (Cartiff et al., 2024; Starrett et al., 2025).

Overall, South Carolina’s teacher workforce in 2024–25 reflected stability in both demographic composition and professional credentials. The workforce remained predominantly female and White, with a substantial proportion of teachers holding advanced degrees and professional certification. Nearly half of educators entered through traditional undergraduate preparation programs, while alternative certification, graduate, and reciprocity pathways accounted for a significant share of the state teacher workforce, illustrating diverse recruitment efforts. The high percentage of fully certified teachers further indicates a mature and experienced workforce. Together, these patterns suggest that while entry routes into the profession have broadened, the core characteristics of South Carolina’s teacher population have remained consistent over time.

## + KEY QUESTION 2:

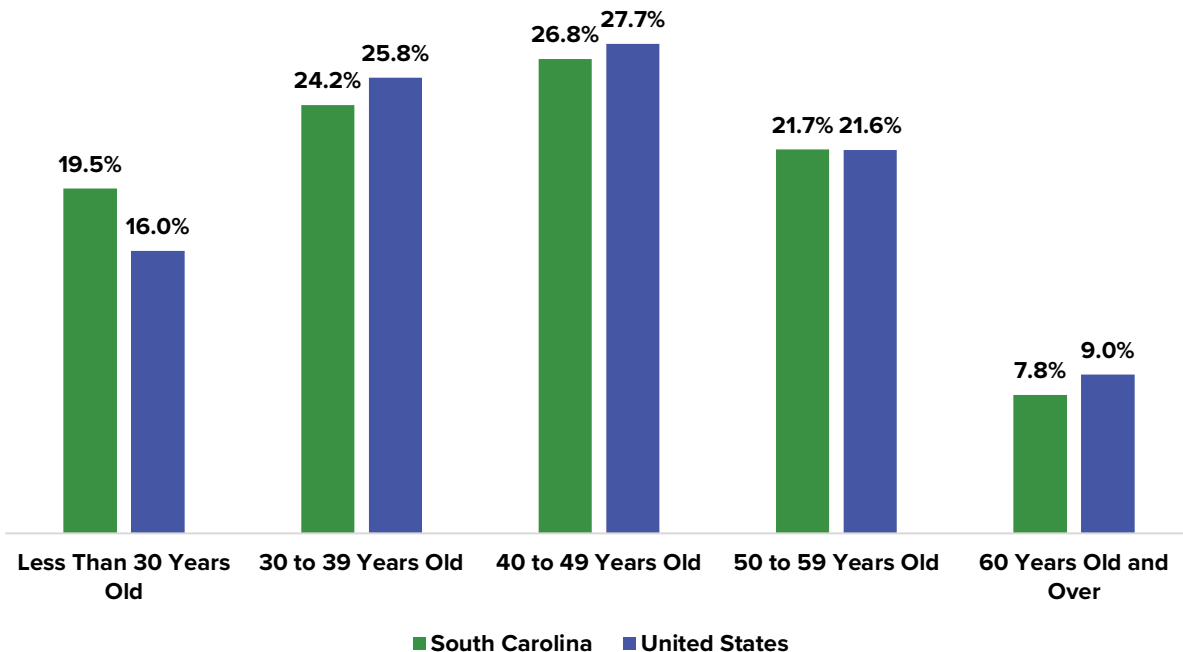
### How does the age profile of the teacher workforce vary across certificate pathways and school contexts?

To address Key Question 2, the analysis focused on the average age and age distribution of South Carolina’s teacher workforce in 2024–25. Age patterns across certificate pathways were examined to identify meaningful intersections between age and preparation route. The analysis also compared age profiles across teacher positions (classroom, special education, and prekindergarten/kindergarten) and school contexts, including organizational level, geographic locale, and poverty level (Title I and non-Title I).

#### Age Profile of Public Teachers in South Carolina and Across the United States

The average age of public school teachers in the South Carolina workforce was 41.9 years in 2024–25. This average was similar to the most recently available national average of 42.9 years from 2020–21 (Taie & Lewis, 2022). Figure 3 shows a comparison between the age distribution of South Carolina’s teacher workforce in 2024–25 and the national public teacher workforce.

**Figure 3.** Age Profile of Public School Teachers in South Carolina and the US



*Note.* The US percentages are from the year 2022 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2024).

The age profiles of the two workforces were similar, though South Carolina’s teacher population skewed younger than the national average. Nearly three-quarters of South Carolina teachers were between 30 and 60 years old in 2024–25, a distribution that may ease concerns about near-term retirement pressures at the state level. However, the presence of roughly 20% of teachers under age 30 highlights the ongoing need for strong mentoring and induction supports for early career educators.

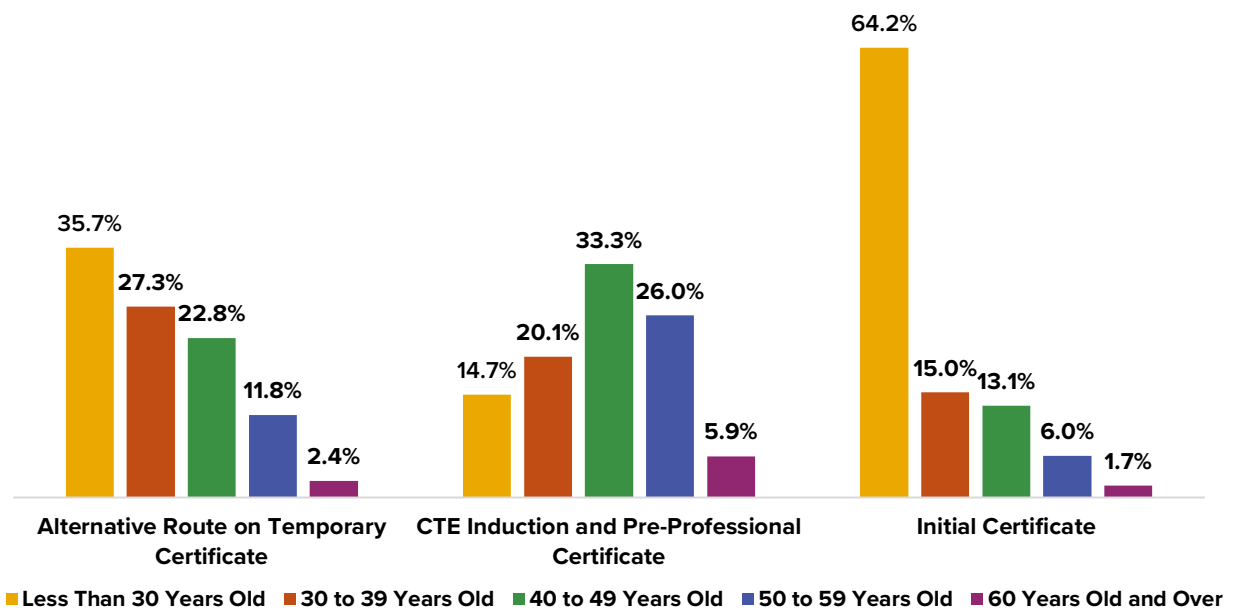
## Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Certificate Pathway and Level

Examining the age profiles of teachers across different teaching certificate pathways and levels provides important insights into workforce sustainability, retention, and strategic planning. Age often reflects career stage and projected years of service, which have implications for long-term staffing stability. Teachers entering through traditional undergraduate EPPs are typically earlier in their careers and may contribute a longer tenure to the profession. In contrast, alternative certification routes may attract mid-career professionals who bring valuable content expertise and professional experience but have shorter projected career spans.

Figure 4 presents the age profile of early career teachers in South Carolina. These teachers had not earned professional certification as of 2024–25 and were primarily novice educators in their first 3 years of teaching. Teachers holding an initial certificate showed the strongest concentration in younger age ranges, reflecting the fact that most enter the workforce after completing an undergraduate EPP. Their median age was 25 years.

Research consistently finds that alternatively certified teachers tend to be older than those entering through traditional EPPs, often because they are transitioning from other careers (Bland et al., 2023; Sass, 2015; US Department of Education, 2016). This pattern was evident among South Carolina’s alternative route teachers who had not earned a professional certificate as of 2024–25, although more than one-third were still under age 30. Their median age was 34 years. CTE teachers also tend to be older than their non-CTE peers (Kistler et al., 2024), reflecting prior industry experience. In South Carolina, more than 65% of early career CTE teachers were age 40 or older, and approximately 6% were over age 60 in 2024–25. Their median age was 45 years.

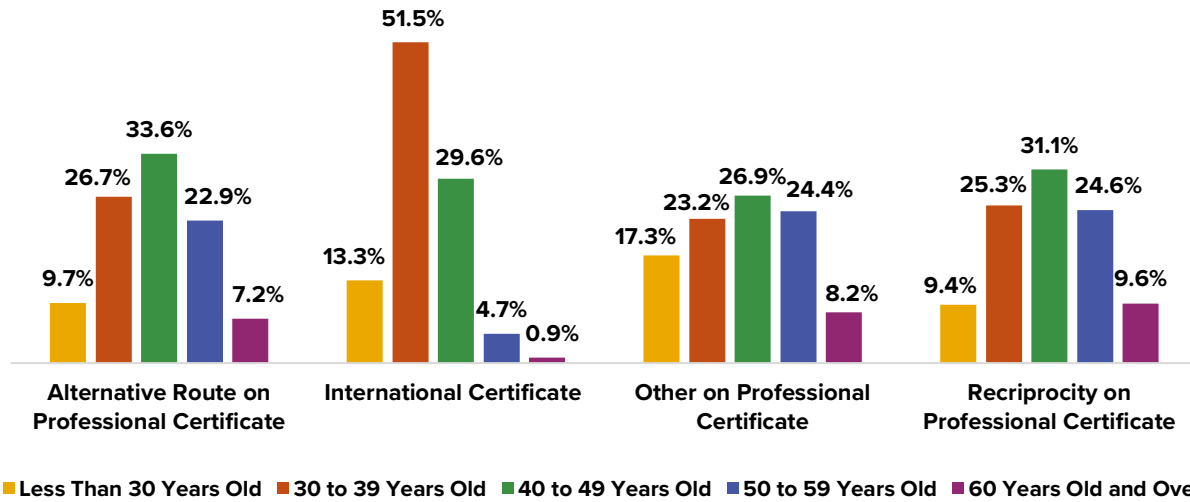
**Figure 4.** Age Profile of Early-Career Teachers in South Carolina



The age profiles of more experienced teachers in the state in 2024–25 were compared across multiple certification pathways. The analysis included three groups who had earned professional certification in South Carolina: teachers who completed an alternative route program, teachers certified in another state who obtained professional certification in South Carolina through reciprocity, and an “other” group made up primarily of teachers who progressed from initial to professional certification through a traditional EPP, along with a small number who followed other, less common pathways.

Figure 5 presents the age distributions for these three groups along with international teachers on J-1/J-2 visas. Although international teachers cannot earn a professional certificate in South Carolina, previous analyses indicate that they typically have substantial classroom experience prior to entering the state’s workforce (Starrett et al., 2024).

**Figure 5. Age Profile of Experienced Teachers in South Carolina**



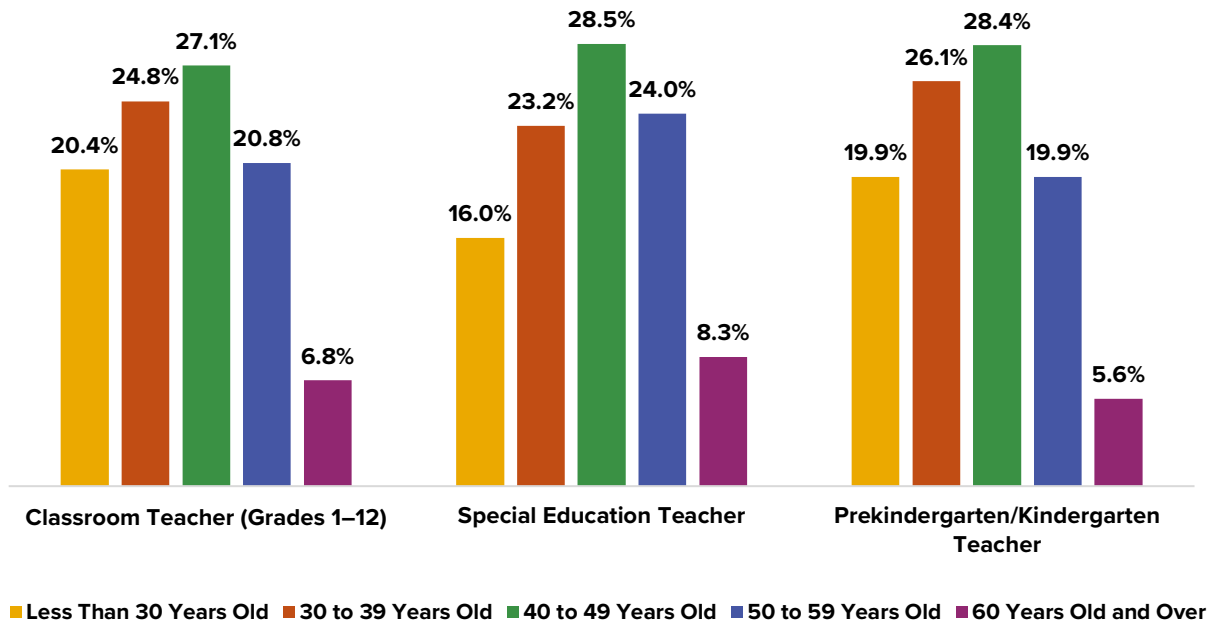
The distinct circumstances of teachers on an international certificate—who typically teach in South Carolina for only 3–5 years before returning to their home countries—help explain the unique age distribution of this group. In 2024–25, over half of international teachers were ages 30–39, and more than 80% were ages 30–49. The median age of the group was 36 years. In contrast, the three groups of teachers holding professional certificates showed broadly similar age distributions. Alternative route teachers holding a professional certificate (median age 44 years) skewed slightly older than the “other” on professional certificate group (median age 43 years), while teachers certified through reciprocity (median age 44 years) had the highest proportion of individuals age 60 or older. Although this reciprocity group’s 60-plus segment comprised fewer than 10%, some may have retired from teaching elsewhere before entering the South Carolina workforce.

### Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Positions

Analyzing the age profile of public school teachers across different positions, such as grades 1–12 classroom teachers, special education teachers, and early childhood teachers, is also important for informing targeted recruitment needs, retention, and professional support strategies. Different roles often involve varying levels of physical, emotional, and instructional demands, which may intersect with career stage and age in meaningful ways. Identifying whether certain positions are staffed primarily by early-career or late-career educators can help tailor mentoring, leadership development, and workload supports. Additionally, examining age by position strengthens long-term workforce planning by clarifying whether the state is cultivating sustainable pipelines across all instructional areas, particularly in high-need fields such as special education and early childhood education.

Figure 6 presents the age profiles of these three teacher groups in South Carolina in 2024–25, showing largely similar patterns. National data indicate that classroom teachers and special education teachers tend to have comparable average ages (about 43 years) and age distributions (Data USA, 2022; Taie & Lewis, 2022). In South Carolina in 2024–25, this pattern generally held, though special education teachers skewed slightly older on average (median age 43 years) than classroom teachers (median age 41 years). National trends also suggest that early childhood educators are typically younger than grades 1–12 classroom teachers (McLean et al., 2024); however, the South Carolina data showed closer similarities between these groups, with prekindergarten/kindergarten teachers averaging 41 years. These differences from national patterns may reflect variations in how states classify early childhood centers and define who is considered a teacher.

**Figure 6. Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Positions**

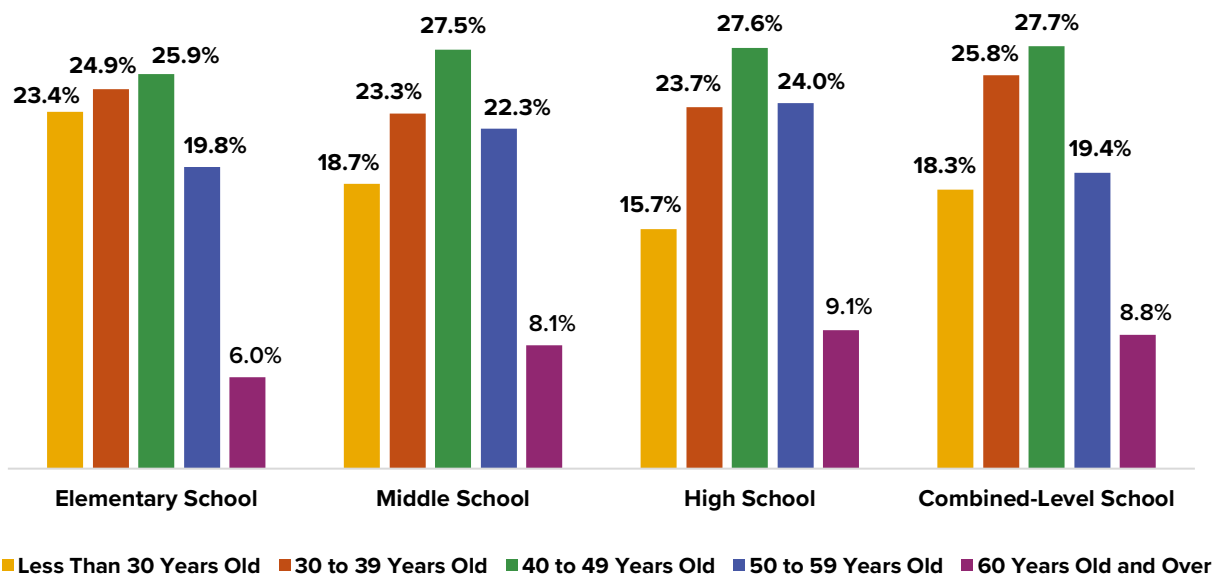


### Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Organizational Level

National data do not indicate significant differences in the age profiles of teachers working at different organizational levels. In 2020–21, elementary teachers in the US were slightly younger, on average (42.3 years), than their peers working in middle schools (42.8 years), high schools (43.8 years), or combined-level schools (43.3 years) (NCES, 2022).

In South Carolina in 2024–25, this difference was slightly more pronounced. The average age of elementary school teachers was 40 years. High school teachers had the highest average age at 43 years, followed by middle school teachers (42 years), and then combined-level school teachers (41 years). The age distributions, as seen in Figure 7, showed a greater skew toward the youngest teachers (i.e., those under 30) in elementary schools.

**Figure 7. Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Organization Levels**



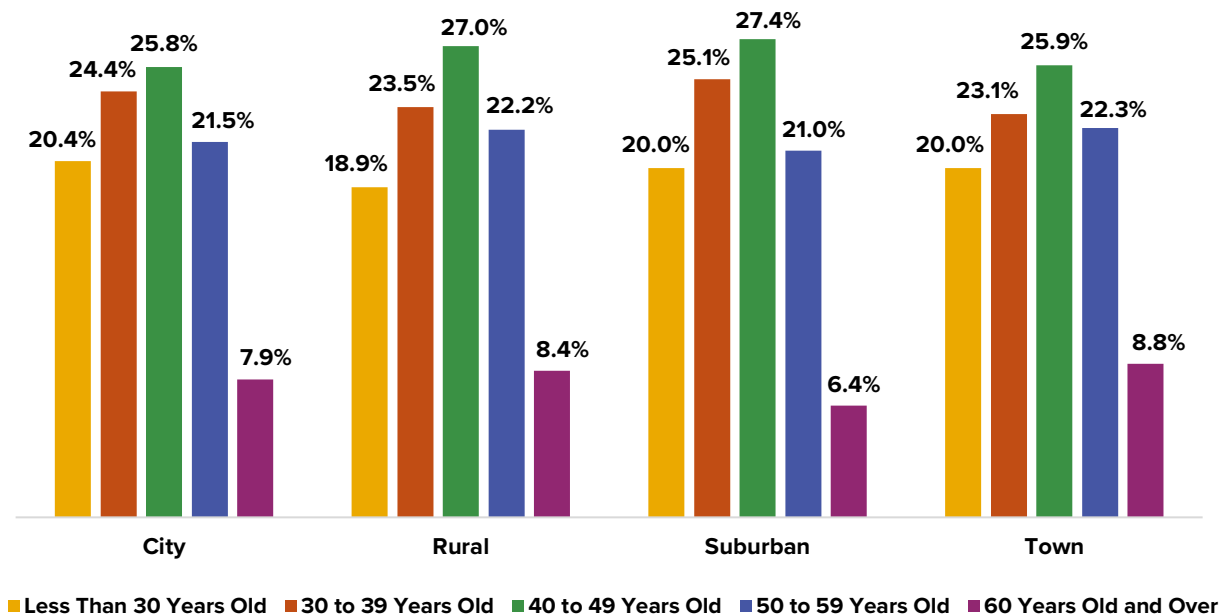
These differences across organizational levels may reflect broader dynamics in the state’s teacher preparation and certification patterns. Traditional EPPs, for example, tend to enroll larger numbers of preservice elementary teachers, who are typically younger than those entering through other pathways. In addition, teachers on alternative and international certificates are more heavily concentrated in middle and high schools than in elementary settings (Starrett et al., 2025), contributing to the observed age variation across levels.

### Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Geographic Locales

Some stakeholders continue to raise concerns about an aging teacher workforce in certain locales, particularly rural schools, and the potential for increased retirements. However, national evidence does not support these concerns (e.g., NCES, 2022), and Ingersoll and Tran (2023) found that rural teachers nationwide are, on average, younger than teachers in other locales. The authors cautioned that this is not cause for reassurance but rather reflects the disproportionate movement of experienced teachers out of rural schools, potentially leaving those communities in a persistent cycle of recruiting and onboarding novice replacements.

The age profile analysis of South Carolina teachers in 2024–25 revealed no meaningful differences across locales (see Figure 8). These findings align with a recent study showing that, unlike the national pattern described by Ingersoll and Tran (2023), South Carolina has not experienced disproportionate teacher mobility among locales in recent years (Dmitrieva & Cartiff, 2025).

**Figure 8.** Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers Across Geographic Locales

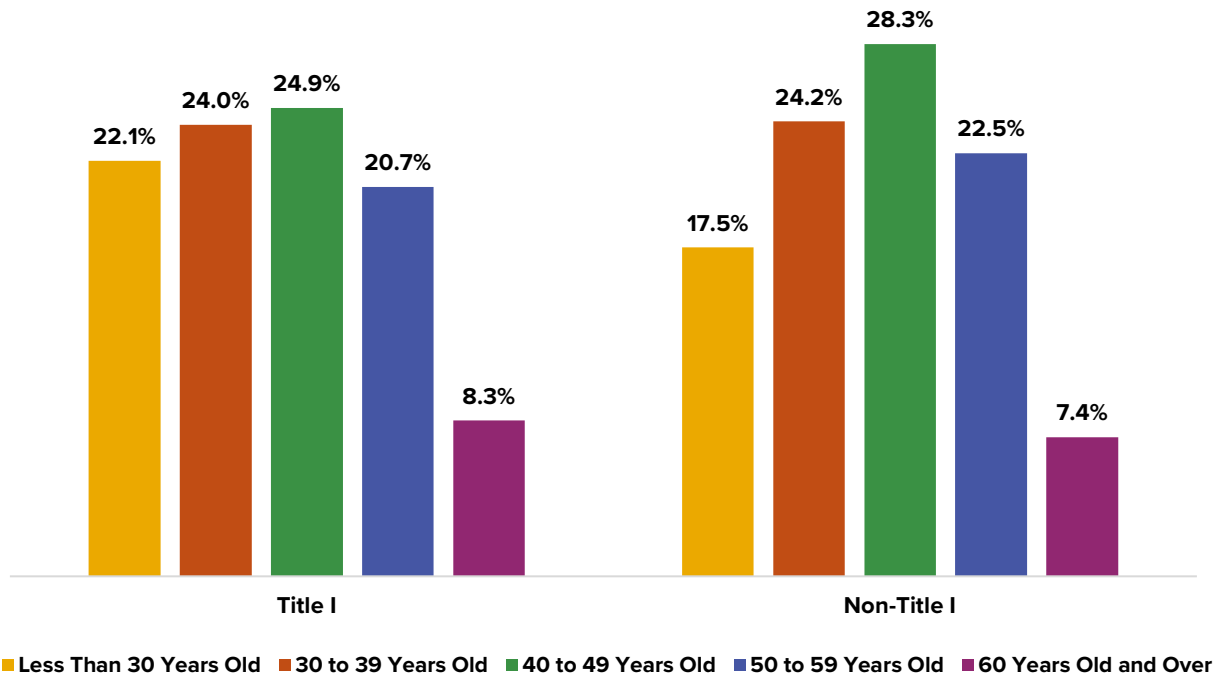


### Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers at Title I and Non-Title I Schools

Research consistently shows that high-poverty schools employ higher proportions of novice teachers than lower-poverty schools (e.g., Rice, 2013). In alignment with these findings, the Southern Regional Education Board (2025) recently reported a 6.4 percentage-point difference in the share of novice teachers between Title I schools (20.7%) and non-Title I schools (14.3%). These placements can contribute to inequities in teacher quality, as more experienced teachers generally demonstrate stronger pedagogical expertise (Lankford et al., 2002).

Although experience and age are not interchangeable, they are related, underscoring the importance of examining age patterns in Title I and non-Title I schools. As shown in Figure 9, the 2024–25 age distribution in South Carolina indicated that about 5% more teachers in Title I schools were under age 30, while non-Title I schools had a higher concentration, more than 4%, in the 40–49 age range.

**Figure 9.** Age Profile of South Carolina Teachers at Title I and Non-Title I Schools



The analyses presented in this section highlight the stability of South Carolina’s teacher workforce while underscoring meaningful variation across pathways, positions, and school contexts. Age distributions across certification pathways revealed predictable patterns that reflect differences in how teachers enter the profession, ranging from traditionally prepared early-career educators to mid-career entrants through alternative or CTE pathways. These variations emphasize the importance of differentiated supports tailored to teachers’ career stages and entry routes. Similarly, comparisons across teacher positions and organizational levels demonstrated overall consistency in age profiles, with only modest differences such as slightly younger elementary teachers and slightly older special education and high school teachers.

Despite national discussions about aging workforces and potential retirement pressures in specific locales, the state-level data provide a more nuanced picture for South Carolina. Age profiles were largely consistent across geographic locales and school poverty levels, with no evidence of disproportionate aging in rural areas and only modest differences between Title I and non-Title I schools. These findings suggest that South Carolina’s teacher workforce is not experiencing age-related vulnerabilities that may be occurring elsewhere. Together, the observed patterns reinforce the value of monitoring age alongside pathway, position, and school context to anticipate staffing needs, inform targeted recruitment, and strengthen long-term workforce planning.

## + KEY QUESTION 3:

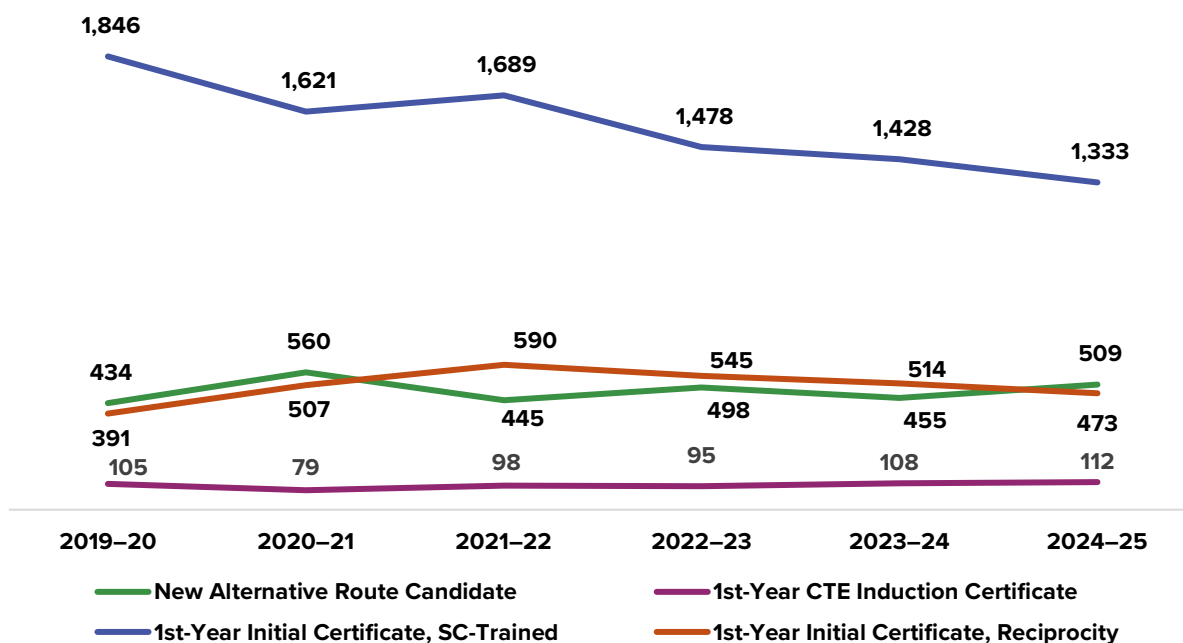
### What are the recruitment trends of newly hired novice teachers in South Carolina?

For Key Question 3, the analysis examined several aspects of the recruitment process. Trends in the certificate pathways and certificate levels of newly hired novice teachers from 2019–20 through 2024–25 were reviewed. For new hires entering through an alternative certification route, the analysis examined whether they entered from outside or within the state educator workforce and identified the type of alternative preparation program in which they were enrolled. For novice teachers entering with initial certification via reciprocity—those new to teaching who completed preparation programs in other states—the top five contributing states were also identified.

#### Trends in Newly Hired Novice Teachers by Certificate Level and Pathway

Longitudinal trends in certificate levels and pathways for newly hired teachers are shown in Figure 10. These numbers include only individuals newly entering the educator workforce and serving in position codes 3–9; those who previously held nonteaching roles in South Carolina public schools are excluded. From 2019–20 to 2024–25, the number of new teachers entering with initial certification from a South Carolina EPP declined steadily, mirroring national decreases in EPP enrollment (Partelow, 2019). Over the same period, the number of novice teachers entering through alternative route certification programs and CTE induction remained stable. Over the 6-year period, the number of novice teachers entering via reciprocity increased slightly, but the number has been decreasing over the last 4 years. The COVID-19 pandemic likely contributed to anomalies in the 2020–21 data.

**Figure 10.** *Novice Teacher Recruitment by Certification Pathway*



*Note.* In a previous SC TEACHER report (Starrett et al., 2025), we reported 167 new hires enrolled in an alternative certification program in 2019–20. That value excluded 267 teachers who were enrolled but whose specific program was missing in the data. The data in this figure have been corrected to include them in the total of 434.

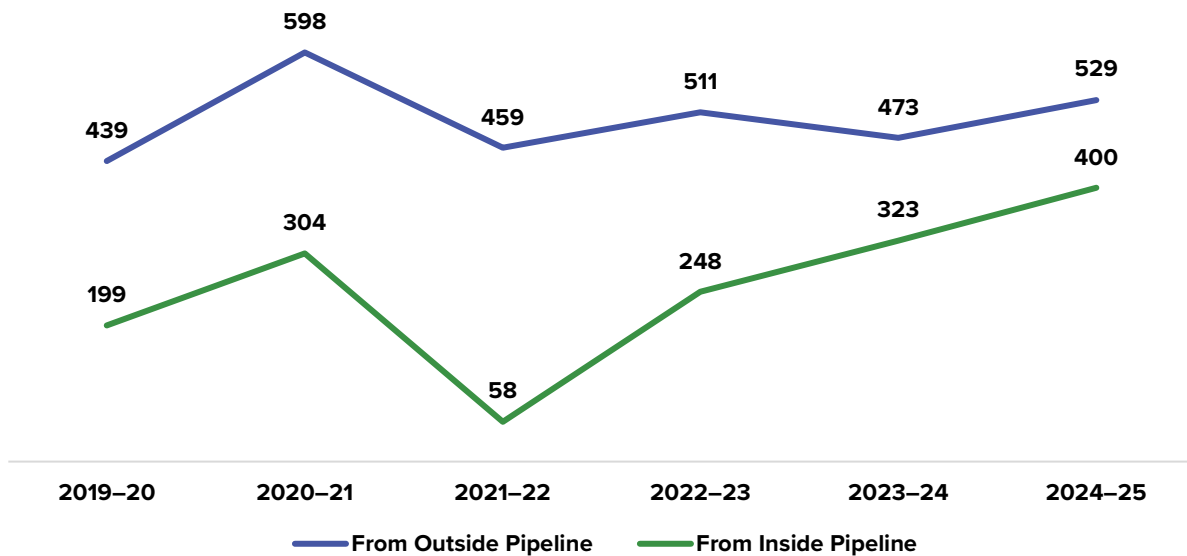
## Alternative Route Enrollment and Candidate Entry Sources

The number of state-approved alternative certification programs has expanded in recent years, making it increasingly important to examine recruitment trends across these pathways. It is also important to recognize that many alternative route teachers serve in other school-based roles before pursuing certification, and some candidates continue working in nonteaching positions while completing their programs.

Figure 10 reports only teachers who were first-time entrants to South Carolina schools and serving in position codes 3–9 (see Position Code in glossary) during the year shown. Figure 11 provides a broader perspective by presenting entry routes for all new alternative route candidates from 2019–20 to 2024–25. Those entering from outside the pipeline align closely, but not exactly, with the counts in Figure 10. For instance, Figure 10 shows 509 new alternative route teachers serving in position codes 3–9 in 2024–25. In Figure 11, the 529 outside-pipeline candidates include those 509 teachers, plus an additional 20 educators who served in other position codes such as aides (codes 90–94), librarians (code 10), or career specialists (code 23).

Candidates entering from inside the pipeline, shown in Figure 11, are not included in Figure 10. While more new hires entered from outside the pipeline between 2021–22 and 2024–25, the gap has narrowed as entries from within the pipeline have steadily increased. It is important to distinguish between these two entry sources, in part because those entering from within the educator workforce, while bringing valuable field experience, also leave vacancies as they leave their former roles.

**Figure 11.** *New Alternative Route Candidates by Entry Source*



To examine the specific alternative route pathways pursued by these educators, the 15 programs with candidates in the 2024–25 academic year were grouped into four categories based on their provider or administrative entity, following the framework used in previous work (Dmitrieva et al., 2025). This categorization was done in part because of the relatively small enrollment in some programs. The composition of these categories is presented in Table 1. Given its scale, the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) is reported as its own category.

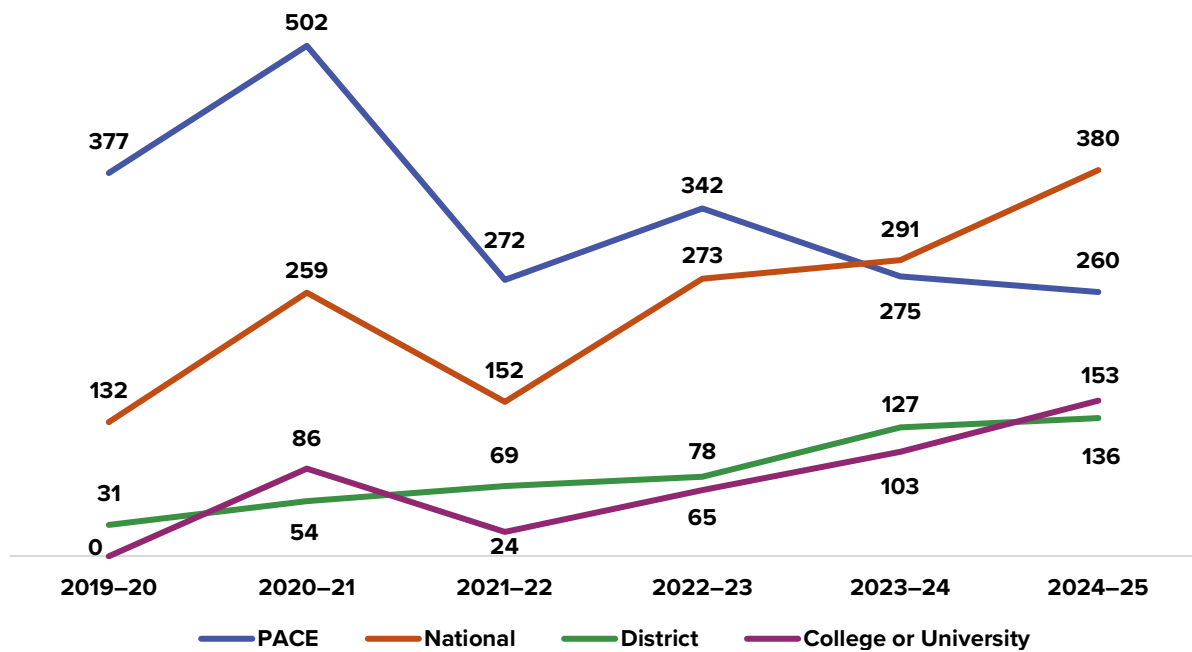
**Figure 12.** *Approved Alternative Certification Programs in South Carolina by Type as of 2024–25*

Administered by a College or University	Administered by a National Program	Administered by a School District	Program of Alternative Certification for Educators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternative Pathways to Educator Certification (APEC) Program at Coker University</li> <li>Alternative Pathways to Educator Certification (APEC) Program at Columbia College</li> <li>Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Preparation (CarolinaCAP)</li> <li>Converse Alternative Certification in Art Education (CACAE)</li> <li>Network for Alternative Preparation in Teaching (NetAPT) at Winthrop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)</li> <li>Teach For America (TFA)</li> <li>Teach Right USA</li> <li>Teachers of Tomorrow (ToT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charter Inspire Alternative Certification Pathway</li> <li>Greenville Alternative Teacher Education (GATE) Program</li> <li>Lowcountry Educator Alternative Pathway (LEAP)</li> <li>TeachCharleston</li> <li>TeachFlorence1</li> </ul>	

*Note.* Additional alternative certification programs have been approved as of 2025–26. These programs will be included in future analyses.

Longitudinal trends in alternative certification enrollment from 2019–20 to 2024–25, shown in Figure 12, mirror the counts presented in Figure 11. Fluctuations across years reflect, in part, changes in the number of approved programs. From 2021–22 to 2024–25, enrollment grew steadily in college- and university-administered and district-administered programs, while PACE participation declined modestly. Nationally-administered programs increased to be the largest category.

**Figure 13.** *New Alternative Route Candidates by Program Type*



*Note.* There were no state-approved programs in the Administered by a College or University category in 2019–20.

## New Hires on Initial Certification via Reciprocity

Teachers entering the workforce after completing EPPs in other states represent an important source of new talent for South Carolina schools, especially with South Carolina leading the nation in population growth (US Census Bureau, 2026). Table 1 identifies the top five states from which South Carolina hired teachers on initial certificates via reciprocity in 2024–25. Many of these teachers came from South Carolina’s border states, North Carolina and Georgia. However, there were also notable contributions from New York, as well as smaller numbers from Pennsylvania and Florida.

**Table 1.** *Top Five States of Initial Reciprocity Hires in 2024–25*

Rank	State	# of Teachers
1	North Carolina	68
2	Georgia	53
3	New York	52
4	Pennsylvania	32
5	Florida	22

Overall, recruitment patterns from 2019–20 to 2024–25 showed a steady decline in new hires entering with initial certification from South Carolina EPPs, alongside modest growth in alternative certification and reciprocity hires. Alternative route recruitment reflects both entrants from outside the educator workforce, who expand the pipeline, and entrants from within, whose transitions create vacancies in their previous roles. The expansion of state-approved alternative certification programs, particularly those administered by colleges and universities and those run by districts, has contributed to rising enrollment, while PACE has experienced modest fluctuations and nationally-administered programs have grown. Reciprocity also remained a consistent source of new novice teachers, with North Carolina, Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, and Florida contributing the largest numbers in 2024–25. Together, these trends point to an expanding and multifaceted set of entry points into the state's teacher pipeline.

## + CONCLUSION

South Carolina's 2024–25 teacher workforce reflects a system marked by overall stability, with demographic and professional characteristics that are consistent with patterns observed in recent years. The consistency in certificate levels, most notably the high proportion of teachers holding professional certificates, suggests a mature and experienced workforce capable of providing continuity in instruction statewide. At the same time, the state continues to draw from a broad array of preparation pathways, including undergraduate, graduate, reciprocity, and a growing set of alternative certification programs—signaling a diversified preparation pipeline designed to meet evolving staffing needs. These patterns align with national analyses showing that while teacher demographics have shifted over time, statewide labor markets often exhibit stability even amid widespread concerns about shortages and turnover (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine, 2020).

Age profile analyses further reinforce this picture of stability while highlighting meaningful variation across pathways and roles. In 2024–25, South Carolina's teacher workforce skewed slightly younger than the most recently available national average, with about one-fifth of South Carolina teachers under age 30 and most concentrated between ages 30 and 60. Predictable differences across certification pathways, such as younger teachers on initial certificates and older entrants in alternative and CTE routes, reflect broader national patterns in how individuals enter the profession and progress in their careers. Importantly, unlike some national narratives suggesting localized aging or retirement pressures, South Carolina shows little evidence of major age-related vulnerabilities across geographic locales or school contexts. Age distributions remain largely consistent statewide, with only modest differences between Title I and non-Title I schools and across organizational levels.

Recruitment trends from 2019–20 through 2024–25 illustrate a shifting but adaptive pipeline, with declining numbers of newly hired teachers entering through traditional South Carolina EPPs but modest growth in alternative-route and reciprocity hires. The rise in district based, college/university based, and nationally-based alternative certification programs—alongside the continuing contributions of PACE and steady contributions from neighboring states—suggests a workforce increasingly supported by multiple entry points. As South Carolina continues to refine its strategies for strengthening teacher recruitment and retention, these findings underscore the importance of monitoring the intersections of age, pathway, position, and school context. Maintaining a balanced pipeline that supports both early-career educators and mid-career entrants will be essential for sustaining a stable, high quality workforce capable of meeting the needs of the state's students in the years ahead.

## + GLOSSARY

### **Adjunct Certificate**

A specialized alternative certification pathway and level requested by the hiring school or district for the certification of either (a) a locally identified content area expert or (b) an eligible candidate for the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE).

### **Advanced Fine Arts Certificate**

A specialized alternative certification pathway requested by the hiring school or district and designed for individuals with a degree and professional experience in a fine arts field who wish to pursue a professional teaching certificate. This is only an initial certification pathway for noncertified educators. Candidates must demonstrate at least 2 years of successful professional experience in their fine arts discipline and obtain a passing score on the required content area assessment(s) approved by the State Board of Education for certification purposes.

### **Alternative Route Candidate (Candidate)**

An individual hired on a conditional alternative route certificate based on their enrollment in one of South Carolina's 15 approved alternative route certification programs. By definition, these individuals have also (a) obtained a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited university, (b) not participated in student teaching in a traditional education preparation program, and (c) not participated in another state-approved alternative route certification program.

### **Alternative Route Certificate**

An educator credential and certification level that may be issued to an eligible candidate participating in a South Carolina-approved alternative route teacher preparation program. This certificate is valid for 1 school year. With continued employment in a South Carolina public school and successful progress toward completion of the specific preparation program, it may be renewed annually for a defined period as allowed by state and federal statutes and regulations. Upon successful completion of all requirements of the program within the certification period, the educator is eligible for advancement to a renewable professional certificate.

### **Alternative Route Completer (Completer)**

An educator who has successfully fulfilled all requirements of a state-approved alternative certification program and has advanced from a temporary alternative route certificate to a professional teaching certificate. This status indicates that the individual has completed all coursework, assessments (e.g., Praxis exams), and other program- and state-specific requirements necessary for full certification to teach in South Carolina public schools.

### **Alternative Route Teacher**

An educator affiliated with one of South Carolina's approved alternative certification programs, including both *alternative route candidates* and *alternative route completers*. This term refers to individuals who entered the teaching profession through a nontraditional pathway—typically without completing a traditional student teaching experience—and who either hold a conditional alternative route certificate while completing program requirements (candidate) or have fulfilled all program and state certification requirements and advanced to a professional teaching certificate (completer).

### **Attrition**

A teacher leaves the classroom teaching profession in South Carolina public schools. This includes retirement, moving to teach out of state, leaving to teach in private or home schools, switching to a nonteaching role, or exiting the profession entirely.

### **Career and Technical Education (CTE) Certification**

A nontraditional certification pathway to classroom teaching designed for individuals with industry work experience in specific career and technical fields, who may not have completed a standard educator preparation program. This certificate provides eligibility to teach grades 9–12 in South Carolina public school districts in career and technical fields such as health sciences, automotive technology, welding, and other vocational areas.

**Career and Technical Education (CTE) Induction Certificate**

A certificate level issued to industry professionals allowed to begin teaching while completing certification requirements through a 2-year process. In the 1st year, teachers must complete two required courses and earn a passing score on a basic skills examination. In the 2nd year, teachers must complete two more required courses, earn a passing score on required certification exams, and receive a successful formative or summative evaluation of their teaching performance.

**Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pre-Professional Certificate**

For those in the career and technical education field, a certificate level issued during a teacher's 3rd through 5th years as they work toward obtaining a professional certificate. During this time, teachers must earn a passing score on all sections of a basic skills examination, complete 6 hours of professional education coursework, and receive a successful summative evaluation of their teaching performance.

**Career Stage**

A phase in a teacher's professional journey reflecting patterns of experience, expertise, professional identity, engagement, and responsibility. Career stages describe common developmental tendencies rather than fixed timelines or uniform, linear progression. Teachers may move through stages in different ways depending on context, role, setting, and individual circumstances. Stages are often described as early-, mid-, and late-career.

**Critical Needs Certificate**

An educator certificate level and pathway for participants in the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) who have passed the required Praxis II content area exam(s) and participated in the 10-day pre-service program. The South Carolina Department of Education no longer issues this type of certificate.

**Critical Needs Teacher**

A teacher working in a subject area or geographic region identified by the South Carolina Department of Education as experiencing persistent shortages of qualified educators. Critical needs subject areas include fields with high vacancy rates, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; special education; world languages; and career and technical education. Critical needs geographic regions are school districts, often in rural or high-poverty urban areas, that face challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. Educators in these roles may qualify for loan forgiveness, salary incentives, and alternative certification pathways to help address workforce shortages and ensure students have access to highly qualified teachers.

**Early-Career Stage**

A phase in which a teacher is building professional experience and consolidating foundational knowledge, skills, and identity in practice. This stage often involves ongoing learning, adaptation to institutional contexts, and increasing confidence in instructional decision-making. Teachers in this stage may draw on formal or informal supports as they develop their professional approach.

**Graduate Pathway**

A certificate pathway where teachers hold a bachelor's degree in a noneducation field and need to complete additional coursework to earn certification. These teachers must complete the required coursework through either a Master of Arts in Teaching program or a post-baccalaureate teacher certification program, complete student teaching as part of their program requirements, and earn passing scores on required certification exams. After graduation, they are eligible for an initial teaching certificate.

**Initial Certificate**

A certificate level and educator credential valid for 3 school years, issued to individuals who have completed an approved undergraduate or graduate educator preparation program. This certificate is primarily granted to beginning educators or those returning to teaching without recent experience. An out-of-state certified educator who meets all South Carolina certification requirements but has fewer than 27 months of qualifying teaching experience in the last 7 years in their previous state will also be issued this certificate type.

**Interim Certificate**

An educator certificate level issued to participants in the Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) who have not passed the required Praxis II content area exam(s) and/or have not participated in the preservice program. This certificate is renewed annually. The South Carolina Department of Education no longer issues this type of certificate.

**International Certificate**

A temporary teaching certificate and level designed for educators from countries outside the United States who participate in visiting visa programs (e.g., J-1, J-2). Teachers must have completed at least a bachelor's degree with a major in the teaching field. The certificate is initially issued for up to 1 year and can be renewed annually for up to 3 years at the request of the employing school district. Renewal is contingent upon the teacher demonstrating content competency, either through a review of official transcript evaluations or by meeting certification examination requirements.

**International Teacher**

A teacher hired from outside the United States through specific visiting visa programs (e.g., J-1, J-2). Such teachers typically fill positions on a temporary basis, bringing diversity and cultural exchange to classrooms but also contributing to attrition when visa terms expire.

**Internship Certificate**

An educator certificate level given to individuals who have completed all requirements of an educator preparation program with the exception of student teaching and have earned passing scores on all required certification exams.

**Late-Career Stage**

A phase marked by substantial professional experience and accumulated knowledge of practice and context. Teachers in this stage may demonstrate sustained effectiveness and a well-developed professional identity. Some may assume formal or informal leadership, mentoring, or advisory roles, while others continue to focus primarily on classroom practice. Contributions at this stage can take multiple forms depending on individual goals and institutional settings.

**Limited Professional Certificate**

A certification level and advancement option for educators who hold a South Carolina initial certificate and are employed in eligible, nonregulated educational entities, such as accredited private schools, certain public charter schools, and higher education institutions with approved teacher preparation programs. These entities operate outside of the State Board of Education's regulations for teacher evaluation. To qualify, educators must have at least 3 years of experience in a relevant certification area within the last 7 years, while maintaining a valid initial certificate and undergoing an employer-approved performance evaluation.

**Mid-Career Stage**

A phase characterized by growing experience and a strengthening sense of professional judgment and autonomy. Teachers in this stage often deepen and refine their instructional practices and may expand their roles in varied ways, such as contributing to collaborative initiatives, supporting colleagues, exploring new areas of expertise, or taking on additional responsibilities. Professional trajectories during this stage are diverse and context-dependent.

**Mobility**

Any movement of teachers between classroom teaching positions within South Carolina public schools, including interdistrict and intradistrict transfers.

**Montessori Certification**

A specialized certification pathway available for various educational levels, including early childhood (3K–5K), elementary I (grades 1–3), elementary II (grades 4–6), and middle level (grades 5–8). Individuals without prior teaching certification can pursue Montessori certification by completing a state-approved Montessori educator preparation program. This pathway leads to an initial teaching certificate in Montessori education. Certified educators can add a Montessori endorsement to their existing teaching certificate by completing an approved Montessori training program and fulfilling any additional state requirements.

**New Hire**

A teacher who did not work in the state's public education system in any position code (i.e., teaching or nonteaching) during the previous academic year.

**Nonteaching Role**

Any position in a public school that does not involve direct classroom teaching responsibilities (e.g., administrator, instructional coach, guidance counselor). Moving to one of these roles typically removes an individual from the teacher category (see *teacher* definition) unless they later return to a teaching position.

**Novice Teacher**

A teacher in the early-career stage of their professional practice, holding an entry-level certification appropriate to their preparation pathway. This designation, which typically applies to teachers in their first 3 years, can include alternative route candidates who hold an alternative certificate, traditionally prepared teachers who hold an initial certification, and other combinations of pathways and levels prior to attainment of professional certification.

**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, teachers are those with position codes 3–9, which include PK–12 classroom teachers (i.e., prekindergarten, kindergarten, classroom), special education teachers (i.e., self-contained, resource, itinerant), and retired teachers returning to teach.

**Pre-Initial Certificate**

A category of teaching certificate that includes provisional initial certificates and internship certificates.

**Professional Certificate**

A teaching certificate level and standard educator credential valid for a period of 5 school years, which may be renewed by meeting continued professional learning requirements established by the State Board of Education. An educator who has advanced to a professional certificate must earn 120 renewal credits during that 5-year period to renew the certificate.

**Provisional Initial Certificate**

An educator certificate level given to teachers who have completed all requirements of an approved, traditional educator preparation program but have not earned a passing score on one or more required certification exams.

**Reciprocity**

A process that streamlines hiring for districts and enables qualified teachers to move more seamlessly between systems across state lines. The South Carolina Department of Education, through the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Agreement, recognizes valid, standard teaching credentials from other states, provided they meet specific criteria. If the out-of-state credential reflects completion of an approved educator preparation program (traditional or alternative route) and is a standard (not temporary, emergency, or provisional) certificate, South Carolina will issue a comparable certificate, if one exists.

**Reciprocity Professional**

A teacher hired in a South Carolina public school having entered the state via reciprocity and received a professional teaching certificate. These individuals hold valid, standard educator credentials from other jurisdictions recognized through South Carolina's participation in the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Agreement, provided the credentials meet specified requirements.

**Recruitment**

The process of bringing new teachers into the public school workforce. From the state perspective, this may include hiring recent graduates of traditional or alternative preparation programs, teachers from other states or countries, or teachers returning to the classroom. From a district perspective, recruitment also encompasses bringing in teachers from other South Carolina districts.

**Regular Certificate**

An educator certificate level issued to teachers who earned a grade of B, C, or D on the National Teacher Examination, or to teachers who did not take or pass a specialty area exam. The South Carolina Department of Education stopped issuing this type of certificate in 1971.

**Retention**

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.

**Retired Certificate**

An educator certificate level and credential awarded to an individual who retired from a South Carolina public school and is hired for the purpose of substituting only.

**Role-Changer**

A public school educator who changes positions within South Carolina public schools from one year to the next. This includes moving from teaching to a nonteaching role (e.g., administrator, instructional coach) or moving from a nonteaching role into teaching.

**Special Subject Certificate**

An educator certificate level issued to individuals who have expertise in a subject taught in public schools. It is renewed at the request of the district. The South Carolina Department of Education no longer issues this type of certificate.

**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.

**Teacher Pipeline**

A conceptual model depicting how teachers enter, move within, and exit the public school workforce. It includes new teachers (e.g., recent graduates, out-of-state hires), returning educators (e.g., retirees, boomerangs), and those leaving or moving between schools and districts.

**Teaching Certificate Level**

A level which indicates where teachers are in the certification process. Levels include pre-initial, initial, conditional alternative route, and other annual or temporary certificate levels that lead to a professional certificate once all requirements for full certification have been met. Some certificate levels, like international certificate, cannot lead to a professional certificate.

**Teaching Certificate Pathway**

Teaching certificate information which describes the route a teacher takes to become certified. Pathways include undergraduate, graduate, alternative certification, career and technical education, critical needs, and reciprocity.

**Undergraduate Pathway**

A certificate pathway where teachers earn a bachelor's degree in education from an approved educator preparation program at a South Carolina college or university, complete student teaching as part of their degree requirements, and earn passing scores on required certification exams. After graduation, they are eligible for an initial teaching certificate.

**Warrant Certificate**

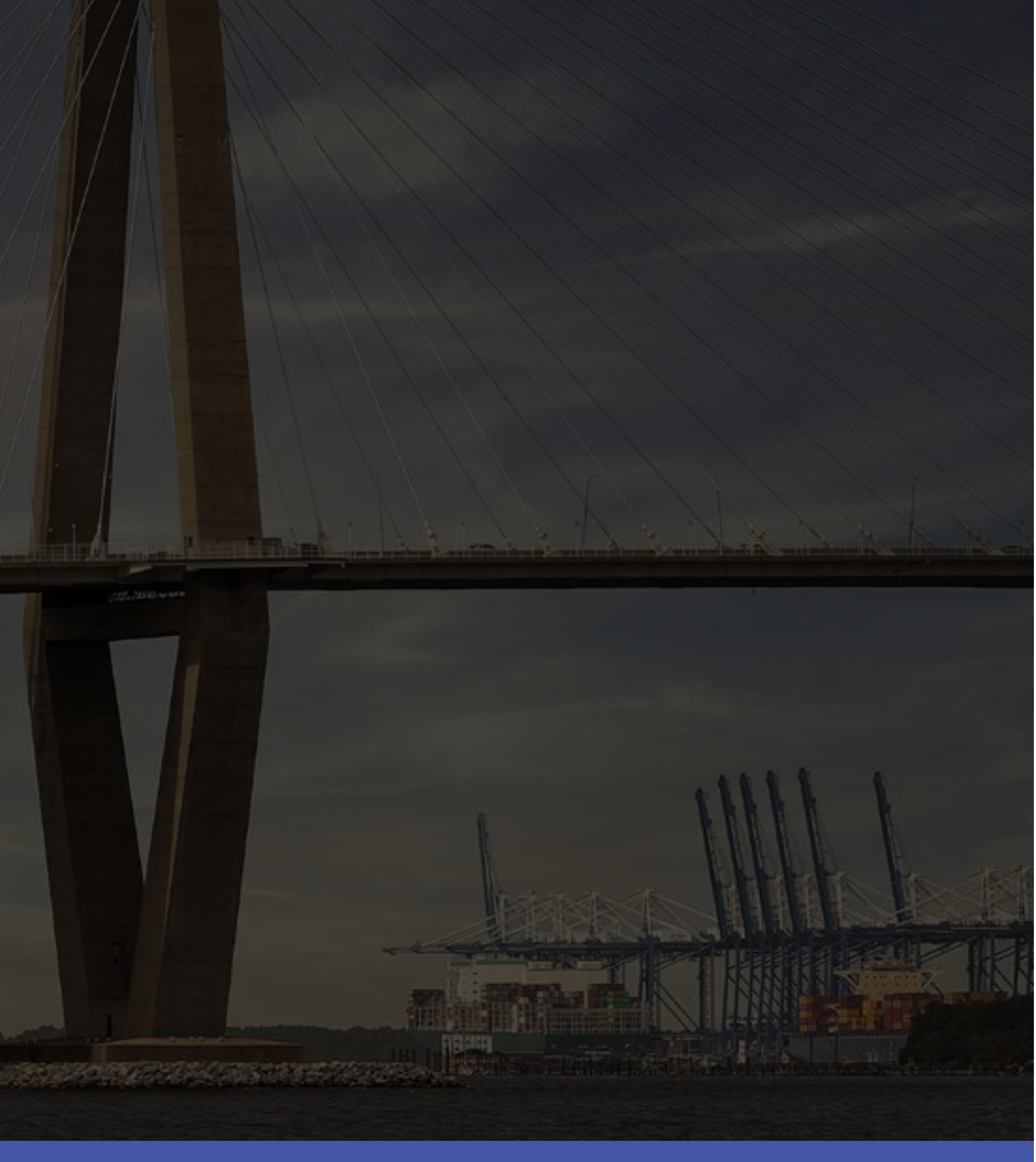
An educator certificate level issued to teachers who have not passed the required teaching exams or the required professional education courses. The South Carolina Department of Education stopped issuing this type of certificate in 1976.



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## EDUCATOR WORKFORCE PROFILE

