SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.
PO Box 11867 | 227 Blatt Building
Columbia SC 29211 | WWW.SCEOC.ORG

AMENDED AGENDA

SC Education Oversight Full Committee Meeting

Monday, June 15, 2026
1:00 p.m.
Room 433, Blatt Building

I. Welcome and Introductions ..... April Allen

II. Approval of Full EOC Committee Minutes for
April 15, 2026 ..... April Allen

III. Presentation (Information Item):
Rural Teacher Recruitment Initiative Report ..... Dr. Rainey Knight
Director, Strategic Innovation

IV. Academic Standards & Assessments Subcommittee ..... Dr. Patty Tate,
ASA Chair

Action Items:
Technical Review of SC READY ELA &
English 2 End-of-Course ..... Dr. Patty Tate
SCDE Response to State Assessments Recommendations

Multilingual Learners' Progress Indicator ..... Dr. Patty Tate

High School Employability Credential:
Inclusion of On-Track Measure ..... Dr. Patty Tate

Inclusion of Seal of Biliteracy in CCR ..... Dr. Patty Tate

Dual Credit Process Revision ..... Dr. Patty Tate

Industry Certifications & Credentials for SY2026-27 ..... Dana Yow

V. Information: FY 2026-27 EIA Budget Update ..... Dr. Rainey Knight

VI. Executive Session: Personnel Matter

VII. Return to Open Session

VIII. Adjournment

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Full Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

April 13, 2026

Members Present (in-person or remote): April Allen, Rep. Neal Collins, Dr. Brian Newsome, Barbara Hairfield, Melissa Pender, Dr. Patty Tate, Sen. Ross Turner, Melanie Barton, Laura McKinney, Tammy Achziger, Sidney Locke, Rep. Terry Alexander, and Dr. Abbey Duggins (for Superintendent Weaver).

Guests: Heather Bolinger, K-12 Assessment Solutions, University of Georgia; Dr. Kacey Cook, SC Department of Education; and Dr. Herb Bocchino, SC Department of Education.

EOC Staff Present: Crystal Garcia, Gabrielle Fulton, Tenell Felder, Hope Johnson-Jones, Dr. Rainey Knight, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Dr. Jenny May, Amina Asghar, and Dana Yow.

April Allen opened the meeting and introduced new EOC member Laura McKinney, who was appointed by Senator Hembree to fill the unexpired term previously held by Jeri McCumbee. Dr. Abby Duggins also attended, representing the superintendent. The committee then approved the February 9, 2026 Full Committee minutes.

April Allen invited Dr. Jenny May, EOC Director of Qualitative Research & Stakeholder Engagement, to present the State Funded Full-Day 4K Report for fiscal years 2024-25 and 2025-26. This annual evaluation is required by proviso and was due by March 1. The report was submitted to members of the General Assembly on February 27 and was presented as an information item, requiring no vote from the committee.

Dr. Jenny May presented the State Funded Full-Day 4K Report, which evaluates South Carolina's Child Development Education Pilot Program (CERDEP) as required by Proviso 1.47. The report examines quality, access, and impact of state-funded 4K programming across both CERDEP 4K (district-run) and First Steps 4K (private settings).

On access, Dr. May reported 711 students on the 4K waitlist at CERDEP school districts, 1,739 open seats in First Steps 4K, and approximately 8,855 pupils in poverty with unknown 4K experience during 2024-25. Regarding financial investment, the state spent $73.6 million on 14,143 CERDEP 4K students and $40.6 million on 3,767 First Steps 4K students who later enrolled in public school kindergarten in 2025-26. Nationally, South Carolina ranks 15th in access

for 4-year-olds but 38th in state financial investment to early childhood, dropping to 42nd when other funds are considered.

Dr. May highlighted recent program changes, including moving the waitlist communication date from November 15 to September 1, formalizing a pilot for placing waitlisted children, and proposed 2026-27 changes that would expand CERDEP and allow First Steps 4K to serve children at or below 300% of poverty (currently 185% for Medicaid eligibility). Of nearly 18,000 children served in state-funded 4K, 84% in CERDEP 4K and 68% in First Steps 4K were in poverty.

On impact, Dr. May noted that 54,000+ kindergartners took the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), with 56% being pupils in poverty. Statewide readiness has remained around 37%, though children in poverty served by CERDEP performed better on the KRA than their peers in poverty who did not participate.

Key recommendations included piloting efforts to reduce CERDEP waitlists, expanding infrastructure using data to prioritize recruitment, improving consistency in waitlist and seat reporting, meeting additional NIEER quality benchmarks related to screening and teacher qualifications, and enhancing marketing to recruit families for available seats. Next steps include the 4K Data Dashboard, a CERDEP Collaborative Convening, Year 2 of the 4K Waitlists Pilot, including CERDEP assessment data in the assessment audit, and examining teacher preparation and retention along with universal hearing, vision, and developmental screening in CERDEP classrooms.

Laura McKinney asked whether data exists on private or religious schools that provide PreK. Dr. May replied that data is available only for schools affiliated with SC First Steps; unaffiliated providers are not tracked.

Melanie Barton expressed concern that statewide kindergarten readiness declined from 39% to 37% this year, but praised the full-day 4K program for nearly closing the readiness gap for children in poverty. She urged expansion to more public and private providers, thanked the House and Senate Finance Committee for expanding access to private providers, and challenged public and charter schools to reach the 30% of eligible students not participating, noting transportation as a common barrier. She also called on the General Assembly to expand birth-to-three services and identified program expansion, along with addressing barriers like space, teacher shortages, and childcare operator challenges, as the next priority.

Rep. Alexander raised concerns about teacher qualifications and called for a unified approach to early childhood programs, noting that DSS, First Steps, Head Start, and other entities each operate independently despite significant funding, while many eligible children remain unserved. He urged that consolidating and examining these programs together should be a statement of purpose moving forward. Dr. May responded that her reporting authority is currently limited to CERDEP programming but offered to expand her review informally and collaborate with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), which is facilitated by First Steps.

Dr. Patty Tate presented the report from the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee, which met on March 16. The subcommittee addressed three action items and received three information items. Before summarizing them, Dr. Tate invited Dr. May back to the podium to present a report on the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) program.

Dr. May presented the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) Program Report, required by Act 247, which documents the program's impact on student achievement and includes school-level data when at least 51% of enrolled students participate in the program and at least 30 participating students have test scores (with potential reduction to no fewer than 10 students if privacy can be maintained).

The report covers three areas: information on the approval process, participation, and compliance for ECENC schools; the process for collecting assessment results to document program impact; and updates to previous EOC recommendations. Dr. May reviewed the approval timeline, which includes application availability in January, application deadlines by late February, completed grants submitted by June 30, school-level assessment results due September 1, and compliance audits by November 15.

Dr. May offered three recommendations. First, convene the ECENC Advisory Committee as required by Act 247, which consults with the EOC on curriculum exemption requests and provides recommendations on matters requested by the EOC. Second, offer summative state assessments to ECENC students in public schools to help evaluate program impact. Third, consider coordination at the state level between the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) and ECENC by either implementing safeguards to prevent parents from receiving both funds or allowing the two funding sources to be braided.

Ms. Barton recommended adding context to the self-reported data in Appendix F of the ECENC report, noting that scores such as a mean scale score of 365 are meaningless to the public without

an explanation of what they correlate to. She emphasized that this will be an ongoing challenge as the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) moves forward, since comparing assessments requires a common frame of reference. Ms. Barton stressed that the EOC, the Department, and other stakeholders will need to work together to help the public understand whether special needs students are scoring at levels comparable to their peers, framing this as a key future issue for education.

Tammy Achziger asked whether any audit process exists to verify that ECENC schools are actually serving students with special needs as stated.

Dr. May responded that no audit process currently exists, nor is there a formal complaint procedure, though the office has received a few complaints this year. In those cases, staff gathered as much information as possible but found schools were not out of compliance with their stated accommodations and special services. Dr. May noted this is an area she would like the Advisory Committee to address by recommending a formal process for handling complaints. She explained that the EOC has no authority to investigate unless invited and cannot require action from schools; the only available recourse is removing a school from the approved participation list, which would likely impact families more than the school itself.

Ms. Allen then moved to approve the report. The motion was approved unanimously by the members.

Dr. Tate reported that the ASA Subcommittee's first action item was the technical review of the SC READY Science assessments for grades 4 and 6, conducted by K-12 Assessment Solutions at the University of Georgia, with UGA team members available on Zoom for questions. The review included blueprint analysis, content alignment, depth of knowledge (DOK) analysis, psychometric evaluation, and performance classification, with subject matter experts examining all items for alignment and rigor.

Findings indicated that the grade 4 and 6 SC READY test blueprints are well-aligned to state standards and emphasize DOK Level 2, with most items appropriately aligned, though a small number were flagged for potential realignment or DOK miscalculation. Recommendations included reviewing flagged items, strengthening overall DOK alignment, exercising caution with sub-domain scores, incorporating additional psychometric analyses, adding items near cut scores to improve classification precision, and exploring models to enhance decision accuracy. The subcommittee approved the report unanimously.

Melanie Barton asked whether the general solution is simply to add more test items.

Ms. Yow deferred to others, and Heather Bolinger replied that from a psychometric perspective, the answer is “not necessarily”, since the test has four reporting categories and adding too many items would be inappropriate for the purpose of the assessment.

Daniel Cammisa and Kelvin Pompey of the SC Department of Education clarified that two separate issues were being conflated: the four performance levels (does not meet, approaches, meets, exceeds) and the DOK levels (one, two, and three). The UGA recommendation noted that classifying students into two groups is statistically easier than classifying into four, which relates to decision classification. On DOK, they confirmed that the state summative assessment appropriately assesses at all applicable levels, with some disagreement only around a few items, reflecting the inherently subjective nature of DOK assignment.

They added that Dr. Madison, at the subcommittee meeting, suggested replacing some items with ones closer to the cut score rather than adding more items, acknowledging this would be complex and require recalibration but worth considering. They also noted Dr. Madison affirmed that the SCDE's current practices are in line with field standards, and his recommendations reflect broader challenges the field is working through.

Ms. Allen then moved to approve the report. The motion was approved unanimously by the members.

Dr. Tate reported that the ASA Subcommittee's second action item was the 2026 Report on the Educational Performance of Military-Connected Students, required by Act 289 of 2014 (the Military Family Quality of Life Enhancement Act), which mandates annual EOC reporting on academic outcomes for this student population.

The report included demographic data from 2024-25, an overview of state data collection practices, academic performance, attendance, and existing supports. Under federal ESSA requirements, districts must identify military-connected students, typically through parent surveys entered into PowerSchool, though 18 districts reported having no such students. Of the 18,824 identified students, about 74% were concentrated in 10 districts. Military-connected students in South Carolina outperformed their non-military peers across all tested areas, including math, ELA, and science.

Recommendations included requiring consistent data collection during enrollment, continuing collaboration with the Department of Education to improve military-related data, and exploring

partnerships with postsecondary institutions to better support these students. Dr. Tate also noted an updated military-connected students dashboard at dashboard.sc.gov and invited members to visit. The subcommittee approved the report unanimously.

Ms. Allen then moved to approve the report. The motion was approved unanimously by the members.

Dr. Tate reported that the ASA Subcommittee's final action item was a request to approve new industry certifications for career readiness and accountability purposes. The Department of Education submitted 19 new certifications, and EOC staff asked the subcommittee to reconsider six of them. Following discussion and concerns from EOC members about the process, the subcommittee unanimously approved a motion to delay action on the credentials until technical advisory committees could meet in the spring.

Dr. Tate reported on two information items received by the ASA Subcommittee. Dr. Rocio Zalba of the SC Department of Education presented on the South Carolina Seal of Biliteracy, a nationally recognized credential signifying high proficiency in English and at least one additional language. In May, the subcommittee will consider additional South Carolina-specific data to decide whether the Seal should be added as a measure of college and career readiness. The subcommittee also discussed the inclusion of courses taken by students pursuing the high school employability credential and additional issues affecting other CCR measures, both of which will return at the May meeting.

April Allen then introduced an action item regarding nomination to the South Carolina Public Charter School District Board of Trustees. Under Section 59-40-230 of the Code of Laws, five board members are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of other bodies, including the EOC, and with Senate approval. Jonathan Butcher has served as the Governor's nominee from the EOC since 2021, and both Mr. Butcher and the Public Charter School Board leadership expressed interest in his continued service. Ms. Allen moved to approve Mr. Butcher's nomination for a three-year term, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Dana Yow shared two calendar items during the Executive Director Update.

First, the EOC is beginning its strategic planning process for 2025 and beyond, building on the initial work launched in 2020-2021 under former Director Dr. Ferguson, which centered on defining the committee's mission, values, and goals. The EOC staff is working with Dr. Christina Melton, former Lexington-Richland Five superintendent and current consultant, to review the plan internally and identify areas needing change, strengthening, or addition. Members are

invited to a strategic planning session following the ASA meeting on May 18 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in the building. More information and invitations will follow.

Second, Ms. Yow announced a "save the date" for the EOC retreat on August 9-10 in historic Camden, South Carolina, just after the nation's birthday. Additional details will be provided.

After the update the meeting was adjourned.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Date: June 15, 2026

INFORMATION ITEM:
Rural Teacher Recruitment Initiative Funds Evaluation

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
2025-2025 Appropriation Act

1A.45. (SDE-EIA: Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive) (A) There is created a program within the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) to recruit and retain classroom educators in rural and underserved districts experiencing excessive turnover of classroom teachers on an annual basis.
(B) During the current fiscal year CERRA shall publish eligibility requirements and applications for individual educators, school districts, and institutions of higher education not inconsistent with existing licensure requirements for each, but also including:
(1) Eligible districts identified by CERRA as experiencing greater than eleven percent average annual teacher turnover, as reported on the districts five most recent district report cards issued by the South Carolina Department of Education and are not one of the fifteen wealthiest districts based on the index of taxpaying ability, may make application to participate in the program.
(2) Individuals eligible for incentives shall be willing to provide instructional services in an eligible district in exchange for participation in an incentive detailed in item (C) pursuant to the obligations and restrictions stated for each.
(3) Institutions of higher education eligible to receive education funding as a component of recruiting incentives created pursuant to item (C) of this provision shall not be excluded from participation in Teaching Fellows Program.
(4) Any incentives requiring individuals to relocate into an eligible district to provide instructional services shall not be made available to individuals providing instructional services in other eligible districts.
(C) Pursuant to item (A), CERRA shall develop a set of incentives including, but not limited to, salary supplements, education subsidies, loan forgiveness, professional development, and mentorship to be provided to classroom educators that offer instructional services in eligible districts and shall provide incentive options for eligible individuals at all stages of their careers, including high-school and college or university students interested in entering the teaching profession and including individuals entering the field through an alternative certification pathway to include, but not limited to, PACE, ABCTE, Teach for America, and CATE Work-Based Certification.
At a minimum, the incentives shall include:
(1) Development of a program for forgiveness of undergraduate student loans, not to exceed $5,000 per year, for up to 7 years, for teachers participating in this incentive that achieve certification through an alternative pathway or who have a loan from an institution other than the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation or program other than the South Carolina Teachers Loan Program.
(2) Development of a forgivable loan program for individuals pursuing graduate coursework in furtherance of a teaching career, including enrollment in graduate-level coursework necessary to seek additional credentialing or certification relevant to the participants teaching practice, or individuals seeking an alternative pathway to certification as a teacher.
(3) Support for the establishment and maintenance of a teaching mentorship program, including salary supplements for teaching mentors not to exceed $2,500 per year.

(4) Other technical support and recruiting incentives as developed by CERRA in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Education Oversight Committee consistent with the objectives of this section.
(D) In addition to eligibility and application requirements, CERRA shall develop a process for recovering an amount equal to the incentives given to individual participants who fail to comply with the obligations associated with a relevant incentive in which they participate including, but not limited to, failure to complete a prescribed course of study, failure to obtain a relevant certification or licensure upon completion of a course of study, or failure to provide instructional services in an eligible district for a prescribed period of time.
(E) CERRA shall report by July thirty-first of the current fiscal year to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House on the incentives developed pursuant to item (C) of this proviso and make recommendations for attracting and retaining high quality teachers in rural and underserved districts. The report shall contain at a minimum eligibility requirements and application processes for districts and individuals, descriptions of and proposed budgets for each incentive program and an analysis of the number and demographics of individuals potentially eligible for each.
(F) Funds appropriated or transferred for use in the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive may be carried forward from prior fiscal years and used for the same purpose.
(G) The Education Oversight Committee is required to complete an evaluation of the impact of the funds and incentives related to the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive. A completed evaluation is due to the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Education Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, the Senate Education Committee, and the Governors Office by June 30, 2026.

CRITICAL FACTS

This report will be provided to members of the General Assembly following the full EOC meeting on June 15, 2026.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

Revisions to this budget proviso have been made in both the House and Senate versions of the 2026-27 Appropriation Act. SC TEACHER will replace CERRA as the administrator of the program and funds. Additional revisions have been made to the proviso language.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

There is no economic impact to the EOC producing this report.

ACTION REQUEST

☐ **For approval** ☒ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

Rural Recruitment Initiative Funds Evaluation 2024-25

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.

June 2026

Dr. Rainey Knight, EOC Director of Strategic Innovation

Acknowledgments

Ms. Melanie Barton, Governor's Office

Dr. P. Ann Byrd, SC TEACHER, University of South Carolina

Dr. Svetlana Dmitrieva, SC TEACHER, University of South Carolina

Dr. Abbey Duggins, South Carolina Department of Education

Ms. Lila Toal Mandsager, South Carolina Department of Education

Dr. Angela Starrett, SC TEACHER, University of South Carolina

Ms. Michelle Sweatman, CERRA

Dr. Lindsay Yerta, CERRA

SC Education Oversight Committee staff including Dana Yow, Dr. Matthew Lavery, Tenell Felder, and Hope Johnson-Jones

CONTENTS

Appendices:

The study was focused on the following questions:

1. How did districts utilize the Rural Recruitment Initiative (RRI) funds in 2024-25?

2. For selected incentives, what are the return on investments (ROI) for each incentive, the cost per hire per teacher and trends over time?

History of the South Carolina Rural Recruitment in Education Initiative

South Carolina's rural regions have long struggled to fill teaching positions with adequately trained and certified educators. Challenges unique to these areas—such as limited access to resources, geographic isolation, and economic constraints—have contributed to persistent staffing gaps, directly impacting the quality of education students receive. The Rural Recruitment in Education Initiative serves as a strategic response to these challenges, making substantial investments in targeted strategies that support community growth and help ensure equitable educational opportunities for students in rural districts. By implementing targeted recruitment and retention strategies and offering incentives, the program aims to strengthen education in rural areas and improve long-term student outcomes.

Governor Nikki Haley's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2015-16 recommended the establishment of a Rural Teacher Recruiting Initiative with an initial allocation of $1.5 million from Education Improvement Act (EIA) revenues. This funding was intended to address the critical need for recruiting and retaining educators in areas facing high teacher turnover. Governor Haley's budget emphasized strengthening talent retention in regions of the state with significant teacher shortages.

The fiscal year 2015-16 Appropriations Act contained Proviso 1A.73 (Appendix A) which established the Rural Teacher Recruiting Initiative (RRI). In 2015, the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) was authorized to implement and administer incentives with the allocated $1.5 million in EIA funding. The initiative also allows funds appropriated for the program to carry forward into subsequent fiscal years to maintain support and continuity.

Prior to making initial recommendations on incentives, CERRA met with staff from the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), the Governor's Office, Senate Education committee staff, and House Education committee staff to review potential strategies to be offered as incentives. In addition, CERRA met with superintendents and other district staff to gain input. In collaboration with the SC Department of Education and the EOC, CERRA developed a set of five core incentives aimed at attracting and retaining teachers. Recognizing that recruiting and retaining qualified educators has historically posed significant challenges in these communities, this initiative continues to focus on creating and promoting incentives which bring skilled teachers to areas that need them most.

The original initiative's five core incentives included:

1. **Homegrown Teacher Initiative:** Offered high school graduates from eligible districts four years of subsidized tuition at any public college or university within the state, in exchange for a commitment to teach in their home district or another eligible district for a minimum of two years.
2. **Enhanced Student Loan Repayment:** Provided eligible teachers up to $7,500 per year in direct student loan repayment for each year of teaching in a qualifying district, for a maximum of five years.
3. **Rural Educator Salary Supplement:** Offered educators with less than five years of experience a stipend to increase their salary to align with five additional years of experience, based on the district's salary schedule. The supplement could be renewed up to the ten-year experience level.
4. **Graduate Degrees for Career Educators:** Provided educators with five to ten years of teaching experience with two years of tuition support for a graduate degree at a public college or university within the state, in return for a two-year teaching commitment in a qualifying district.
5. **Teaching Mentors:** Supported experienced teachers to serve as mentors, providing mentoring stipends of $5,000 for their service. These mentors offer guidance and support to newer teachers in eligible districts to foster retention.

RRI Program Timeline

FY 2015-16

*SC Governor Nikki Haley recommends the establishment of a **Rural Recruitment Initiative** in her Executive Budget.*

*SC General Assembly allocates **$1.5 million** of EIA revenues to RRI to address the critical need to recruit and retain teachers in SC school districts experiencing greater than 12% average teacher turnover. Five core incentives were established.*

FY 2016-17

*CERRA issues **first report on the RRI program** on January 15, 2016.*

FY 2017-18

*The development of a **loan forgiveness program** was added as an incentive. The program's purpose is to encourage classroom teachers to seek and become employed in one of the rural incentive districts. Eligible teachers may apply for up to $5,000 for up to seven years.*

CERRA, in collaboration with other agencies, develops additional incentives for eligible districts.

FY 2019-20

***School district eligibility** was further revised to exclude the 15 wealthiest school districts based on the index of taxpaying ability.*

FY 2022-23

*Budget proviso adopted requiring a **teacher recruitment and retention task force** be convened to develop strategies. RRI incentives addressed in final report.*

FY 2024-25

RRI budget proviso revised to require EOC to evaluate the impact of RRI incentives by Dec. 15, 2024.

FY 2025-26

RRI budget proviso revised to require EOC to evaluate the impact of RRI incentives by June 30, 2026

FY 2026-27

Based on budget amendments in the House and Senate budgets, revisions to RRI proviso include designating SC TEACHER as the new authority of the RRI initiative.

2023 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force

Pursuant to Proviso 1.114 in the 2022-23 Appropriation Act, a group of educators and stakeholders were convened to develop strategies on teacher recruitment and retention in South Carolina. The report[1] recommended increased coordination at the school, district, and state levels. Recommendations from the report related to incentives for districts to use for recruitment and retention to include:

- Critical needs stipends should be a strategy to recruit and retain teachers
- Schools should support nurses, counselors, media specialists, speech-language therapists, and psychologists
- Teacher loan forgiveness should be expanded
- Grow-your-own programs should be implemented by districts
- Teacher mentoring and induction should be increased from one to three years
- ProTeam and Teacher Cadet programs, administered by CERRA, should be expanded

1 SC Department of Education. Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force Recommendations. https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-task-force-recommendations/

Rural Recruitment Initiative Incentives

Districts eligible for RRI funds for 2024-25 are listed in Table A. These districts are not in the top 15 districts as listed on the most recent index of taxpaying ability (Appendix C) and have an average five year teacher turnover greater than 11%. Districts eligible for RRI funds for 2025-26 are listed in Appendix D as reported by the district's five most recent district report card.

Table A: Eligible School Districts Rural Recruitment Initiative 2024-25[2]

Eligible School Districts Rural Recruitment Initiative Funds 2024-25[2]	
Abbeville	Jasper
Allendale	Kershaw
Anderson 2	Lancaster
Anderson 3	Laurens 55
Anderson 4	Laurens 56
Anderson 5	Lee
Bamberg	Lexington 2
Barnwell	Lexington 3
Calhoun	Lexington 4
Chester	Marion
Clarendon	Marlboro
Colleton	McCormick
Darlington	Newberry
Dillon 3	Orangeburg
Dillon 4	Saluda
Dorchester 4	Spartanburg 2
Edgefield	Spartanburg 3
Fairfield	Spartanburg 7
Florence 3	Sumter
Greenwood 50	Union
Greenwood 51	Williamsburg
Greenwood 52	York 1
Hampton	York 4

(Table A, right) Eligible districts have greater than 11% average annual teacher turnover, as reported by districts' five most recent district report cards issued by the SC Department of Education and are not one of the 15 wealthiest districts based on index of taxpaying ability.

[2] Source: CERRA, Rural Teacher and Recruitment Incentives Legislative Report, July, 2025.

Incentives for Rural Recruitment Funds

In 2017-18, incentives were identified by CERRA in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee, the South Carolina Department of Education, district personnel directors, and superintendents. Eligible districts in 2024-25 selected from the same list of incentives developed in 2017-18 (see graphic below). Districts had discretion in choosing appropriate incentives to recruit and/or retain teachers.

CERRA Incentives for Rural Recruitment Incentive Funds

Recruiting into the Profession from Within a District

Alternative Certification: funds for districts to reimburse employees for costs associated with applying for and participating in an alternative certification program

Bridge Program Partnerships: funds to cover district costs associated with college/university partnerships to identify and support future teachers

Certification Examinations: funds for districts to reimburse employees for costs associated with certification exams and certification support seminars

Teacher Cadet Start-Up Costs: funds to cover costs associated with starting a new Teacher Cadet class, excluding teacher salary; may include startup of ProTeam or other types of teacher recruitment classes

General Recruitment and Hiring

District Website Upgrades: funds for districts to improve their websites so as to assure accessibility from all devices, ease in locating information about vacancies and availability of online application process

International Teacher Fees: funds to cover district costs associated with hiring international teachers

National Employment System Vendor: funds for districts to subscribe to a national vendor package of online services to track, recruit, screen, and onboard applicants

Recruitment Expenses: funds for districts to cover costs of travel expenses associated with domestic recruitment activities (such as attendance at recruitment fairs), the purchase of marketing materials, etc.

Recruitment

Critical Needs Salary Stipend: funds for districts to pay salary stipends to critical need subject teachers to encourage them to accept employment and to remain in the district

Housing Purchase: funds to reimburse districts for all or some of the cost of a down-payment and the renovation of a house or apartment from outside the district to offset the community costs

Travel Stipend: funds for districts to provide a stipend to teachers who travel to their teaching assignment from outside the district, to offset the community costs

First Year Teacher Stipend: funds for districts to increase the salary of a first year teachers to the second year teacher level

Retention

Graduate Coursework: funds to reimburse teachers for costs associated with graduate coursework that the district has determined would address a district need or promote job satisfaction/retention

Mentoring/Induction Support: funds for districts to provide stipends for first year teachers mentors and to offer resources and training for mentors and first year teachers

Professional Development: funds to provide professional development for classroom teachers that is intended to address a district need or promote job satisfaction/retention

District Allocation of RRI Funds

On an annual basis, district eligibility for RRI is determined. District eligibility is determined by two factors: teacher turnover rate must be above 11% (five-year average) and the district cannot be in the top 15 wealthiest districts as determined by the most recent Index of Taxpaying Ability. Once the list of eligible districts is determined by CERRA, districts are allocated funds according to the number of classroom teachers in the district and a weighting based on the district's five year average teacher turnover rate.

Example of Calculation for a District's Allocation of RRI Funds:

District X has a **5 year teacher turnover rate of 11.94%** and has **207 classroom teachers**

Step 1: District Teacher Turnover Rate – Teacher Turnover Rate Cutoff x Multiplier = **District Weighting**

11.94 – 11 x 100 = **.0094**

Step 2: District number of classroom teachers from Supply and Demand Report (self reported)

207 teachers

Step 3: Number of Teachers from Step 2 x District Weighting = **Total Teacher Weighting**

207 x .0094 = **1.95**

Step 4: Number of Teachers in District + Total Teacher Weighting = **Combined Teachers in a District**

207 + 1.95 = **208.95**

Step 5: Step 4 is completed for every eligible district for RRI funds and total for all districts is determined

16,286 teachers (all RRI districts)

Step 6: RRI allocation of funds/All RRI district teachers = **Base Allocation of Funding**

$7,000,000 / 16,286 = **$429.81**

Step 7: Base Allocation x Combined Teachers in a District = **Amount of RRI Funding**

429.81 x 208.95 = **$89,808.79**

So, District X would receive **$89,808.79 for its RRI funds.**

Table B: 2024-25 Funding for RRI Qualifying Districts

The RRI funding allocated for eligible districts in 2024-25 is listed below.[3]

FY25 Qualifying Districts	Allocation
Abbeville	$89,808
Allendale	$34,227
Anderson 2	$97,380
Anderson 3	$79,913
Anderson 4	$89,156
Anderson 5	$368,944
Bamberg	$52,838
Barnwell	$101,841
Calhoun	$43,990
Chester	$146,533
Clarendon	$112,649
Colleton	$119,815
Darlington	$324,805
Dillion 3	$41,105
Dillon 4	$96,011
Dorchester 4	$64,489
Edgefield	$101,948
Fairfield	$88,594
Florence 3	$91,547
Greenwood 50	$256,653
Greenwood 51	$31,162
Greenwood 52	$43,681
Hampton	$64,028
Jasper	$78,602
Kershaw	$283,031
Lancaster	$440,876
Laurens 55	$164,667
Laurens 56	$86,754
Lee	$51,322
Lexington 2	$266,279
Lexington 3	$66,510
Lexington 4	$104,360
Marion	$140,167
Marlboro	$102,228
McCormick	$22,620
Newberry	$191,076
Orangeburg	$434,615
Saluda	$73,103
Spartanburg 2	$302,456
Spartanburg 3	$90,807
Spartanburg 7	$266,865
Sumter	$369,704
Union	$109,636
Williamsburg	$94,768
York 1	$157,834
York 4	$560,601
Total	$7,000,000

[3] Source: CERRA, Rural Teacher Recruitment and Retention Report, July, 2025.

In addition, the following funds were dispersed in 2024-25 to districts with carry forward funds from the previous year.[4]

District	Carry Forward Funds
Barnwell (Consolidated)	$61,401
Clarendon	$2,000
Dorchester 4	$22,000
Jasper	$44,278
Marlboro	$107,226
Total	$236,905

[4]Source: CERRA, email to R.Knight, Fall, 2025.

Table C shows the amount of RRI funds disbursed to districts for 2024-25 by individual districts, types of incentives, and amount disbursed. These data are from the CERRA 2025 report and are based on disbursements to school districts. Carry forward funds disbursed are not reflected.

[4]Source: CERRA, email to R.Knight, Fall, 2025.

Table C - Disbursements by District 2024-25[5]

DISTRICT	INCENTIVE	DISBURSEMENT	TOTAL
Abbeville	Graduate Coursework	$4,105.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$10,750.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$35,537.60	
	Professional Development	$633.28	
	Recruitment Expenses	$38,782.51	**$89,808.39**
Allendale	Alternative Certification Fees	$1,902.55	
	Certification Examination Support	$2,400.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$24,227.00	
	Surveys	$5,697.45	**$34,227.00**
Anderson 2	Graduate Coursework	$38,700.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$23,000.00	
	Professional Development	$14,859.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$20,821.00	**$97,380.00**
Anderson 3	Bridge Program Partnerships	$1,420.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$600.00	
	National Employment System Fees	$28,800.00	
	Professional Development	$12,780.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$1,793.00	
	Website Updates	$34,520.00	**$79,913.00**
Anderson 4	Alternative Certification Fees	$640.50	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$26,097.01	
	National Employment System Fees	$9,000.00	
	Professional Development	$47,279.35	
	Recruitment Expenses	$6,138.34	**$89,155.20**
Anderson 5	Mentoring/Induction Support	$126,944.00	
	Professional Development	$167,000.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$75,000.00	**$368,944.00**
Bamberg	Housing Purchase/Renovations	$47,813.24	
	International Teacher Fees	$996.46	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$3,972.30	
	Professional Development	$56.00	**$52,838.00**
Barnwell	Alternative Certification Fees	$24,382.29	
	International Teacher Fees	$46,099.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$16,223.15	
	Website Updates	$15,136.56	**$101,841.00**
Calhoun	Mentoring/Induction Support	$28,338.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$15,652.00	**$43,990.00**
Chester	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$85,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$15,000.00	
	Professional Development	$4,200.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$42,000.00	**$146,200.00**

Clarendon	Bridge Program Partnerships	$5,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$57,000.00	
	National Employment System Fees	$20,000.00	
	Professional Development	$10,649.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$20,000.00	**$112,649.00**
Colleton	First-Year Teacher Salary Supplement	$111,741.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$8,074.00	**$119,815.00**
Darlington	Bridge Program Partnerships	$35,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$20,000.00	
	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$195,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$51,755.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$7,850.00	
	Professional Development	$15,200.00	**$324,805.00**
Dillon 3	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$41,105.00	**$41,105.00**
Dillon 4	Certification Examination Support	$2,500.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$3,297.00	
	Housing Purchase/Renovations	$1,992.80	
	International Teacher Fees	$40,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$19,221.20	
	Recruitment Expenses	$29,000.00	**$96,011.00**
Dorchester 4	International Teacher Fees	$64,488.52	**$64,488.52**
Edgefield	Alternative Certification Fees	$1,330.11	
	Graduate Coursework	$400.68	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$74,095.57	
	National Employment System Fees	$5,534.93	
	Professional Development	$6,802.44	
	Recruitment Expenses	$13,524.35	**$101,688.08**
Fairfield	Alternative Certification Fees	$5,000.00	
	Bridge Program Partnerships	$9,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$3,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$25,055.83	
	National Employment System Fees	$25,613.17	
	Professional Development	$5,925.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$15,000.00	**$88,594.00**
Florence 3	Alternative Certification Fees	$750.00	
	Bridge Program Partnerships	$12,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$16,248.96	
	Graduate Coursework	$6,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$27,000.00	
	National Employment System Fees	$9,112.14	
	Recruitment Expenses	$20,435.90	**$91,547.00**
Greenwood 50	Certification Examination Support	$1,636.00	
	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$39,518.20	

	Graduate Coursework	$33,740.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$128,018.79	
	Professional Development	$50,222.26	
	Recruitment Expenses	$3,517.75	**$256,653.00**
Greenwood 51	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$31,162.00	**$31,162.00**
Greenwood 52	Alternative Certification Fees	$16,050.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$11,904.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$2,700.00	
	Professional Development	$8,026.65	
	Recruitment Expenses	$5,000.00	**$43,680.65**
Hampton	Alternative Certification Fees	$15,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$30,000.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$19,028.00	**$64,028.00**
Jasper	International Teacher Fees	$50,000.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$28,602.00	**$78,602.00**
Kershaw	Bridge Program Partnerships	$3,000.00	
	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$108,675.00	
	First-Year Teacher Salary Supplement	$7,080.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$33,250.00	
	Professional Development	$63,015.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$22,611.00	
	Surveys	$38,400.00	
	Website Updates	$7,000.00	**$283,031.00**
Lancaster	Alternative Certification Fees	$60,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$196,616.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$70,839.00	
	Professional Development	$14,520.00	
	Surveys	$98,900.00	**$440,875.00**
Laurens 55	First-Year Teacher Salary Supplement	$10,000.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$43,200.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$24,710.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$5,000.00	
	Professional Development	$2,513.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$25,800.00	
	Surveys	$27,810.00	
	Website Updates	$25,634.00	**$164,667.00**
Laurens 56	Alternative Certification Fees	$1,500.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$500.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$24,800.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$25,535.20	
	National Employment System Fees	$8,221.52	
	Professional Development	$2,000.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$17,190.00	
	Website Updates	$7,000.00	**$86,746.72**

Lee	Alternative Certification Fees	$2,249.52	
	International Teacher Fees	$36,740.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$5,000.00	
	National Employment System Fees	$4,306.68	
	Recruitment Expenses	$3,025.80	**$51,322.00**
Lexington 2	Alternative Certification Fees	$50,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$84,599.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$131,680.00	**$266,279.00**
Lexington 3	Alternative Certification Fees	$17,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$2,510.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$17,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$10,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$20,000.00	**$66,510.00**
Lexington 4	Alternative Certification Fees	$18,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$21,700.00	
	Professional Development	$46,910.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$17,750.00	**$104,360.00**
Marion	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$136,620.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$1,500.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$2,047.00	**$140,167.00**
Marlboro	Alternative Certification Fees	$6,000.00	
	First-Year Teacher Salary Supplement	$75,000.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$15,228.00	
	Travel Stipend for Commuters	$6,000.00	**$102,228.00**
McCormick	Alternative Certification Fees	$6,835.12	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$3,311.89	
	Recruitment Expenses	$11,833.31	
	Travel Stipend for Commuters	$639.68	**$22,620.00**
Newberry	Alternative Certification Fees	$9,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$72,500.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$45,325.40	
	National Employment System Fees	$22,454.38	
	Recruitment Expenses	$33,980.70	
	Website Updates	$7,815.52	**$191,076.00**
Orangeburg	Alternative Certification Fees	$20,000.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$379,420.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$16,113.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$19,081.95	**$434,614.95**
Saluda	Alternative Certification Fees	$3,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$1,500.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$2,357.00	

	Mentoring/Induction Support	$50,235.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$2,500.00	
	Website Updates	$13,700.00	**$73,292.00**
Spartanburg 2	Certification Examination Support	$23,072.00	
	Professional Development	$78,706.25	
	Recruitment Expenses	$186,304.99	**$288,083.24**
Spartanburg 3	Alternative Certification Fees	$5,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$1,000.00	
	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$10,000.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$20,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$30,000.00	
	Professional Development	$807.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$24,000.00	**$90,807.00**
Spartanburg 7	Alternative Certification Fees	$43,800.00	
	Bridge Program Partnerships	$23,858.30	
	Certification Examination Support	$1,500.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$20,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$117,092.22	
	Professional Development	$16,116.02	
	Recruitment Expenses	$25,000.00	**$247,366.54**
Sumter	Alternative Certification Fees	$50,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$9,600.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$90,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$55,904.00	
	Professional Development	$5,000.00	
	Recruitment Expenses	$102,600.00	
	Surveys	$56,600.00	**$369,704.00**
Union	Certification Examination Support	$1,500.00	
	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$94,127.53	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$2,638.84	
	Recruitment Expenses	$11,369.63	**$109,636.00**
Williamsburg	Bridge Program Partnerships	$22,500.00	
	First-Year Teacher Salary Supplement	$6,908.00	
	International Teacher Fees	$48,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$11,000.00	
	National Employment System Fees	$6,360.00	**$94,768.00**
York 1	Alternative Certification Fees	$415.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$692.38	
	Employment System Fees	$599.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$39,995.95	
	National Employment System Fees	$18,061.91	
	Recruitment Expenses	$40,453.26	
	Teacher Cadet Start-Up Costs	$12,024.80	**$112,242.30**

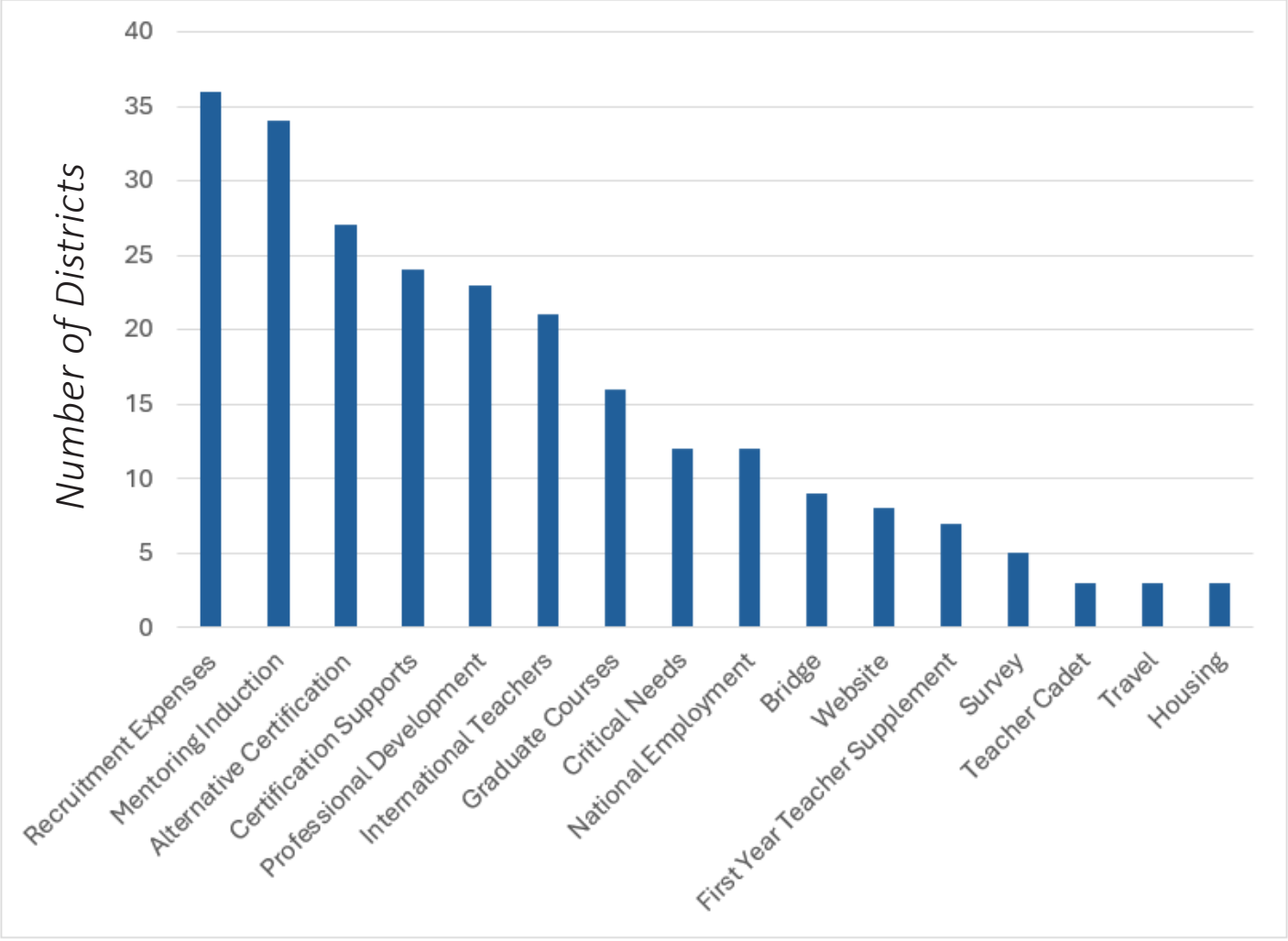
York 4	Alternative Certification Fees	$7,000.00	
	Certification Examination Support	$2,310.00	
	Critical Need Salary Supplement	$70,000.00	
	Graduate Coursework	$50,000.00	
	Mentoring/Induction Support	$36,376.56	
	National Employment System Fees	$60,000.00	
	Professional Development	$218,678.10	
	Recruitment Expenses	$97,736.35	
	Surveys	$15,000.00	
	Website Updates	$3,500.00	**$560,601.01**
TOTAL			**$6,920,121.60**

Does not include carry forward funds dispersed

[5]Source: CERRA, Rural Recruitment and Retention Incentive Report, July, 2025.

Figure 1 and Table D represent the incentive expenditures by the RRI districts in 2024-25 based on a survey administered by the EOC. Districts most frequently used the following incentives: recruiting expenses, mentoring and induction, and alternative certification to recruit and retain teachers. A frequency distribution of incentives implemented by districts for 2024-25 is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 - Frequency Distribution Rural Recruitment Incentives in 2024-25[5]



[5]Source: EOC Survey to districts Fall 2025

Of the 46 RRI districts in 2024-25, Table D shows the percentage of districts implementing a specific incentive.

Table D - Incentive Usage in 2024-25[6]

2024-25 RRI Incentives	Percent of Districts Utilizing Incentive
Recruitment Expenses	78%
Alternative Certification	59%
Mentoring/Induction	74%
Professional Development	50%
International Teachers	46%
Certification Exam Supports	52%
Graduate Coursework	35%
Website Development	17%
Critical Needs Supplement	26%
National Employment Fees	26%
Surveys	11%
First Year Teacher Supplement	15%
Bridge Program Partnership	20%
Teacher Cadet Start Up	7%
Travel for Commuters	7%
Housing Purchase/Renovations	6%

[6]Source: EOC. Survey to districts, Fall, 2025

The total expenditures by districts for 2024-25 are included in Table E below. The top expenditures by districts for 2024-25 are mentoring and induction, recruitment expenses and international teacher fees as reflected below.

Table E - Incentives Expenditures 2024-25[7]

Incentive Type	Expenditure
Mentoring/Induction Support	$1,189,940.53
Recruitment Expenses	$1,168,783.99
International Teacher Fees	$1,261,607.81
Critical Needs Salary Stipend	$811,207.73
Professional Development	$791,898.35
Alternative Certification Fees	$364,855.09
Graduate Coursework	$275,503.68
Surveys	$242,407.45
National Employment System Fees	$218,063.73
First-Year Teacher Salary Stipend	$210,729.00
Website Upgrades	$114,306.08
Bridge Program Partnerships	$111,778.30
Certification Exam Support	$90,569.34
Housing	$49,806.04
Teacher Cadet Start-Up Costs	$12,024.80
Travel Stipends for Commuters	$6,639.68
Total	$6,920,121.60

Does not include carry forward funds expended

[7]Source: CERRA. Rural Teacher Recruitment and Retention Report, July 2025.

Study Question #1

How did districts utilize the RRI funds in 2024-25?

Descriptive Data from Surveys on 2024-25 RRI Incentive Funds

One component of the Rural Recruitment Initiative evaluation was to seek feedback from eligible districts in 2024-25 who received RRI funding on how funds were spent in their district. Forty-six districts met the eligibility requirements. Forty-six districts requested funding and all 46 districts responded to the survey.

The EOC sent a survey to school districts in September 2025 asking districts which incentives they utilized in the past year and to provide the specifics regarding the utilization of the funds. The following section describes the districts' responses regarding their utilization of incentives and the specifics regarding the incentive.

27

Alternative Certification: Twenty-seven districts (59%) used funds for alternative certification. Generally, these programs are "grow your own programs," recruiting community members or uncertified staff in the district to become certified teachers. Some of the programs require a bachelor's degree and others establish a pathway for a four-year degree and certification. There are currently 19 alternative certification programs approved by the SC Board of Education serving school districts in South Carolina. In 2024-25, districts reported 185 teachers enrolled in an alternative certification program which is a considerable increase from the previous year of 62 teachers. Districts spent $364,855 on this incentive in 2024-25. Of the 27 districts utilizing alternative certification, programs in Table F (below) were used most frequently as reported by the districts.

Table F - Alternative Certification Programs

Name of Program	Number of Participants in Program (in various stages of certification)	Amount Districts Expended *(cost per participant)*	Number of participants Hired *(Percentage of Participants in Program Hired as Teachers in 24-25)*
Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE)	48	$9,959 *($207)*	21 *(44%)*
Carolina Collaborative for Alternative Preparation (Carolina CAP)	18	$45,000 *($2,500)*	16 *(89%)*
Teachers of Tomorrow	93	$110,000 *($1,182)*	52 *(56%)*
Alternative Pathways to Educator Certification (APEC Coker University)	8	$29,500 *($3,688)*	5 *(63%)*
Teach for America (TFA)	7	$15,700 *($2,243)*	6 *(86%)*

9

Bridge Program: Nine districts (20%) used RRI funds to provide scholarships to certified teachers looking to obtain their master's degree, as an alternative certification pathway for certification, for teacher interns to participate in Read to Succeed, for apprenticeships, and for certification of teachers of multilingual learners. One district indicated they required teachers to remain with the district for five years when using the Bridge funds. Colleges and universities who partnered with school districts include Wofford, Converse, Clemson, USC Columbia, USC Upstate, Grand Canyon, Voorhees, and University of Phoenix. A total of $111,778 was spent by districts in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

24

Certification Supports: Twenty-four (52%) of the districts used funds for certification supports. These funds were used to support teachers in some fashion in the administration of the Praxis tests. Expenses included Praxis reimbursement to teachers, online Praxis supports, tutors for Praxis help and Praxis books. One district reported using funds towards gifted and talented certification. (Note these percentage include duplicative counts from districts.) Districts spent $90,569 for certification supports. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

12

Critical Needs Stipends: Twelve districts (26%) used this incentive to fund stipends for teachers in critical needs areas. Each district determines which teaching area is deemed to be critical needs that best fits their needs. Of the districts using this incentive, 623 teachers received a supplement as compared to 729 teachers the previous year. Districts reported a 94% retention rate for teachers receiving the supplement for 2024-25. (Note: Retention data for 2023-24 was not available.) The most prevalent subject areas used by districts for critical needs were special education, early childhood, elementary, and high/middle school mathematics. The amount of the stipends is determined by the district. The supplements ranged from $250 to $2500 per teacher. A total of $811,208 was spent by districts in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

7

First Year Teacher Stipends: Seven districts (15%) paid a stipend to first year teachers using RRI funds. (One district did not respond to additional questions regarding this incentive.) Districts reported 145 teachers were paid this stipend and 137 teachers or 94% were retained the following year. For 2023-24, a total of 59 teachers received the supplement with a retention rate of 97%. The stipends varied from $1,000 to $2,500 with districts spending $211,729 for first year stipends in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

16

Graduate Courses: Sixteen districts (35%) used RRI funds to pay the tuition for teachers to take graduate courses towards a master's degree, for technology training, for national board certification, and for English language learners' certification. Two hundred and thirty-six (236) teachers participated in graduate courses offered through RRI. Districts reported a retention rate of 85%. For comparison, 295 five teachers participated in graduate courses in 2023-24 with a retention rate of 97%. Districts spent $275,504 on graduate courses in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Housing: In 2024-25, three districts (5%) used funds for housing. No district used funds to provide allowances to teachers. (Note only two of the three districts responded to additional questions for this incentive.) Districts reported eight (8) teachers were supported and seven teachers were retained. No district used funds for housing stipends in 2023-24. The total amount of money expended by districts was $49,806 in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

International teachers: Twenty-one districts (46%) used RRI funds to hire international teachers. As reported by the districts, 295 new international teachers were hired using this incentive in 2024-25 with 280 of these teachers retained at the end of the school year for a retention rate of 95%. As of fall 2025, districts reported using RRI funds to support over 800 total international teachers. International teachers are initially hired in one of two ways: on a J1 visa or H-B1 visa. Teachers hired on a J1 visa are hired using a vendor who specializes in securing teachers internationally such as Foreign Academic Cultural Exchange Service (FACES), Palmetto Academic and Cultural Teachers Immigrant Petition, Educational Partners International (EPI), Teacher Placement Group Cultural Exchange (PG), and International Teacher Exchange Service (ITES). The districts do not pay the fringe costs for these teachers; however, there is an ongoing annual fee to the vendor. Teachers hired on a H-B1 visa are sponsored by the district and the district pays annually for their fringe costs, plus the cost of the visa and legal fees. Districts reported spending a total of $1,261,608 on international teacher recruitment in 2024-25. Data analysis cannot isolate the incentive as the primary driver of this outcome.

Mentoring and Induction: Thirty-four districts (74%) of the RRI districts used the mentoring/induction program as an incentive. Districts reported 924 first year teachers were provided mentorship as part of their induction program. For these teachers, 812 were retained for a rate of 88%. In 2023-24, 585 teachers were mentored using RRI funds and 80% of these teachers were retained. Districts also reported 241 second year teachers were provided a second-year mentoring program and 171 or 77% of these teachers were retained in 2024-25. In 2023-24, 78 teachers were supported in mentoring and 100% of these teachers were retained. Mentoring was implemented in different ways in districts including mentors allowed time outside of their teaching duties, after school, during planning, district employees were used, professional development time and retirees were used. As reported by the districts in 2024-25, the cost per teacher using RRI funds was $812 for mentoring a first-year teacher and $312 per teacher for mentoring a year two teacher. A total of $1,189,941 RRI funds was spent on mentoring and induction in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

National Employment Fees: Twelve districts (26%) of the districts used RRI funds for this incentive. This incentive is used to post teacher vacancies on national sites, purchase software to recruit, and to track and hire applicants. Vendors used included Talent Ed, Frontline, Neogov, Linkin, and Handshake. A total of $218,064 was spent by districts on national employment in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Professional Development: Twenty-three districts (50%) of the districts used funds for professional development. Districts used these funds to support teachers in areas of classroom behavior strategies, instructional strategies, National Board, Visible Learning, and professional learning communities. Districts also used the funds to attend conferences. A total of 1,679 (duplicative count) teachers participated in professional development using RRI funds. Total funds expended for professional development was $791,898 for 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Recruitment Expenses: Thirty-six districts (78%) of the RRI districts used funds for recruiting expenses. The top categories of monies spent as reported by districts were: 94% of funds for marketing; 77% for items for prospective teachers; 63% for travel to fairs and recruiting, and 23% for career fair fees. The top categories of total monies spent were as follows: $546,000 for marketing, $323,000 for items for prospective teachers, $90,000 for travel, and $21,000 for career fair fees. A total of $1,168,784 was spent on this incentive in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Teacher Cadet: Three (7%) of the RRI districts used funds to establish Teacher Cadet classes. Approximately 220 students were enrolled in 2024-25. Districts spent $12,075 in 2024-25 on teacher cadet startup classes. No funds were used for this incentive in 2023-24. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Travel Stipends: Three districts (7%) used RRI funds for paying travel to teachers to commute to the district. Three (3) teachers received these funds for a total of $6,640. Two of the three teachers (67%) were retained. No district used travel stipends in 2023-24. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Surveys: Five districts (11%) used RRI funds for a survey tool for their teachers and administrators. All districts used Upbeat, a vendor, to create their surveys. Upbeat also provides onsite principal and teacher supports for an additional fee. Districts reported they used the survey results to gain insight to actionable strategies to improve teacher retention, to gain staff perspectives on school culture, to coach principals, and to set principal goals for retention. Districts spent $242,407 on surveys in 2024-25. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Website Updates: Eight districts (17%) of the RRI districts used funds as a strategy to upgrade their website. Vendors used included Final Site, Apptegy, and Beam. The districts reported website upgrades included securing compliancy issues, adding a portal, ensuring teacher employment was visible, restructuring the website, managing the website to showcase the district, sending texts to parents, restoration after a cyber attack, or adding a Chatbot. Districts spent $114,306 on this incentive. Data to identify this incentive as solely contributing to recruitment was unavailable.

Long Term Use of RRI Funds

In looking at district incentives over time, Table G shows disbursements of incentives to districts over the past six years (2019-20 through 2024-25). The table shows a total of over $41 million dollars has been utilized by districts. Over the past six years, districts spent most of the RRI funds on international teachers at $10.8 million, critical needs stipends at $6.7 million, recruitment expenses at $6.6 million, mentoring and induction at $4.7 million and professional development at $4.5 million.

Over this period, districts receiving the highest incentive awards were Anderson 5, Chester, Colleton, Darlington, Florence 1, Florence 4, Laurens 55, Lexington 2. Newberry, Orangeburg, Spartanburg 3, Spartanburg 7, and York 4. A complete listing of the six-year summary by district is shown in Appendix E.

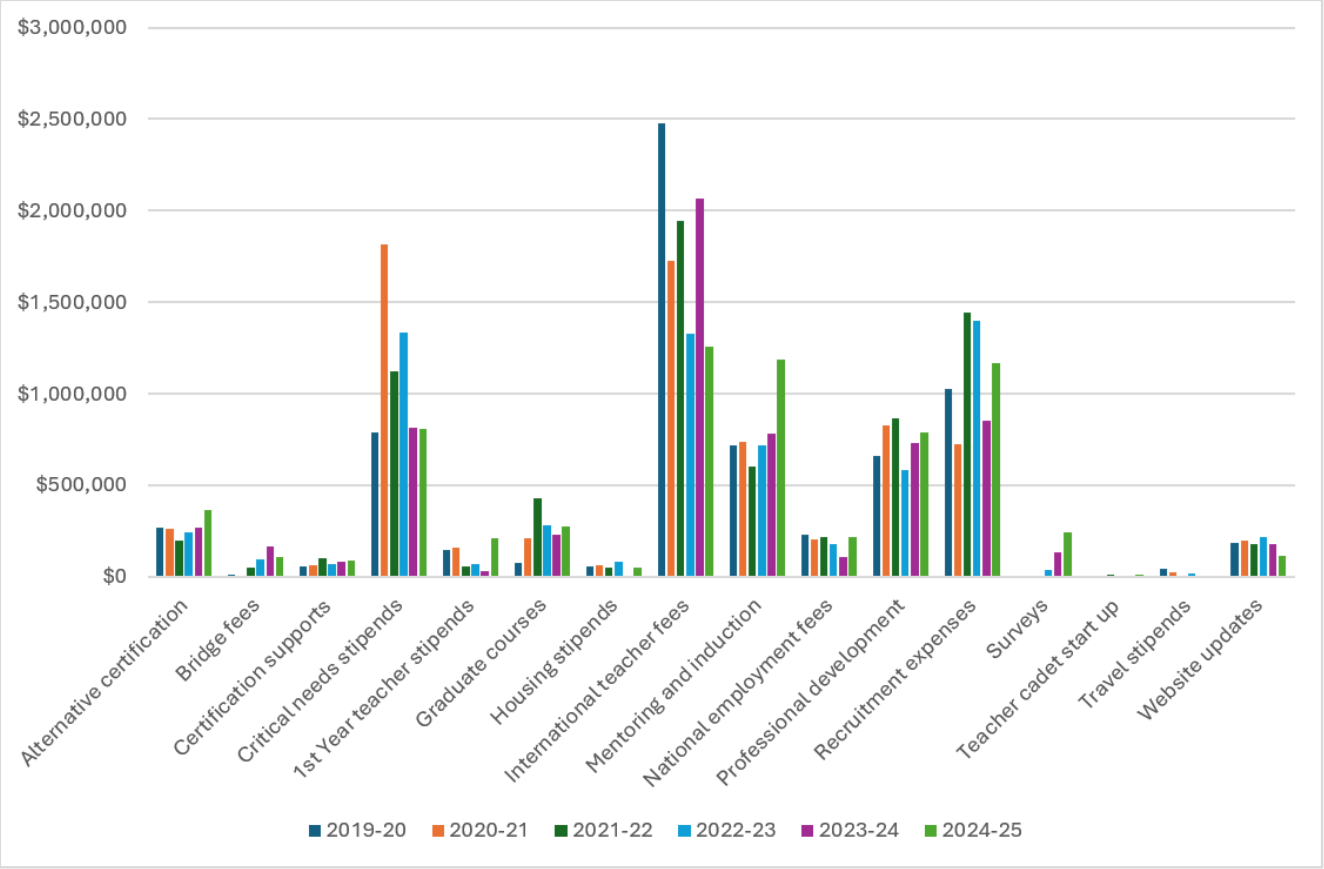
Table G - Six Year Total RRI Funds Disbursed by Incentive Type[8]

Incentive	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Alternative certification	$269,407	$265,624	$202,513	$246,151	$271,718	$364,855	$1,620,268
Bridge fees	$14,500	$0	$55,000	$99,286	$171,093	$111,778	$451,657
Certification supports	$60,627	$67,200	$105,800	$73,747	$82,821	$90,569	$480,764
Critical needs stipends	$793,395	$1,819,719	$1,123,568	$1,336,116	$818,658	$811,208	$6,702,664
1st Year teacher stipends	$149,948	$161,477	$60,690	$73,884	$31,500	$210,729	$688,228
Graduate courses	$78,077	$212,297	$433,850	$282,335	$235,382	$275,504	$1,517,145
Housing stipends	$61,236	$64,366	$52,050	$85,251	$0	$49,806	$312,709
International teacher fees	$2,474,955	$1,724,836	$1,943,910	$1,328,967	$2,068,151	$1,261,608	$10,802,427
Mentoring and induction	$722,468	$740,090	$607,060	$717,567	$783,355	$1,189,941	$4,670,481
National employment fees	$234,761	$203,623	$217,068	$181,347	$109,740	$218,064	$1,164,603
Professional development	$662,011	$830,421	$868,905	$586,356	$729,686	$791,898	$4,469,277
Recruitment expenses	$1,026,478	$729,395	$1,446,684	$1,397,057	$851,617	$1,168,784	$6,620,015
Surveys	$0	$0	$0	$40,950	$137,681	$242,407	$421,038
Teacher Cadet start up	$1,161	$10,125	$14,200	$4,000	$0	$12,025	$41,511
Travel stipends	$43,173	$28,335	$7,000	$18,190	$0	$6,640	$103,338
Website updates	$184,231	$202,328	$182,744	$217,139	$180,608	$114,306	$1,081,356
	$6,776,428	**$7,059,836**	**$7,321,042**	**$6,688,043**	**$6,472,010**	**$6,920,122**	**$41,237,481**

[8]Source: SC TEACHER, Rural Recruitment Spending: 5 Year ROI Analysis of Strategic Investments, April, 2026

The corresponding Figure 2 shows incentive expenditures by year by amount expended by districts.

Figure 2 - Six Year Disbursements by Incentive Type[9]



[9]Source: SC TEACHER. data from SC Teacher Rural Recruitment Spending: 5 Year ROI Analysis of Strategic Investments, April, 2026

Based on the six (6) year expenditures of RRI funds and 2025 vacancy rates[10] , districts with the highest percentage of vacancies and their respective six year expenditures[11] are listed by district below in Table H.

Table H - Districts with Highest Vacancies (2025) with Corresponding Six Year Expenditures

District	Percent Vacancy (November 2025)	RRI Funds Expended (past 6 years)
Lee	20.5%	$449,000
Hampton	11.9%	$687,207
Florence 3	8.7%	$833,473
McCormick	8.8%	$191,930
Marlboro	6.3%	$884,874
Williamsburg	7.5%	$820,717
Spartanburg 7	4.8%	$1,700,006
Jasper	4.7%	$607,425

Of the 75 school districts (including the charter school districts), 44 districts showed vacancies at 1% or less in November of 2025. The state vacancy average for fall 2025 was 1.25%. Note: SC Public School District did not submit a report.

[10]Source: CERRA, Email to R.Knight, March, 2026

[11]Source: Source: SC TEACHER, Rural Recruitment Spending: 5 Year ROI Analysis of Strategic Investments, April, 2026

Financials for Rural Recruitment Initiative[12]

Districts submitted fund disbursement requests that specified the incentive for which funds would be utilized, the amount requested, and how the incentive would be implemented. A copy of the disbursement request form is attached as Appendix F. A total of $7,157,0271 was disbursed to districts between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025.

Expenditures on behalf of the district site grants to teachers included ProTeam and Teacher Cadet site grants that offset the cost of supplies and/or travel to observe students in internship assignments. College partners receive site grants to offset the cost of Teacher Cadet College Days. Total expenditures for FY25 were $32,0361.

FY25 available funds included the EIA allocation of $7,598,392 plus $1,195,270 in FY24 carryover funds, for a total of $8,793,662. Funds that were disbursed and/or expended during FY25 ($7,157,027 + $32,036 + $370,394) totaled $7,559,457. Administrative costs of $376,915 (increase from FY24 due to additional staffing) bring the total utilized to $7,936,372. Available funds ($8,793,662) – funds utilized ($7,936,372) leaves a FY24 carryover amount of $857,290, resulting from some districts not making use of their full allocation.

Carry Forward 2023-24	**$1,195,270**
RRI Allocation from EIA funds for 2024-25	$7,598,392
Total funds available for 2024-25	$8,793,662

Allocations for 2024-25

Rural Recruitment Incentive Funds to Districts (total funds disbursed FY25, including carryover funds)	**$7,157,027**
District Expenditures for Incentives (based on total disbursed funds from FY25 allocation only)	$6,920,121
Difference between Allocation/Expenditure (total FY24 carryover funds disbursed)	$236,906

CERRA Administrative (inclusive of Winthrop indirect costs of $221,313)	**$376,915**
Site Grants to Teachers	$32,036
Teacher Loan Forgiveness	$370,394

Rural District Undergraduate Loan Forgiveness Program[13]

Beginning in 2016-17 and pursuant to Proviso 1A.45, CERRA began administering the Rural District Loan Forgiveness Program (Program) as part of the Rural Recruitment Initiative. The Program's purpose is to encourage classroom teachers to seek and become employed in one of the rural incentive districts. Eligible teachers may apply for up to $5,000 for up to seven years. The loans are to be applied to existing teacher undergraduate loan balances. These loans are not eligible for any other loan forgiveness options. Loans are made directly to teachers upon receipt of an application, loan balance documentation and district verification that the teacher completed a full year of employment during the school year. CERRA sends the loan packets to district human resources departments, posts it on its website, and shares with various stakeholders.

[12]Source: CERRA, Email to R.Knight, November, 2025
[13]Source: CERRA. November, 2025.

Undergraduate loan forgiveness funds were disbursed directly to teacher applicants in 2025 in the amount of $298,627.58. Applicants must meet the requirements as outlined: receipt of a completed application, loan balance documentation, and district verification that the teacher completed a full year of employment during the 2024-25 school year. A total of 108 applicants applied for loan forgiveness and 65 were awarded loans. A total of 28 districts used loan forgiveness for their teachers. The districts offering the largest amounts in loan forgiveness are listed below in Table I.

Table I - Top Six Districts using Loan Forgiveness Programs, 2024-25

District	Loan Forgiveness
Anderson 5	$28,981
Lancaster	$32,248
Spartanburg 7	$25,000
Edgefield	$20,000
Barnwell	$17,817
Colleton	$16,698
York 4 (Fort Mill)	$17,454

The total amount of loan forgiveness funds disbursed directly to teachers in 2023-24 was $370,324 and the previous year was $336,167.

Previous Rural Recruitment Initiative Progress Reports

Two previous Rural Recruitment Incentive reports have been completed. One was done by University of South Carolina in 2019 and a second by the Education Oversight Committee in 2025.

In 2019, the EOC commissioned a progress report[14] on the use of RRI funds. The report was completed by Dr. Henry Tran and Dr. Douglas Smith at the University of South Carolina in June 2019. The report was an exploratory, descriptive study.

The results from this report are listed below.

- A top challenge for districts was recruiting teachers with the appropriate certification for their vacant positions.
- Teacher salaries made it difficult to retain teachers.
- The distance to a school proved to be a challenge for schools to recruit.
- The average teacher turnover rate was 17.9% and the cumulative instability rate was 52.5%, which means in the previous 10 years only 52.5% of the teaching staff remained intact.
- Of the 29 incentives presented to the districts, an average of 15 were utilized. The incentive utilized the most frequently for recruitment was travel for teachers to commute and international teachers. The most frequently used incentive for retention was induction/mentoring and travel for teachers to commute. (The incentives presented included ones the authors gleaned from the literature on teacher recruitment and retention as well as the incentives available to districts as RRI incentives.)

The recommendations made from the 2019 report were:

- Incentives offered should be aligned with strategies backed by empirical evidence.
- Websites should be teacher-friendly for maximum usage.
- RRI funds should be sufficient to make an impact.
- Data should be collected from multiple years to draw conclusions about the impact of the RRI strategies being utilized.

[14]Tran, Henry and Douglas Smith. Department of Educational Leadership: The Rural Recruitment Initiative Progress Report. Provided to the Education Oversight Committee; June, 2019.

In 2025, the EOC completed a report on the Rural Recruitment Initiative funds[15]. The link to this study can be found at https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/eoc/files/Documents/1_Rural%20Recruitment%20Initiative%20Report%202024_FINAL_12_12_24.pdf

The results showed:

- Districts reported trying to be more strategic in their plans for the use of incentives to build greater capacity in retention in their districts.
- Districts reported heavy use of hiring international teachers to reduce the number of vacancies.
- Vacancies were not evenly distributed across districts. Some districts reported 0 vacancies at the beginning of 2025 while others were as high as 41%.
- Districts were appreciative of the incentive funds and perceived these incentives were making a positive impact in their schools.
- Using data from the South Carolina Department of Education, SC TEACHER has been creating a statewide data infrastructure that is beginning to show a clearer picture of the training and movements of individual teachers in South Carolina.
- With time and improved data systems, SC TEACHER is confident in their ability to reliably provide data to districts and the state regarding short and long-term effects of individual incentives on retention and return on investment (ROI) for specific incentives. The EOC will continue to work closely with SC TEACHER in these efforts.

The recommendations from this report were:

- Expand the evaluation effectiveness of current incentives.
- Facilitate collaborative analysis for strategic refinement of the data.
- Implement data-driven decision making on strategic implementation of the incentives.
- Develop a training model for districts to use in preparing a plan for use of the incentives.
- Empower districts with long-term planning tools.

Reviews of Current Rural Recruitment Initiative Program

From November 2025 until February 2026, several organizations convened to discuss the current RRI program and to make recommendations for future implementation of the program. Because the currently adopted budget proviso lists CERRA, SC Department of Education and the EOC as partners, these groups identified persons to attend. In addition, the EOC requested Ms. Melanie Barton, Governor's Office, to attend as she was on the original committee designing the program in 2015. The committee made the following recommendations:

- The application should be available online for districts.
- Consideration should be given to revising the budget proviso, excluding districts in the top one-third highest overall index of tax paying ability, and giving priority to districts who collaborate with neighboring districts. Funds not expended should be returned to the EIA.
- Districts should create a plan prior to the school year outlining the incentives to be used based on the retention/recruitment data in their district.
- The listing of incentives should be reduced based on available data supporting real return investment. The incentives recommended were: alternative certification/certification supports, critical need stipends, first year stipends, graduate courses, international teachers (to be phased out in three years), mentoring and induction, professional development, and grow your own.

[15]Rural Recruitment Initiative Funds Evaluation, Education Oversight Committee, June, 2019. Provided to the General Assembly and the Education Oversight Committee.

- The disbursement of funds should be maintained electronically (not paper) and funds should be reimbursed, not provided upfront.

The revised proviso language is expected to be adopted in the 2026-27 Appropriations Act, the list of incentives and updated application are in Appendices G, H, and I, respectively.

In 2024, SC TEACHER at the University of South Carolina convened a group of educators and researchers and other educational leaders, Litmus Policy Solutions, to review the education policy landscape. One focus was to review educator recruitment and retention through the RRI program. In March 2026, Litmus Policy Solutions released a report on Rural Recruitment Initiative Considerations. These considerations included changing the incentives, amending the eligibility of districts, and reporting of districts at the teacher level as well as other considerations[16]. The revised proviso language found in Appendix G transfers authority of the program from CERRA to SC TEACHER.

Study Question #2

For selected incentives, what are the return on investments (ROI) for each incentive, the cost per hire per teacher and trends over time?

Effectiveness of Rural Recruitment Initiative Incentives

The EOC requested the services of SC TEACHER at the University of South Carolina to conduct an analysis of the impact of Rural Recruitment Initiative spending of incentives on teacher retention and recruitment to identify the incentives that yield the most effective outcomes or return on investment (ROI). The report was entitled *Rural Recruitment Spending: 5 Year ROI Analysis of Strategic Investments* (See Appendix J). SC TEACHER has been building a data infrastructure that is designed to follow individual teachers into teaching. SC TEACHER reviewed selective incentives over a five-year period from 2019-20 through 2023-24. These incentives included: alternative certification, international teacher recruitment, First Year teacher stipends, induction and mentoring and general recruitment strategies. "For each strategy, the report documents the cost per hire or cost per retained teacher, the distribution of outcomes across districts and years, and trends over time. Findings describe associations between spending and outcomes."

It is important to point out that the financial incentives provided to districts are flexible, meaning that districts are not currently required to report or track each incentive by teacher. This is a challenge when attempting to analyze a specific incentive as to its contribution to recruiting or retaining a teacher since multiple factors and/or resources cannot be ruled out as contributing factors.

Summary for the Five SC TEACHER Analyzed Categories

1. Alternative Certification was used by 36 unique districts observations (meaning the number of times districts used this incentive over a five-year period) and districts expended a total of $1.26 million. This incentive has remained relatively stable in spending across the districts.

One measure looked at whether a district retained more alternative certified teachers this year over the previous year, relative to what was spent. In looking at a year 1 retention (2021-22 and 2022-23), the ROI for this incentive shows a slightly negative change (-0.0000296) overall suggesting monies expended on alternative certification did not show an increase in teacher retention. Approximately 40% of the unique district observations (27 of 68) did show an improvement in retention. Districts showing improved retention rates were Greenwood 50, Laurens 55 and Spartanburg 7.

[16]Source: Rural Recruitment Initiative: Litmus Considerations: SC TEACHER, University of South Carolina, March 2026

A more direct way to look at the dollar cost associated with a teacher retained is to look at cost per retention. The median cost per additional teacher retained was $4,500. The retention rate for alternative certification improved from 73.5% in 2019-20 to 83.3% in 2023-24, suggesting districts have improved their ability to retain these teachers.

A second question was asked as to whether teachers certified using alternative certification remained with the same district and obtained their teacher certification. In looking at the two cohorts in 2019-20 and 2020-21, the retention rate declined sharply over a four-year period from 80% and 71% to 35% and 35%, respectively. After a four-year period, only approximately 25% of the teacher candidates in alternative certification pathways obtained their teacher certification.

2. International Teacher Recruitment was used by 39 unique districts (meaning the number of times districts used this incentive over a five-year period) for a five-year total of $9.54 million. The spending for this incentive was more volatile, especially during COVID and the restrictions placed on travel.

SC TEACHER used the measure of teachers hired per dollar spent for this incentive, primarily for international teachers on a J-1 visa. Teachers hired under a J-1 visa may remain in the United States for up to three years with the option to remain an additional two years. The average cost per hire for an international teacher on a J-1 visa was $17,538 with a median cost of $13,708. Costs for international teachers are on an annual basis. Districts show an upward trend in hiring the number of international teachers over the five-year period with certification areas in 2024-25, with the most hires in mathematics, science and English/language arts.

3. First-Year Teacher Stipends was used by 14 unique districts (meaning the number of times districts used this incentive over a five-year period) and districts spent a total of $477,000. The cost per retained teacher is $3,121. District expenditures for first-year teacher stipends have gradually decreased from a high of $149,948 in 2019-20 to $31,500 in 2023-24. However, the retention rate has been relatively high from 100% (34/34 teachers) in 2029-20 to 89% (8/9 teachers) in 2023-24.

A second question was whether a stipend is associated with more first-year teachers being retained in districts. The ROI for First Year Stipends show an extremely small positive change (0.0000431) per dollar spent, indicating a very small increase in the number of teachers hired following the stipend spending. Forty-three percent (43%) of observations had more hires as compared to the year before and 47% of the observations showed fewer hires. This sample size is small (18).

4. Mentoring and Induction was used by districts the most frequently with 44 unique districts (meaning the number of times districts used this incentive over a five-year period) with districts expending $3.57 million RRI over 5 years. The cost per retained teacher is $1,458 (from year 1 to year 2). The pooled retention rate is relatively high with an average of 87.9% over the six-year period.

The question of whether more teachers were retained in the following year spending occurred was asked. The overall ROI is slightly negative (-0.00000153) meaning the monies spent on this incentive the prior year did not show an increase in retained teachers.

5. General Recruitment Expenses is a combination of three incentives: recruiting expenses, website updates and national employment fees. Spending patterns showed districts spent a total of $7.36 million on these three incentives with recruitment expenses accounting for 75% of all monies spent. There were 46 unique districts (meaning the number of times districts used this incentive over a five-year period).

The cost per hire for the combination of these incentives was $1,041 per teacher based on the number of teachers hired divided by the district expenditures (46 unique districts observations) for these incentives. Based on the data from the districts, there was little difference between districts who used general recruitment monies from districts who did not as to who was being hired. See Table J.[19]

Table J - General Recruiting Expenses

Group	Total New Hires	New to State	Lateral Movers	Role Changers
RRI Districts WITH General Recruiting Expenses	7,073	61.5%	32.8%	5.7%
RRI Districts WITHOUT General Recruiting Expenses	1,929	60.5%	33.1%	6.4%
Difference		+0.9	-0.3	-0.7

Conclusions on Effectiveness

Based on the data provided by SC TEACHER regarding the five incentives studied, the data suggests there are some inconsistent findings. For example, alternative certification showed a negative ROI (-0.0000296); however, several district observations (40%) showed improved retention. A similar situation was exhibited by mentoring and induction which showed a negative ROI (-0.00000153) with an 87.9% retention rate.

For incentives in which the median cost per hire was provided, international teachers were the highest at $13,703 per teacher, alternative certification was $4,500, mentoring at $4,279, first-year teachers at $3,121, and the aggregate group of general recruitment expenses at $1,041. It should be noted that the number of teachers hired via general recruitment expenses could not be isolated as the only factor in evaluating this recruitment strategy.

In looking at long term retention, alternative certification appears to lack general sustainability for retaining teachers, especially for teacher candidates obtaining teacher certification (25%). Also it appears for districts using general recruiting monies, there is no discernible difference in teachers being hired from out-of-state. In terms of cost per teacher, international teachers are more than three times the cost of any one of the other four incentives analyzed.

[19]Ibid., p23

EOC Recommendations

Determining return on investment for the Rural Recruitment Initiative funds distributed in 2024-25 and previous years is challenging because data systems are incomplete and not validated. As a result, projections should not be viewed as definitive. The EOC offers the following recommendations for this initiative:

Create an integrated educator data system that follows teachers from preparatory programs (traditional and alternative) through professional practice and retention. Absent this system, the ROI of RRI funds cannot be adequately determined.

Serious consideration should be given to the incentives available to districts. Only incentives where an ROI can be determined and can be directly attributed to teacher recruitment or retention should be offered as options for districts. Incentives that are hard to define and cannot be attributed directly to recruitment or retention, such as website and recruitment expenses, should be eliminated. Both the joint meeting among CERRA, SC Department of Education and EOC staff and SC TEACHER Litmus have made recommendations for future incentives to be made available.

Districts should be required to complete an online application that includes a detailed plan and rational for usage of incentives based on the data in their district. CERRA started this process in 2025-26 with additional revisions to the application and process in 2026-27. Training sessions should be required of districts receiving RRI incentives to support short- and long-term planning and encourage collaboration as part of this process. Additionally, payment to school districts should be reimbursements following the submission of receipts.

Stronger emphasis should be placed on incentives that show a positive outcome on teacher retention. A district's strong focus on teacher retention minimizes the need to recruit new teachers and has the potential to build a stronger school culture, rather than rebuilding the teaching staff each year. School leadership is a critical component in the process of teacher retention.

The eligibility of districts for RRI funds should be only those districts with the highest five year teacher turnover average (must be greater than the state average) and districts in the top one third of the index of tax paying ability are excluded. This recommendation is made based on an EOC analysis of available data.

Appendices

Appendix A

1A.73 (Original) Rural Recruitment Proviso

2015-16 Appropriations Act

1A.73. *(SDE-EIA: Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive) (A) There is created a program within the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) to recruit and retain classroom educators in rural and underserved districts experiencing excessive turnover of classroom teachers on an annual basis.*

(B) During Fiscal Year 2015-16, CERRA shall develop eligibility requirements and applications for individual educators, school districts, and institutions of higher education not inconsistent with existing licensure requirements for each, but also including:

(1) Eligible districts identified by CERRA as experiencing greater than twelve percent average annual teacher turnover, as reported on the districts' five most recent district report cards issued by the South Carolina Department of Education, may make application to participate in the program.

(2) Individuals eligible for incentives shall be willing to provide instructional services in an eligible district in exchange for participation in an incentive detailed in item (C) of this section, pursuant to the obligations and restrictions stated for each.

(3) Institutions of higher education eligible to receive education funding as a component of recruiting incentives created pursuant to item (C) of this section shall not be excluded from participation in Teaching Fellows Program in accordance with proviso 1A.58 of this Act.

(4) Any incentives requiring individuals to relocate into an eligible district to provide instructional services shall not be made available to individuals providing instructional services in other eligible districts.

(C) Pursuant to item (A), CERRA shall develop a set of incentives including, but not limited to, salary supplements, education subsidies, professional development, and mentorship to be provided to classroom educators that offer instructional services in eligible districts. The incentives and implementation shall be developed in consultation with the State Department of Education and the Education Oversight Committee, and shall provide incentive options for eligible individuals at all stages of their careers, including high-school and college or university students interested in entering the teaching profession.

(D) CERRA shall report by January 15, 2016 to the Governor, President pro Tempore of the Senate, and Speaker of the House on the incentives developed pursuant to item (C) of this section and make recommendations for attracting and retaining high quality teachers in rural and underserved districts. The report shall contain at a minimum eligibility requirements and application processes for districts and individuals, descriptions of and proposed budgets for each incentive program and an analysis of the number and demographics of individuals potentially eligible for each.

(E) Funds appropriated or transferred for use in the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive may be carried forward from prior fiscal years and used for the same purpose.

Appendix B
1A.45 Rural Recruitment Incentive Proviso
2025-26 Appropriations Act

1A.45. (SDE-EIA: Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive) (A) There is created a program within the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) to recruit and retain classroom educators in rural and underserved districts experiencing excessive turnover of classroom teachers on an annual basis.

(B) During the current fiscal year CERRA shall publish eligibility requirements and applications for individual educators, school districts, and institutions of higher education not inconsistent with existing licensure requirements for each, but also including:

(1) Eligible districts identified by CERRA as experiencing greater than eleven percent average annual teacher turnover, as reported on the districts five most recent district report cards issued by the South Carolina Department of Education and are not one of the fifteen wealthiest districts based on the index of taxpaying ability, may make application to participate in the program.

(2) Individuals eligible for incentives shall be willing to provide instructional services in an eligible district in exchange for participation in an incentive detailed in item (C) pursuant to the obligations and restrictions stated for each.

(3) Institutions of higher education eligible to receive education funding as a component of recruiting incentives created pursuant to item (C) of this provision shall not be excluded from participation in Teaching Fellows Program.

(4) Any incentives requiring individuals to relocate into an eligible district to provide instructional services shall not be made available to individuals providing instructional services in other eligible districts.

(C) Pursuant to item (A), CERRA shall develop a set of incentives including, but not limited to, salary supplements, education subsidies, loan forgiveness, professional development, and mentorship to be provided to classroom educators that offer instructional services in eligible districts and shall provide incentive options for eligible individuals at all stages of their careers, including high-school and college or university students interested in entering the teaching profession and including individuals entering the field through an alternative certification pathway to include, but not limited to, PACE, ABCTE, Teach for America, and CATE Work-Based Certification.

At a minimum, the incentives shall include:

(1) Development of a program for forgiveness of undergraduate student loans, not to exceed $5,000 per year, for up to 7 years, for teachers participating in this incentive that achieve certification through an alternative pathway or who have a loan from an institution other than the

South Carolina Student Loan Corporation or program other than the South Carolina Teachers Loan Program.

(2) Development of a forgivable loan program for individuals pursuing graduate coursework in furtherance of a teaching career, including enrollment in graduate-level coursework necessary to seek additional credentialing or certification relevant to the participants teaching practice, or individuals seeking an alternative pathway to certification as a teacher.

(3) Support for the establishment and maintenance of a teaching mentorship program, including salary supplements for teaching mentors not to exceed $2,500 per year.

(4) Other technical support and recruiting incentives as developed by CERRA in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Education Oversight Committee consistent with the objectives of this section.

(D) In addition to eligibility and application requirements, CERRA shall develop a process for recovering an amount equal to the incentives given to individual participants who fail to comply with the obligations associated with a relevant incentive in which they participate including, but not limited to, failure to complete a prescribed course of study, failure to obtain a relevant certification or licensure upon completion of a course of study, or failure to provide instructional services in an eligible district for a prescribed period of time.

(E) CERRA shall report by July thirty-first of the current fiscal year to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House on the incentives developed pursuant to item (C) of this proviso and make recommendations for attracting and retaining high quality teachers in rural and underserved districts. The report shall contain at a minimum eligibility requirements and application processes for districts and individuals, descriptions of and proposed budgets for each incentive program and an analysis of the number and demographics of individuals potentially eligible for each.

(F) Funds appropriated or transferred for use in the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive may be carried forward from prior fiscal years and used for the same purpose.

(G) The Education Oversight Committee is required to complete an evaluation of the impact of the funds and incentives related to the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive. A completed evaluation is due to the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Education Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, the Senate Education Committee, and the Governor’s Office by June 30, 2026.

Appendix C
Index of Taxing Paying Ability

South Carolina Department of Revenue
Index of Taxpaying Ability Report

Generated On: 01/30/2026

Index Year 2026
Tax Year 2024

District Name	Index
ABBEVILLE	0.00242
AIKEN	0.02954
ALLENDALE	0.00094
ANDERSON1	0.00906
ANDERSON2	0.00247
ANDERSON3	0.00218
ANDERSON4	0.00504
ANDERSON5	0.01292
BARNWELL45	0.0000
BEAUFORT	0.06481
BERKELEY	0.06053
CALHOUN	0.00327
CHARLESTON	0.13197
CHEROKEE	0.0086
CHESTER	0.00504
CHESTERFIELD	0.0052
COLLETON	0.00739
DARLINGTON	0.01007
DILLON3	0.00102
DORCHESTER2	0.02137
DORCHESTER4	0.00355
EDGEFIELD	0.00322
FAIRFIELD	0.00523

South Carolina Department of Revenue
Index of Taxpaying Ability Report

Generated On: 01/30/2026

Index Year 2026
Tax Year 2024

District Name	Index
FLORENCE1	0.01677
FLORENCE2	0.00057
FLORENCE3	0.00214
FLORENCE5	0.00057
GEORGETOWN	0.01899
GREENVILLE	0.09444
GREENWOOD50	0.00826
GREENWOOD51	0.00056
GREENWOOD52	0.00235
HORRY	0.10477
JASPER	0.00628
KERSHAW	0.00967
LANCASTER	0.01363
LAURENS55	0.00461
LAURENS56	0.00264
LEE	0.00155
LEXINGTON1	0.0182
LEXINGTON2	0.0115
LEXINGTON3	0.00186
LEXINGTON4	0.00151
LEXINGTON5	0.01654
MCCORMICK	0.00137
MARLBORO	0.00301

South Carolina Department of Revenue
Index of Taxpaying Ability Report

Generated On: 01/30/2026

Index Year 2026
Tax Year 2024

District Name	Index
NEWBERRY	0.00613
OCONEE	0.02272
ORANGEBURG	0.01177
PICKENS	0.0234
RICHLAND1	0.03267
RICHLAND2	0.01895
SALUDA	0.00197
SPARTANBURG1	0.00487
SPARTANBURG2	0.01082
SPARTANBURG3	0.00312
SPARTANBURG4	0.00295
SPARTANBURG5	0.01909
SPARTANBURG6	0.01515
SPARTANBURG7	0.01002
UNION	0.00349
WILLIAMSBURG	0.00381
YORK1	0.00364
YORK2	0.01045
YORK3	0.01732
YORK4	0.01292
HAMPTON	0.0021
BAMBERG	0.00114
BARNWELL	0.00215

South Carolina Department of Revenue
Index of Taxpaying Ability Report

Generated On: 01/30/2026

Index Year 2026
Tax Year 2024

District Name	Index
CLARENDON	0.00387
DILLON4	0.00219
MARION	0.00317
SUMTER	0.01249

Appendix D

RRI FY26 Eligible SC School Districts

Rural Recruitment Initiative FY26	
Eligible SC School Districts	
Abbeville	Kershaw
Allendale	Lancaster
Anderson 3	Laurens 55
Anderson 5	Laurens 56
Bamberg	Lee
Barnwell	Lexington 2
Chester	Lexington 3
Chesterfield	Lexington 4
Clarendon	Marion
Colleton	Marlboro
Darlington	McCormick
Dillon 3	Newberry
Dillon 4	Orangeburg
Dorchester 4	Saluda
Edgefield	Spartanburg 2
Fairfield	Spartanburg 3
Florence 1	Spartanburg 4
Florence 3	Spartanburg 7
Greenwood 50	Sumter
Greenwood 51	Union
Greenwood 52	Williamsburg
Hampton	York 1
Jasper	York 4

Appendix E - Six Year RRI Expenditures by Districts

Rural Recruitment Initiative 6 Year Expenditures

District	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	TOTAL
Abbeville	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$96,927.00	$89,808.00	**$186,735.00**
Allendale	$76,900.00	$51,552.00	$52,625.00	$48,412.00	$39,187.00	$34,227.00	**$302,903.00**
Anderson 2	N/A	$135,903.00	$130,675.00	$124,010.00	$91,160.00	$97,380.00	**$587,328.00**
Anderson 3	$148,700.00	$92,504.00	$100,750.00	$103,898.00	$86,563.00	$79,913.00	**$612,328.00**
Anderson 4	$160,700.00	$115,239.00	$119,364.75	$108,242.00	$94,854.00	$89,156.00	**$687,611.00**
Anderson 5	N/A	$472,766.84	$390,050.00	$406,800.00	$407,436.64	$368,944.00	**$2,246,813.00**
Bamberg	N/A	N/A	N/A	$77,580.00	$62,414.00	$52,838.00	**$192,832.00**
Bamberg 2	$53,900.00	$29,699.16	$42,550.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$126,150.00**
Barnwell 19	$41,000.00	$24,669.00	$19,750.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$85,419.00**
Barnwell 29	$56,900.00	$38,540.00	$40,325.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$136,545.00**
Barnwell 45	$124,680.00	$87,032.00	$88,325.00	$86,090.00	$60,961.00	N/A	**$450,908.00**
Barnwell Consolidated (48)	N/A	N/A	N/A	$63,755.00	$11,700.00	$101,841.00	**$238,697.00**
Calhoun	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	$43,990.00	**$43,990.00**
Chester	$285,700.00	$208,102.00	$209,850.00	$202,917.00	$92,500.00	$146,200.00	**$1,210,667.00**
Clarendon	N/A	N/A	N/A	$90,418.00	$111,187.90	$112,649.00	**$326,254.91**
Clarendon 1	$56,300.00	$25,379.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$81,679.00**
Clarendon 2	$153,799.22	$99,235.00	$85,750.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$338,785.00**
Clarendon 4	N/A	N/A	$89,825.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$89,825.00**
Colleton	$296,300.00	$216,958.00	$217,450.00	$172,626.00	$134,780.70	$119,815.00	**$1,180,578.00**
Darlington	$566,313.00	$393,327.00	$402,250.00	$366,750.00	$329,911.00	$324,805.00	**$2,386,725.00**
Dillon 3	$81,700.00	$44,533.00	$52,050.00	N/A	N/A	$41,105.00	**$219,388.00**
Dillon 4	$228,100.00	$147,348.00	$147,550.00	$85,000.00	N/A	$96,011.00	**$754,962.00**
Dorchester 4	$146,600.00	$97,681.95	$90,578.62	$88,260.00	$49,289.35	$64,489.00	**$584,019.00**
Edgefield	$202,600.00	$145,908.00	$142,925.00	$134,134.00	N/A	$101,948.00	**$727,515.00**
Fairfield	$220,900.00	$153,132.00	$153,150.00	$131,055.00	$103,645.00	$88,594.00	**$850,476.00**
Florence 1	N/A	N/A	$399,625.00	$658,176.00	$558,124.00	N/A	**$1,615,925.00**
Florence 2	$65,900.00	$45,806.00	$44,575.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$156,281.00**
Florence 3	$206,100.00	$144,280.00	$147,625.00	$137,793.00	$106,128.00	$91,547.00	**$833,473.00**
Florence 4	$60,200.00	$43,363.00	$29,125.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$132,688.00**
Greenwood 50	N/A	$340,716.41	$366,021.02	$300,336.00	$265,914.96	$256,653.00	**$1,530,108.00**
Greenwood 51	$62,100.00	$42,473.00	$43,450.00	$38,486.00	$33,103.00	$31,162.00	**$250,774.00**
Greenwood 52	N/A	N/A	N/A	$55,723.00	$45,803.00	$43,681.00	**$145,207.00**
Hampton	N/A	N/A	$122,800.00	$113,828.00	$83,317.00	$64,028.00	**$383,973.00**

Hampton 1	$129,900.00	$90,828.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$220,728.00**
Hampton 2	$50,500.00	$32,003.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	**$82,503.00**
Jasper	$166,834.50	$107,585.00	$108,225.00	$106,313.00	$38,400.00	$78,602.00	**$607,425.00**
Kershaw	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	$283,031.00	**$283,031.00**
Lancaster	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$439,059.00	$440,876.49	**$879,935.49**
Laurens 55	$371,900.00	$267,253.00	$261,800.00	$218,699.00	$172,840.39	$164,667.00	**$1,829,736.39**
Laurens 56	N/A	N/A	$89,252.33	$76,817.00	$84,504.75	$86,746.49	**$396,935.49**
Lee	$117,400.00	$78,419.00	$79,900.00	$67,637.00	$45,320.00	$51,322.00	**$449,046.00**
Lexington 2	N/A	$369,690.00	$371,725.00	$350,771.00	$284,857.00	$266,179.00	**$1,643,222.00**
Lexington 3	N/A	N/A	N/A	$80,336.00	$63,704.00	$66,510.00	**$210,550.00**
Lexington 4	$185,200.00	$132,039.00	$137,800.00	$110,767.00	$106,528.00	$104,360.00	**$792,618.00**
Marion	$276,200.00	$187,034.00	$193,600.00	$186,080.00	$147,397.00	$140,167.00	**$1,130,478.00**
Marlboro	$235,300.00	$147,183.00	$153,849.73	$138,660.00	$0.00	$102,228.00	**$884,447.00**
McCormick	$39,500.00	$40,975.00	$40,725.00	$23,400.00	$24,710.00	$22,620.00	**$191,930.00**
Newberry	$375,900.00	$268,836.00	$269,900.00	$252,179.00	$202,755.00	$191,076.00	**$1,567,537.00**
Orangeburg	$715,300.00	$480,500.00	$443,800.00	$130,432.00	$351,550.00	$434,615.00	**$2,792,750.00**
Saluda	$121,200.00	$81,435.00	$100,325.00	$92,306.00	$71,150.00	$73,103.00	**$539,708.00**
Spartanburg 2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	$288,084.00	**$288,084.00**
Spartanburg 3	N/A	$120,880.28	$128,000.00	$119,500.00	$100,043.00	$90,807.00	**$569,674.00**
Spartanburg 7	N/A	$372,287.00	$367,000.00	$363,517.00	$316,935.00	$265,367.00	**$1,700,006.00**
Sumter	$850,400.00	$580,729.00	$593,625.00	$503,918.00	$399,422.00	$369,704.00	**$3,297,798.00**
Union	N/A	$148,671.00	$151,800.00	$144,966.00	$120,891.00	$109,636.00	**$675,964.00**
Williamsburg	$217,400.00	$152,392.00	$143,250.00	$127,457.00	$85,450.00	$94,768.00	**$820,717.00**
York 1	N/A	$204,949.00	N/A	N/A	$41,326.25	$112,627.00	**$479,472.00**
York 4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$568,237.00	$560,601.00	**$1,128,838.00**
Total Expenditures to Districts	$7,148,326.72	$7,059,835.64	$7,321,041.45	$6,688,044.00	$6,529,985.94	##########	**$41,685,714.73**

NA Not part of RRI

Appendix F
CERRA Letter of Assurance/ Disbursement Request Form

District Name and Mailing Address:

_____

Superintendent Name and Email Address:

_____

Designated Contact Person and Email Address:

_____

Please list all IHE Partners:

_____

Assurances:

1. I acknowledge and understand that FY26 RRI funds disbursed to the district are to be used only for the purpose and in the manner stated in the request.
2. I acknowledge and understand that the **FY26** ***Proposed Spending Worksheet*** and **FY26** ***RRI Disbursement Request Form*** must be used for any requests for disbursement of funds.
3. I acknowledge and understand that FY26 RRI funds which have been disbursed to the district must be utilized before the conclusion of FY26. All requests for disbursements and the ***FY26 EOY Summary Form*** must be submitted to CERRA by **May 29th, 2026**.
4. I acknowledge and understand that any or all of the funds requested but not utilized must be returned to CERRA as soon as the district determines that the funds are not fully needed. Alternatively, a ***FY26 Reallocation Form*** can be submitted to request that some or all of the previously disbursed funds be utilized for a different incentive. Any FY26 funds not requested by May 29th, 2026 will require the use of the ***FY26 Carryover Form***.
5. I acknowledge and understand that the district's use of RRI funds must be reviewed as part of the district's annual audit, and that the district must specifically notify the district's auditor to that effect. I also acknowledge and understand that any negative findings related to the auditor's review of the district's use of RRI funds will be reported to CERRA within 30 days of the auditor's findings being reported to the district.
6. CERRA will provide an end of year summary of funds allocated. I acknowledge and understand that I will be required to report the impact of the incentive(s) on the district's recruitment and retention efforts. I further acknowledge and understand that a year-end spending report accounting for the use of FY26 RRI funds must be submitted to CERRA by **August 1, 2026.**
7. I acknowledge and understand that any failure to comply with RRI requirements could result in referral of the district and/or the district superintendent to the State Department of Education and/or other state entities for any and all appropriate legal or administrative action.
8. I acknowledge and affirm that I will not receive FY26 RRI funds until I have verified and now affirm that all RRI funds disbursed to the district prior to or during FY21 have been utilized as stated on the request forms and that the use of the funds has been reviewed by the district's auditor.

Superintendent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix G
2026-27 EIA Budget Proviso (Passed by House and Senate)

1A.44. (SDE-EIA: Rural Teacher Recruiting and Retention Incentive) (A) There is created a program within the South Carolina ~~Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA)~~ Teacher Education Advancement Consortium through Higher Education Research (SC TEACHER) to recruit and retain classroom educators in rural and underserved districts experiencing elevated teacher ~~excessive~~ turnover ~~of classroom teachers on an annual basis~~.
(B) During the current fiscal year ~~CERRA~~ SC TEACHER shall publish eligibility requirements and applications for individual educators, school districts, and institutions of higher education not inconsistent with existing licensure requirements for each, but also including:
(1) Eligible districts identified by ~~CERRA~~ SC TEACHER as those whose three-year average teacher retention rate, calculated using teacher-level administrative data for eligible classroom educators, falls below the statewide three-year average district retention rate, and that are not within the highest quartile of districts based on index of taxpaying ability. Eligible districts may make application to participate in the program ~~experiencing greater than eleven percent average annual teacher turnover, as reported on the districts five most recent district report cards issued by the South Carolina Department of Education and are not one of the fifteen wealthiest districts based on the index of taxpaying ability, may make application to participate in the program~~.
(2) Notwithstanding item (B)(1), districts in the lowest quartile of taxpaying ability shall remain eligible if their three-year average teacher retention rate is within two percentage points of the statewide three-year district average, recognizing structural recruitment and retention challenges associated with limited fiscal capacity.
(3) Once determined eligible, a district shall retain eligibility status for a period of three fiscal years, subject to monitoring and reporting by SC TEACHER, to support long-term strategic recruitment and retention planning and implementation.
(4) Individuals eligible for incentives shall be willing to provide instructional services in an eligible district in exchange for participation in an incentive detailed in item (C) pursuant to the obligations and restrictions stated for each.
~~(3)~~(5) Institutions of higher education eligible to receive education funding as a component of recruiting incentives created pursuant to item (C) of this provision shall not be excluded from participation in Teaching Fellows Program.
~~(4)~~(6) Any incentives requiring individuals to relocate into an eligible district to provide instructional services shall not be made available to individuals providing instructional services in other eligible districts.
(C) Pursuant to item (A), ~~CERRA~~ SC TEACHER shall develop a set of incentives including, but not limited to, salary supplements, education subsidies, loan forgiveness, professional development, and mentorship to be provided to eligible classroom teachers or candidates ~~educators that offer instructional services~~ in eligible districts and shall provide incentive options for eligible individuals at all stages of their careers, including high-school and college or university students interested in entering the teaching profession and including individuals entering the field through an approved alternative certification pathway ~~to include, but not limited to, PACE, ABCTE, Teach for America, and CATE Work-Based Certification~~. In developing and approving incentives, SC TEACHER shall ensure that funding allocations reflect a balanced and evidence-informed approach to both recruitment and retention, recognizing that sustained workforce stability requires investment beyond initial hiring.
(1) At a minimum, the incentives shall include:

~~(1)~~(a) Development of a program for forgiveness of undergraduate student loans, not to exceed $5,000 per year, for up to 7 years, for teachers participating in this incentive that achieve certification through an alternative pathway or who have a loan from an institution other than the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation or program other than the South Carolina Teachers Loan Program.
~~(2)~~(b) Development of a forgivable loan program for individuals pursuing graduate coursework in furtherance of a teaching career, including enrollment in graduate-level coursework necessary to seek additional credentialing or certification relevant to the participants teaching practice, or individuals seeking an alternative pathway to certification as a teacher.
~~(3)~~(c) Support for the establishment and maintenance of a teaching mentorship program, including salary supplements for teaching mentors not to exceed $2,500 per year.
~~(4)~~(d) Other technical support and recruiting incentives as developed by ~~CERRA~~ SC TEACHER in conjunction with the Department of Education and the Education Oversight Committee consistent with the objectives of this section.
(D) In addition to eligibility and application requirements, ~~CERRA~~ SC TEACHER shall develop a process for recovering an amount equal to the incentives given to individual participants who fail to comply with the obligations associated with a relevant incentive in which they participate including, but not limited to, failure to complete a prescribed course of study, failure to obtain a relevant certification or licensure upon completion of a course of study, or failure to provide instructional services in an eligible district for a prescribed period of time.
(E) ~~CERRA~~ SC TEACHER shall report by July thirty-first of the current fiscal year to the Governor, President of the Senate, ~~and~~ Speaker of the House, and Education Oversight Committee on the incentives developed pursuant to item (C) of this proviso and make recommendations for attracting and retaining high quality teachers in rural and underserved districts. The report shall contain at a minimum eligibility requirements and application processes for districts and individuals, descriptions of and proposed budgets for each incentive program and an analysis of the number and demographics of individuals potentially eligible for each.
(F) Additional evidence-based report requirements shall include:
(1) tracking of incentives funded under this proviso, to the extent practicable, to individual classroom educators;
(2) analysis of expenditures by category of recruitment and retention strategy;
(3) computation of return on investment and related effectiveness measures for categories of spending, including impacts on recruitment, retention, and workforce stability; and
(4) as a condition of eligibility and continued participation, districts shall provide timely, accurate, and standardized information necessary for such tracking and analysis, as specified by SC TEACHER.
(G) To streamline reporting evidence consistency, accuracy, and transparency, SC TEACHER shall:
(1) Develop, maintain, and make available to eligible districts a secure district-facing portal that provides access to aggregated information relevant to the Rural Teacher Recruiting & Retention Incentive including, but not limited to, incentive expenditures, recruitment and retention trends, and educator working conditions data, consistent with applicable privacy and data governance requirements.
(2) The district portal shall be designed to support districts required responsibilities in use of these data for district planning, monitoring, and evaluation of recruitment and retention strategies funded under this proviso.
(H) Funds appropriated or transferred for use in the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive may be carried forward from prior fiscal years and used for the same purpose.

~~(G) The Education Oversight Committee is required to complete an evaluation of the impact of the funds and incentives related to the Rural Teacher Recruiting Incentive. A completed evaluation is due to the House Ways and Means Committee, the House Education Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, the Senate Education Committee, and the Governors Office by June 30, 2026.~~

Appendix H.
Recommended Rural Recruitment Incentives for 2026-27 from an interagency working group (EOC, SCDOE, CERRA, and the Governor's office)

Proposed RRI Incentives
Alternative Certification and Certification Supports
Critical Needs Stipends
First Year Stipends
Graduate Courses
International Teachers (to be phased out in three years)
Mentoring and Induction
Professional Development
Grow Your Own (District Innovative Program)

Appendix I

Recommended Rural Recruitment Initiative District Application
Pursuant to Proviso 1A.44

Overview & Instructions

Overview

Since Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16), pursuant to Proviso 1A.73, the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA), in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), has been responsible for developing and maintaining a comprehensive list of recruitment and retention incentives available to rural districts. The provision has been renewed annually, with several substantive amendments implemented over time to strengthen its effectiveness.

Under the current FY27 Proviso 1A.44, districts identified as eligible will be invited to apply for Rural Recruitment Initiative (RRI) funds. Eligibility is determined through a rigorous analysis of three key indicators:

1. *Academic Performance*: Districts with the lowest performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, based on report card scores for grades 3-8, English 1, and Algebra 1.

2. *Fiscal Capacity*: Districts with the lowest index of Taxpaying Ability, reflecting their capacity to generate local revenue, as reported by the South Carolina Department of Revenue.

3. *Teacher Retention*: Districts with the highest three-year teacher turnover rates, as indicated on the school report card.

Using these criteria, a list of eligible districts will be determined by the Education Oversight Committee. An eligible district must decide by July 15, 2026 whether it will apply for the RRI funds. If an eligible district elects not to apply for the Rural Recruitment Initiative funds by this deadline, the Education Oversight Committee will move to the next district on the ranked alternate list.

District applications for RRI funds must reflect comprehensive planning, research, and documentation to demonstrate a measurable impact on teacher recruitment and retention. Districts are expected to:

- Outline proposed strategies supported by research
- Clearly define anticipated outcomes

- Include baseline data to accurately measure progress
- Provide both short-term and long-term indicators of success
- Develop a detailed progress-monitoring framework
- Collect and report teacher recruitment and retention data throughout the funding period

A cross-agency team will support districts in crafting robust, aligned proposals and will review applications for adherence to program goals. Pending availability, funding will be provided for three years. Districts are encouraged to consider collaborative, regional approaches. Ultimately, each plan must answer the critical question: How will you know the Rural Recruitment Initiative funds are improving teacher recruitment and retention rates in your schools?

Application Instructions

The Rural Recruitment Initiative (RRI) application includes three components: Basic Information, Plan Information and Timeline, and Assurances. Districts should ensure alignment with their district strategic plan and should collaborate closely with the cross-agency support team to develop a comprehensive, research-backed proposal. Participation in RRI workshops, hosted by CERRA, is required as these sessions will provide guidance on best practices and compliance requirements. Funds must be allocated within the following categories: alternative certification and certification supports, critical needs stipends, first year stipends, graduate coursework, international teachers (districts allocating funds to this category must include a three-year plan for phasing out this funding), mentoring and induction programs, professional development opportunities, *grow your own* or other innovative district programs. Thoughtful planning and coordination will help districts craft a proposal that meets program expectations and demonstrates a clear, measurable path toward improving teacher recruitment and retention.

Once submitted, the application will be reviewed by a team composed of representatives from the South Carolina Department of Education and the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement.

Rural Recruitment Initiative Application Questions

Section I: Basic Information

- Date submitted
- District name
- Primary contact name
- Contact position title
- Contact phone number

- Contact email address

Section II: Plan Information & Timeline

1. ***Identify Area(s) of Need***
   Describe your district's greatest area(s) of need in relation to teacher recruitment and retention. Be specific and include relevant data where possible.
   **This will likely serve as baseline data*.

2. ***Recruitment Plan***
   What is your plan to increase recruitment in your district (based on your needs identified in Q1)? Refer to the following categories as applicable: alternative certification and certification supports, critical needs stipends, first year stipends, graduate coursework, international teachers (districts allocating funds to this category must include a three-year plan for phasing out this funding), mentoring and induction programs, professional development opportunities, grow your own or other innovative district programs. Include supporting research with citations and provide detailed information on how implementation will occur.

3. ***Retention Plan***
   What is your plan to improve teacher retention in your district? Refer to the same categories listed above. Include supporting research with citations and provide detailed information on how implementation will occur.

4. ***Progress Monitoring and Measuring Success***
   How will you monitor progress and measure success (based on your need and data in Q1)? Please note that for each teacher who benefits from this funding, the district must submit names and certificate numbers. This will allow both the district and the cross-agency team to track the impact of funding on teacher recruitment and retention at the district and state levels.

5. ***Implementation Timeline***
   Upload a three-year timeline that includes detailed implementation steps and scheduled progress-monitoring checks. This timeline should clearly indicate short-term and long-term milestones aligned with your recruitment and retention goals.

Section IIa: Plan Information & Timeline (International Teachers)

If the district plan includes allocating funds for international teachers, please provide the phase-out plan here.

Section III: Assurances

The district understands and assures the following:

- A district team, comprised of at least the superintendent, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Human Resources director, and a teacher representative collaborated to develop this proposal.
- The district can submit descriptions of events and copies of original receipts to CERRA for reimbursement twice per academic year: by November 30, 2026 and April 30, 2027.
- Upon request, the district must provide invoices. Only expenses directly related to the approved plan will be eligible for reimbursement.

Appendix J

Rural Recruitment Spending:
5-Year ROI Analysis of Strategic Investments

1. Introduction

In this report, SC TEACHER analyzes 5 years of Rural Recruitment Initiative spending across five incentive categories (alternative certification, international teacher recruitment, 1st-year teacher stipends, induction and mentoring support, and general recruitment expenses). For each category, the report documents cost per hire or cost per retained teacher, the distribution of outcomes across districts and years, and trends over time. Findings describe associations between spending and outcomes.

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This report presents a return on investment (ROI) analysis of South Carolina's Rural Recruitment Initiative (RRI) funds for the 5 fiscal years from 2019–20 through 2023–24. The RRI provides Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds to rural and economically disadvantaged school districts to support the recruitment and retention of teachers in hard-to-staff positions.

The analysis covers five spending categories for which administrative outcome data are sufficient to compute ROI: alternative certification, international teacher recruitment, 1st-year teacher stipends, induction and mentoring support, and general recruitment expenses. Together, these five categories account for $22.2 million, or approximately 65%, of the $34.3 million disbursed to districts over the 5-year study window. Additional RRI categories, including critical needs stipends, professional development, graduate coursework, and several smaller incentive types, are documented in Table 1.1 but are not analyzed for ROI because the data infrastructure needed to link spending to individual recruitment or retention outcomes is not yet in place for those categories.

The five categories span the two primary goals of the RRI program: recruitment (bringing teachers into districts who were not previously there) and retention (supporting teachers already employed in districts so they remain). International teacher recruitment and general recruitment expenses are analyzed as recruitment strategies; their primary outcome is the number of teachers hired per dollar spent. Alternative certification, induction and mentoring, and 1st-year stipends are analyzed as retention strategies; their primary outcome is the number of additional teachers retained from one year to the next per dollar spent. This distinction is central to the analysis: It explains why ROI is defined differently across categories and why categories cannot be ranked on a single scale. Section 1.3 and Technical Appendix A explain the methodological basis for these differences in detail.

Table 1.1 lists all RRI spending categories, their 5-year totals, the number of unique districts that used each category, and their analytical status.

Table 1.1. *RRI Spending Categories, 5-Year Totals (2019–20 Through 2023–24), District Participation, and Analytical Status*

Spending category	5-year total (2019-24)	Unique districts	Analytical status	Outcome
Categories analyzed in this report				
Alternative certification	$1,255,413	36	Analyzed — Section 3.1	Cost per retained teacher (Measure 2); change in retained teachers vs. prior year (Measure 1)
International teacher recruitment	$9,540,819	39	Analyzed — Section 3.2	Cost per new hire
1st-year teacher stipends	$477,499	14	Analyzed — Section 3.3	Change in 1st-year hires vs. prior year
Induction and mentoring	$3,570,540	44†	Analyzed — Section 3.4	Change in retained teachers vs. prior year
General recruitment expenses (recruitment activities, website updates, national employment fees)	$7,364,821	46	Analyzed — Section 3.5	Cost per new hire
Sub-total — categories analyzed in report	**$22,209,092**	**55**	**64.7% of all 5-year disbursements to districts**	
Additional categories — not analyzed for ROI				
Critical needs stipends	$5,891,456	—	Not analyzed—lacks teacher-level tracking to link spending to individual outcomes	
Professional development	$3,677,379	—	Not analyzed—lacks teacher-level tracking to link spending to individual outcomes	
Graduate coursework	$1,241,641	—	Not analyzed—lacks teacher-level tracking to link spending to individual outcomes	
Bridge fees, certification supports, housing, travel stipends	$1,297,792	—	Not analyzed—lacks teacher-level tracking to link spending to individual outcomes	
Sub-total — categories NOT analyzed in report	**$12,108,268**	—	**35.3% of all 5-year disbursements to districts**	
TOTAL — all categories	**$34,317,359**	**—**	**5-year total, 2019-20 through 2023-24**	

Unique district counts for analyzed categories reflect the number of districts with at least 1 year of spending in that category within the study window; the 55-district total for analyzed categories counts each district once, regardless of how many categories a district used. †The district count for induction and mentoring support reflects all 6 years, including 2018–19; the 5-year ROI analysis (Section 3.4) covers 42 unique districts.

1.2 Background on the Rural Recruitment Initiative

The RRI was established in fiscal year 2015–16 under Proviso 1A.73 of the General Appropriation Act. The initial appropriation of $1.5 million from EIA revenues was administered by the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) and targeted school districts with average annual teacher turnover greater than 12%. Across subsequent years, the program was modified several times: The turnover eligibility threshold was lowered to 11%, the 15 wealthiest districts by index of taxpaying ability were made ineligible, a rural district undergraduate loan forgiveness program was added, and the annual appropriation grew substantially.

District eligibility is determined annually by CERRA based on two criteria: (a) average annual teacher turnover exceeding 11% as reported on the five most recent district report cards and (b) exclusion from the top 15 districts by index of taxpaying ability. Eligible districts apply for and receive annual allocations, with the allocation amount determined by a formula that weights district size (number of classroom teachers) and turnover rate above the eligibility threshold. Because the allocation formula is driven primarily by teacher count, larger districts receive more funding in absolute terms; the turnover weighting adds a relatively small adjustment. This property of the allocation formula is relevant to interpreting some cross-district comparisons in Section 3.5.

RRI offers districts considerable flexibility in how they use their allocations. Funds may be carried forward from one year to the next, and districts may apply for funds across as many incentive categories as their staffing strategy requires. The wide variation in how districts allocate their funds is evident in the 5-year data: No single category dominates across all districts, and several districts shifted their strategies substantially from year to year, possibly in response to changing staffing conditions.

1.3 Methodology Overview

ROI is calculated at the district-year level: Each combination of a district and a fiscal year in which that district had spending in a given category constitutes one observation. The unit of analysis is the district-year rather than the district alone because RRI strategies change from year to year. Districts that invested heavily in induction in 2020–21 and shifted to international recruitment in 2022–23 yield observations that are meaningfully different for each year. Using district-years rather than district averages preserves that within-district variation and increases the statistical precision of the estimates. Different analyses within a category apply different inclusion criteria. For example, some require prior-year spending, some require consecutive years of outcome data, and some are restricted to a 5-year window, while others include a 6th baseline year. As such, the number of district-year observations reported will vary within the same category across tables. Each table notes its specific inclusion criteria.

All ROI formulas use a 1-year lag structure: Spending in fiscal year t is linked to outcomes observed in year $t + 1$. This lag reflects how the program operates in practice. A district funds recruitment activities in one year and measures how many teachers are newly hired at the start of the following year; it funds induction throughout a school year and measures how many of those teachers return the following year.

Because the five categories pursue different goals, each uses a different outcome measure. For recruitment categories, the outcome is the number of teachers hired; ROI is expressed as new hires per dollar, or equivalently as cost per hire. For retention categories, the outcome is the year-over-year change in the number of teachers retained; ROI is expressed as additional retained teachers per dollar spent, which is positive when more teachers are retained than in the prior year and negative when fewer are retained. These are not interchangeable metrics. A cost-per-hire figure from general recruitment and a cost-per-additional-retained-teacher figure from induction describe fundamentally different activities and comparing them as if they were on the same scale would be misleading. Section 4 places all five categories side by side, with this caveat explicitly stated, and Technical Appendix A documents each formula in full detail.

From district-year ROI values, an overall ROI is computed as a pooled ratio: the sum of all outcome values across all district-year observations divided by the sum of all spending values for the category. This approach was chosen over a simple average because averaging district-year ROI values is distorted by observations with very small denominators. A district that spent $1,500 on induction in a single year produces an ROI value that is arithmetically enormous, even if the absolute outcome was trivial. The pooled ratio weights each district-year observation in proportion to its actual share of total spending, so large-spending districts have appropriately more influence on the overall estimate than small-spending ones. Because the pooled ratio is implicitly spending-weighted and may not reflect the typical district's experience, the median district-year ROI is always reported alongside it. Table 1.2 provides a concise reference for all six ROI formulas documented in the appendix.

Table 1.2. *Summary of ROI Formula Components by Category*

Category	Numerator (outcome)	Denominator (cost)	Interpretation of positive value	Timing structure
Alternative certification (retention) (Formula 1)	Change in # of retained alt cert candidates year-over-year	Prior-year RRI spending ($t-1$)	Additional retained candidates per dollar	Spending in $t-1$; outcome change from $t-1$ to t (1-year lag)
Alternative certification (retention) (Formula 2)	Retained alt cert candidates in $t+1$	Current-year RRI spending (t)	Cost per retained candidate	Spending in t; outcome in $t+1$ (1-year lag)
International recruitment	New international teachers hired in year $t+1$	RRI spending on international teacher fees in year t	International teacher hires per dollar spent	Spending in t; outcome in $t+1$ (1-year lag)
1st-year stipends (recruitment)	Change in # of 1st-year teachers year-over-year	Prior-year stipend spending ($t-1$)	Additional 1st-year hires per dollar spent	Spending in $t-1$; outcome change from $t-1$ to t (1-year lag)
1st-year stipends (retention)	Pooled retention rate: stipend years vs. non-stipend years	N/A — no spending denominator	Descriptive rate difference	All stipend and non-stipend district-years compared (no lag structure)
Induction/ mentoring (retention)	Change in # of retained induction teachers year-over-year	Current-year RRI spending (t)	Additional retained induction teachers per dollar spent	Spending in t; outcome in $t+1$ (1-year lag)
General recruitment	New hires in year $t+1$	RRI spending in year t	New hires per dollar; or cost per hire	Spending in t; outcome in $t+1$ (1-year lag)

All formulas use spending in year t as the denominator unless otherwise noted. "Change" in outcome means value in $t+1$ minus value in t.

What the Data Support and What They Do Not

RRI funds are allocated to districts as flexible resources, without requiring tracking of which specific teachers benefit from each dollar spent. This creates an inherent attribution challenge, particularly for retention categories. When a district spends on induction and retains 90% of its early-career teachers, the analysis can document the association between that spending and that outcome, but it cannot rule out that some teachers would have stayed regardless, or that other factors (e.g., a new principal, an improved salary schedule, statewide labor market conditions) explain part or all of the retention difference. It also cannot account for additional resources (e.g., federal grants, other district investments) that may have been deployed alongside RRI dollars toward the same recruitment or retention goals. The analysis captures only the RRI spending allocated; it does not capture the total investment surrounding it.

Because of this limitation, the ROI estimates in this report should be interpreted as associations between RRI spending and outcomes, not as causal effects. They describe what happened in districts that invested in each strategy, year by year, across the study period. Where patterns are consistent across many districts and multiple years, the evidence for a relationship between spending and outcomes is stronger. When outcomes vary widely across districts or years, the analysis seeks to

identify which contextual factors may explain that variation, while acknowledging that the available data cannot resolve all sources of uncertainty.

Three additional constraints affect interpretation throughout the report. First, all ROI calculations use a 1-year outcome window; programs like induction and alternative certification that are designed to build long-term teaching careers may generate retention effects over 3 to 5 years that this analysis cannot capture. Second, the ROI metrics measure recruitment and retention counts, not teacher quality, instructional effectiveness, student outcomes, or teacher satisfaction. Third, several categories have relatively small panels (1st-year stipends: 23 district-year observations; alternative certification: 68 observations), and findings from smaller-sample categories are less precise than those from larger ones. Section 5 addresses these limitations in detail.

A note on the study period: The study window is 2019–20 through 2023–24 for all five analyzed categories. For retention categories (alternative certification, mentoring/induction, 1st-year stipends), 2018–19 data are used as the prior-year baseline for the 2019–20 ROI calculations but do not constitute a separate ROI observation year. Spending figures for induction and 1st-year stipends are sometimes cited over 6 years (including 2018–19) to give the full picture of program investment; in those cases, the applicable total is noted explicitly.

Categories Not Analyzed for ROI

Several RRI spending categories are not analyzed in this report. Critical needs stipends ($5.9 million across 5 years) are paid to teachers in high-need subject areas, but a data infrastructure to identify which teachers received stipends and whether they remained in those positions is not yet in place. Professional development ($3.7 million) supports teacher quality and satisfaction broadly rather than targeting a defined cohort whose outcomes can be tracked. With beneficiary tracking in place, these funds could be connected with SC TEACHER's SC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Graduate coursework ($1.2 million) represents a long-term career investment with retention effects that may not materialize within a 1-year outcome window. Smaller categories (e.g., bridge program fees, certification supports, housing stipends, and travel stipends) also lack consistent beneficiary tracking. These categories are excluded from the ROI analysis as they require an improved data infrastructure to be assessed rigorously.

2. Overall RRI Spending Patterns

2.1 Aggregate Spending Trends

From 2019–20 through 2024–25, South Carolina RRI-eligible districts disbursed a total of $41.2 million in funds. Table 2.1 shows the complete distribution across all spending categories and years. Annual disbursements ranged from $6.47 million (2023–24) to $7.32 million (2021–22), a variation of less than 12% across the 6-year period. This stability reflects consistent legislative appropriations and steady district participation, with no year showing a dramatic contraction in overall program activity.

Table 2.1. *Total RRI Funds Disbursed by Incentive Type, 2019–20 Through 2024–25*

RRI incentive	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Alternative certification	$269,407	$265,624	$202,513	$246,151	$271,718	$364,855	**$1,620,268**
Bridge fees	$14,500	—	$55,000	$99,286	$171,093	$111,778	**$451,657**
Certification supports	$60,627	$67,200	$105,800	$73,747	$82,821	$90,569	**$480,764**
Critical needs stipends	$793,395	$1,819,719	$1,123,568	$1,336,116	$818,658	$811,208	**$6,702,664**
1st-year teacher stipends	$149,948	$161,477	$60,690	$73,884	$31,500	$210,729	**$688,228**
Graduate courses	$78,077	$212,297	$433,850	$282,035	$235,382	$275,504	**$1,517,145**
Housing stipends	$61,236	$64,366	$52,050	$85,251	—	$49,806	**$312,709**
International teacher fees	$2,474,955	$1,724,836	$1,943,910	$1,328,967	$2,068,151	$1,261,608	**$10,802,427**
Mentoring and induction	$722,468	$740,090	$607,060	$717,567	$783,355	$1,189,941	**$4,760,481**
National employment fees	$234,761	$203,623	$217,068	$181,347	$109,740	$218,064	**$1,164,603**
Professional development	$662,011	$830,421	$868,905	$586,356	$729,686	$791,898	**$4,469,277**
Recruitment expenses	$1,026,478	$729,395	$1,446,684	$1,397,057	$851,617	$1,168,784	**$6,620,015**
Surveys	—	—	—	$40,950	$137,681	$242,407	**$421,038**
Teacher Cadet start-up	$1,161	$10,125	$14,200	$4,000	—	$12,025	**$41,511**
Travel stipends	$43,173	$28,335	$7,000	$18,190	—	$6,640	**$103,338**
Website updates	$184,231	$202,328	$182,744	$217,139	$180,608	$114,306	**$1,081,356**
Total RRI funds disbursed	**$6,776,428**	**$7,059,836**	**$7,321,042**	**$6,688,043**	**$6,472,010**	**$6,920,122**	**$41,237,481**

A dash (—) indicates no disbursements for that category in that year. Source: CERRA.

The distribution of spending across categories is highly concentrated. International teacher fees are the single largest category at $10.8 million over 6 years (26.2% of total disbursements). Critical needs stipends ($6.7 million, 16.3%), recruitment expenses ($6.6 million, 16.1%), mentoring and induction ($4.8 million, 11.5%), and professional development ($4.5 million, 10.8%) round out the top five. Together, these five categories account for approximately $33.4 million, or 81% of all RRI disbursements. The remaining 19% is distributed across eleven smaller categories, including alternative certification, graduate courses, website updates, housing and travel stipends, and bridge fees.

Study period note: This section reports full 6-year disbursement figures (2019–20 through 2024–25) using Table 2.1. The ROI analysis in Section 3 covers 5 years only (2019–20 through 2023–24) because 2024–25 teacher employment and outcome data are not yet available for the outcome linkage calculations. Where dollar figures are referenced in Section 3, they reflect the 5-year totals, which are smaller than the 6-year figures shown in Table 2.1.

2.2 Spending Patterns for the Five Analyzed Categories

This section describes spending patterns for the five categories analyzed for ROI in Section 3. For context, 5-year totals (2019–20 through 2023–24) are noted where relevant, as those are the figures used in the ROI calculations.

Alternative Certification

Districts spent $1.62 million on alternative certification across 6 years ($1.26 million across the 5-year window), with 36 unique districts using the category across the study period. Annual spending was relatively stable, ranging from $203K to $272K across the first 5 years, with a notable increase to $365K in 2024–25. The year-over-year stability suggests this category functions as a sustained programmatic investment in a subset of districts rather than an episodic response to staffing crises. Of the 36 participating districts, slightly less than 40% used the category in at least 4 of the 6 available years, while roughly 28% used it in only 1 or 2 years, reflecting the mix of districts that have established alternative certification pipelines and those that draw on it opportunistically to address specific vacancies.

International Teacher Fees

International teacher fees represent the largest single RRI category at $10.8 million across 6 years ($9.54 million across the 5-year window), with 39 unique districts using the category across the study period. The year-over-year pattern is the most volatile of any analyzed category, largely driven by the pandemic. Spending declined from $2.47 million in 2019–20 to $1.72 million in 2020–21, and fell further to $1.33 million in 2022–23 as international visa processing backlogs and travel restrictions persisted beyond the acute phase of COVID-19 challenges. Recovery was evident by 2023–24, when spending returned to $2.07 million. Approximately 62% of districts using this category did so in at least 4 of the 5 years in the ROI window. A small number of larger districts account for a disproportionate share of total spending in this category.

First-Year Teacher Stipends

Spending for 1st-year stipends totaled $688K across 6 years ($477K across the 5-year window), the smallest of the five analyzed categories. Only 14 unique districts used stipends at any point during the study period, and usage was highly sporadic: 10 of the 14 used the category in only a single year, two used it in 2 consecutive years, and only Williamsburg County School District sustained participation across all 6 years. The year-over-year pattern is also the most variable: Spending peaked at $161K in 2020–21, dropped sharply to $61K in 2021–22, recovered modestly, fell to $32K in 2023–24, and then rose to $211K in 2024–25. Whether the 2024–25 increase represents a durable expansion of stipend use or a single-year spike is not yet clear from the available data.

Mentoring and Induction

Mentoring and induction is the most consistently growing RRI category. Total spending was $4.76 million across 6 years ($3.57 million across the 5-year window), with 44 unique districts participating across the study period. The trend is unambiguously upward: Annual spending grew from $722K in 2019–20 to $740K in 2020–21, dipped to $607K in 2021–22, and then rose in each subsequent year, reaching $1.19 million in 2024–25. No other category shows this level of consistent, multi-year growth. The number of districts using induction in a given year grew from 12 in 2018–19 to 26 in 2023–24,

suggesting that participation is expanding as more districts develop or formalize their mentoring programs. Nearly half of these districts (approximately 48%) used the category in at least 4 of the 6 available years.

General Recruitment Expenses

General recruitment is reported across three subcategories in Table 2.1 (recruitment expenses, website updates, and national employment fees), which are combined in the ROI analysis as a single broad-funnel recruitment category. Together, these three subcategories total $8.87 million across 6 years ($7.36 million across the 5-year window), with 46 unique districts participating. Recruitment expenses are the dominant subcategory, accounting for $6.62 million (74.7% of the combined total) and covering job fairs, digital advertising, printed materials, and general outreach. Website updates ($1.08 million, 12.2%) and national employment system fees ($1.16 million, 13.1%) make up the remainder.

General recruitment has the highest district participation of any analyzed category and the most consistent year-over-year usage: Approximately 74% of participating districts used at least one of the three subcategories in at least 4 of the 5 years. Annual combined spending fluctuated more than the stability of participation would suggest, ranging from $1.46 million (2019–20 combined) to $1.85 million (2021–22), reflecting variation in the scale and frequency of recruitment activities across years. The 2021–22 spike in recruitment expenses coincides with the return of in-person career fairs and hiring events following pandemic closures, when multiple years of deferred outreach activity may have compressed into a single high-spend year.

3. ROI Analysis by Category

This section presents ROI findings for each of the five analyzed categories. Each category is evaluated using the outcome measure most appropriate to its purpose, as described in Section 1.3 and Technical Appendix A. Comparisons across categories require care because the metrics are not on the same scale. Section 4 addresses cross-category comparisons directly.

3.1 Alternative Certification Programs

Alternative certification programs support teachers who enter the classroom on a provisional license while working toward full professional certification. Districts use RRI funds to cover program fees, exam costs, and mentoring expenses for these candidates. The primary goal is to retain them long enough to complete the certification process and establish careers in RRI districts.

This section reports two complementary measures of program performance. Measure 1 (year-over-year change in retained count) asks whether more alternative certification candidates were retained following the spending year than the year before, using prior-year spending as the denominator. Measure 2 (cost per retained teacher) asks what each retained alternative certification candidate costs the district in the investment year, using current-year spending as the denominator. Because Measure 1 requires prior-year spending and consecutive retained counts, it draws on a narrower panel: 29 districts and 68 district-year observations. Measure 2 requires only that current-year spending be positive, giving a broader panel of 36 districts and 84 district-year observations.

3.1.1 One-Year Return on Investment

The data allow for two ways to measure whether the investment paid off.

The first measure asks: Did the district retain more alternative certification candidates this year than last year, relative to what was spent the year before? This captures potential improvement over time. However, the measure has a limitation: It is sensitive to cohort size, meaning that a district that doubled its alternative certification enrollment will likely retain more candidates in absolute terms even if its retention rate stays the same.

The second measure asks: How much did it cost the district for each alternative certification candidate who remained the following year? Technical Appendix A provides full definitions for both measures.

Measure 1: Year-Over-Year Retention Change

Table 3.1.1. *Alternative Certification Summary, 2019–20 Through 2023–24*

Metric	Value
Overall ROI (pooled)	−0.0000296 change in retained teachers per dollar
Median ROI	0.000000 (no change at median)
District-years with improving retention	27 of 68 (39.7%)
Districts with spending per year (range)	13 (2019–20) to 23 (2023–24)
Median cost per additional teacher retained†	$4,500
Total spending (2019–20 through 2023–24)	$1,255,413
Observations	68 district-years; 29 unique districts

†Median among district-years where year-over-year retention improved. Measure 1 requires prior-year spending data, giving 68 observations across 29 unique districts.

Across the study period, alternative certification spending was associated with a slightly negative overall result: The total number of retained alternative certification candidates across all district-years was 31 fewer than the prior year, against $1.0 million in prior-year spending. The median result was exactly zero, meaning the middle observation showed no change in retention from the prior year, neither an improvement nor a decline. In 27 of the 68 instances where a district spent on alternative certification and had data for the following year, retention improved. In other words, when looking at each district's experience year by year, about 4 in 10 spending years were followed by an improvement in the number of alternative certification candidates who stayed.

Year-by-year results varied considerably. The first 2 years of the study period both showed positive median results; performance fell in 2021–22 and 2022–23, consistent with the national wave of teacher attrition following COVID-19, before partially recovering in 2023–24.

Table 3.1.2. *Year-Over-Year Retention Change: Alternative Certification Results by Year*

Year	Median result	Districts	Positive outcomes
2019–20	0.000060	10	5 of 10 (50%)
2020–21	0.000048 ← Best year	13	7 of 13 (54%)
2021–22	−0.000154	13	3 of 13 (23%)
2022–23	−0.000115	16	8 of 16 (50%)
2023–24	−0.000025 ← Recovery	16	4 of 16 (25%)

A positive value means more alternative certification candidates were retained than in the prior year.

Three districts (Greenwood School District 50, Laurens County School District 55, and Spartanburg School District 7) showed improving retention in every year for which prior-year spending data were available. Spartanburg School District 7 is the most consistent example, with stable retention rates of 86–88% across a growing cohort over multiple consecutive years.

Measure 2: Cost per Retained Teacher

Across 84 district-year observations involving 36 unique districts, the pooled cost per retained alternative certification candidate was $1,524, with a median of $955. Four observations had zero retained candidates despite spending. The overall candidate retention rate (the share of alternative certification candidates who remained in their district the following year) improved from 73.5% in 2019–20 to 83.3% in 2023–24, suggesting that districts' ability to hold onto the candidates they invest in strengthened over the study period.

Table 3.1.3. *Cost per Retained Alternative Certification Candidate by Year*

Year	Districts	Pooled cost per retained teacher	Candidate retention rate	Median cost per retained teacher
2019–20	13	$1,938	73.5%	$649
2020–21	15	$1,509	76.5%	$1,059
2021–22	16	$1,164 ← Best	77.3%	$909
2022–23	17	$1,810	78.6%	$1,017
2023–24	23	$1,365	83.3%	$1,218

Candidate retention rate = share of alt cert candidates still in the district the following year.

ROI note: These two measures can tell different stories about the same district. A district can show a slightly negative Measure 1 result, meaning it retained a smaller number of teachers than the prior year, while still showing a reasonable Measure 2 cost per retained teacher, because retention counts fluctuate for reasons beyond the program itself. Reading both together gives a more complete picture than either one alone.

3.1.2 Multi-Year Retention and Certification Outcomes

The 1-year measures shared in Section 3.1.1 capture whether retention improved in a given year. The more consequential question for a program designed to build a sustainable teacher pipeline is the longer-term one: Do these teachers ultimately earn professional certification, and do they remain in the district that invested in them? SC TEACHER tracked two cohorts of newly hired alternative certification

candidates who entered RRI spending districts in 2019–20 (*n* = 65) and 2020–21 (*n* = 100), across 4 years each.

Retention and Certification: Two Cohorts, 4 Years

Table 3.1.4. *Four-Year Retention and Certification Outcomes for Newly Hired Alternative Certification Candidates in RRI Spending Districts by Cohort*

Outcome	2019-20 cohort (*n* = 65)	2020-21 cohort (*n* = 100)
Retention trajectory (still teaching in same district)		
After Year 1	80%	71%
After Year 2	54%	49%
After Year 3	36%	41%
After Year 4	35%	34%
Certification outcomes (at end of 4-year window)		
Achieved professional certification	58.5%	42.0%
Certified AND still in same district	30.8%	22.0%

2019–20 cohort measured through 2023–24; 2020–21 cohort measured through 2024–25.

The two cohorts follow notably different paths but arrive at nearly the same destination. The 2019–20 cohort starts at 80% retention after Year 1 and declines gradually to 35% by Year 4; its largest single-year loss comes in Year 2, not Year 1. The 2020–21 cohort starts lower at 71% after Year 1 and then declines more gradually to 34% by Year 4. In both cohorts, the majority of total attrition has occurred by the end of Year 2 (71% and 77% of all departures, respectively), with relatively little additional attrition in Years 3 and 4. The convergence at Year 4 to 35% and 34% is the most notable pattern: two cohorts with different starting points and different early trajectories ended up in nearly the same place.

Certification rates differed more between cohorts. In the 2019–20 cohort, 58.5% achieved professional certification within 4 years; in the 2020–21 cohort, 42% did. The difference may reflect differences in district composition across cohorts or variation in certification program structure.

The combined outcome, professionally certified and still in the same district, was met by 30.8% of the 2019–20 cohort and 22% of the 2020–21 cohort. These are the figures most directly relevant to assessing whether the district's investment produced a lasting return.

Note on measurement: These retention figures count teachers who remained in the same district that originally hired and invested in them. Some who left their original district continued teaching in South Carolina elsewhere. The figures here reflect the return to the investing district, not to the state's workforce overall.

3.2 International Teacher Recruitment

Districts use RRI funds to recruit teachers from abroad through the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program and the H-1B Visa Program, paying agency placement fees, visa processing costs, and administrative expenses. Across 5 years, 39 unique districts spent a combined $9,540,819 on international recruitment across 108 district-year observations. Of these 39 districts, 10 (26%) used international recruitment in all 5 spending years of the study period, and 13 (33%) used it in 4 or 5 years, reflecting sustained agency partnerships.

3.2.1 Cost per Teacher Recruited

International recruitment measures the number of actual teachers hired per dollar spent. Teachers on J-1 visas serve fixed-term contracts of up to 3 years, with the option to extend for 2 years. The program does not aim to grow a permanent international workforce but to maintain annual recruitment capacity, replacing teachers as their contracts end and recruiting new cohorts each cycle. Measuring year-over-year change in hires would show zero or negative results even in years when the program is working exactly as intended. Cost per hire captures what the investment actually bought.

Table 3.2.1. *International Teacher Recruitment Summary*

Metric	Value
Overall cost per hire	$17,538 per teacher recruited
Median cost per hire	$13,708 per teacher
Range of cost per hire	$12 to $311,000
Districts with spending per year (range)	18 (2022–23) to 24 (2019–20)
Recruitment success rate	66.7% of district-years with spending hired ≥ 1 teacher
Total teachers recruited (5-year)	541 teachers (in district-years with international fee spending)
Total spending (2019–20 through 2023–24)	$9,540,819
Observations	108 district-years; 39 unique districts

Note. Teacher hire counts reflect only teachers on J-1 or J-2 exchange visitor visas, as identified by their international teaching certificate.

Districts spent an average of $17,538 per teacher recruited, with a median of $13,708. The range is wide, from $12 (Hampton County School District, 2021–22, which paid $34.57 in agency fees and placed 3 teachers) to $311,000 (Orangeburg County School District, 2020–21, when $622,000 in fees yielded only 2 hires), reflecting real differences in agency relationships, hiring volume, and year-to-year variability in visa processing outcomes.

Year-by-Year Patterns

Table 3.2.2. *Visiting International Teacher Recruitment Performance by Year*

Spending year	Districts with spending	Teachers hired the following year	Success rate	Overall cost per hire	Median cost per hire
2019–20	24	29	54.2%	$85,343	$40,644
2020–21	24	96	62.5%	$17,423	$13,417
2021–22	20	97	85.0%	$20,040	$14,000
2022–23	18	144	66.7%	$9,229	$9,688
2023–24	22	175	68.2%	$11,818	$9,500

Success rate = share of district-years with current-year spending that hired at least one teacher the following year.

The pandemic's impact on international recruitment was severe. In 2020–21, with visa processing suspended and international travel restricted, districts that had invested in recruitment saw only 29 hires at a cost of $85,343 per hire, nearly five times the study-period average.

Recovery was substantial. By 2022–23, 85% of district-years succeeded in hiring at least one teacher. The 2022–23 spending year showed the lowest cost per hire in the study period at $9,229, driven in part by high-volume districts achieving exceptional efficiency.

One-third of district-years with prior spending (36 of 108 observations, 33.3%) resulted in zero hires despite the investment. This non-success rate was highest during the COVID-19 disruption and lowest during the 2022–23 recovery. Zero-hire outcomes can result from visa processing failures, candidates withdrawing after placement, or timing mismatches between spending and when teachers arrive. Districts using international recruitment should expect occasional failed recruitment years as a normal feature of the strategy.

3.2.2 Visa Type Distribution

Visa type data are available for 2023–24 and 2024–25. The majority of new international hires arrived on J-1 cultural exchange visas. A substantial share arrived on H-1B specialty occupation visas, which allow longer stays and do not carry the departure requirement, but do require employer sponsorship, are subject to annual caps, and involve more complex administrative processes.

H-1B teachers are more likely to result in longer-term workforce presence, but the higher administrative burden means they may be used selectively by districts with the capacity to manage the process.

Table 3.2.3. *International Teacher Hires by Visa Type, 2023–24 and 2024–25*

Spending year	J-1 hires	H-1B approvals	Total	H-1B share
2023–24	146	73	219	33.3%
2024–25	175	70	245	28.6%

The table includes RRI spending districts only. The US State Department data only include H-1B visa approvals, not actual hires.

Because H-1B sponsorship costs are typically handled through legal and human resources channels rather than agency fee lines, the cost-per-hire figures for H-1B-heavy districts are overstated relative to the true cost per teacher placed. A district like Darlington County School District, which placed 3 J-1 teachers and had 24 H-1B approvals in 2023–24, shows a cost per-hire figure based on 3 placements when 27 teachers may have actually been recruited.

Note on measurement: International recruitment ROI measures teachers hired per dollar spent. It does not capture how long those teachers stayed, whether they fulfilled their contracts, or what happened after the 3-year J-1 period ended. The figures reflect RRI-funded district-years only; international hiring through non-RRI channels is not included.

3.2.3 Certification Areas for Newly Hired International Teachers

Mathematics and science consistently account for the largest share of international teacher placements, reflecting possible persistent shortages in these subjects among domestically available candidates. Together, they represented 35–51% of all certification areas each year. English and language arts and special education emerged as notable categories beginning in 2023–24, with English and language arts peaking at 32 certifications in 2023–24 and special education going from zero placements in prior years to 22 in 2023–24 and 27 in 2024–25. Table 3.2.4 provides certification areas for newly hired international teachers in RRI districts that invested in the international fees spending category. Note that certification area counts exceed hire counts in some years because some teachers hold certifications in multiple areas; teachers with missing certification data are reported separately and excluded from the area-level counts.

Table 3.2.4. *Certification Areas of Newly Hired International Teachers, 2021–22 Through 2024–25*

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total number of newly hired international teachers*	96	97	144	175
Total number of teachers with missing certification area	19	21	5	0
Total number of certification areas**	90	83	165	211
Mathematics	25	21	33	50
Science	21	9	25	40
Elementary	20	18	14	31
English and language arts	5	12	32	27
Special education	0	0	22	27
World languages	11	10	15	10
Social studies	2	8	10	8

Early childhood	5	2	3	6
English for speakers of other languages	0	0	9	7
Physical education	1	1	1	3
Arts and music	0	1	1	2
Other	0	1	0	0

**Newly hired international teachers in RRI districts that invested in the international fees spending category.*
***A teacher may hold certifications in more than one area; totals reflect certification-area counts, not unique teachers.*

3.3 First-Year Teacher Stipends

First-year stipends are direct financial payments to newly hired teachers during their 1st year of employment. Unlike recruitment fees or certification costs, the money goes to the teacher, functioning simultaneously as a recruitment signal and a retention incentive, since payments are typically tied to completing the school year.

This section reports three analyses with different observation counts, each reflecting different inclusion criteria: Table 3.3.1 uses all 23 district-year observations with any stipend spending across the full 6-year window (2018–19 through 2023–24); the retention comparison (Table 3.3.3) draws on 18 observations restricted to the 5-year ROI window (2019–20 through 2023–24); and the recruitment ROI (Table 3.3.4) uses 21 observations that additionally require prior-year stipend spending to serve as the cost denominator, which excludes a district's 1st year of participation.

First-year stipends are the smallest of the five analyzed categories in total dollar terms and the most narrowly used. Across 6 years, 14 unique districts spent a combined $542,104 across 23 district-year observations. Between two and five districts used stipends in any given year, with participation declining to just two districts by 2023–24.

3.3.1 Spending Patterns

Table 3.3.1. *First-Year Stipend Program Overview*

Metric	Value
Total spending (2019–20 through 2023–24)	$477,499
Total spending (including 2018–19)	$542,104
Unique districts using stipends	14 districts
District-year observations	23 district-years
Districts with spending per year (range)	2 to 5
Peak spending year	2020–21 ($161,477)
Most recent year (2023–24)	$31,500 (2 districts)

The 5-year total used in ROI calculations is $477,499; the 6-year total, including 2018–19, is $542,104.

Table 3.3.2. *First-Year Stipend Spending and 1st-Year Teacher Retention by Year*

Year	Districts	Stipend spending	1st-year teachers†	Retained next year	Retention rate
2018–19	5	$64,605	34	34	100.0%
2019–20	5	$149,948	29	24	82.8% ← COVID
2020–21	4	$161,477	80	75	93.8%
2021–22	2	$60,690	15	14	93.3%
2022–23	5	$73,884	35	32	91.4%
2023–24	2	$31,500	9	8	88.9%
5-year total		**$477,499**	**168**	**153**	**91.1%**

†First-year teacher counts and retention rates reflect stipend-spending districts only in each year.

Spending peaked in 2020–21 at $161,477 and then fell sharply. The 2019–20 retention rate of 82.8% is the lowest among stipend years and likely reflects COVID-related disruptions.

3.3.2 Retention Outcomes

The straightforward comparison asks: Did districts that offered 1st-year stipends retain their 1st-year teachers at higher rates than districts that did not?

Table 3.3.3. *Pooled 1st-Year Teacher Retention Rates by Stipend Status, 2018–19 Through 2023–24*

Group	Observations	Pooled retention	Notes
District-years with stipend spending	18	91.1%	Small sample; wide variation
District-years without stipend spending	167	87.6%	
Difference		+3.5 pp	Descriptive only; not causal

District-years with stipend spending show a pooled retention rate of 91.1%, compared to 87.6% in district-years without stipends, a descriptive difference of 3.5 percentage points. These are pooled retention rates across all 1st-year teachers in stipend vs. non-stipend district-years during the 5-year study window. This gap should not be read as evidence that stipends cause higher retention. With only 18 observations in the stipend group, the sample is small. Districts that choose to offer stipends may differ in other ways from those that do not (e.g., stronger administrative capacity, more stable

leadership, or better working conditions) that independently support retention. The 3.5 percentage point difference is presented as a descriptive observation only.

The pattern holds, though less strongly, in the year after a stipend year: Districts in the year following a stipend offering show a pooled retention of 91.2%, compared to 87.3% for districts with no prior stipend history. This possible persistence of the pattern is also descriptive only.

3.3.3 Recruitment ROI

A separate question is whether stipend spending is associated with more 1st-year teachers arriving in the first place, rather than just better retention among those who are already hired. This recruitment measure asks whether the number of 1st-year hires increased in the year following stipend spending, relative to what the district spent. Technical Appendix A provides the formula.

Table 3.3.4. *First-Year Stipend Recruitment ROI Summary, 2018–19 Through 2023–24*

Metric	Value
Observations (prior-year spending > 0)	21
Overall recruitment ROI	0.0000431 additional 1st-year hires per dollar
Median recruitment ROI	0.000000 (no change at median)
District-years with more hires than prior year	9 of 21 (42.9%)
District-years with fewer hires than prior year	10 of 21 (47.6%)
Implied cost per additional 1st-year hire	Approximately $23,200 (based on overall ROI)

The median recruitment ROI is exactly zero, indicating that the typical district-year observation shows no change in 1st-year hire counts following stipend spending. Less than half of observations (42.9%) showed more hires than the prior year; nearly half (47.6%) showed fewer. The overall positive ROI figure is driven upward by a small number of high-result observations, particularly Dorchester School District 4 in 2019–20, where $1,780 in spending coincided with three additional 1st-year hires, a striking ratio driven almost entirely by the very small expenditure denominator rather than by an unusual hiring outcome.

Taken together, the retention and recruitment data for 1st-year stipends describe a small, declining program, with suggestive but limited evidence of impact due to sample size. The 3.5 percentage point retention advantage in stipend years is directionally positive; the median recruitment ROI of zero is less encouraging. Neither figure can establish a causal link between stipend spending and outcomes.

3.4 Induction and Mentoring Support

Induction and mentoring spending covers the cost of structured support programs for teachers in their 1st years in a district: mentor stipends, formal induction program costs, coaching, and early-career professional development. Unlike 1st-year stipends, which go directly to the teacher, induction spending primarily funds infrastructure for new teachers, such as experienced mentors, coordinators, and support structures designed to reduce the attrition common in the first 2 years of teaching.

Induction and mentoring has seen the sharpest growth in adoption of any RRI category, with the number of participating districts more than doubling over the study period, from 12 in 2018–19 to 26 in 2023–24. Across 5 years, 42 unique districts spent a combined $3,570,540 across 114 district-year observations in the 5-year study window. Table 1.1 shows 44 unique districts, reflecting 6-year participation including 2018–19; all ROI calculations in this section use the 42-district, 5-year panel.

3.4.1 Spending Patterns and Participation

Table 3.4.1. *Year-by-Year Induction and Mentoring Spending, Participation, and Retention Among Teachers on Induction Contracts*

Spending year	Districts	Total spending	Induction teachers	Retained next year	Pooled retention rate
2018–19	12	$414,741	305	296	97.0%
2019–20	22	$722,468	595	491	82.5%
2020–21	22	$740,090	538	483	89.8%
2021–22	20	$607,060	456	406	89.0%
2022–23	24	$717,567	521	437	83.9%
2023–24	26	$783,355	708	632	89.3%
6-year total (2018-19 to 2023-24)		**$3,985,281**	**3,123**	**2,745**	**87.9%**

Two years stand out. The 2018–19 aggregate retention rate of 97.0% is the highest in the dataset, but that year had only 12 participating districts with relatively small induction cohorts. The 2022–23 retention rate of 83.9% is the lowest; the cause is not clear from the administrative data, but the recovery to 89.3% in 2023–24 suggests this was not sustained.

3.4.2 Does Investment Level Matter?

To examine whether higher induction spending is associated with better retention, the data were grouped by how much each district spent per induction-program teacher in a given year, with districts not spending on induction serving as a comparison group.

Table 3.4.2. *Teacher Retention Rates by Induction and Mentoring Investment Level, 2018–19 Through 2023–24*

Investment level	Observations	Teachers on induction contracts	Retained next year	Pooled retention rate	Average spent per teacher
No spending	105	2,712	2,372	87.5%	$0 (baseline)
Low (Q1)	32	991	866	87.4%	$320 per teacher
Medium-low (Q2)	31	998	865	86.7%	$915 per teacher
Medium-high (Q3)	31	730	648	88.8%	$1,789 per teacher
High (Q4)	32	404	366	90.6%	$4,483 per teacher

Investment quartiles (Q1–Q4) are based on RRI induction spending per program teacher.

Districts with low and medium-low investment (averaging $320 and $915 per teacher) show retention rates the same as or below those of non-investing districts. Only the two highest quartiles, averaging $1,789 and $4,483 per teacher, show retention rates above the no-investment baseline, at 88.8% and 90.6%, respectively.

This does not mean that a small investment in induction teachers reduces retention. Districts investing small amounts may face more difficult baseline conditions or be in the early stages of building their programs. What the pattern does suggest is that modest investment is not reliably associated with a retention benefit, and that the positive association between induction spending and retention appears concentrated at higher spending levels.

Note on analysis: The 3.1 percentage point gap between no-investment (87.5%) and high-investment (90.6%) districts is descriptive, not causal. The high-investment quartile is defined by spending per induction teacher, and the data show that high-quartile districts are actually the smallest in the dataset: They average 12.6 induction teachers per year compared to 31.0 in the low quartile. A district spending $30,000 on four induction teachers registers a higher per-teacher figure than one spending $100,000 on 40 teachers. Small cohorts may also support closer mentoring relationships independent of the dollar amount spent. The association between per-teacher investment level and retention cannot be interpreted as evidence that spending more per teacher causes better retention.

3.4.3 Year-Over-Year ROI

Induction ROI measures whether more teachers were retained in the year following spending than were retained the year before, using the same year-over-year change numerator as alternative certification Measure 1, but with a different denominator timing: Induction divides by current-year spending, while alternative certification Measure 1 divides by prior-year spending. The full methodology is in Technical Appendix A.

Table 3.4.3. *Induction and Mentoring ROI Summary, 2018–19 Through 2023–24*

Metric	Value
Total spending (2019–20 through 2023–24)	$3,570,540
Total spending (including 2018–19)	$3,985,281
Unique districts using stipends (5-year)	42 districts
Observations (prior-year spending > 0)	96 district-years
Districts with spending per year (range)	20 (2021–22) to 26 (2023–24)
Overall ROI	−0.0000142 (slightly negative)
Median ROI	−0.0000153 (slightly negative)
District-years with positive ROI	41 of 96 (42.7%)
District-years with zero ROI	6 of 96 (6.2%)
District-years with negative ROI	49 of 96 (51.0%)
Median cost per additional retained teacher†	$4,279

†Median among district-years with positive ROI.

The overall ROI and the median ROI are both slightly negative. This means that across the typical district-year, prior-year induction spending was not associated with an increase in retained teachers. In 51.0% of observations, the number of retained teachers declined from the prior year despite spending; in 42.7%, it improved.

A slightly negative result is not the same as saying induction spending reduces retention. The numerator (i.e., the year-over-year change in the number of teachers retained) is affected by many factors beyond any program: Cohort size variation, individual life decisions, statewide labor market conditions, and district leadership changes can all independently influence year-to-year retention counts, regardless of what a district spends on mentoring. The ROI measure answers a narrow question: Did spending in the prior year predict a net increase in retained teachers this year? Across most district-years, the answer is that retention held roughly steady or declined slightly, with no measurable increase attributable to the prior-year investment.

3.5 General Recruitment Expenses

General recruitment spending covers the costs of actively seeking new teacher candidates: attending job fairs, advertising positions, maintaining online recruitment presence, and paying fees to employment networks. Unlike the other four categories, general recruitment is broad-funnel as it does not target a specific candidate type, career stage, or retention mechanism. Its goal is to build a larger, better-qualified applicant pool for open positions in RRI districts.

General recruitment is the second-largest of the five analyzed categories by total spending, behind international recruitment. Across 5 years, 46 unique districts spent a combined $7,364,821 across 145 district-year observations. Because general recruitment spending is broad-funnel rather than targeted at a specific cohort or hire type, the analysis focused on cost per new hire and where newly hired teachers came from (new-to-state, lateral movers, or role changers). Technical Appendix A explains the methodological basis for this approach.

3.5.1 Spending Patterns

Table 3.5.1. *General Recruitment Program Overview, 2019–20 Through 2023–24*

Metric	Value
Total spending (2019–20 through 2023–24)	$7,364,821
Unique districts with spending	46 districts
District-year observations	145 district-years
Districts with spending per year (range)	25 (2019–20) to 33 (2022–23)
Overall cost per new hire (2019–20 through 2023–24)	$1,041
Annual cost per hire (range)	$613 (2023–24) to $1,603 (2019–20)
Total new hires in RRI districts (5-year)	7,073

Table 3.5.2. *General Recruitment Spending by Subcategory*

Subcategory	5-year total	% of total	What it covers
Recruitment expenses	$5,451,232	74.0%	Job fairs, career events, travel, advertising, marketing materials
Website updates	$967,051	13.1%	District careers pages, online recruitment infrastructure
National employment service fees	$946,538	12.9%	Fees to national job boards and placement networks
Total	**$7,364,821**	**100%**	

Recruitment expenses (e.g., direct costs of attending job fairs, career events, and candidate outreach) make up nearly three-quarters of general recruitment spending. Website updates and national employment service fees divide the remainder roughly equally. The subcategory mix is broadly stable across years, though national employment fees have declined in absolute terms ($235K in 2019–20 to $110K in 2023–24), while recruitment expenses show more year-to-year variation, likely reflecting differences in how many job fairs and career events districts attended in a given year.

Table 3.5.3. *General Recruitment Spending and New Hire Counts by Year*

Year	Districts with spending	Total recruitment spending	New hires	Cost per hire
2019–20	25	$1,445,470	902	$1,603
2020–21	27	$1,135,346	1,105	$1,028
2021–22	30	$1,846,496	1,361	$1,357
2022–23	33	$1,795,544	1,843	$974
2023–24	30	$1,141,965	1,862	$613
5-year total		**$7,364,821**	**7,073**	**$1,041**

Cost per hire = total spending ÷ total new hires across all RRI districts; this treats all RRI hiring as partly attributable to the collective recruitment activity in the cohort.

Hiring volume grew substantially over the study period, from 902 new hires in 2019–20 to 1,862 in 2023–24, while spending did not grow at the same pace. The result is a 62% reduction in cost per hire, from $1,603 in 2019–20 to $613 in 2023–24. Whether this reflects the effect of recruitment spending, broader labor market shifts, or other factors cannot be determined from these data.

3.5.2 Who is Being Hired: New Teachers vs. Transfers

A persistent concern about general recruitment spending in RRI districts is that it may primarily attract teachers already working in South Carolina, effectively moving teachers among districts rather than growing the statewide pool. The hire composition data address this directly.

New hires fall into three groups: new-to-state (teachers newly entering the South Carolina workforce, whether recent graduates or arrivals from other states), lateral movers (teachers already employed in South Carolina who transferred from another district), and role-changers (individuals shifting into teaching positions from non-teaching roles).

Table 3.5.4. *Hire Composition by General Recruitment Spending Status*

Group	Total new hires	New-to-state	Lateral movers	Role changers
RRI districts WITH general recruitment spending	7,073	61.5%	32.8%	5.7%
RRI districts WITHOUT general recruitment spending	1,929	60.5%	33.1%	6.4%
Difference		**+0.9 pp**	**−0.3 pp**	**−0.7 pp**

Districts with general recruitment spending hired a slightly higher share of new-to-state teachers (61.5%) than non-spending districts (60.5%), a difference of 0.9 percentage points. Lateral mover shares are nearly identical (32.8% vs. 33.1%). This small gap is directionally inconsistent with the concern that general recruitment spending primarily redistributes existing South Carolina teachers, but the difference is too small to draw strong conclusions. Districts that invest in recruitment may also differ from non-investing districts in ways that independently affect who applies.

Table 3.5.5 breaks down hire composition by spending quartile, comparing across the range of investment levels rather than the simple with/without binary.

Table 3.5.5. *Hire Composition by General Recruitment Spending Quartile, 2019–20 Through 2023–24*

Spending level	New hires (next year)	New-to-state	Lateral movers	Role-changers
No spending (baseline)	1,929	60.5%	33.1%	6.4%
Low (Q1) (highest new-to-state)	1,352	63.0%	31.1%	5.8%
Medium-low (Q2)	1,421	61.0%	33.4%	5.6%
Medium-high (Q3)	1,588	61.0%	33.1%	5.9%
High (Q4)	2,712	61.3%	33.1%	5.6%

Spending quartiles are based on total general recruitment spending among district-years with spending > 0.

The relationship between spending level and hire composition is essentially flat. New-to-state shares range from 60.5% (no spending) to 63.0% (low, Q1) across all groups, with a 2.5 percentage-point spread and no consistent directional pattern. All quartiles show similar lateral mover shares, clustering around 31–33%. The quartile analysis provides no evidence that spending more on general recruitment shifts the mix of new hires toward out-of-state candidates.

Across all 5 years, new-to-state teachers made up the majority of new hires in spending districts, ranging from 56.9% (2022–23) to 64.7% (2019–20). Lateral movers ranged from 30.9% to 35.6%, and role changers from 3.7% to 7.5%. No sustained directional trend is visible in the composition data across the 5-year period.

4. Comparative Analysis Across Categories

Sections 3.1 through 3.5 analyzed each RRI spending category individually. This section draws comparisons across all five categories, examining differences in scale, outcome frameworks, cost, and participation patterns. Because the five categories are designed for different purposes and use different outcome metrics, direct comparison requires care; the goal is to place the findings side by side for context rather than to rank categories on a single scale.

4.1 Overview of Spending, Scale, and Outcomes

Table 4.1 provides a summary comparison of all five categories across the 5-year study period and summarizes the distribution of positive outcomes and median costs where applicable. Across retention categories, roughly 40–43% of district-year observations show positive outcomes; international recruitment has a 66.7% success rate, with substantial variation within each category.

Table 4.1. *Cross-Category Comparison of RRI Spending, Participation, and Outcome Results, 2019–20 Through 2023–24*

Category	5-year total spending	Primary outcome measure	Unique districts	District-year observations	Overall results	Positive outcomes
Alternative certification	$1,255,413	Change in retained teachers vs. prior year (Measure 1)	29	68	−0.0000296 change in retained teachers per dollar	27 (39.7%) district-years had improving retention
		Pooled cost per retained alternative certification candidate (Measure 2)	36	84	$1,524/retained teacher	80 (95.2%) district-years retained at least one candidate; Candidate retention rate improved by 9.8 percentage points in 5 years
International recruitment	$9,540,819	Cost per international teacher recruited	39	108	$17,538/recruited teacher	72 (66.7%) district-years hired at least one international teacher
1st-year stipends	$477,499	Pooled retention rate (Measure 1)	14	18	91.1% pooled retention for spending district-years	Spending districts had a 3.5 pp pooled retention advantage
		Change in 1st-year hires vs. prior year (Measure 2)	14	21	+0.0000431 change in 1st-year hires per dollar	9 (42.9%) district-years had more hires than prior year
Induction/ mentoring	$3,570,540	Change in retained teachers vs. prior year	42	96	−0.0000142 in retained teachers per dollar	41 (42.7%) district-years had improving retention
General recruitment	$7,364,821	Cost per new hire	46	145	$1,041/new hire	For districts in all spending categories, the majority (61.5%) of new hires are new to the state

Note. Outcome measures differ across categories and are not directly comparable; see Section 3 for full methodology on each. For retention categories, positive outcome = year-over-year increase in retained teachers. International success rate = share of observations with at least one hire. General recruitment uses cost-per-hire framework only.

A note on comparing ROI across categories: Each category uses a different outcome framework because the categories have different goals. General recruitment and international recruitment measure cost per hire (a recruitment outcome). Alternative certification and induction/mentoring measure change in retained teachers per dollar (a retention outcome). First-year stipends include both a retention comparison and a recruitment ROI. Because the numerators and denominators differ, the figures in Table 4.1 are not on the same scale and should not be treated as a simple ranking of effectiveness.

A consistent pattern across the two year-over-year retention categories (i.e., alternative certification and induction/mentoring) is that fewer than half of observations show positive outcomes: 39.7% and 42.7%, respectively. This suggests that year-over-year improvement in retained teacher counts is

achievable in roughly 4 out of 10 cases but is not the modal outcome.

For 1st-year stipends, the recruitment ROI (change in 1st-year hire counts) shows 42.9% of observations to be positive, but the more relevant retention finding is descriptive: Districts offering stipends show a pooled retention rate 3.5 percentage points higher than non-stipend years. For international recruitment, the 66.7% success rate reflects a different calculation: whether any teachers were successfully placed in a given district-year. The 33.3% of international district-years with zero hires despite spending represents a meaningful share of non-productive investment, most of which is concentrated in early study years and COVID-affected observations.

4.2 Participation Patterns Across Categories

Table 4.2 describes how participation has evolved across the study period for each category.

Table 4.2. *District Participation Patterns by RRI Spending Category, 2018–19 Through 2023–24*

Category	Unique districts	Districts per year	Participation trend
General recruitment	46	25–33 per year	Growth from 25 to 30 spending districts over 5 years
Induction/mentoring	42	12–26 per year	Consistent growth: 12 districts (2018–19) to 26 (2023–24)
International recruitment	39	18–24 per year	Disrupted by COVID 2020–21; recovered and grew to 175 hires in 2024–25
Alternative certification	36	13–23 per year	Relatively stable; 39% of participating districts used it in only 1 year
1st-year stipends	14	2–5 per year	Declining: peaked at 5 districts, fell to 2 (2023–24)

Two categories show clear growth in district participation over the study period: induction/mentoring (12 to 26 districts) and, to a lesser extent, general recruitment. International recruitment recovered from its COVID disruption and continued to grow in absolute hiring volume, reaching 175 hires in 2024–25. First-year stipends show the only clear decline in participation, dropping from a peak of 5 districts to just 2 in 2023–24. Alternative certification participation has been relatively stable with no strong trend.

4.3 Recruitment vs. Retention: Different Frameworks, Different Evidence Standards

Recruitment Categories

General recruitment and international recruitment share a common outcome structure: both measure whether spending is associated with more teachers hired. The evidence standard is relatively direct; hires either happened or they did not, and cost per hire is calculable. General recruitment produced 7,073 new hires in spending districts over 5 years at a blended cost of $1,041 per hire; international recruitment produced 544 tracked hires at a per-hire cost of $17,538. These costs are not equivalent in what they buy: general recruitment casts a broad net for any qualified teacher, while international recruitment targets teachers willing and able to work on J-1 or H-1B visas, often in subjects where domestic recruitment has been unsuccessful.

Retention Categories

Alternative certification and induction/mentoring aim to keep teachers who have already been hired. Their ROI measures year-over-year change in the number of teachers retained per dollar spent, which is a more volatile metric than cost per hire: It depends not only on

spending but also on cohort size, individual life circumstances, and dozens of district-level factors outside the program. This volatility is one reason both retention categories show slightly negative overall ROI despite 42–43% of individual observations being positive.

First-Year Stipends: Spanning Both Frameworks

First-year stipends is the only category that appears in both frameworks. The recruitment ROI asks whether 1st-year hiring increased in the year following stipend spending. In response, 42.9% of the 21 recruitment ROI observations are positive, with a pooled result of 0.0000431 per dollar. The retention component is reported as a descriptive comparison rather than a cost-effectiveness ratio: districts in stipend-offering years retained 1st-year teachers at a pooled rate of 91.1%, compared to 87.6% in non-stipend district-years, a difference of 3.5 percentage points. Because the retention comparison does not divide by spending, it is not on the same scale as the retention ROI figures for alternative certification and induction/mentoring.

4.4 Cross-Cutting Patterns

Several patterns hold across multiple categories:

- Year-over-year variability is high across all retention categories. Retention rates fluctuate for reasons unrelated to spending, and the 1-year ROI framework captures this noise along with any signal from the investment.
- High-participation districts tend to show sustained high retention, but the causal direction is not established. Districts with strong retention infrastructure may invest more because they have the capacity to do so, rather than retaining more because of the investment. Edgefield County School District, Greenwood School District 50, and Sumter School District appear consistently across multiple categories as high-participation, high-retention districts.
- Investment level appears to matter more for retention categories than for recruitment categories. For induction/mentoring, the retention difference between high-investment districts (averaging $4,483/teacher) and no-investment districts is 3.1 percentage points; low and medium-low investment shows no retention advantage over no investment. For general recruitment, hire composition across spending quartiles is essentially flat (new-to-state shares range from 60.5% to 63.0%), providing no evidence that spending level affects the mix of teachers hired.
- COVID-19 affected all five categories in 2020–21 and to some extent 2021–22. International recruitment saw the sharpest disruption ($85,343/hire in 2020–21, nearly five times the study-period average). For induction, 2022–23 shows a dip to 83.9%, which mirrors the dip in statewide teacher retention (Starrett et al., 2026).[1]

5. Limitations and Considerations

This section addresses methodological limitations affecting the interpretation of ROI findings and identifies factors not captured in the quantitative analysis.

[1] 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

5.1 Measurement Limitations

Teacher-Level Tracking

Historically, RRI funds have been allocated to districts as flexible resources without requirements to track which specific teachers benefit from each dollar spent. Each spending category carries its own set of measurement assumptions that affect how results should be interpreted.

- For alternative certification, spending is matched to retention rates among teachers on alternative certification contracts in the spending district. Districts may support alternative certification candidates in ways that go beyond direct RRI expenditures, and teachers on alternative route certificates include those at varying stages of the certification process.

- For induction and mentoring, retention rates reflect all teachers on induction contracts in the spending district—not only those whose mentoring was directly funded by RRI. Whether that population should be further restricted to teachers from traditional EPPs is an open methodological question; including all induction contract teachers likely understates the per-teacher investment for districts with large induction cohorts and mixed funding sources.

- For 1st-year stipends, the retention comparison reflects all 1st-year teachers in stipend-offering districts, not only the individual teachers who received stipends. This broadens the comparison group beyond the directly treated population, which may dilute the estimated retention effect.

- For international recruitment, the hire counts reflect new J-1 visa holders and/or H-1B approvals documented in agency records. This excludes teachers on visa renewals or extensions, teachers placed through non-agency channels, and any ongoing visa maintenance or agency retainer costs not captured in the annual fee data. The true cost of sustaining an international teacher pipeline is therefore likely higher than what is reported here.

- For general recruitment, spending can be linked to total new hire counts in the district but cannot be traced to specific hires or activities. The hire composition analysis reflects all new hires in spending districts, not only those who may have been reached through RRI-funded recruitment efforts.

These assumptions mean ROI estimates should be read as approximations rather than precise accountings. Where the assumptions broaden the measured population beyond the directly treated group (i.e., 1st-year stipends and induction), the estimated effects are likely conservative. Where costs are undercounted (i.e., international recruitment), cost-per-hire figures likely understate the true investment.

Attribution and Confounding

The ROI calculations measure associations between RRI spending and outcomes, not causal effects. Multiple factors operating simultaneously affect the same outcomes.

- District characteristics (e.g., geographic isolation, salary schedules, school leadership, working conditions, and local labor market dynamics) affect both which districts invest in RRI and how well those investments perform.
- Complementary investments (e.g., local district funding, Title I and Title II grants, and in-kind supports such as principal mentoring and professional learning communities) may interact with RRI spending in ways that amplify or dilute the apparent RRI effect.

- Teacher characteristics (e.g., career stage, subject area, alternative certification pathway, and personal circumstances) affect retention decisions independently of any district support program.

These confounding factors do not invalidate the analysis, but they do mean that district-level ROI variation reflects both the effectiveness of spending decisions and the baseline context in which those decisions operate. A district showing low ROI may face more severe structural challenges rather than having made less effective spending choices.

5.2 One-Year Outcome Window

All ROI calculations measure outcomes 1 year after spending. This time frame is appropriate for operational planning purposes but likely misses some longer-term effects:

- Induction and mentoring programs are designed to accelerate early-career development over multiple years. Teachers who complete comprehensive induction may show progressively higher retention in years 2–5 of their careers, beyond the 1-year window. The growing investment in induction, despite a slightly negative one-year ROI, is consistent with districts perceiving longer-term benefits that are not captured in this analysis.
- Alternative certification teachers who complete professional certification may show higher long-term retention than is visible in any single year's comparison. The convergence of Year 4 retention rates between 2019–20 and 2020–21 cohorts (35.4% vs. 34.0%) is suggestive of a structural long-term pattern, but multi-year cohort tracking is needed to generalize this finding.
- General recruitment and international recruitment deliver their primary value in the hiring year; multi-year tracking of recruited teachers would measure whether these hires persist in RRI districts over time.

5.3 Sample Size Constraints in Smaller Categories

First-year stipends (21 ROI observations; 18 retention observations in the 5-year window) and alternative certification (68 Measure 1 observations; 84 Measure 2 observations) have smaller samples than induction (96 ROI observations) and general recruitment (145 observations). Findings from smaller-sample categories are less precise and should be interpreted with more caution than findings from larger-sample categories. District-specific findings (e.g., individual district ROI in the 1st-year stipend analysis) are particularly sensitive to small absolute changes in cohort sizes.

5.4 Data Infrastructure Needs

The limitations described above point to specific data infrastructure improvements that would strengthen future analyses. Linking RRI expenditure records to individual teacher identifiers would allow direct tracking of which teachers benefited from each category, enabling more precise attribution. Extending retention tracking to 3 and 5 years post-hire would capture longer-term effects of induction and alternative certification investments. Connecting RRI data to teacher evaluation, salary, commute distance, and working conditions data would enable assessment of quality outcomes beyond retention counts.

6. Summary of Findings

This report examined RRI spending across five categories (alternative certification, international teacher recruitment, 1st-year stipends, induction and mentoring support, and general recruitment) across 5 fiscal years (2019–20 through 2023–24) in up to 55 eligible South Carolina districts. The total 5-year spending across the five analyzed categories was approximately $22,209,092. Table 6.1 summarizes the primary findings from each category.

Table 6.1. *Summary of RRI ROI Findings by Category, 2019–20 Through 2023–24*

Category	5-year spending	Unique districts	Overall ROI result	ROI framework	Key additional findings
Alternative certification	$1,255,413	36	Measure 1: Negative overall (39.7% positive); Measure 2: $1,524/retained teacher	Measure 1: Change in retained count; Measure 2: Cost per retained teacher	4-year retention converges to about 34–35%; 58.5% certification rate (2019–20 cohort), 42.0% (2020–21)
International recruitment	$9,540,819	39	$17,538/hire overall	Teachers per dollar	COVID disruption recovered; cost improved to $9,229/hire in 2023–24; 66.7% success rate
1st-year stipends	$477,499	14	Recruitment: 0.0000431 per dollar (42.9% positive); Retention: +3.5 pp pooled retention vs. non-stipend district-years	Recruitment: change in 1st-year hires per dollar; Retention: pooled retention rate in stipend vs. non-stipend district-years	+3.5 pp pooled retention vs. non-stipend; participation declining; only Williamsburg County School District used all 6 years
Induction and mentoring	$3,570,540	42	Negative overall (42.7% positive); ROI: −0.0000142	Retained teachers per $	High-investment districts (+$4,483/teacher) show 90.6% retention vs. 87.5% baseline; high quartile = smallest districts
General recruitment	$7,364,821	46	$1,041/hire (spending districts)	Hires per dollar	61.5% new-to-state vs. 60.5% non-spending (+0.9 pp); cost/hire declined 62% across 5 years; no quartile pattern in hire composition

6.1 What the Data Show by Category

Alternative certification ($1,255,413 | 36 districts)

Measure 1 (year-over-year change in retained count) gives a slightly negative overall result (−0.0000296), with 39.7% of observations showing improvement. Measure 2 (cost per retained teacher) gives a pooled cost of $1,524 per retained alternative certification candidate, with the retention rate improving from 73.5% in 2019–20 to 83.3% in 2023–24. The most consistent long-term finding is that Year 4 retention converges at approximately 34–35% regardless of cohort entry year, suggesting a structural pattern in alternative certification teacher careers rather than a spending-driven one. The 2019–20 cohort achieved professional certification at 58.5%; the 2020–21 cohort at 42.0%.

International recruitment ($9,540,819 | 39 districts)

International recruitment addresses teacher shortages in subject areas where domestic recruitment consistently fails, at a pooled cost of $17,538 per successful hire overall. The cost improved dramatically over the study period, from $85,343/hire in the COVID-disrupted 2020–21 year to $9,229/hire in 2023–24. The overall success rate is 66.7%, meaning 33.3% of district-years with spending yielded zero hires or hired teachers on H-1B visas that are impossible to capture in the state administrative data.

First-year stipends ($477,499 | 14 districts)

First-year stipends are the smallest and most narrowly used category, with participation declining from a peak of five districts to two in 2023–24. The recruitment ROI averages 0.0000431 across 21 observations, with 42.9% positive. The retention comparison shows spending districts had a pooled retention rate of 91.1% vs. 87.6% in non-stipend district-years (a descriptive difference of 3.5 percentage points), but the sample is small (18 spending observations in the 5-year window).

Induction/mentoring ($3,570,540 | 42 districts)

Induction and mentoring has seen the sharpest growth in adoption of any RRI category, more than doubling from 12 to 26 participating districts. The overall ROI is slightly negative (−0.0000142) and the median is also slightly negative, meaning that in most district-years, the number of teachers retained did not increase year-over-year following induction spending. Among the 42.7% of observations with positive ROI, the median cost per additional retained teacher is $4,279. The investment-level analysis shows that only districts in the top two quartiles (averaging $1,789 and $4,483 per teacher) show retention rates above the no-investment baseline. Notably, high-quartile districts are the smallest in the dataset, averaging 12.6 induction teachers, compared to 31.0 in the low quartile, so the apparent investment advantage may reflect small-cohort dynamics rather than spending level.

General recruitment ($7,364,821 | 46 districts)

General recruitment is the second largest of the five analyzed categories by total spending, and the broadest by district participation. The 5-year blended cost is $1,041 per new hire in spending districts, declining from $1,603 in 2019–20 to $613 in 2023–24. The hire composition gap between spending and non-spending districts is small: 61.5% new-to-state vs. 60.5% (a 0.9 percentage point difference), with lateral mover shares nearly identical. Across spending quartiles, new-to-state shares cluster between 60.5% and 63.0% with no consistent pattern, providing no evidence that spending level affects the mix of teachers hired.

6.2 What These Data Can and Cannot Support

The findings in this report describe associations between RRI spending and teacher recruitment and retention outcomes across 5 years and up to 55 districts. The data support the following types of statements:

- Descriptive statements about what outcomes were observed in districts that spent in each category, including the distribution of positive and negative outcomes and the cost per outcome where applicable.
- Comparisons of outcome patterns across districts and years within each category, identifying cases where outcomes were consistently strong or consistently weak.
- Observations about participation trends, cost trends over time, and the relationship between investment level and outcomes within a category.

The data do not support causal claims that a specific spending category caused a specific outcome because the analysis cannot rule out confounding from district characteristics, labor market conditions, complementary investments, and teacher selection effects. The cross-category cost comparisons in Section 4 describe what different categories cost per documented outcome, but because the outcome measures differ across categories, these figures do not represent a single ranking of program effectiveness.

Technical Appendix A

Return on Investment: Definitions, Formulas, and Panel Data Construction

This appendix documents the analytical methods underlying the ROI estimates reported in Section 3 of the main report.

A.1 Why ROI Definitions Vary Across Categories

A single ROI formula cannot apply to all five RRI spending categories because the categories have fundamentally different theories of action, meaning different hypotheses about how spending produces value. ROI is most meaningful when the metric matches what a program is designed to accomplish.

The five categories are divided into two broad groups based on their theory of action:

Recruitment categories: spending is expected to increase the number of teachers hired

- General recruitment
- International teacher recruitment
- 1st-year stipends (recruitment component)

For these categories, the relevant outcome is how many teachers were hired, and ROI is naturally expressed as hires per dollar (or its reciprocal, cost per hire). A positive ROI means more teachers were hired following the spending; a cost-per-hire figure shows what they paid per additional classroom teacher filled.

Retention categories: spending is expected to increase the number (or rate) of teachers who stay

- Alternative certification
- Induction and mentoring
- 1st-year stipends (retention component)

For these categories, the relevant outcome is how many more teachers were retained compared to the prior year. ROI is expressed as additional retained teachers per dollar. A positive ROI means retention improved year-over-year following the spending; a negative ROI means fewer teachers were retained despite spending.

First-year stipends are the only category that spans both groups: they include a recruitment ROI (did 1st-year hiring increase following stipend spending?) and a separate retention comparison (did districts offering stipends retain 1st-year teachers at higher rates than those that did not?). These two submetrics answer different questions and are reported separately.

A.2 Notation and Variable Definitions

Table A.1 defines all variables and subscripts used in the formulas in Section A.4.

Table A.1. *Variable Definitions Used in ROI Formulas*

Symbol	Name	Definition
d	District index	Identifies each unique school district in the panel; $d = 1, \ldots, D$
t	Year index	Identifies each fiscal year; t corresponds to the year in which outcomes are observed
$Spending_{!,\#}$	RRI expenditure	Total dollars disbursed from RRI funds to district d in fiscal year t, within a given category
$Retained_{!,\#}$	Retained teacher count	Number of teachers in district d who were employed at the end of year t and returned for year $t+1$ (alt cert and induction)
$Hires_{!,\#}$	New hire count	Number of teachers newly placed in district d in year t (international and general recruitment)
$FYTeachers_{!,\#}$	1st-year teacher count	Number of teachers in their 1st year of employment in district d in year t (1st-year stipends)
$RetRate_{!,\#}$	Retention rate	Proportion of eligible teachers in district d in year t who returned for year $t+1$ (1st-year stipend retention comparison)
$N_!$	District-years observed	Number of fiscal years for which district d has both valid spending and outcome data in a given category
$\Sigma_!\Sigma_\#$	Double summation	Sum across all districts and all years with valid observations in a given category

Note. Subscripts (d, t) are omitted below where they would be redundant; all formulas are understood to apply to a single district d and fiscal year t unless otherwise noted.

A.3 Panel Data Construction

A.3.1 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis throughout is the district-year: a single school district observed in a single fiscal year. A district may contribute multiple observations to the panel if it was eligible for and used RRI funds in multiple years. The panel is unbalanced, meaning not all districts participate every year, and some districts enter or exit eligibility during the study window as their turnover rates change. This means district-year counts are lower than (number of districts) × (number of years).

A.3.2 Source Data

Two types of administrative data were linked to construct each category's panel:

- RRI expenditure records (from CERRA via SC TEACHER): Annual disbursement amounts by district and incentive type for each fiscal year in the study window. These records identify which districts spent funds in each category in each year and the amounts spent.
- Teacher employment and outcome records (from the South Carolina Department of Education via SC TEACHER's statewide data infrastructure): Annual counts of teachers by district, including 1st-year status, retention from one year to the next, certification level and pathway, contract status, and hire origin (new-to-state, lateral mover, or role changer).

These two data sources were linked by district and fiscal year. Not all districts appear in both sources in all years: a district with zero spending in a given category in a given year does not appear in the expenditure records for that category, and districts that became eligible mid-study or exited eligibility have partial records.

A.3.3 Inclusion Criteria and Panel Construction

For each category, a district-year observation was included in the ROI panel if and only if:

- The district reported spending greater than zero dollars in the relevant incentive category in year t.
- Valid outcome data (retained teacher counts, hire counts, or retention rates, depending on category) were available for both year t and year $t + 1$ for that district.
- The spending year and outcome year fell within the study window defined for that category.

Observations with zero spending were excluded from the ROI denominator calculations because dividing by zero is undefined and because zero-spending districts, by definition, have no ROI to calculate. However, zero-spending districts were retained for descriptive comparisons. For example, in the induction retention-by-investment-level analysis (Section 3.4) and the general recruitment hire composition comparison (Section 3.5), non-spending districts serve as the comparison baseline.

Table A.2 shows the resulting panel dimensions for each category.

Table A.2. *Panel Dimensions by Category*

Category	Year range	Unique districts	District-year observations	Max years per district	Inclusion criteria
Alternative certification	2019–20 to 2023–24	36 (Formula 2); 29 (Formula 1)	84 (Formula 2); 68 (Formula 1)	5	Formula 2 (cost per retained): current-year spending > 0. Formula 1 (year-over-year change): prior-year spending > 0 and retained count available in both t and $t+1$
International recruitment	2019–20 to 2023–24	39	108	5	Spending > 0; outcome = J-1 new placements and/or H-1B approvals in $t+1$ (may be 0).
1st-year stipends	2018–19 to 2023–24	14	23 (all years); 21 (rec. ROI); 18 (retained, 5-year)	6	Stipend spending > 0; FY teacher count in both t and $t+1$.
Induction and mentoring	2018–19 to 2023–24	42 (5-year)	96 (5-year retention ROI); 126 (6-year investment-level retention)	6	Spending > 0 (ROI panel)
General recruitment	2019–20 to 2023–24	46	145	5	Any general recruitment spending > 0; hires > 0 in $t+1$

Induction shows two observation counts because the ROI panel (spending > 0 in both years) and the retention-by-investment analysis (any induction spending in t) use slightly different inclusion criteria.

A.3.4 Time Lag Structure

All ROI formulas use a 1-year lag: spending in year t is linked to outcomes in year $t+1$. This lag reflects the mechanism by which spending is expected to operate: a district spends on recruitment in year t and measures how many teachers are in place at the start of year $t+1$; a district funds induction throughout year t and measures how many of those teachers return for year $t+1$.

For 1st-year stipends, the recruitment ROI formula uses the same 1-year lag as all other ROI formulas in this report: spending in year $\boldsymbol{t-1}$ is the denominator, and the outcome is the change in 1st-year hire counts from $\boldsymbol{t-1}$ to $\boldsymbol{t}$. The retention comparison also uses outcomes observed in $\boldsymbol{t}$ following spending in $\boldsymbol{t-1}$, so the timing structure is identical, though the retention comparison is descriptive rather than a cost-effectiveness ratio.

A.3.5 Missing Data and District Consolidation

Several districts consolidated or changed names during the study window (e.g., Barnwell 45 and 48, Clarendon districts, Hampton districts). Observations for districts that consolidated were treated as separate entities up to the year of consolidation and as the consolidated entity thereafter, consistent with CERRA's reporting. District-years with clearly inconsistent records (spending reported but implausibly large year-over-year outcome changes exceeding ±3 standard deviations from the category mean) were flagged and reviewed; no observations were excluded on this basis.

A.4 ROI Formulas by Category

The following subsections define the ROI formula for each category. Each subsection states (1) the theory of action, (2) the formal formula(s), (3) interpretation of the result, and (4) category-specific

limitations. Alternative certification is the only category with two complementary formulas (Section A.4.1); all other categories use a single formula.

A.4.1 Alternative Certification

Theory of Action

Alternative certification spending covers program fees, cohort support, and administration for teachers entering through non-traditional pathways (e.g., CarolinaCAP, PACE, Teacher for Tomorrow). The SC TEACHER data infrastructure enabled us to track a specific identified cohort at the district level: the number of alternative certification candidates in year t and the number of that same group who are still employed in the district in year $t + 1$. Because an identified cohort exists, two complementary ROI metrics are meaningful, and both are reported in Section 3.1.

Formula 1: Year-Over-Year Change in Retained Count

This formula asks whether more alternative certification candidates were retained after the spending year than before it. It measures whether retention is improving relative to prior-year spending.

$$ROI_{\$\%\#\&,\#} = \frac{Retained_{!,\#\cdot\&} - Retained_{!,\#}}{Spending_{!,\#(\&}}$$

where:

$Retained_{!,\#\cdot\&}$ = number of alt cert candidates in year t still employed in district d in year $t + 1$

$Retained_{!,\#}$ = number of alt cert candidates in year $t - 1$ still employed in district d in year t

$Spending_{!,\#(\&}$ = RRI alt cert expenditure in district d year $t - 1$ (1-year lag)

Note on metrics: The subscript on $Retained(d,\cdot)$ denotes the employment observation year (when employment status is checked), not the candidate enrollment year. Each annual observation compares two successive cohorts at their respective 1-year retention checkpoints.

Interpretation of Formula 1

- A positive value means more alternative certification candidates were retained after the spending year than before. The value is the number of additional retained teachers per dollar spent.
- A zero value indicates the retained count did not change year over year.
- A negative value means fewer alternative certification candidates were retained despite spending.
- The magnitude is very small (on the order of 10^{-5} to 10^{-4}) because it represents a count change divided by a dollar amount, typically in the tens of thousands.
- Formula 1 is sensitive to changes in cohort size: a district whose alternative certification cohort grew will show a positive numerator even if the retention rate remains unchanged, because more teachers are retained in absolute terms.

Formula 2: Cost per Retained Teacher

This formula asks directly what each retained alternative certification candidate costs the district. It is structurally equivalent to the international recruitment cost-per-hire metric and is more stable than Formula 1 because it does not depend on prior-year cohort size.

$$Cost\_per\_retained_{d,t} = \frac{Spending_{d,t}}{Retained_{d,t\to t+1}}$$

Equivalently as retained teachers per dollar:

$$ROI\_alt2_{d,t} = \frac{Retained_{d,t\to t+1}}{Spending_{d,t}}$$

where:

$Retained_{d,t\to t+1}$ = number of alt cert candidates from year t still employed in district d in year $t+1$

$Spending_{d,t}$ = RRI alt cert expenditure in district d in year t

Interpretation of Formula 2

- The cost-per-retained figure is the most directly interpretable: It is the dollar cost associated with one alternative certification candidate remaining in the district for at least 1 year after the investment year.
- Observations where $Retained(d, t+1) = 0$ despite spending > 0 (four observations in the data) represent complete cohort loss in year $t+1$. These are included in the pooled ratio, where they contribute spending to the denominator and zero to the numerator.
- Unlike Formula 1, there is no negative value: Retained teachers can only be zero or positive. Efficiency variation is captured by the range and distribution of cost-per-retained values.

Relationship Between the Two Formulas

Formula 1 uses prior-year spending ($t-1$) and measures whether retention is improving. Formula 2 uses current-year spending (t) and measures what the investment directly bought. A district can show negative Formula 1 ROI (retention fell year-over-year) while still having a reasonable Formula 2 cost-per-retained figure (meaning it retained a substantial share of its cohort at modest cost). Both metrics are reported in Section 3.1 because together they characterize different dimensions of program performance.

Category-Specific Limitations Applying to Both Formulas

- The cohort tracked is the entire alternative certification cohort, where candidates are enrolled in an alternative route program and in a teaching position. Current data collection does not link individual candidates to specific expenditure amounts; per-teacher spending figures assume funds were distributed proportionally across the enrolled cohort.
- Neither formula distinguishes between teachers who leave because they failed certification, found better opportunities, or departed for personal reasons unrelated to program quality.
- The multi-year certification and retention outcomes described in Section 3.1.2 are not captured by either of the 1-year ROI formulas. Those outcomes require longitudinal cohort tracking beyond the 1-year window.

A.4.2 International Teacher Recruitment

Theory of Action

International recruitment spending covers agency fees paid to secure teachers from outside the US, typically on J-1 exchange visitor or H-1B specialty occupation visas. The expectation is that spending in year t will result in international teachers being present in the district at the start of year $t+1$. The metric is therefore a recruitment outcome, not a retention outcome.

Formula

$$ROI\_intl_{d,t} = \frac{Hires_{d,t+1}}{Spending_{d,t}}$$

Equivalently expressed as cost per hire:

$$Cost\_per\_hire_{d,t} = \frac{Spending_{d,t}}{Hires_{d,t+1}}$$

where:

$Hires_{d,t+1}$ = number of international teachers successfully placed in district d in year $t+1$

$Spending_{d,t}$ = RRI international teacher fee expenditure in district d in year t

Interpretation

- A positive ROI (any value > 0) means at least one international teacher was successfully placed per dollar spent. The cost-per-hire reciprocal is more intuitive as it represents the dollar cost per successfully placed teacher.
- A value of zero hires (spending > 0, hires = 0) means the district spent on recruitment activities, but no teachers were successfully placed in year $t+1$. These observations are included in the pooled ratio calculation, where they contribute spending to the denominator and zero to the numerator.
- Unlike the retention categories, there is no negative ROI here: Hires can only be zero or positive. The variation across districts and years is therefore captured by the cost-per-hire range, not by the sign of the ROI.

Category-Specific Limitations

- The underlying assumption is that all new J-1/J-2 teachers are supported by the international fees.
- The formula captures the cost of placement, not the cost of sustained employment. International teachers on J-1 visas have an initial 3-year contract with an option for a 2-year extension, for a maximum stay of 5 years; those on H-1B visas may remain longer depending on employer sponsorship. The ROI formula does not track whether a placed teacher remained through subsequent years, which would require linking individual teachers to specific expenditure amounts.
- Current SCDE administrative data can only track teachers who arrived on a J-1/J-2 visa. To track H-1B visa hires, we must assume that all visa approvals from the US State Department result in successful hires.

A.4.3 First-Year Teacher Stipends

First-year stipends are analyzed using one ROI formula and one descriptive comparison that address different questions. The recruitment ROI asks whether stipend spending is associated with more 1st-year hires in the following year. The retention comparison asks whether districts offering stipends retained 1st-year teachers at higher pooled rates than non-stipend district-years; this is a descriptive group comparison, not a cost-effectiveness ratio.

ROI Formula: Recruitment

$$ROI\_stipend_{!,\#} = \frac{FYTeachers_{!,\#} - FYteachers_{!,\#(\&}}{Spending_{!,\#(\&}}$$

where:

$FYTeachers_{!,\#}$ = number of 1st-year teachers in district d in year t

$Spending_{!,\#(\&}$= RRI 1st-year stipend expenditure in district d in year $t-1$

Lag: spending in $t-1$; outcome is change in 1st-year teacher count from $t-1$ to t.

Descriptive Comparison: Retention

$$Pooled\ retention\ rate\ (stipend\ years) = \frac{\sum retained}{\sum FYTeachers}$$

across all district-years with stipend spending > 0

$$Pooled\ retention\ rate\ (non-stipend\ years) = \frac{\sum retained}{\sum FYTeachers}$$

across all district-years with stipend spending = 0

$$Difference = pooled\ retention\ rate\ (stipend) - pooled\ retention\ rate\ (non-stipend)$$

This pooled rate weights each district-year by its cohort size, giving more influence to district-years with more 1st-year teachers. The comparison uses all district-year observations in the 5-year study window (2019–20 through 2023–24), regardless of whether prior-year spending data are available. The resulting difference of +3.5 percentage points (91.1% vs. 87.6%) is descriptive only.

Interpretation

- A positive recruitment ROI means more 1st-year teachers were hired in year t than in year $t-1$, following stipend spending in year $t-1$ (i.e., stipend spending attracted more 1st-year teachers).
- A positive retention comparison means the pooled retention rate in stipend district-years exceeds the pooled retention rate in non-stipend district-years. This is a descriptive finding; it does not adjust for differences between districts that offer stipends and those that do not.

Category-Specific Limitations

- The underlying assumption is that all 1st-year teachers in the district are supported by the stipends.
- With only 21 district-year observations in the recruitment ROI panel and 18 in the 5-year retention comparison, these are the smallest samples in the analysis. Individual district-year values are sensitive to small absolute changes in cohort size, and the overall pooled ratios are more easily influenced by a single large observation than in categories with larger panels.
- The retention comparison (stipend vs. non-stipend years) is confounded by year effects: The years in which districts offered stipends may differ systematically from non-stipend years in ways unrelated to the stipend program (e.g., labor market conditions, leadership changes).

A.4.4 Induction and Mentoring

Theory of Action

Induction and mentoring spending covers stipends for mentors, program fees, and administrative support for teacher induction programs. The expectation is that structured mentoring will increase the number of early-career teachers retained from one year to the next, relative to what would have been observed without the program.

Formula

$$ROI\_ind_{d,t} = \frac{Retained_{d,t+1} - Retained_{d,t}}{Spending_{d,t}}$$

where:

$Retained_{d,t}$= number of teachers on induction contracts in district d in year t who return for $t+1$

$Spending_{d,t}$ = RRI induction/mentoring expenditure in district d in year t

Lag: spending in t; outcome is change in retained induction-cohort teacher count from t to $t+1$.

Interpretation

- Interpretation follows the same logic as alternative certification (Section A.4.1). A positive ROI indicates that the number of induction-cohort teachers retained increased year over year following the spending; a negative ROI indicates it decreased.
- An important distinction from alternative certification: The induction cohort eligible for retention is defined as teachers in the district on induction contracts. The retention question is purely about whether mentoring support reduces early attrition.

Category-Specific Limitations

- The underlying assumption is that all teachers on induction contracts in the district are supported by the induction and mentoring spending.
- The same cohort-size sensitivity applies as in alternative certification: year-over-year changes in the number retained reflect both retention rate and cohort size. A district whose 1st-year teacher cohort grew from 10 to 20 may show a positive numerator even if the retention rate fell.
- The investment-level analysis in Section 3.4 groups districts by per-teacher spending quartile and compares average retention rates across quartiles and to non-spending districts. This analysis uses the broader retention panel (114 district-year observations with any induction spending in the 5-year window; 126 including 2018–19) rather than the ROI panel (96 observations) and uses retention rate rather than retained count as the outcome. The two analyses are therefore not directly comparable and should be interpreted as addressing different questions.
- Induction spending per teacher varies widely across districts (less than $200 to more than $5,000 per teacher). The ROI formula does not account for this variation; high- and low-intensity programs are treated the same in the pooled formula.

A.4.5 General Recruitment

Theory of Action

General recruitment spending covers a broad range of activities (e.g., recruitment fairs, advertising, website development, and national employment system fees) designed to attract teachers to the district from any source. The expectation is that spending in year t will produce more new hires beginning in year $t+1$. Because this is a broad-funnel activity rather than a program with a defined participant cohort, the metric is cost per hire rather than change in a tracked cohort.

Formula

$$ROI\_rec_{d,t} = \frac{Hires_{d,t+1}}{Spending_{d,t}}$$

Equivalently as cost per hire:

$$Cost\_per\_hire_{d,t} = \frac{Spending_{d,t}}{Hires_{d,t+1}}$$

where:

$Hires_{d,t+1}$= total new teachers hired in district d in year $t+1$ (includes new-to-state, lateral movers, role changers)

$Spending_{d,t}$ = RRI general recruitment expenditure in year t,including recruitment expenses, website updates, and national employment system fees

Lag: spending in t; outcome is new hires in $t+1$.

Hire Composition Subanalysis

In addition to cost per hire, general recruitment spending is analyzed by hire composition: the share of new hires who are new-to-state (not previously employed as public school teachers in South Carolina), lateral movers (previously employed in a different South Carolina district), or role-changers (previously employed in a non-teaching role in South Carolina). This is not an ROI formula but a descriptive comparison between districts with and without spending in a given year:

$$NewToState\_share_{d,t+1} = \frac{NewToState\ \ hires_{d,t+1}}{Total\ hires_{d,t+1}}$$

Compared across:

- District-years with $Spending_{d,t} > 0$
- District-years with $Spending_{d,t} = 0$

Interpretation

- A lower cost per hire indicates higher efficiency: More teachers were placed per dollar spent.
- Unlike the retention categories, there is no negative ROI: Hires are non-negative. Efficiency variation is captured by the range of cost-per-hire values.
- The hire composition analysis is descriptive. A higher new-to-state share in spending districts compared to non-spending districts is consistent with general recruitment expanding the

teacher workforce (bringing in teachers who were not previously in South Carolina) rather than redistributing existing South Carolina teachers across districts.

Category-Specific Limitations

- General recruitment spending is the broadest category and the one with the least direct traceability between spending and outcomes. A district attending a recruitment fair in year t may hire some teachers directly as a result, but it also hires teachers through other channels (walk-in applications, word of mouth, referrals) simultaneously. The formula attributes all new hires to the district in year $t + 1$, not just those potentially traced to RRI-funded recruitment activities.
- The allocation formula links higher spending to larger districts (more classroom teachers, weighted by turnover rate above the 11% threshold). This means the spending quartile analysis of hire composition conflates spending level with district size.
- General recruitment spending includes three subcategories (recruitment expenses, website updates, and national employment fees) that are combined in the primary analysis. Districts that use only website updates spend on a different activity than districts that primarily attend job fairs, but the formula treats all three subcategories identically.

A.5 Aggregating District-Year ROI to an Overall Category Estimate

A.5.1 The Pooled Ratio

For each category, an overall ROI is computed as the pooled ratio: the sum of all outcome values across all district-year observations divided by the sum of all spending values across all district-year observations.

$$Overall\_ROI\_category = \frac{\sum_i \sum_t [Outcome_{i,t}]}{\sum_i \sum_t [Spending_{i,t}]}$$

where the sums run over all district-year observations included in the panel for that category

For general recruitment and international recruitment, where the outcome is a hire count, this simplifies to total hires divided by total spending across all years and districts. For the alternative certification and induction and mentoring categories, it is the total change in retained teacher counts (which may be negative in some years) divided by total spending.

A.5.2 Why the Pooled Ratio was Used

Three aggregation approaches were considered:

- Simple mean: average of all district-year ROI values, treating each observation equally
- Spending-weighted mean: each district-year ROI is weighted by its spending share
- Pooled ratio (sum of outcomes/sum of spending): equivalent to the implicit spending-weighted mean but avoids dividing by spending twice

The pooled ratio was chosen for two reasons. First, it avoids distortion from extreme outliers with very small denominators. In the induction panel, Dorchester School District Four's 2021–22 observation has spending of only $1,466, producing an ROI of 0.007503, an order of magnitude larger than any other observation. Under a simple mean, this single observation would pull the overall estimate substantially toward a positive value that does not reflect typical program performance. Under the pooled ratio, that district-year contributes $1,466 to the denominator (out of $3.57 million total), representing a 0.04%

weight, and its influence on the overall figure is proportional to its actual fiscal share. Second, the pooled ratio answers the more policy-relevant question: Per dollar actually spent across all participating districts and years, what was the aggregate return?

A.5.3 The Pooled Ratio is Implicitly Spending-Weighted

An important property of the pooled ratio is that it gives more weight to districts that spent more. A district that spent $500,000 on induction has 100 times the influence on the overall ratio as a district that spent $5,000. This is appropriate for a program-level policy question (we want to know what the program achieved overall per dollar), but it may mean the overall ROI does not reflect the median district's experience. For this reason, the main report always reports the median district-year ROI alongside the pooled ratio. For induction, both the pooled ratio and median are negative, which strengthens the conclusion. For alternative certification (Measure 1) and 1st-year stipends, the pooled ratio is nonzero, but the median is exactly zero, meaning the typical district-year showed no change even though the aggregate did, a pattern that is itself informative about the skewed distribution of outcomes in those categories. For international recruitment and general recruitment, cost per hire is always positive, so sign comparison does not apply; the median cost per hire provides a sense of the typical district's experience relative to the spending-weighted pooled figure.

A.6 What These ROI Metrics Do and Do Not Measure

A.6.1 What They Measure

- The association between RRI spending and observed recruitment or retention outcomes at the district level, measured 1 year after spending
- The cost efficiency of each category: how many units of outcome (hires or additional retained teachers) were observed per dollar of spending, in districts that used each category
- The distribution of outcomes across districts and years: how often outcomes were positive, zero, or negative, and how variable outcomes were across contexts
- The trend in cost efficiency over time: whether the cost per hire or cost per additional retained teacher changed across the study period

A.6.2 What They Do Not Measure

- Causal effects: The formulas produce associations, not causal estimates. The counterfactual (what retention or recruitment would have been without RRI spending) is not observed. Confounders, including district leadership, salary levels, working conditions, labor market conditions, and complementary investments, are not controlled.
- Quality outcomes: Teacher effectiveness, instructional quality, student achievement, and professional satisfaction are not captured in any ROI formula.
- Long-term persistence: All formulas use a 1-year outcome window. Whether recruited or retained teachers persist in the district for 3, 5, or 10 years is not measured.
- Certification completion: For alternative certification, whether a teacher who is retained in year $t+1$ has completed professional certification is tracked separately in the cohort analysis (Section 3.1.2) but is not incorporated into the ROI formula.
- Multi-category interactions: Districts often invest in multiple categories simultaneously (e.g., induction and alternative certification, or general recruitment and international recruitment). The formulas analyze each category independently and do not capture whether combinations of strategies produce synergistic or diminishing returns.

1205 Pendleton Street
Room 502 Brown Building
Columbia, SC 29201
www.eoc.sc.gov

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) is an independent, nonpartisan group of 18 educators, business people, and elected officials appointed by the legislature and governor. The EOC enacts the South Carolina Education Accountability Act of 1998, which sets standards for improving the state's K-12 educational system. The EOC reviews the state's education improvement process, assesses how schools are doing, and evaluates the standards schools must meet to build the education system needed to compete in this century.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: June 15, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Evaluation of SC READY English Language Arts (ELA) and English 2 EOCEP

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
§SECTION 59-18-320 Review of field test; general administration of test; accommodations for students with disabilities; adoption of new standards.

(A) After the first statewide field test of the assessment program in each of the four academic areas, and after the field tests of the end of course assessments of high school credit courses, the Education Oversight Committee, established in Section 59-6-10, will review the state assessment program and the course assessments for alignment with the state standards, level of difficulty and validity, and for the ability to differentiate levels of achievement, and will make recommendations for needed changes, if any. The review will be provided to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Governor, the Senate Education Committee, and the House Education and Public Works Committee as soon as feasible after the field tests. The Department of Education will then report to the Education Oversight Committee no later than one month after receiving the reports on the changes made to the assessments to comply with the recommendations.

(B) After review and approval by the Education Oversight Committee, and pursuant to Section 59-18-325, the standards-based assessment of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, and science will be administered for accountability purposes to all public school students in grades three through eight, to include those students as required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and by Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. To reduce the number of days of testing, to the extent possible, field test items must be embedded with the annual assessments. To ensure that school districts maintain the high standard of accountability established in the Education Accountability Act, performance level results reported on school and district report cards must meet consistently high levels in all four core content areas. For students with documented disabilities, the assessments developed by the Department of Education shall include the appropriate modifications and accommodations with necessary supplemental devices as outlined in a student's Individualized Education Program and as stated in the Administrative Guidelines and Procedures for Testing Students with Documented Disabilities.

(C) After review and approval by the Education Oversight Committee, the end of course assessments of high school credit courses will be administered to all public school students as they complete each course.

(D) Any new standards and assessments required to be developed and adopted by the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education for use as an accountability measure, must be developed and adopted upon the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

§**SECTION 59-18-355**. Content standards revisions; required approval.

(A)(1) A revision to a state content standard recommended pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A), as well as a new standard or a change in a current standard that the State Board of Education otherwise considers for approval as an accountability measure, may not be adopted and implemented without the:

(a) advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee; and

(b) approval by a Joint Resolution of the General Assembly.

(2) General Assembly approval required by item (1)(b) does not apply to a revision recommended pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A), other approval of a new standard, and other changes to an old standard if the revision, new standard, or changed standard is developed by the State Department of Education.

(B) A revision to an assessment recommended pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A), as well as a new assessment or a change in a current assessment that the State Board of Education otherwise considers for approval as an accountability measure, may not be adopted and implemented without the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

CRITICAL FACTS

The 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards were officially approved by the State Board of Education on January 17, 2023. The Standards became fully operational and assessed in the year 2024-2025.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

- **May 18, 2026:** anticipated ASA subcommittee approval of UGA review of SC READY ELA and English 2 EOCEP
- **June 15, 2026:** anticipated EOC approval of UGA review of SC READY ELA and English 2 EOCEP; review to be provided to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Governor, the Senate Education Committee, and the House Education and Public Works Committee. SCDE to respond to review within one month of receipt.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

Cost: $164,162.16 (includes review of multiple assessments by University of GA K-12 Assessment Solutions)

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

Mary Frances Early College of Education
K–12 Assessment Solutions
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

South Carolina State Assessment Programs: English Language Arts

Evaluation of ELA Grades 3-8 and English 2

Spring 2024-2025 Test Data

Gwinnett Campus:
2530 Sever Road
Suite 149
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Contact Us:
Toll free: (888) 392-8977
Web: https://coe.uga.edu/directory/k-12-assessment-solutions

Table of Contents

Summary

This document reviews the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY) English Language Arts (ELA) Grades 3-8 and the South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) English 2 assessment, focusing on their alignment with the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards, and the validity, difficulty, and ability to differentiate achievement levels, thereby ensuring it provides reliable data for evaluating student mastery and state accountability.

The review of the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 assessments yielded several key findings. Overall, the test blueprints are well aligned with the intended standards and reporting categories, and the operational forms generally reflect blueprint specifications. Across grades, most reporting categories are adequately represented; however, a small number of standards listed in the blueprints are not represented on the operational forms. Despite these findings, the overall alignment between operational items and reporting categories is acceptable. With respect to Depth of Knowledge, the assessments are predominantly weighted at DOK Level 2, which is appropriate for measuring conceptual understanding and application of skills, with a smaller yet sufficient proportion of DOK Level 3 items to assess higher-order thinking, particularly at the middle and high school levels. Item-level reviews identified a limited number of items where DOK classifications or standard alignments could be improved through metadata updates or item revision.

Evidence based on the internal structure of the assessments indicated that the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests function as intended. Classical Test Theory (CTT) analyses demonstrated appropriate ranges of item difficulty and strong item discrimination across grades and administrations. Rasch model analyses showed that item difficulties spanned the ability continuum, and that model fit statistics generally fell within acceptable ranges, supporting the validity of score interpretations. Dimensionality analyses provided evidence that each assessment measured a single dominant construct, and reliability estimates were strong across grades, forms, and student subgroups. Differential item functioning analyses further indicated that the assessments satisfied measurement invariance assumptions, with minimal evidence of bias across demographic and administration groups.

The evaluation also examined Performance Level Classifications for the SC READY and EOCEP ELA assessments. Cut scores were established using a recognized standard-setting methodology and applied to Rasch-based ability estimates to classify students into four performance levels for SC READY and corresponding achievement and letter-grade categories for EOCEP English 2. Classification consistency indices indicated strong agreement for broader performance distinctions, with acceptable levels of reliability for finer-grained classifications, consistent with industry standards.

Overall, the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 assessments demonstrate sound technical quality and alignment with the state's ELA standards. While the assessments are generally functioning as intended, targeted refinements such as addressing minor gaps in standard coverage, reviewing flagged items for alignment and DOK classification, and exercising caution when making high-stakes decisions based on fine-grained performance levels would further strengthen the validity and interpretability of assessment results.

1. South Carolina State Assessment Programs

This report reviews the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY) program and the South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) in English Language Arts grades 3-8 and English 2, respectively.

The 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards were officially approved by the State Board of Education on January 17, 2023. The Standards became fully operational and assessed in the year 2024-2025. After the initial statewide field tests of the assessment program, the Education Oversight Committee reviews the state assessment program for alignment with standards, difficulty, validity, and its ability to differentiate achievement levels. The committee makes recommendations for changes, if needed, and provides this review to various educational and governmental bodies.

1.1 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments Program Overview

The South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessments (SC READY) is a statewide program of assessments in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, science and social studies administered to students in grades 3-8 as required by the Education Accountability Act (EAA).

SC READY test items measure student performance on the South Carolina College-and Career-Ready Standards. SC READY English language Arts (ELA) items are aligned with the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career- Ready Standards for English Language Arts. Standards specify what schools are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn. Academic standards also include indicators that are statements of the specific cognitive processes and the content knowledge and skills that students must demonstrate to meet the grade-level standards. SC READY test items are written to assess the content knowledge and skills described in the academic standards and indicators.

1.2 South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program Overview

The South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) is a statewide program of end-of-course tests for gateway courses in South Carolina, including English 2. The EOCEP English 2 is a standardized test administered by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to assess students' understanding of standards based on the College and Career Ready English Language Arts Standards (2024). The test is designed to measure student mastery of English 2 content and skills as defined by the state standards and serves as an accountability measure for schools and districts, contributing 20% to students' final course grades. Passing English 2 is required for a South Carolina high school diploma (https://ed.sc.gov/tests/high/eocep/).

As listed in the South Carolina State Board of Education Regulation 43-262 (SBE Regulation 43-262: Assessment Program), the purposes and uses of the EOCEP tests are as stated:

A. The examinations shall encourage instruction in the specific academic standards for the courses, encourage student achievement, and document the level of students' mastery of the academic standards.
B. The examinations shall serve as indicators of program, school, and school district effectiveness in the manner prescribed by the Education Oversight Committee in accordance with the provisions of the Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA).
C. The examinations shall be weighted 20 percent in the determination of students' final grades in the gateway courses.

1.3 South Carolina Review Process

As per the South Carolina Code of Laws-Title 59 (Title 59 - Education, § 59-18-320):

> (A) After the first statewide field test of the assessment program in each of the four academic areas, and after the field tests of the end of course assessments of high school credit courses, the Education Oversight Committee, established in Section 59-6-10, will review the state assessment program and the course assessments for alignment with the state standards, level of difficulty and validity, and for the ability to differentiate levels of achievement, and will make recommendations for needed changes, if any. The review will be provided to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Governor, the Senate Education Committee, and the House Education and Public Works Committee as soon as feasible after the field tests. The Department of Education will then report to the Education Oversight Committee no later than one month after receiving the reports on the changes made to the assessments to comply with the recommendations.

With the support of the Education Oversight Committee, experts from the University of Georgia evaluated the SC READY assessments in ELA grades 3 through 8 and the EOCEP assessment in English 2 for reliability and validity in assessing student mastery, school/district performance, and state accountability, following best practices in educational measurement, as detailed by the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014).

The following materials were provided by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) and the test contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) for evaluation:

- UGA Access Information SC READY and EOCEP Test Forms
- For each grade level:
    - ESC593_ELA GrX_Final DOTS
    - ESC593_ELAS_GRX_Online260D (test booklet)
    - Spring 25 SC READY ELA Blueprint
    - SC READY ELA 3-5 Test Blueprint 2024-25
    - SC READY ELA 6-8 Test Blueprint 2024-25
    - SC EOCEP English 2 Test Blueprint 2024-25

- For grades 3-4:
    - Convey Experience Writer's Checklist

  - To Convey an Experience Rubric
- For grades 5-8:
  - Persuasive Writer's Checklist
  - To Persuade Rubric

Additionally, the following materials were publicly available and utilized for the evaluation:

- South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards

The test map (Dots) included metadata about individual items and psychometric indices. All parameters were calculated by the test contractor; no additional estimation of item or test parameters was conducted. The items reviewed for content validity were presented in the Spring 2025 administration, and the psychometric review is based on the draft chapter summaries from the 2024-2025 Technical Report which reported on Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 administrations.

This report was prepared by the University of Georgia and examines critical elements of the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 test designs and summarizes findings and recommendations for each.

2. Test Blueprint Review

A test blueprint review is crucial for an assessment's validity, fairness, and reliability. It ensures alignment with state standards, balanced content representation, and appropriate mix of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, providing valid data for instructional and accountability purposes.

The test blueprint review involved evaluating two key aspects.

- **Coverage of Standards**. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and assessment designers assessed how well each state standard is represented on the test blueprint, ensuring balanced weighting across content domains (reporting categories).
- **DOK distribution**. SMEs reviewed the distribution of DOK levels, ensuring a mix of items requiring recall, application of knowledge, and critical thinking skills to prevent over- or under-emphasis of any one area and promote a comprehensive, fair assessment.

2.1 Coverage of Standards

The Spring 2024-2025 SC READY ELA 3-5 tests consist of 50 operational test items. Table 1 summarizes the test blueprint for grades 3-5 by reporting category, designed to measure the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready ELA Standards.

Table 1. SC READY ELA 3-5 Test Blueprint 2024-2025

Session	Reporting Category	Indicators Within Reporting Categories	Number of Indicators	Number of Items per Reporting Category
Reading Session	Reading Literary Text	AOR.1.1, AOR.1.2, AOR.2.1, AOR.3.1 AOR.5.1, AOR.6.1(a)	6	8-12
	Reading Informational Text	AOR.2.2, AOR.4.1 AOR.5.2, AOR.5.3 AOR.6.1(b)	5	8-12
	Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	AOR.7.1, AOR.8.1 AOR.9.1	3	7-10
Writing Session	Writing	C.1.1, C.2.1 C.3.1, C.4.1, C.5.1	5	14-16 plus one 4-point TDW Item
	Research and Evaluating Ideas	R.1.1, R.1.2 R.1.3*, R.1.4* *Not assessed at grade 3.	2* or 4	6-8
Total Number of Operational Items Including TDW				**50**

The Spring 2024-2025 SC READY ELA 6-8 tests consist of 55 operational test items. Table 2 summarizes the test blueprint for grades 6-8 by reporting category, designed to measure the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready ELA Standards.

Table 2. SC READY ELA 6-8 Test Blueprint 2024-2025

Session	Reporting Category	Indicators Within Reporting Categories	Number of Indicators	Number of Items per Reporting Category
Reading Session	Reading Literary Text	AOR.1.1, AOR.1.2 AOR.2.1, AOR.3.1 AOR.5.1, AOR.6.1(RL)	6	8-12
	Reading Informational Text	AOR.2.2, AOR.4.1 AOR.5.2, AOR.5.3 AOR.6.1(RI)	5	8-12
	Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	AOR.7.1, AOR.8.1 AOR.9.1	3	8-12
Writing Session	Writing	C.1.1, C.2.1 C.3.1, C.4.1, C.5.1	5	16-20 plus one 4-point TDW Item
	Research and Evaluating Ideas	R.1.1, R.1.2 R.1.3, R.1.4	4	8-10
Total Number of Operational Items Including TDW				**55**

The 2024-2025 EOCEP English 2 test consists of 55 operational test items. Table 3 summarizes the test blueprint by reporting category, designed to measure the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready ELA Standards.

Table 3. EOCEP English 2 Test Blueprint 2024-2025

Session	Reporting Category	Indicators Within Reporting Categories	Number of Indicators	Number of Items per Reporting Category
Reading Session	Reading Literary Text	AOR.1.1, AOR.1.2 AOR.2.1, AOR.3.1 AOR.5.1, AOR.6.1(a)	6	8-12
	Reading Informational Text	AOR.2.2, AOR.4.1 AOR.5.2, AOR.5.3 AOR.6.1(b)	5	8-12
	Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	AOR.7.1, AOR.8.1 AOR.9.1, AOR.10.1	4	8-12
Writing Session	Writing	C.1.1, C.2.1 C.3.1, C.4.1, C.5.1	5	16-20 plus one 6-point TDW Item
	Research and Evaluating Ideas	R.1.1, R.1.2 R.1.3, R.1.4, C.9.1	5	8-10
Total Number of OP Items Including TDW				**55**

Evaluation: Based on the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards, the test blueprints align and inform stakeholders of the SC READY ELA 3-5, ELA 6-8, and EOCEP English 2 assessment content.

Recommendation: N/A

2.2 Depth of Knowledge Distribution

The SC READY ELA assessments use the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework to categorize items based on the cognitive complexity required to answer the item. Items span a range of cognitive complexity levels and difficulty levels. The DOK framework categorizes items into one of four categories (Webb, 2002); as DOK levels increase, the cognitive demand on students also increases. Higher DOK levels require more than just recalling facts; they require deeper understanding, application, analysis, and synthesis.

- Level 1. Recall and Reproduction: This level requires students to recall basic facts, information, definitions, terms, or perform simple, routine procedures.
- Level 2. Skills and Concepts: This level requires engaging in mental processing beyond simple recall. Students need to apply concepts, use skills, and make decisions. It requires understanding and using knowledge.
- Level 3. Strategic Thinking: This level requires deep understanding, planning, using evidence, and more complex reasoning. Students must analyze, evaluate, and draw conclusions. The cognitive demands are more abstract and require justification.
- Level 4. Extended Thinking: This level requires students to make connections, relate ideas within or among content areas, and select or devise an approach to solve a problem. It often involves extended time and requires synthesis and in-depth analysis.

Standardized tests like the SC READY ELA assessments primarily include items at DOK Levels 1-3, as Level 4 is less common. It is designed to include a variety of questions across these three DOK levels, ranging from simple recall to more complex reasoning. Table 4 and Table 5 show the DOK distribution as specified on the SC READY ELA Grades 3-5 and SC READY ELA Grades 6-8 test blueprints.

Table 4. Percent Range of DOK Levels for SC READY ELA 3-5

DOK Level	Minimum %	Maximum %
1	0%	16%
2	76%	92%
3	4%	16%

Table 5. Percent Range of DOK Levels for SC READY ELA 6-8

DOK Level	Minimum %	Maximum %
1	0%	15%
2	60%	90%
3	5%	15%

Table 6 shows the DOK distribution as specified on the EOCEP English 2 test blueprints.

Table 6. Percent Range of DOK Levels for EOCEP English 2

DOK Level	Minimum %	Maximum %
1	0%	10%
2	55%	85%
3	25%	45%

Evaluation:

- SC READY: The SC READY ELA 3-5 and 6-8 tests are mostly weighted at DOK Level 2 (Skills and Concepts), with between 60% and 92% of the items at this complexity level. Level 2 is appropriate, emphasizing conceptual understanding and problem-solving. In addition, having 4-16% of items at DOK Level 3 is acceptable, ensuring the test focuses on higher-order thinking skills such as students' ability to analyze, justify, and reason more abstractly. The SC READY assessments are of medium to medium-hard complexity.

- EOCEP: The EOCEP English 2 test is mostly weighted at DOK Level 2 (Skills and Concepts), with between 55% and 85% of the items at this complexity level. This is appropriate, emphasizing conceptual understanding and problem-solving. In addition, having 25-45% of items at DOK Level 3 is appropriate to assess the more complex high school standards.

Recommendation: N/A

3. Evaluation of Overall Validity

Content validity is essential for ensuring an assessment accurately measures the intended knowledge and skills (Bandalos, 2018). It involves a thorough evaluation of the items and domains to ensure they represent the target domain. This review ensures that the information gathered from administering the assessment is relevant and minimizes construct-irrelevant variance. Furthermore, content specification and item review help to ensure that the full range of the construct(s) is measured, minimizing construct underrepresentation.

To verify content validity, subject matter experts (SMEs) compared the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and the EOCEP English 2 assessments with the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready ELA Standards. The assessments were reviewed for domain coverage (i.e., reporting category) and item alignment to standards and DOK. Two SMEs independently reviewed each item for standard alignment. A third SME resolved any discrepancies. The panel of SMEs then held a consensus meeting to finalize alignment recommendations. The internal structure of the assessment was reviewed by an educational measurement expert at the University of Georgia.

3.1 Coverage by Reporting Category

Operational items on the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 were reviewed for alignment to reporting category and evaluated against each Test Blueprint 2024-2025. First, the provided 'Final DOTS' file was evaluated against each Test Blueprint 2024-2025. Then, all items were reviewed for alignment to reporting category.

Table 7 through Table 13 summarize number and percentage of operational items aligned with each reporting category as reflected in the provided 'Final DOTS' file. If a standard on the test blueprint was not represented in the test, it is noted within the table.

Table 7. Coverage by Reporting Category for SC READY ELA Grade 3 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	83% *AOR.5.1*	8-12	10	20%
Reading Informational Text	5	80% *AOR.5.3*	8-12	8	16%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	3	100%	7-10	10	20%
Writing	5	100%	14-16 plus one 4-point TDW Item	16	32%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	2	100%	6-8	6	12%
Total Number of OP Items				**50**	**100%**

Table 8. Coverage by Reporting Category for SC READY ELA Grade 4 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	83% *AOR.6.1(a)*	8-12	9	18%
Reading Informational Text	5	80% *AOR.6.1(b)*	8-12	10	20%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	3	100%	7-10	10	20%
Writing	5	100%	14-16 plus one 4-point TDW Item	15	30%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	4	100%	6-8	6	12%
Total Number of OP Items				**50**	**100%**

Table 9. Coverage by Reporting Category for SC READY ELA Grade 5 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	67% *AOR.2.1, AOR.6.1(a)*	8-12	8	16%
Reading Informational Text	5	60% *AOR.4.1, AOR.5.3*	8-12	10	20%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	3	100%	7-10	8	16%
Writing	5	100%	14-16 plus one 4-point TDW Item	16	32%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	4	100%	6-8	8	16%
Total Number of OP Items				**50**	**100%**

Table 10. Coverage by Reporting Category for SC READY ELA Grade 6 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	83% *AOR.3.1*	8-12	10	18%
Reading Informational Text	5	80% *AOR.4.1*	8-12	10	18%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	3	100%	8-12	8	15%
Writing	5	100%	16-20 plus one 4-point TDW Item	17	31%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	4	100%	8-10	10	18%
Total Number of OP Items				**55**	**100%**

Table 11. Coverage by Reporting Category for SC READY ELA Grade 7 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	83% *AOR.1.2*	8-12	12	22%
Reading Informational Text	5	100%	8-12	8	15%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	3	100%	8-12	8	15%
Writing	5	100%	16-20 plus one 4-point TDW Item	19	35%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	4	75% *R.1.3*	8-10	8	15%
Total Number of OP Items				**55**	**100%**

Table 12. Coverage by Reporting Category for SC READY ELA Grade 8 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	67% *AOR.1.2, AOR.3.1*	8-12	8	15%
Reading Informational Text	5	100%	8-12	12	22%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	3	67% *AOR.9.1*	8-12	10	18%
Writing	5	100%	16-20 plus one 4-point TDW Item	17	31%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	4	75% *R.1.2*	8-10	8	15%
Total Number of OP Items				**55**	**100%**

Table 13. Coverage by Reporting Category for EOCEP English 2 (Operational Items)

Reporting Category	Test Blueprint			Final Dots	
	Number of Indicators	% of Category Coverage	Range of the Number of Items per Category	Number of Items per Category	% of Assessment
Reading Literary Text	6	67% *AOR 2.1 AOR 5.1*	8-12	10	18%
Reading Informational Text	5	80% AOR 5.3	8-12	12	22%
Reading (vocabulary) Across Genres	4	75% *AOR.10.1*	8-12	8	15%
Writing	5	100%	16-20 plus one 6-point TDW Item	17	31%
Research and Evaluating Ideas	5	80% *C.9.1*	8-10	8	15%
Total Number of OP Items				**55**	**100%**

Evaluation: Table 7 through Table 13 summarize alignment for operational items on the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 assessments.

Grade 3: There are two standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

Grade 4: There are two standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

Grade 5: There are four standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

Grade 6: There are two standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

Grade 7: There are two standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

Grade 8: There are four standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

English 2: There are five standards on the test blueprint that are not represented on the operational form. But as a whole, operational items align with the test blueprint's reporting categories.

Recommendation: N/A

3.2 Alignment to Standards

All operational items on the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 assessments were reviewed for standard alignment.

Evaluation: Table 14 through Table 15 highlights items flagged during review in grades 3 and 7. No items were flagged for issues with standard alignment in grades 4, 5, 6, 8, and English 2 assessments.

Table 14. Alignment to Standards for SC READY ELA Grade 3

Item Sequence	Standard on Final Dots	Suggested Re-alignment	Notes
2	C.4.1j	NA	Item **does not align** with a grade 3 standard. Item does not assess coordinating/ subordinating conjunctions or independent/dependent clauses. Recommend revising or replacing the item.
17	C.4.1i	C.4.1f	Item **aligns well** to C.4.1f: distinguish between and use comparative and superlative adverbs. Recommend re-aligning item.

Table 15. Alignment to Standards for SC READY ELA Grade 7

Item Sequence	Standard on Final Dots	Suggested Re-alignment	Notes
12	C.5.1	C.4.1e	Item may have double alignment. A**ligns better to C.4.1e: identify and revise sentence fragments, run-on sentences, pronoun antecedent agreement, and inappropriate shifts in verb tense**. Item also generally aligns to the noted standard, C5.1: improve writing by planning, editing, and considering feedback from adults and peers and revising for clarity of content.

Recommendation: Overall, the SC READY and EOCEP ELA items are well aligned with the stated standards. Review alignment for two items in grade 3 and one item in grade 7.

It is also worth reviewing item #21 on the EOCEP English 2 assessment, particularly the meta data in the DOTs document. The item does align to the noted 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards though the description in the DOTs does not match the description of the standard.

3.3 Depth of Knowledge

Operational items on the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 were reviewed for DOK distribution and evaluated against each Test Blueprint 2024-2025. First, the provided 'Final DOTS' file was evaluated against each Test Blueprint 2024-2025. Then, all items were reviewed for DOK.

3.3.1 Distribution of DOK Levels

Table 16 through Table 22 summarize number and percentage of operational items aligned with each DOK level as reflected in the provided 'Final DOTS' file.

Table 16. DOK Distribution for SC READY ELA Grade 3 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	16%	4	8%
2	76%	92%	43	86%
3	4%	16%	3	6%
Total Number of OP Items			**50**	**100%**

Table 17. DOK Distribution for SC READY ELA Grade 4 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	16%	1	2%
2	76%	92%	45	90%
3	4%	16%	4	8%
Total Number of OP Items			**50**	**100%**

Table 18. DOK Distribution for SC READY ELA Grade 5 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	16%	2	4%
2	76%	92%	45	90%
3	4%	16%	3	6%
Total Number of OP Items			**50**	**100%**

Table 19. DOK Distribution for SC READY ELA Grade 6 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	15%	1	2%
2	60%	90%	48	87%
3	5%	15%	6	11%
Total Number of OP Items			**55**	**100%**

Table 20. DOK Distribution for SC READY ELA Grade 7 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	15%	1	2%
2	60%	90%	49	89%
3	5%	15%	5	9%
Total Number of OP Items			**55**	**100%**

Table 21. DOK Distribution for SC READY ELA Grade 8 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	15%	2	4%
2	60%	90%	47	85%
3	5%	15%	6	11%
Total Number of OP Items			**55**	**100%**

Table 22. DOK Distribution for EOCEP English 2 (Operational Items)

DOK	Test Blueprint		Final Dots	
	Min %	Max %	Number of OP Items	% of Assessment
1	0%	10%	0	0%
2	55%	85%	43	78%
3	25%	45%	12	22%
Total Number of OP Items			**55**	**100%**

Evaluation:

Grade 3: The DOK of SC READY ELA Grade 3 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

Grade 4: The DOK of SC READY ELA Grade 4 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

Grade 5: The DOK of SC READY ELA Grade 5 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

Grade 6: The DOK of SC READY ELA Grade 6 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

Grade 7: The DOK of SC READY ELA Grade 7 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

Grade 8: The DOK of SC READY ELA Grade 8 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

English 2: The DOK of EOCEP English 2 operational items as reflected on the Final Dots do reflect the Test Blueprint.

Recommendation: N/A

3.3.2 Review Items for DOK Level

All operational items on the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 were reviewed for DOK level.

Evaluation: Table 23 through Table 29 highlights items flagged during review.

Table 23. Alignment to DOK for SC READY ELA Grade 3

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
43	3	2	Item asks students to determine the theme of the passage. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3.

Table 24. Alignment to DOK for SC READY ELA Grade 4

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
2	1	2	Item asks students to identify the opinion and then determine which one is best to include in the essay. This requires some reasoning beyond recall.
18	2	1	Item asks students to place/use a comma correctly. This requires recalling a simple, routine procedure.

Table 25. Alignment to DOK for SC READY ELA Grade 5

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
1	2	1	Item asks students to identify the correct use of a colon. This requires recalling a simple, routine procedure.
2	2	1	Item asks students to identify the correct use of punctuation (comma). This requires recalling a simple, routine procedure.

Table 26. Alignment to DOK for SC READY ELA Grade 6

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
3	2	1	Item asks students to identify the sentence with correct punctuation. The distractors are incorrect regardless of punctuation; the key is the only grammatical sentence. This requires recalling a simple, routine procedure.
5	2	1	Item asks students to identify the correct use of parentheses. This requires recalling a simple, routine procedure.
25	3	2	Item asks students to determine which sentence from the paragraph acknowledges an alternative viewpoint. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3. The reasoning is done within the provided text/paragraph.

Table 27. Alignment to DOK for SC READY ELA Grade 7

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
10	2	1	Item asks students to identify the sentence that correctly uses a comma. This requires recalling a simple, routine procedure.
19	3	2	Item asks students to determine which research question would help students gain understanding of a particular topic. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3.
23	3	2	Item asks students to determine which research question would help students gain understanding of a particular topic. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3.

Table 28. Alignment to DOK for SC READY ELA Grade 8

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
1	2	1	Item asks students to identify the error in capitalization. This requires recall of basic information/rules of capitalization (such as for proper nouns).
19	3	2	Item asks students to select the correct heading to organize notes on a topic. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3. The reasoning is done within the provided notes.

Table 29. Alignment to DOK for EOCEP English 2

Item Sequence	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
8	3	2	Item asks students to determine the most valid and reliable source to include in a report. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3.
44	3	2	Item requires students to determine the tone of a paragraph. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3. The reasoning is done within the provided text.
50	3	2	Item requires students to determine the purpose of a key detail. Item does not require strategic thinking or abstract reasoning to classify as Level 3. The reasoning is done within the provided text.

Recommendation:

Overall, the SC READY and EOCEP ELA items are well aligned with the stated DOK Levels. In addition to the item-level DOK review, a comprehensive, holistic review is necessary to determine whether the operational form will adequately reflect the cognitive demands and distribution parameters specified in the test blueprint, particularly considering any cumulative effect of these proposed DOK reclassifications.

Grade 3: Review the 1 flagged item and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 4: Review the 2 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 5: Review the 2 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 6: Review the 3 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 7: Review the 3 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 8: Review the 2 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

English 2: Review the 3 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

3.4 Internal Structure

According to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014), validity evidence based on internal structure relates to how test items, individually and collectively, align with the construct(s) being measured. To that end, this evaluation included summaries of classical test theory and Rasch model item analyses, dimensionality, reliability, and measurement invariance. No additional analyses were conducted. Rather, materials provided by SCDE and DRC, including the 2024-25 Technical Report (DRC, 2025) and psychometric statistics files, are summarized and interpreted.

3.4.1 CTT Item Statistics

A classical test theory (CTT) item analysis is conducted as a baseline check for the appropriateness of items. To support the ELA psychometric analyses and ability estimation, items need to be sufficiently difficult for the population and function properly. CTT item difficulty is reported as the proportion of examinees who answered an item correctly. Lower values indicate harder items (e.g., 0.15 (15%) of the examinees answered the item correctly), and higher values indicate easier items (e.g., 0.85 (85%) of examinees answered the item correctly).

For these ELA assessments, a wide range of difficulty values should be observed to indicate utility across the breadth of examinee ability levels. Additionally, values near 0.50 provide strong information (Bandalos, 2018). One measure of CTT item quality is the item-total correlation. The item-total correlation is a quantification of the degree to which individual items separate examinees with low and high scores. Values greater than 0.30 are considered satisfactory, while values less than 0.20 indicate low discrimination and suggest revision of the item (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Negative values indicate that higher scoring examinees tended to get the item incorrect more often than low scoring examinees, which is a red flag for immediate item review.

Evaluation: Results from CTT analysis are displayed in Table 30.

Table 30. Classical Test Theory Item Statistics

Assessment	Number of Items	Mean *p*-value	*p*-value Range	Item-Total Correlation
Grade 3 ELA	50	0.66	0.46 - 0.85	0.51
Grade 4 ELA	50	0.65	0.28 - 0.80	0.50
Grade 5 ELA	50	0.64	0.45 - 0.89	0.48
Grade 6 ELA	55	0.63	0.33 - 0.86	0.49
Grade 7 ELA	55	0.65	0.33 - 0.85	0.46
Grade 8 ELA	55	0.65	0.30 - 0.87	0.47
English 2 Fall/Winter	55	0.67	0.24 - 0.85	0.42
English 2 Spring	55	0.70	0.42 - 0.89	0.45

Overall, each ELA assessment has an appropriate range of item difficulties to properly assess students across the span of ability levels. Additionally, item-total correlations are well above 0.40, indicating that items discriminate adequately. Altogether, the difficulty and item-total correlation estimates provide preliminary evidence that the items are functioning properly for the SC READY and EOCEP ELA assessments.

Recommendation: N/A

3.4.2 Rasch Item Statistics

The Rasch item response theory model was used for calibration and scaling. While it makes strong assumptions about items, the Rasch model has preferrable measurement properties including sum-score sufficiency, invariant item ordering, and a common item-to-ability scale (Engelhard, 2013). These properties are useful for interpretation of items, ability estimates, and performance level classifications. The Rasch model includes ability estimates and item parameter estimates. The Rasch model assumes that each item discriminates equally and only estimates a difficulty parameter for each item. This difficulty parameter is a location parameter, indicating the point on the ability scale where an examinee has a 50% chance of answering the item correctly. For SC READY and EOCEP ELA purposes, difficulty parameters should span the ability distribution (e.g., -3 to 3) to reliably locate all examinees.

When applying the Rasch model, it is important to assess the degree to which the data fits the model. Rasch model fit statistics, including infit and outfit, quantify the differences between

observed responses and model-predicted responses. Values less than 0.80 or greater than 1.2 can indicate poor fit (Wright, 1994).

Evaluation: Results from Rasch model psychometric analyses are displayed in Table 31.

Table 31. Rasch Model Item Parameters and Fit Statistics

Assessment	Number of Items	Mean Rasch Difficulty	Rasch Difficulty Range	Infit 90% Interval	Outfit 90% Interval
Grade 3 ELA	50	-1.24	-2.65 - 0.30	0.83 - 1.12	0.67 - 1.17
Grade 4 ELA	50	-0.60	-1.53 - 1.30	0.88 - 1.15	0.77 - 1.22
Grade 5 ELA	50	-0.07	-1.93 - 1.12	0.91 - 1.13	0.76 - 1.20
Grade 6 ELA	55	0.12	-1.72 - 1.94	0.89 - 1.12	0.74 - 1.30
Grade 7 ELA	55	0.34	-1.14 - 2.19	0.87 - 1.20	0.69 - 1.36
Grade 8 ELA	55	0.60	-0.99 - 2.44	0.89 - 1.14	0.79 - 1.21
English 2 (Fall/Winter)	55	0.31	-1.06 - 1.96	0.86 - 1.21	0.74 - 1.33

Overall, each ELA assessment has an appropriate range of item difficulties to properly assess students across the span of ability levels. Each assessment had infit and outfit mean square averages values near 1.0 with ranges that were mostly contained in the recommended range of 0.80 to 1.20. Generally, these values indicate that the Rasch model fits the data adequately and supports the intended interpretations. The small proportion of items for which fit statistics approached or exceeded the thresholds were flagged and reviewed by the DRC psychometric staff.

Recommendation: While being sufficient for reliable scaling across the span of abilities, Grade 3 ELA could include more difficult items to more precisely estimate ability for higher ability students.

3.4.3 Dimensionality

The item response theory models used to scale SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests have an underlying assumption of unidimensionality. That is, each test measures a single domain. If this is not the case, and more than one factor exists, then the validity and interpretation of scale scores are called into question. To assess dimensionality, common approaches are factor analysis and principal components analysis (PCA). Within the PCA framework, Reckase (1979) suggested that the first principal component should account for at least 20% of the total variance

to support unidimensionality. Also, the first component should account for substantially more variance than the second (Zopluoglu & Davenport, 2017).

Evaluation: Results from a PCA on the fall administration of the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests indicated that the first components were at least 7 - 11 times as large as the second components, and that they all explained more than 20% of the variance. These results suggest that the unidimensionality assumption is met for the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests.

Recommendation: N/A

3.4.4 Reliability

Test score reliability is concerned with the consistency and precision of scores and is a function of the amount of measurement error (Wells & Wollack, 2003). Reliability is a necessary condition for validity because if scores are highly variable and error-ridden, they cannot be said to measure the construct(s) accurately. There are several ways to quantify reliability in the CTT framework, including Cronbach's alpha and the standard error of measurement. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1 and quantifies the degree to which the items consistently measure the target domain. For high stakes settings, alpha should be approaching or above 0.90 (Wells & Wollack, 2003). The standard error of measurement (SEM) provides an interval estimate around raw scores.

Evaluation: For the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests, Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates were strong, ranging from 0.93 - 0.94 for non-accommodated forms and 0.86 - 0.87 for accommodated forms. Subgroup analysis indicated that the tests were reliable for all subgroups, with subgroup alpha estimates being very similar (within ±.03). SEM values ranged from 2.68 to 3.51. Raw score SEMs near 3 is adequate considering there were 50 - 55 operational items. In summary, reliability is adequate for the SC READY and EOCEP ELA scaling purposes.

Recommendation: N/A

3.4.5 Measurement Invariance

Test fairness is a fundamental aspect of conducting group comparisons and ensuring the validity of assessments, particularly when examining differences based on gender, ethnicities, culture, or treatment conditions. To achieve test fairness, it is essential to detect and prevent any form of unfairness throughout the entire testing process, including test design, development, administration, and scoring (Camilli, 2006). When a test is free of systematic bias, measurement invariance has been met.

Differential item functioning (DIF) analysis plays a crucial role in addressing test fairness by identifying potentially biased items in a test. DIF procedures assess whether examinees from different subgroups, who possess the same underlying ability or trait, have different probabilities of endorsing an item (Angoff, 1993). By identifying items that function differently across groups, DIF analysis helps to minimize the impact of factors unrelated to the construct being measured (Sireci & Rios, 2013). Biased items systemically advantage or disadvantage a specific

subgroup because of factors irrelevant to the intended construct. By addressing DIF, the fairness and validity of the test can be enhanced, ensuring that an item is unbiased and measures the same construct across groups.

From a psychometric perspective, DIF is commonly analyzed using methods that compare item performance across groups. For the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests, subgroups of interest were gender (male/female), racial/ethnic groups (Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic, two or more races), disability status (no/yes), multilingual status (no/yes), and paper versus online administrations. To measure DIF, the Mantel-Haenszel (MH) delta statistic quantifies the difference in item response distribution for two groups. Researchers at ETS developed thresholds to interpret MH delta values (Zwick, et al., 2005).

Evaluation: During the test development phase, item writers followed guidelines for fairness and sensitivity to minimize bias. In the analysis phase, DIF analysis compared genders, race/ethnicities, students speaking multiple languages, students with and without disabilities, and paper vs online administrations. Overall, across all ELA tests and comparison groups, 2566/2630 (98%) possible item comparisons displayed no or negligible DIF; 56/2630 (2%) showed slight DIF; and 8/2630 (0.3%) show moderate DIF. Items that were flagged were reviewed by teachers, SCDE staff, and DRC test development experts. In summary, the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests satisfied measurement invariance assumptions.

Recommendation: N/A

4. Performance Level Classifications

For summative assessments, in addition to scale scores, it is often useful to provide performance level classifications that are coupled with interpretable descriptors of skill and understanding development for each performance level. In an item response theory framework, cut scores for each performance level must be determined and applied to classify examinees. For the SC READY and EOCEP ELA tests, cut scores were determined in a standard setting process and applied to classify examinees into one of four performance levels:

- **Does Not Meet Expectations**: the student does not meet the expectations of the course or grade-level content standards.
- **Approaches/Minimally Meets Expectations**: the student approaches (or minimally meets) expectations of the course or grade-level content standards.
- **Meets Expectations**: the student meets the expectations of the course or grade-level content standards.
- **Exceeds Expectations**: the student exceeds the expectations of the course or grade-level content standards.

Additionally, for the EOCEP English 2 test, cut scores were determined to letter grade categories (A/B/C/D/F). According to the cut-scores, a grade of A corresponds to Exceeds, B-C corresponds to Meets, D corresponds to Minimally Meets, and F corresponds to Does not Meet.

This evaluation concerns the degree to which these classifications are valid and reliable. Data for this section comes from the technical report (DRC, 2025).

Evaluation: A bookmark standard setting was used to determine the SC READY and EOCEP ELA cut scores. This method is commonly applied in industry and accepted as a valid procedure for standard settings. The cut scores were then applied to the ability estimates derived from the Rasch scaling process to classify students into the achievement levels. Conditional SEMs around the cut scores range from 3.5 to 5.0 points for EOCEP (100-point scale) and 20 to 30 points for SC READY (800-point variable scale by grade). These conditional SEMs are not excessively large considering the grading scale ranges. Classification consistency indices indicate strong consistency for classification agreement into two achievement levels; Kappa values ranged from 0.7 to 0.8, indicating substantial agreement. Kappa values were lower for five (and four) achievement levels (0.5 - 0.7), but still acceptable by industry standards.

Recommendation: While the standard setting process was sound, and classification consistency exceeded acceptable industry standards, decisions made based on classifications of the four or five achievement levels could be supported with additional student data or assessments. Additionally, the use of psychometric models that better support classification (e.g., cognitive diagnosis models) could be explored.

References

American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education (2014). Standards for educational and psychological testing. American Educational Research Association.

Angoff, W. H. (1993). Perspectives on differential item functioning methodology. In P. W. Holland & H. Wainer (Eds.), *Differential item functioning* (pp. 3-23). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bandalas, D. L. (2018). Measurement theory and applications for the social sciences. Guilford Publications: New York.

Camilli, G. (2006). Test fairness. *Educational measurement*, *4*, 221-256.

Data Recognition Corporation (2025). South Carolina End-of-Course Examination Program 2024-2025 Operational Test Technical Report (Preliminary draft). Retrieved from DRC associates.

Engelhard, G. (2013). Invariant Measurement: Using Rasch Models in the Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences, 1st edition. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory*, 3rd ed. McGraw-Hill.

Reckase, M. D. (1979). Unifactor Latent Trait Models Applied to Multifactor Tests: Results and Implications. *Journal of Educational Statistics, 4*(3), 207-230.

Sireci, S. G., & Rios, J. A. (2013). Decisions that make a difference in detecting differential item functioning. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 19*(2-3), 170-187.

South Carolina Code of Laws. (n.d.). *Title 59 - Education, § 59-18-320*. South Carolina Legislature. https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c018.php

South Carolina Department of Education (2024). South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards. Available online: https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards/english-language-arts/standards/2023-sc-ccr-ela-standards-approved/

South Carolina State Board of Education. (n.d.). Regulation 43-262: Assessment Program. South Carolina State Board of Education. Available online: https://www.scstatehouse.gov/coderegs/Chapter%2043.pdf

Webb, N. L. (2002). Depth-of-knowledge levels for four content areas. *Language Arts*, *28*(March), 1-9.

Wells, C. S., & Wollack, J. A. (2003). An Instructor's Guide to Understanding Test Reliability. Testing & Evaluation Services. University of Wisconsin.

Wright, B. D. (1994). Reasonable mean-square fit values. *Rasch Measurement Transactions, 8*, 370.

Zopluoglu, C., & Davenport, E. C. (2017). A note on using eigenvalues in dimensionality assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation, 22*(7). Available online: http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=22&n=7.

Zwick, R., Thayer, D. T., & Lewis, C. (1999). An empirical bayes approach to Mantel-Haenszel DIF analysis. *Journal of Educational Measurement, 36*(1), 1-28

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ms. Dana Yow, Executive Director
South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
1205 Pendleton Street
502 Brown Building
Columbia, SC 29201

FROM: Kristi D. Austin, PhD
Director, Office of Assessment and Standards

DATE: June 12, 2026

RE: SCDE Response to South Carolina State Assessment Programs: English Language Arts Evaluation of ELA Grades 3-8 and English 2: Spring 2024-2025 Test Data

This memo is the South Carolina Department of Education's (SCDE's) response to the recommendations contained in the South Carolina State Assessment Programs: English Language Arts Evaluation of ELA Grades 3-8 and English 2: Spring 2024-2025 Test Data from K-12 Assessment Solutions at the University of Georgia (UGA) hereafter referred to as UGA ELA Evaluation. We were pleased to read in the evaluation that the SC READY ELA Grades 3-8 and EOCEP English 2 assessments demonstrate overall sound technical quality and alignment with the 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards. The content validity evaluation confirmed that the test blueprints align well with the intended standards, and the operational forms generally reflect blueprint specifications with acceptable alignment between operational items and reporting categories across grades. The report also noted that the tests' predominant weighting toward Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Level 2 is appropriate for measuring conceptual understanding and the application of skills, while the inclusion of a smaller yet sufficient proportion of DOK Level 3 items is acceptable for assessing higher-order thinking.

Furthermore, the psychometric evaluation confirmed the assessments' overall technical soundness based on internal structure. Classical Test Theory (CTT) analysis indicated that the items are functioning properly, demonstrating appropriate ranges of item difficulty alongside strong item discrimination. The data also fits the Rasch model adequately to support the validity of score interpretations, and dimensionality analyses successfully confirmed that each assessment measured a single dominant construct, satisfying the unidimensionality assumption. Finally, it is highly encouraging that the overall test scores demonstrated strong reliability across grades, forms, and student subgroups, and that Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis confirmed measurement invariance—satisfying test fairness assumptions by showing no or negligible DIF for 98% of item comparisons.

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) adopted K-12 Assessment Solutions for the review of SC READY ELA in grades 3-8 and EOCEP for English 2 pursuit to §59-18-320. The EOC requested the following documents be provided to UGA: test blueprints including key, standard alignment, Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and other metadata to consider, items for review, scoring rubrics (if applicable), student response data, and state science standards. The SCDE Office of Assessment and Standards (OAS) and the assessment contractor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC), provided the requested items.

2. Test Blueprint Review

2.1 Coverage of Standards

Recommendation: N/A

2.2 Depth of Knowledge Distribution

Recommendation: N/A

3. Evaluation of Overall Quality

3.1 Coverage by Reporting Category

Recommendation: N/A

3.2 Alignment to Standards

Recommendation: Overall, the SC READY and EOCEP ELA items are well aligned with the stated standards. Review alignment for two items in grade 3 and one item in grade 7.

It is also wortdah reviewing item #21 on the EOCEP English 2 assessment, particularly the meta data in the DOTs document. The item does align to the noted 2024 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready English Language Arts Standards though the description in the DOTs does not match the description of the standard.

SCDE Response: OAS will review the alignment of the flagged items. These items will be re-evaluated during our annual content review meetings, where committees of South Carolina educators will determine and establish the final item alignments.

3.3 Depth of Knowledge

3.3.1 Distribution of DOK Levels

Recommendation: N/A

3.3.2 Review of Items for DOK Levels

Recommendation:

Overall, the SC READY and EOCEP ELA items are well aligned with the stated DOK Levels. In addition to the item-level DOK review, a comprehensive, holistic review is necessary to determine whether the operational form will adequately reflect the cognitive demands and distribution parameters specified in the test blueprint, particularly considering any cumulative effect of these proposed DOK reclassifications.

Grade 3: Review the 1 flagged item and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 4: Review the 2 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 5: Review the 2 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 6: Review the 3 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 7: Review the 3 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

Grade 8: Review the 2 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

English 2: Review the 3 flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification.

SCDE Response: OAS holds annual content review meetings during which committees of South Carolina teachers review all items before they are field tested. Those committees review items for many attributes including cognitive complexity understood through DOK. Those teacher committees think deeply about DOK and make the final recommendations for what level DOK each item is. OAS will review the suggested DOK levels in the UGA ELA Evaluation and have any changes confirmed by our teacher committees. OAS will review the forms once final DOK alignments are established.

3.4 Internal Structure

3.4.1 CTT Item Statistics

Recommendation: N/A

3.4.2 Rasch Item Statistics

Recommendation: While being sufficient for reliable scaling across the span of abilities, Grade 3 ELA could include more difficult items to more precisely estimate ability for higher ability students.

SCDE Response: OAS explored this recommendation further with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and they provided a response via the attached memo.

3.4.4 Reliability

Recommendation: N/A

3.4.5 Measurement Invariance

Recommendation: N/A

4 Performance Level Categories

Recommendation: While the standard setting process was sound, and classification consistency exceeded acceptable industry standards, decisions made based on classifications of the four or five achievement levels could be supported with additional

student data or assessments. Additionally, the use of psychometric models that better support classification (e.g., cognitive diagnosis models) could be explored.

SCDE Response: OAS explored this recommendation further with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and they provided a response via the attached memo.

The SCDE would like to express sincere appreciation to the EOC for the ongoing collaboration and partnership throughout this work. The EOC's involvement from beginning to end plays a vital role in ensuring a thoughtful, thorough, and aligned process. The SCDE greatly values the feedback and insights provided by the EOC and UGA, which are used to continuously strengthen our approach and ensure we are delivering the highest-quality assessment work for the students of South Carolina. We are grateful for the continued support and commitment to this shared effort.

South Carolina SC READY ELA Assessments

Response to the UGA Evaluation

Joseph Fitzpatrick
Data Recognition Corporation

May 14, 2026

Introduction

The purpose of this memo is to help the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) address questions stemming from UGA's evaluation of the SC READY ELA assessments. Specifically, we aim to clarify the test construction process for Grade 3 and how it differs from that of the other grade levels in ELA. We also address the UGA's concerns about classification of students into four performance level categories.

Grade 3 ELA Test Construction

The draft of the UGA report notes in the "Rasch Item Statistics" section that the Grade 3 ELA assessment includes fewer difficult items than the other grade levels. While that is true in an absolute sense, it is important to note that the theta metric for grades 3–8 ELA is a vertical scale centered at the midpoint between grades five and six. That is, rather than having a separate theta metric for each grade level assessment, a logit scale was established that places grades 3 through 8 along a continuous scale with a common origin. Grade 3 is at the lowest end of this scale, and Grade 8 is at the highest. The fact that the Rasch difficulty parameters for Grade 3 are lower than those of the other grades is a result of that vertical linking: as students progress across grade levels, the knowledge and skills being assessed generally become more difficult.

Compared with the ability of students within each grade level, however, the items on the Grade 3 ELA assessment are fairly consistent with the relative difficulty of items at the other grade levels. The mean *p*-value in Grade 3 (0.66) is similar to those of the other grades, which range from 0.63 to 0.65, with the vast majority of items in all grades (including Grade 3) falling in the range of 0.5 to 0.8.

It is true, however, that the Grade 3 ELA assessment has fewer *very* difficult items compared with other grades. The lowest p-value on the Grade 3 assessment was 0.46, while all other assessments except Grade 5 had at least one item with a p-value below 0.4. This difference is largely a result of the slightly different test construction procedures for Grade 3 that have been developed to address South Carolina's *Read to Succeed Act*.

The *Read to Succeed Act* stipulates that third grade students must demonstrate reading proficiency by scoring at or above the *Approaches Expectations* level on the Reading portion of the Grade 3 SC READY ELA assessment in order to be promoted to the fourth grade. The legislation places much higher stakes on the Reading portion of the assessment, and specifically on the *Approaches* cut score (i.e., the lowest cut score), in Grade 3 than in the other grade levels. Therefore, the Grade 3 ELA test is constructed by first matching a psychometric profile for the Reading portion—which includes ensuring adequate measurement precision in the region of the *Approaches* cut score—before proceeding with construction of the full test.

The spring 2025 ELA assessments were designed to measure updated academic standards and therefore established a new base scale for equating. However, test construction targets still referenced the previous version of the scale in order to avoid drastic shifts in performance. While more difficult items might be incrementally added to future versions of the Grade 3 assessment, we must ensure that the psychometric properties of the test remain stable.

Performance Level Classifications

The UGA's draft report recommends providing additional evidence to support the use of four performance level categories. DRC plans to address this recommendation in the same way they are addressing a similar recommendation for the science test. We plan to revise the decision consistency table (Table 4.9 in the draft technical report) to show overall accuracy across all four performance level classifications as well as the accuracy indices at each of the three individual cut scores. The purpose of this table is not to determine an ideal number of achievement levels but rather to show that accuracy is also high at the cut score for *Meets Expectations*, which is the most consequential classification decision. The accompanying text will also be revised to clarify that the overall accuracy index (i.e., the values currently labeled as "Four Achievement Labels") will always be lower than the individual cut score indices because the overall index combines the measurement uncertainty associated with each cut.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: June 15, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Multilingual Learners' Progress Indicator Revision

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
§59-18-900(A): The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish the format of a comprehensive, web-based, annual report card to report on the performance for the State and for individual primary, elementary, middle, high schools, career centers, and school districts of the State. The comprehensive report card must be in a reader-friendly format, using graphics whenever possible, published on the state, district, and school websites, and, upon request, printed by the school districts. The school's rating must be emphasized and an explanation of its meaning and significance for the school also must be reported. The annual report card must serve at least six purposes:

(1) inform parents and the public about the school's performance including, but not limited to, that on the home page of the report there must be each school's overall performance rating in a font size larger than twenty-six and the total number of points the school achieved on a zero to one hundred scale;
(2) assist in addressing the strengths and weaknesses within a particular school;
(3) recognize schools with high performance;
(4) evaluate and focus resources on schools with low performance;
(5) meet federal report card requirements; and
(6) document the preparedness of high school graduates for college and career.

(D) The comprehensive report card must include a comprehensive set of performance indicators with information on comparisons, trends, needs, and performance over time which is helpful to parents and the public in evaluating the school. In addition, the comprehensive report card must include indicators that meet federal law requirements.

CRITICAL FACTS
In SC's current accountability system, to meet federal requirements, includes a Multilingual Learners' Progress Indicator measures the percent of multilingual learners (MLs) at a school who meet progress targets to achieve English language proficiency within five years.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
January 12, 2026: Following Cyclical Review of the Accountability System, ASA hears information item describing proposed revisions to indicator. EOC staff describe analyses and impact data to be consider prior to finalizing proposal.
May 18, 2026: Approval from the Academic Standards & Assessment Subcommittee.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC none

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

INDICATOR: Multilingual Learners' Progress

School Level: Elementary, Middle, & High

This indicator assesses growth toward the English language proficiency criteria for South Carolina's Multilingual Learner Program (MLP) which is to be achieved within 5 years after the initial assessment of English language proficiency (ELP) as stipulated in the State's approved ESSA plan. The state's definition of English proficiency is a composite score of 4.4 (Expanding) on South Carolina's current ELP test (or Level 3 on the corresponding alternate assessment for not more than 1% of test takers as deemed appropriate by the student's IEP team). Based on analyses of South Carolina's historical ELP test data and consultation with national experts in English language acquisition and ELP growth, annual growth targets (see Table 1) have been developed based on a Multilingual Learner's (ML's) most recent proficiency level which are designed to support MLs achieving proficiency within five years.

Report the percent of Multilingual Learners (MLs) at the school who have met or exceeded their current annual target to achieve ELP within 5 years of beginning the MLP.

> *Note: Do not report this indicator for schools or districts with fewer than 20 students identified as Multilingual Learners (MLs) who are eligible to be included in the Multilingual Learners' Progress metric. All MLs are included in the calculation of the Multilingual Learners' Progress metric for the District and the State regardless of whether that ML is reported at the school level.*

Total Rating Points Available for the Indicator:

10 points

What Students Are Included in the Indicator:

Note that there are two distinct definitions of the ML subgroup. This section describes the ML Students Included in the Indicator (SII). Per federal requirements, the Multilingual Learners' Proficiency indicator may only include MLs who take the ELP test in the current accountability year (or who are meant to take the test but are not tested).

ML students who have achieved proficiency and are in a four-year period of monitoring (coded as M1, M2, M3, or M4) are included in the ML Reporting Subgroup (RS) for the purposes of reporting disaggregated results for all other accountability indicators or for Continuous Improvement Designations and Supports based on subgroup performance. The ML RS includes all MLs in the ML SII (*i.e.*, who meet the criteria described below) *plus* MLs in a monitoring status.

For any additional questions relating to the identification and assessment of MLs, consult the Multilingual Learner Program Guiding Principles (*the link provided leads to the ESEA, Title III, Part A*

/ Multilingual Learner Program website, on which the most current Guiding Principles document may be found).

- For the purposes of the Multilingual Learners' Progress indicator, the ML population includes ML students who have not yet achieved proficiency and are required to receive services in the ML Program. MLs included in the indicator may be identified as follows:
    - MLs coded in the student information system with an English proficiency level 1.0–6.0 (AL1–AL5 or "ALS - <3 Less Than Three" for MLs assessed with the alternate test) or coded as AW (Awaiting).

      Note: Most students with a score of 4.4–6.0 or AL3–AL5 will have met the English proficiency criteria and will be coded M1, 8FRMEL, or 8NVRML. However, there are a few exceptions where a student may score a 4.4-6.0 or AL3–AL5 and remain in the Multilingual Learner Program (MLP). Please see the example scenarios embedded in the most current MLP Coding Matrix on the Title III/MLP website (under the PowerSchool Coding and Data drop-down menu from the Office of Federal and State Accountability) where this coding may be applicable.

      Further Note: MLs who have a missing composite score on their most recent ELP test or MLs who have transferred into the district and for whom an ELP test score from within the past calendar year has not yet been received must take an ELP Screener for the purpose of determining their ELP Growth Target for the current accountability year.

- **School:** All MLs in Kindergarten (K5) through Grade 12 who are enrolled at the school from the 45th day of the school year and on the first day of English Language Proficiency (ELP) testing, with no break in enrollment, and who either (a) took the ELP test during the administration window, or (b) were also included in the calculation of test participation at the school and did not take the test, are included in the denominator for the calculation of school indicators.

  Note: All MLs enrolled at the school who meet the continuous enrollment criteria, regardless of grade level, are included in the Multilingual Learner's Progress indicator for any Report Card received by the school; this indicator is not calculated separately by grade band per federal guidance.

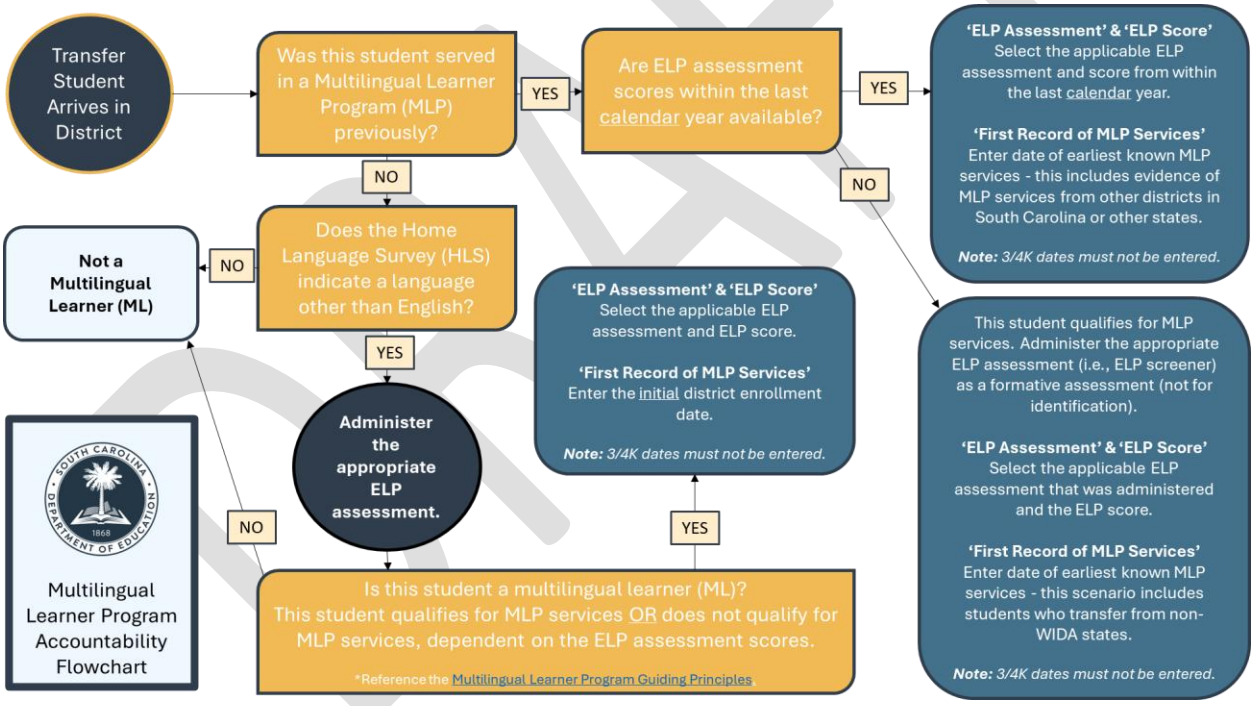
- **District:** All MLs in Kindergarten (K5) through Grade 12 enrolled in the district from the 45th day of the school year and on the first day of ELP testing, with no break in enrollment in the district, regardless of whether the student transferred between two or more schools within the district (including students served by Residential Treatment Facilities and Group Homes), and who either (a) took the ELP test during the administration window, or (b) were also included in the calculation of test participation for at least one school in the district and did not take the test, are included in the denominator for the calculation of district indicators for comparison metrics or for district report cards.
- **State:** All MLs in Kindergarten (K5) through Grade 12 who are enrolled in the state from the 45th day of the school year and on the first day of ELP testing, with no break in enrollment in the state, regardless of whether the student transferred between two or more schools within the state (including students served by Residential Treatment Facilities and Group Homes),

and who either (a) took the ELP test during the administration window, or (b) were also included in the calculation of test participation for at least one school in the state and did not take the test, are included in the denominator for the calculation of state indicators for comparison metrics or for state report cards.

Note: For School, District, and State Report Cards, MLs who are continuously enrolled at a school (or district, or the state), who are included in the calculation of test participation for the same school (or for the same district, or for the state), and who did not take the test are included in the denominator of the indicator but cannot be included in the numerator because they did not take the test. Students not tested for an authorized and properly documented purpose described in the most recently released Students Not Tested Guidelines (distributed to District Accountability Coordinators through ADTS) are excluded from both the numerator and denominator of this indicator.

The SCDE Office of Federal and State Accountability has created **Figure 1** to help guide school and district staff in assessing ML students:

Figure 1
ML Accountability Flowchart



What Students Are Included in the Calculation of Test Participation:

The testing participation rate (*ParticRate*) is calculated for all federally required assessments used in accountability indicators. The *ParticRate* for the Multilingual Learners' Progress indicator shall be calculated (according to the procedures under How Rating Points are Earned for the Indicator, described next) as the proportion of the ML population who meet the following criteria and who took the ELP test.

***Note**: This draft document was produced on 5/1/2026 and represents changes to the Multilingual Learners' Progress indicator that are currently being considered for implementation beginning with 2027 Report Cards. This draft has not been officially adopted and may be subject to change prior to adoption.*

- For the purposes of the Multilingual Learners' Progress indicator, the ML population includes ML students who have not yet achieved proficiency and are required to receive services in the ML Program. MLs included in the indicator may be identified as follows:
    - MLs coded in the student information system with an English proficiency level 1.0–6.0 (AL1–AL5 or "ALS - <3 Less Than Three" for MLs assessed with the alternate test) or coded as AW (Awaiting).
- **School:** All MLs in Kindergarten (K5) through Grade 12 who are enrolled at the school for at least 20 instructional days during the ELP testing window are included in the denominator for the calculation of school participation.
- **District:** All MLs in Kindergarten (K5) through Grade 12 who are enrolled at any school in the district for at least 20 instructional days during the ELP testing window are included in the denominator for the calculation of district participation.
- **State:** All MLs in Kindergarten (K5) through Grade 12 who are enrolled at any school in the state for at least 20 instructional days during the ELP testing window are included in the denominator for the calculation of state participation.

How Rating Points are Earned for the Indicator:

Rating Points are awarded for the percentage of MLs in the ML SII who either achieve a composite score that is greater than or equal to 4.4 (*i.e.*, MLs who demonstrate proficiency on this year's test) or who achieve a composite score that is greater than or equal to their individual ELP Growth Target given their most recently assessed English language proficiency level (Most Recent ELP Level) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
English Language Proficiency (ELP) Growth Targets for MLs based on Most Recent ELP Level

Most Recent ELP Level	ELP Growth Target
1.0 – 1.6	Most Recent ELP Level + 0.9
1.7 – 2.3	Most Recent ELP Level + 0.8
2.4 – 2.9	Most Recent ELP Level + 0.7
3.0 – 3.4	Most Recent ELP Level + 0.6
3.5 – 3.8	Most Recent ELP Level + 0.5
3.9 or higher	Most Recent ELP Level + 0.4 or 4.4 (whichever is least)
Alternate ELP Test	See note.

Note: *Although the ELP Growth Targets in Table 1 were set to promote MLs achieving English proficiency within five years, all MLs in the SII subgroup are included in the indicator until they have achieved English proficiency.*

Further Note: *MLs assessed with the Alternate ELP Test must earn an Overall Scale Score that is no lower than the Overall Scale score earned on the most recent Alternate ELP Test. In addition, MLs assessed with the Alternate ELP Test must earn the same ELP Level for no more than two consecutive years before earning a higher ELP Level.*

For the purposes of this indicator, the Most Recent ELP Level must have been earned on an ELP assessment or screener that was administered within a calendar year of the current test window (*The Most Recent ELP level must have been completed no earlier than 1/21/2026 for 2027 Report Cards*).

If the ML was not tested last year, if the most recent assessment was given too long ago, or if an appropriate ELP transfer score report is not yet received, then the ML in question must be re-screened for the purpose of setting an ELP Growth Target for the current accountability year. If an appropriate ELP transfer score taken no earlier than the first day of the previous school year's ELP assessment window in South Carolina is received after the ML has been re-screened, then the score earned on the transfer ELP assessment shall be used as the Most Recent ELP Level to determine the ELP Growth Target rather than the more recent screener.

First, calculate Rating Points for the school (or district or state for comparison metrics or for district or state report cards) according to the following equation and subsequent steps:

$$RP_{initial} = max\left(12.5\left(\frac{n_{MLs\ who\ met\ ELP\ Growth\ Target}}{n_{ML\ SII}}\right), 10\right) \quad \text{Eq. (1)}$$

Note: $RP_{initial}$ = Initial Rating Points earned (before participation rate adjustment). $n_{MLs\ who\ met\ ELP\ Growth\ Target}$ = The number of MLs included in the indicator who achieved an ELP Test score that met or exceeded their ELP Growth Target (as indicated by Table 1). $n_{ML\ SII}$ = The number of MLs included in the indicator per the What Students Are Included in the Indicator section above.

1. First, divide the number of MLs who achieved an ELP Score greater than or equal to their ELP Growth Target (as indicated by Table 1) by the number of MLs included in the indicator (as described in What Students are Included in the Indicator).

   Note: MLs who are continuously enrolled at a school, who are included in the calculation of test participation at the same school, and who did not take the test are included in the denominator of the indicator but cannot be included in the numerator because they did not meet or exceed their growth target. MLs who are continuously enrolled at a school, who are included in the calculation of test participation at a different school, and who did not take the test are not included in the calculation of the indicator for the school of their continuous enrollment but shall be included in the calculation of the participation rate and shall contribute to the adjustment applied to Rating Points earned (described beginning in step 3) by the school responsible for testing them.

2. Multiply the quotient obtained in Step 1 by 12.5. If the product is greater than 10 (the number of points available for the indicator), then set it to 10.

   Note: Step 2 sets the upper bound of the range of points available for the indicator to match the highest historically observed values for $\left(\frac{n_{MLs\ who\ met\ ELP\ Growth\ Target}}{n_{ML\ SII}}\right)$ *such that schools at which at least 80% of MLs meeting or exceeding their ELP Growth Targets earn maximum points.*

Next, calculate the testing participation rate according to the following equation and subsequent steps. Students not tested for an authorized and properly documented purpose described in the most recently released Students Not Tested Guidelines (distributed to

District Accountability Coordinators through ADTS) are excluded from both the numerator and denominator of the formula presented below.

$$ParticRate = \left({n_{tested}} \Big/ {\left(n_{MLs\ enrolled\ during\ window} - n_{excluded}\right)} \right) \quad \text{Eq. (2)}$$

Note: $ParticRate$ = Participation Rate. n_{tested} = Number of MLs included in the calculation of participation rate for the indicator with an ELP test score. $n_{MLs\ enrolled\ during\ window}$ = Number of MLs actively enrolled at the school (or district, or state, as appropriate for the report card in question) for at least 20 instructional days during the ELP testing window. $n_{excluded}$ = Number of students excluded from the indicator for an authorized and properly documented purpose.

3. Determine the number of MLs who were actively enrolled at the school (or district, or state, as appropriate for the report card in question) for at least 20 instructional days during the ELP testing window (*i.e.*, $n_{MLs\ enrolled\ during\ window}$).
4. Subtract from the number obtained in Step 3 those MLs who have been excluded from the indicator for an authorized and properly documented purpose (*i.e.*, $n_{excluded}$).
5. Determine the number of MLs found in Step 4 who took the ELP Test (*i.e.*, n_{tested}).
6. Divide the number found in Step 5 (*i.e.*, n_{tested}) by the difference found in Step 4 to find the Participation Rate, expressed as a decimal (*i.e.*, *ParticRate*).

$$\mathrm{RP} = RP_{initial} \times ParticRate \quad \text{Eq. (3)}$$

Note: RP = Rating Points. $RP_{initial}$ = Initial Rating Points earned (described in Step 1 through Step 2). $ParticRate$ = Participation Rate (described in Step 3 through Step 6).

7. Multiply the unrounded initial Ratings Points earned (*i.e.*, $RP_{initial}$; found in Step 2) by the unrounded Participation Rate expressed as a decimal (*i.e.*, $ParticRate$; found in Step 6), rounding the product to the nearest thousandth (*e.g.*, 7.21).
8. Finally, compare the final Rating Points found in Step 7 to Table 2 to determine the Multilingual Learners' Progress Rating.

Table 2

Multilingual Learners' Progress Rating Point Conversions to Ratings

Rating	Rating Points
Excellent	6.59 – 10.00
Good	5.46 – 6.58
Average	3.78 – 5.45
Below Average	2.51 – 3.77
Unsatisfactory	0.00 – 2.50

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: June 15, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
High School Employability Credential: Inclusion in On-Track Measure

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
§SECTION 59-18-900(C) In setting the criteria for the academic performance ratings and the performance indicators, the Education Oversight Committee shall report the performance by subgroups of students in the school and schools similar in student characteristics. Criteria must use established guidelines for statistical analysis and build on current data-reporting practices.
(D) The comprehensive report card must include a comprehensive set of performance indicators with information on comparisons, trends, needs, and performance over time which is helpful to parents and the public in evaluating the school. In addition, the comprehensive report card must include indicators that meet federal law requirements. Special efforts are to be made to ensure that the information contained in the report card is provided in an easily understood manner and a reader-friendly format. This information should also provide a context for the performance of the school. Where appropriate, the data should yield disaggregated results to schools and districts in planning for improvement

CRITICAL FACTS
In SC's current accountability system, the High School Student Success Measure includes an OnTrack to Graduate Measure and a Five-Year Student Success Rate. The High School Employability Credential is not currently included in the On-Track to Graduate measure but is included in the 5-Yr. Student Success rate. The Credential is also part of the CCR indicator.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
December 2025: Resolution passes the SC School Boards Association House of Delegates addressing the inclusion of courses taken by students seeking the credential to be included in the OnTrack measure.
March 2, 2026: EOC staff convenes meeting with members of Greenville School District, school board, SC Senate, SCASA, SCDE, and SCSBA staff.
May 18, 2026: Academic Standards & Assessments Subcommittee approval of High School Employability Measure to be included as On-Track for CCR.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC none

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

INDICATOR: High School Student Success

School Level: High

The High School Student Success Indicator (HSSSI) measures the percent of students who are either (a) in their first three years at a high school and are on track to graduate within four years (or, for a small portion of each cohort, on track to complete the SC High School Employability Credential within four years, as described below), or (b) who achieve a successful high school outcome within five years of starting High School. The HSSSI includes the First Year On Track (1YOT) rate, the Second Year On Track (2YOT) rate, the Third Year On Track (3YOT) rate, and the Five Year Success Rate (5YSR).

Since 24 High School credits are required to earn a regular diploma in South Carolina, at least four of which must be English credits and at least four of which must be math credits, a student is considered on track to graduate within four years if they have earned six or more High School credits, at least one of which must be an English credit and at least one of which must be a math credit by the end of each successive year in High School.

Thus, by the end of their first year in High School, a student is considered on track if they have earned at least 6 credits, with at least 1 English credit and 1 math credit. By the end of their second year in High School, a student is considered on track if they have earned at least 12 credits, with at least 2 English credits and 2 math credits. By the end of their third year in High School, a student is considered on track if they have earned at least 18 credits, with at least 3 English credits and 3 math credits.

The 5YSR reports the percent of students who have either earned a regular high school diploma, earned a high school equivalency diploma, or earned the SC High School Employability Credential (see https://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/post-secondary-outcomes/employability-credential-south-carolina-high-school-credential/) within five years of starting High School.

The On Track metrics were developed to monitor students' steady progress towards on-time graduation with a regular high school diploma, since the regular high school diploma is considered the primary goal of the PK12 education system in South Carolina and is the most appropriate outcome for nearly all South Carolina students. The 5YSR includes the regular high school diploma, a high school equivalency diploma, and the SC High School Employability Credential because these outcomes demonstrate success for the students for whom they are appropriate.

Since the Employability Credential was added to the CCR Indicator for 2022 School Report Cards, fewer than 10% of the students with disabilities in each Graduating Cohort statewide has demonstrated career readiness via that credential. However, students pursuing the credential have not been considered "On Track" for the purposes of the 1YOT, 2YOT, or 3YOT because the Essentials of English and Essentials of Math courses included in the course progression for the

---

***Note**: This draft document was produced on 6/2/2026 and represents changes to the High School Student Success indicator that are currently being considered for implementation beginning with 2027 Report Cards. This draft has not been officially adopted and may be subject to change prior to adoption.*

Employability Credential do not satisfy the English and Mathematics requirements of S.C. Code Regs. §43-234 (Defined Program, Grades 9–12 and Graduation Requirements). Since the Employability Credential is a successful outcome for the students for whom it has been designed, not more than 10% of students in the SWD subgroup of each Four-Year Graduation Cohort may be considered "On Track" for the 1YOT, 2YOT, or 3YOT metrics provided the students in question

a) Are identified as students with a disability (SWD) whose Individualized Education Plan (IEP) identifies the Employability Credential as the appropriate goal for the student,
b) Are not already considered on track to receive a regular high school diploma,
c) Have successfully completed at least six (6) high school credits, at least one of which is an Essentials of English (EoE) credit (or meets the English graduation requirement) and at least one of which is an Essentials of Math (EoM) credit (or meets the Mathematics graduation requirement) for each year in High School (*i.e.*, 6 credits with 1 English/EoE, & 1 Mathematics/EoM for 1YOT; 12 credits with 2 English/EoE, & 2 Mathematics/EoM for 2YOT; and 18 credits with 3 English/EoE, & 3 Mathematics/EoM for 3YOT).

Note: Because the Employability Credential is not offered in all high schools, and because students pursuing the Employability Credential are not uniformly distributed throughout the state, the limit shall be applied at the state level and allocated to high schools within the state based on the proportion of students enrolled in the cohort at each high school who are pursuing an Employability Credential.

Further Note: The SCDE Office of Special Education Services (OSES) has set a goal that 75% of students with a disability as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; i.e., those students with a current Individualized Education Plan) who exit high school annually (Exiters) will do so with either a high school diploma or with the South Carolina High School Employability Credential by 2030. To reach this goal, they expect about 10% of Exiters to earn the Employability Credential statewide, because that is the proportion of students with disabilities exiting high school for whom the Credential would be an appropriate outcome. The limit of Credential Earners who may be considered On Track has been set to 10% of the SWD subgroup for 2027 Report Cards to reflect that OSES goal and because the limit matches the most current patterns of adoption in South Carolina. The EOC will continue to coordinate with OSES as they monitor appropriate adoption of the Employability Credential and reserve the right to adjust the limit as needed.

The HSSSI shall be reported in two ways. First, it shall be reported as the percent of all students included in any of the metrics included in the indicator for the high school who meet the criteria to be counted positively in that metric (*i.e.*, who are either considered on track or who have achieved a successful High School outcome within five years, depending on the metric for which the student is included) along with the number of students who are counted positively for their respective HSSSI metrics as the numerator of a fraction with the total number of students included in the indicator as the denominator of that fraction. This first display shall also include comparison metrics for the district and the state, with similarly formatted fractions showing the number of students at the district and state levels.

A detailed view shall also be provided showing the proportion of students on track to receive the high school diploma and the proportion of students on track to receive the Employability Credential for 1YOT, 2YOT, and 3YOT, and the proportion of students who graduated in three

years or less, the proportion of students who graduated on time, the proportion of students who graduated in their fifth year, the proportion of students who earned a high school equivalency diploma, the proportion of students who earned the Employability Credential, and the proportion of students who did not obtain a successful outcome within five years of starting High School.

Second, the HSSSI shall be reported in an interactive data visualization that allows the viewer to, as required by ESSA section 1111(c)(4)(B), see the combined indicator as well as each metric included in the indicator for all students included in the indicator, as well as disaggregated for students from major racial and ethnic groups, economically-disadvantaged students (as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged), children with disabilities (as compared to children without disabilities), and Multilingual Learners (MLs). The visualization may also provide the ability to view additional subgroups, and comparison metrics for the district and state, as available.

Total Rating Points Available for the Indicator:

12 points

What Students Are Included in the Indicator:

Four-Year Graduation Cohort: Students shall be included in the various HSSSI metrics according to their ninth-grade code (9GR) which determines their Four-Year Graduation Cohort. The method of assignment for 9GR and for a school's Four-Year Graduation Cohort are described in the What Students are Included in the Indicator section of INDICATOR: Graduation Rate (please refer to that location for additional details). Students shall be included in the HSSSI metrics as described below.

First-Year On Track (1YOT):

- Students who are assigned to the high school's First-Year Cohort (1Y-Cohort) according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section.

  Note that the graduation cohort reported for the 1YOT metric on any given report card contains students with 9GR equal to the two-digit year of report cards (e.g., students with 9GR = 27 shall be reported on 2027 Report Cards, also referred to as the school's 9GR27).

Second-Year On Track (2YOT):

- Students who are assigned to the high school's Second-Year Cohort (2Y-Cohort) according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section.

  Note that the cohort reported for the 2YOT metric on any given report card contains students with 9GR equal to the two-digit year of report cards minus 1 (e.g., students with 9GR = 26 shall be reported on 2027 Report Cards, also referred to as the school's 9GR26).

Third-Year On Track (3YOT):

- Students who are assigned to the high school's Third-Year Cohort (3Y-Cohort) according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section.

  Note that the cohort reported for the 3YOT metric on any given report card contains students with 9GR equal to the two-digit year of report cards minus 2 (e.g., students with 9GR = 25 shall be reported on 2027 Report Cards, also referred to as the school's 9GR25).

Five-Year Success Rate (5YSR):

- Students who were reported in the Graduation Rate indicator for the prior year Report Cards shall be included in the 5YSR of the High School for which they were included in the four-year on time graduation cohort that year.

  Note that the cohort reported for the 5YSR metric on any given report card contains students with 9GR equal to the two-digit year of report cards minus 4 (e.g., students with 9GR = 23, or the school's 9GR23, shall be reported on 2027 Report Cards since they were reported in the Graduation Rate indicator on 2026 Report Cards).

- Students shall be removed from the cohort for student death, emigration, or transfer to prison or juvenile facility following adjudication but shall not be removed from the cohort for properly documented transfer during the fifth year.
- Students shall not be added to the cohort during the fifth year.

How Rating Points are Earned for the Indicator:

Rating Points are calculated according to the following equation:

$$\mathrm{RP} = 24\left(\frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} 1YOT_i\right) + \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_2} 2YOT_i\right) + \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_3} 3YOT_i\right) + \left(\sum_{i=1}^{n_5} 5YSR_i\right)}{n_1 + n_2 + n_3 + n_5} - 0.5\right) \quad \text{Eq. (1)}$$

Note: RP = Rating Points. i = an index for the student (from 1 to the number of students included for each metric). n_1 = the number of students included in the First Year on Track (1YOT) metric. $1YOT_i$ = an indicator of whether student i is a high school student in their first year who is on track (where 1 = on track and 0 = not on track). n_2 = the number of students included in the Second Year on Track (2YOT) metric. $2YOT_i$ = an indicator of whether student i is a high school student in their second year who is on track (where 1 = on track and 0 = not on track). n_3 = the number of students included in the Third Year on Track (3YOT) metric. $3YOT_i$ = an indicator of whether student i is a high school student in their third year who is on track (where 1 = on track and 0 = not on track). n_5 = the number of students included in the Five-Year Student Success Rate (5YSR) metric. $5YSR_i$ = an indicator of whether student i obtained a successful outcome (as defined in this section) within five years of enrollment at a US High School (where 1 = obtained a successful outcome and 0 = did not obtain a successful outcome). If this equation produces a negative value, then set RP = 0.

To calculate the number of Rating Points for the High School, first calculate the number of students in the First-Year Cohort (1Y-Cohort; n_1) and the number of students considered on track in their first year ($\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} 1YOT_i$) according to the following steps:

1. Determine the number of students assigned to the state's 1Y-Cohort according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section, who are members of the SWD subgroup according Subgroup Coding for Accountability (*e.g.*, 10,589).
2. Determine 10% of the number found in Step 1, rounding ***down*** to the nearest whole number (*e.g.*, 105).

   Note: The limit of Credential Earners who may be considered On Track has been set to 10% of students with disabilities for 2027 Report Cards because that limit aligns with OSES goals for the adoption of the Employability Credential in South Carolina.

3. Determine the number of students assigned to the state's 1Y-Cohort who are pursuing the Employability Credential (*e.g.*, 103).

   Note: The number obtained in Step 3 may or may not be equal to the number obtained in Step 2. The processes described in this manual will ensure that no more than 10% of students with disabilities per cohort in the state will be considered on track via the Employability Credential while allocating that proportion appropriately among High Schools in the state according to the number of students enrolled at the high school in that cohort who are pursuing the Employability Credential.

4. Determine the number of students assigned to the high school's 1Y-Cohort according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section (n_1; *e.g.*, 230).
5. Determine the number of students included in Step 4 who are considered on track (*i.e.*, who have accumulated at least 6 high school credits, at least 1 of which is in English and at least 1 of which is in math; *e.g.*, 199).

   Note: Any valid high school credit listed in the SCDE Course Code Database (linked from the Student Information Systems page on the SCDE website) that has been earned by the student at any time in the past can contribute to the 6 HS credits required to be considered on track. Because 1YOT measures whether students are on track to graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of starting high school, only courses listed as satisfying an English graduation credit can contribute to the 1 required English credit and only courses listed as satisfying a mathematics graduation credit can contribute to the 1 required math credit.

6. Subtract the number of students found in Step 5 from the number of students found in Step 4 to find the number of students in the high school's 1Y-Cohort who are not yet considered on track (*e.g.*, 31).
7. Of the students identified in Step 6 who are not yet considered on track, determine how many of them are students with an IEP pursuing the Employability Credential (*e.g.*, 4).
8. Divide the number found in Step 7 by the number found in Step 3, leaving the quotient unrounded (*e.g.*, 0.03883495).

Note: The use of the term "unrounded" in Step 8 and other similar steps is not meant to imply a requirement for perfect precision. Retaining more than six decimal places of precision is unlikely to affect the final values of publicly reported metrics.

9. Multiply the quotient found in Step 8 by the number found in Step 2, rounding the product ***down*** to the nearest whole number (*e.g.*, 4) to find the number of students pursuing the Employability Credential at the High School who may be considered on track according to criterion (c) above (*e.g.*, 4).
10. Determine the number of students pursuing the Employability Credential at the High School who are on track to earn the Employability Credential within four years (*i.e.*, at least 6 HS credits with at least 1 English/EoE, & at least 1 Mathematics/EoM; *e.g.*, 3). If that number is greater than the number found in Step 9, set it to the number found in Step 9 (*e.g.*, 3).
11. The sum of the numbers found in Step 5 and Step 10 is the number of students included in the high school's 1Y-Cohort who are considered on track (*i.e.*, $\sum_{i=1}^{n_1} 1YOT_i = 13$)

Next, calculate the number of students in the Second-Year Cohort (2Y-Cohort; n_2) and the number of students considered on track in their second year ($\sum_{i=1}^{n_2} 2YOT_i$) according to the following steps:

12. Determine the number of students assigned to the state's 1Y-Cohort according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section, who are members of the SWD subgroup according Subgroup Coding for Accountability (*e.g.*, 10,430).
13. Determine 10% of the number found in Step 12, rounding ***down*** to the nearest whole number (*e.g.*, 104).

    Note: The limit of Credential Earners who may be considered On Track has been set to 10% of students with disabilities for 2027 Report Cards because that limit aligns with OSES goals for the adoption of the Employability Credential in South Carolina.

14. Determine the number of students assigned to the state's 2Y-Cohort who are pursuing the Employability Credential (*e.g.*, 120).

    Note: The number obtained in Step 14 may or may not be equal to the number obtained in Step 13. The example counts given for the 2Y-Cohort were chosen to demonstrate that process described in this manual will ensure that no more than 10% of students with disabilities per cohort in the state will be considered on track via the Employability Credential, even if greater than 10% of students with disabilities in the cohort is pursuing the credential, while still allocating that proportion appropriately among High Schools in the state according to the number of students enrolled at the high school in that cohort who are pursuing the Employability Credential.

15. Determine the number of students assigned to the high school's 2Y-Cohort according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section (n_2; *e.g.*, 238).
16. Determine the number of students included in Step 15 who are considered on track (*i.e.*, who have accumulated at least 12 high school credits, at least 2 of which are in English and at least 2 of which are in math; *e.g.*, 204).

Note: Any valid high school credit listed in the SCDE Course Code Database (linked from the Student Information Systems page on the SCDE website) that has been earned by the student at any time in the past can contribute to the 12 HS credits required to be considered on track. Because 2YOT measures whether students are on track to graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of starting high school, only courses listed as satisfying an English graduation credit can contribute to the 2 required English credits and only courses listed as satisfying a mathematics graduation credit can contribute to the 2 required math credits.

17. Subtract the number of students found in Step 16 from the number of students found in Step 15 to find the number of students in the high school's 2Y-Cohort who are not yet considered on track (*e.g.*, 34).
18. Of the students identified in Step 17 who are not yet considered on track, determine how many of them are students with an IEP pursuing the Employability Credential (*e.g.*, 3).
19. Divide the number found in Step 18 by the number found in Step 14, leaving the quotient unrounded (*e.g.*, 0.025).
20. Multiply the quotient found in Step 19 by the number found in Step 13, rounding the product ***down*** to the nearest whole number to find the number of students pursuing the Employability Credential at the High School who may be considered on track according to criterion (c) above (*e.g.*, 2).
21. Determine the number of students pursuing the Employability Credential in the high school's 2Y-Cohort who are on track to earn the Employability Credential within four years (*i.e.*, at least 12 HS credits with at least 2 English/EoE, & at least 2 Mathematics/EoM; *e.g.*, 3). If that number is greater than the number found in Step 20, set it to the number found in Step 20 (*e.g.*, 2).
22. The sum of the numbers found in Step 16 and Step 21 is the number of students included in the high school's 2Y-Cohort who are considered on track (*i.e.*, $\sum_{i=1}^{n_2} 2YOT_i = 206$)

Next, calculate the number of students in the Third-Year Cohort (3Y-Cohort; n_3) and the number of students considered on track in their third year ($\sum_{i=1}^{n_3} 3YOT_i$) according to the following steps:

23. Determine the number of students assigned to the state's Third-Year Cohort (3Y-Cohort) according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section, who are members of the SWD subgroup according Subgroup Coding for Accountability.
24. Determine 1% of the number found in Step 23, rounding ***down*** to the nearest whole number.

    Note: The limit of Credential Earners who may be considered On Track has been set to 10% of students with disabilities for 2027 Report Cards because that limit aligns with OSES goals for the adoption of the Employability Credential in South Carolina.

25. Determine the number of students assigned to the state's 3Y-Cohort who are pursuing the Employability Credential.

    Note: The number obtained in Step 24 may or may not be equal to the number obtained in Step 24. The processes described in this manual will ensure that no more than 10% of students with

disabilities per cohort in the state will be considered on track via the Employability Credential while allocating that proportion appropriately among High Schools in the state according to the number of students enrolled at the high school in that cohort who are pursuing the Employability Credential.

26. Determine the number of students assigned to the high school's 3Y-Cohort according to the guidelines and procedures described in the Graduation Rate section (n_3).
27. Determine the number of students included in Step 26 who are considered on track (*i.e.*, who have accumulated at least 18 high school credits, at least 3 of which are in English and at least 3 of which are in math).

    Note: Any valid high school credit listed in the SCDE Course Code Database (linked from the Student Information Systems page on the SCDE website) that has been earned by the student at any time in the past can contribute to the 18 HS credits required to be considered on track. Because 3YOT measures whether students are on track to graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of starting high school, only courses listed as satisfying an English graduation credit can contribute to the 3 required English credits and only courses listed as satisfying a mathematics graduation credit can contribute to the 3 required math credits.

28. Subtract the number of students found in Step 27 from the number of students found in Step 26 to find the number of students in the high school's 3Y-Cohort who are not yet considered on track.
29. Of the students identified in Step 28 who are not yet considered on track, determine how many of them are students with an IEP pursuing the Employability Credential.
30. Divide the number found in Step 29 by the number found in Step 24, leaving the quotient unrounded.
31. Multiply the quotient found in Step 30 by the number found in Step 24, rounding the product ***down*** to the nearest whole number to find the number of students pursuing the Employability Credential at the High School who may be considered on track according to criterion (c) above.
32. Determine the number of students identified in Step 29 who are on track to earn the Employability Credential within four years (*i.e.*, at least 18 HS credits with at least 3 EoE, & at least 3 EoM). If that number is greater than the number found in Step 31, set it to the number found in Step 31.
33. The sum of the numbers found in Step 27 and Step 32 is the number of students included in the high school's 3Y-Cohort who are considered on track (*i.e.*, $\sum_{i=1}^{n_3} 3YOT_i$).

Next, calculate the number of students included in the 5YSR (n_5) and the number of students who obtained a successful outcome within five years ($\sum_{i=1}^{n_5} 5YSR_i$) according to the following steps:

34. Determine the number of students who were included in the Graduation Rate for the High School on the prior year Report Cards (n_5; the fifth year cohort; *i.e.*, 9GR = 23 for 2027 Report Cards).

    Note: Students shall be removed from the cohort for student death, emigration, or transfer to prison or juvenile facility following adjudication but shall not be removed for transfer during year five.

35. Determine the number of students included in Step 34 who obtained a successful High School outcome (*i.e.*, a regular High School diploma, a high school equivalency diploma, or the SC HS Employability Credential) within five years of beginning High School in the US ($\sum_{i=1}^{n_5} 5YSR_i$).

    Note: Students contribute to the number of students who obtained a successful high school outcome within five years of starting high school regardless of when that outcome was obtained; students do not need to obtain the outcome during the fifth year of high school.

Finally, determine the Rating Points earned by combining the metrics calculated above according to the following steps:

36. Total the numbers found in Step 11, Step 22, Step 33, and Step 35.
37. Divide by the sum of the numbers found in Step 4, Step 15, Step 26, and Step 34.
38. Subtract 0.5 from the quotient found in Step 37. If the difference is less than zero, set it to zero.
39. Multiply 24 by the difference found in Step 38.

    Note: Steps 1 through 38 generate a value between 0.0 and 0.5. Multiplying this value by 24 will generate a value between 0 and 12, the total points available for the indicator.

40. The product obtained in Step 39, rounded to the nearest hundredth (*e.g.*, 10.65), is the number of Rating Points
41. Finally, total Rating Points earned are converted to Ratings using Table 1. Per this table, any High School with a percentage of students on track or obtaining successful outcomes that is less than 70% is deemed Unsatisfactory and any High School with rates exceeding 90% is deemed Excellent.

Table 1
High School Student Success Rating Point Conversions to Ratings

Rating	Rating Points
Excellent	9.60 – 12.00
Good	8.00 – 9.59
Average	6.40 – 7.99
Below Average	4.80 – 6.39
Unsatisfactory	0.00 – 4.79

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: June 15, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Inclusion of Seal of Biliteracy in CCR

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
§SECTION 59-18-900(C) In setting the criteria for the academic performance ratings and the performance indicators, the Education Oversight Committee shall report the performance by subgroups of students in the school and schools similar in student characteristics. Criteria must use established guidelines for statistical analysis and build on current data-reporting practices. (D) The comprehensive report card must include a comprehensive set of performance indicators with information on comparisons, trends, needs, and performance over time which is helpful to parents and the public in evaluating the school. In addition, the comprehensive report card must include indicators that meet federal law requirements. Special efforts are to be made to ensure that the information contained in the report card is provided in an easily understood manner and a reader-friendly format. This information should also provide a context for the performance of the school. Where appropriate, the data should yield disaggregated results to schools and districts in planning for improvement.

CRITICAL FACTS
In SC's current accountability system, a High School student in the fourth-year cohort (also called the graduating cohort) may be identified as College- or Career-Ready on any of up to 11 criteria. Under the current proposal, earning the Seal of Biliteracy would be added as a College-Ready Criterion, since several postsecondary institutions in SC and in other states award college credit to incoming students who have earned the seal.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
January 12, 2026: Following Cyclical Review of the Accountability System, ASA considers action item to include seal in CCR. EOC asks staff to run data to see impact of seal in SC and nationally.
March 16, 2026: Addition information provided to ASA by SCDE personnel who oversee the Seal of Biliteracy within South Carolina schools.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC none

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

Historical Analysis of the Seal of Biliteracy

EOC Members had requested further information about the Seal of Biliteracy to support their decisions about including it as a College Ready criterion in the College & Career Readiness (CCR) indicator for High School Report Cards. Specifically, they had asked

1. How many students have earned the Seal,
2. What proportion of Seal earners graduate within four years of starting High School,
3. What proportion of Seal earners had also satisfied another College Ready criterion,
4. What proportion of Seal earners were already designated either College or Career Ready via one of the existing 11 CCR criteria,
5. What proportion of Seal earners enroll in postsecondary education within one year after High School graduation, and
6. What are the differences in all these metrics between students who earn the Bronze, Silver, or Gold Seals of Biliteracy?

We analyzed data from students in 9GR21, for whom Graduation Rate and CCR were reported on 2024 Report Cards. This allowed us to examine the relationship between earning the Seal of Biliteracy, on-time graduation, and other CCR designations. Results are displayed below.

Seal of Biliteracy Earned	*n*	On-Time Grads	% College Ready	% CCR
Gold	108	97.2%	68.5%	96.3%
Silver or Higher	689	99.0%	69.4%	94.3%
Bronze or Higher	1,277	99.1%	69.5%	94.1%
No Seal	59,093	85.6%	31.8%	71.4%
Total 9GR21 Cohort	**60,370**	**85.9%**	**32.6%**	**71.8%**

To answer the question about college-going rates, only graduates who were found in data from the National Student Clearinghouse were analyzed. This excludes students who did not graduate, students with a FERPA block or privacy block on their postsecondary enrollment records, and graduates from 4 relatively new High Schools which had not yet been added to our service agreement with the National Student Clearinghouse. Results are below.

Seal of Biliteracy Earned	*n*	% College Ready	% CCR	% Enrolled w/in 1Yr
Gold	105	69.5%	98.1%	79.4%
Silver or Higher	684	69.7%	94.3%	74.4%
Bronze or Higher	1,267	69.9%	94.1%	75.1%
No Seal	50,589	37.0%	80.5%	56.5%
Total 9GR21 Graduates	**51,856**	**37.8%**	**80.8%**	**57.0%**

These analyses suggest that, although the vast majority of students who earn the Seal of Biliteracy already meet at least one CCR criterion (94%) and most are already identified as College Ready (70%), Seal earners are still much more likely to enroll in college in the 1st year after graduation (75%) than graduates who do not earn the Seal (57%).

ACTFL
AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES
1001 North Fairfax Street, Suite 200 | Alexandria, VA 22314 | P 703-894-2900 | F 703-894-2905
445 Hamilton Avenue, Suite 1104 | White Plains, NY 10601-1832 | P 914-963-8830 | F 914-963-1275
www.actfl.org | www.discoverlanguages.org | facebook.com/actfl | @actfl

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages provides the following information to assist the Illinois State Board of Education in setting in its administrative rules the threshold level of language performance for earning the Illinois Seal of Biliteracy.

Talking Points on Setting Level for Illinois' Seal of Biliteracy

- The WIDA Performance Definitions and ACTFL Proficiency Levels represent different purposes and scales. WIDA criteria are intended to measure academic second language development, content and subject area specific, representing a hierarchy of vocabulary and text type. ACTFL Proficiency Levels are intended to measure a broader usage of language, not limited to an academic context, representing a hierarchy of language functions.
- Since the Illinois Seal of Biliteracy will be representative of high school performance, another source of comparison is the College Board's Advanced Placement descriptions of Achievement Levels for the Language and Culture Exams, a measure of end of program performance. The Advanced Placement Achievement Level Descriptions address language functions and provide a close match for purposes of comparison with the ACTFL Proficiency Levels.
- Native speakers spend most of their life for everyday communication at the ACTFL Advanced level. The WIDA level 5 therefore is more like Intermediate High as it is defined as "approaching comparability to that of proficient English peers." The Intermediate High language user is able to produce Advanced level language, as they approach comparability, but are not able to do it all the time.

Comparison of ACTFL Proficiency Levels with WIDA Performance Definitions

- Language functions are not the basis of the WIDA Performance Definitions; language functions are at the heart of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. Intermediate High language users are able to perform the functions of the Advanced level, but not all the time, showing more success with more familiar topics.
- The WIDA Performance Definitions mainly focus on text type: "variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity, extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports"
- The WIDA Performance Definitions focus on a different context: "specialized or technical language of content areas" (which is generally based on familiarity with basic information for the subject area)
- The WIDA Performance Definitions emphasize comparability to oral or written language of English-proficiency peers (when presented with grade level material). Grade level material will be practiced within a unit of instruction, thus providing the element of familiarity for Intermediate High language users to be able to frequently perform like Advanced level language users and deal with vocabulary that is specialized. However, beyond vocabulary, it is important to identify the language functions and the degree of accuracy demonstrated.

Seal of Biliteracy Requirements in Other States

California: Not tied to a proficiency level (evidence includes years of study of a language)

New Jersey: Looking at Intermediate High, but maybe Intermediate Mid

New York: Criterion is "high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages, in addition to English." 2014-15 will be a one-year pilot implementation program; 2015-16 will be full implementation with participating districts

States considering the Seal of Biliteracy:

Utah: Under consideration is having two levels for the Seal of Biliteracy (likely a basic "gold" Seal at Intermediate Mid; a "platinum" level of the Seal at Advanced Low)

Maryland is considering Intermediate High for the Seal of Biliteracy

Comparison of ACTFL Proficiency Levels with Advanced Placement Exams:

- The College Board's Achievement Level Descriptions provide very detailed expectations for student performance at each AP score level for each of six learning objectives for the course and exam. These are published in each of the College Board's re-designed courses' *Course and Exam Descriptions*.
- Anecdotal evidence and examination of the scoring rubric indicate that students who are showing evidence of Intermediate Mid proficiency are likely to score a 3 (passing score) on the AP Language and Culture Exam; students showing evidence of Intermediate High proficiency are likely to score a 4 or 5; students showing evidence of Advanced level proficiency are the most likely to score a 5 on the AP exam. Intermediate High language users are able to function at the Advanced level, but are not able to sustain that performance across the tasks and contexts of the Advanced level.
- Here is a link to the current Achievement Level Descriptions in Spanish (see pages 8-29 of this document for the long and detailed descriptions): http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/courses/descriptions/index.html
- The College Board website provides sample activities from the AP Language and Culture exams, which are based on the National Standards' three modes of communication (Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational):
    - Listen to a radio or television broadcast and present its content and your own opinions about it to your class)
    - Read and discuss current events
    - Compare and contrast cultural perspectives between your community and those of a Spanish-speaking community

Supporting Materials:

Comparison of AP Achievement Level Descriptions (Level 3 – Passing) with ACTFL Proficiency Level of Intermediate High

Categories	AP – Level 3	Corresponding ACTFL Proficiency Level and Sub-Level
Interpersonal		
Strategies	Circumlocution and paraphrasing	**Advanced** (Low): able to use rephrasing and circumlocution; some evidence at Intermediate High
	Seek clarification by asking for repetition	**Novice** (High): with repetition or rephrasing, can generally be understood by those used to non-natives
	Use context to deduce meaning of unfamiliar words	**Intermediate**: Listeners rely heavily on redundancy, restatement, paraphrasing, and contextual clues; Advanced listeners compensate for limitations in lexical and structural control by using real-world knowledge and contextual clues
	May recognize errors; attempts at correction are only occasionally successful	**Intermediate** (Mid): speech may contain pauses, reformulations, and self-corrections
Opinions	State opinions on topics of personal interest	**Intermediate**: familiar topics related to their daily life (Advanced: topics of community, national, or international interest)
	Understand and respond to questions and statements on familiar topics	**Intermediate** (High): able to handle successfully uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange related to work, school, recreation, interests, and areas of competence
Language structures	Narrations and descriptions characterized by strings of simple sentences and a few compound sentences; Most accuracy in the present time and some accuracy in other time frames	**Intermediate** (High): can narrate and describe in all major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length, but not all the time; Intermediate Mid: produce responses typically consisting of sentences and strings of sentences
Vocabulary	Use vocabulary from familiar thematic word groups; Some culturally appropriate and idiomatic expressions	**Intermediate**: Recombine learned material in order to produce personal meaning
Pronunciation	Comprehensible to an audience accustomed to interacting with language learners, yet errors occasionally impede comprehensibility	**Intermediate** (Mid): generally understood by sympathetic interlocutors accustomed to dealing with non-natives
Interpretive		
Comprehension of Content	Identify some main ideas and details on familiar topics	**Advanced** (Low): understand the main ideas and some supporting details; Intermediate High: occasional gaps in understanding due to a limited knowledge of the vocabulary, structures, and writing conventions of the language.

	Respond accurately to basic information questions	**Intermediate**: understand texts that convey basic information
	Can sometimes use context to deduce meaning of unfamiliar words and make limited inferences	**Intermediate**: Readers rely heavily on contextual clues
Vocabulary	Comprehend a variety of vocabulary on topics of personal interest	**Intermediate** (High): text that convey basic information and deal with personal and social topics
Presentational – Spoken or Written		
Discourse and development	Use strings of sentences and a few basic cohesive devices to express personal opinions, describe and narrate on familiar topics	**Intermediate** (High): can narrate and describe in different time frames when writing about everyday events and situations; often but not always of paragraph length
Language structures	Produce simple and compound sentences with the most accuracy in the present time; some accuracy in other time frames	**Intermediate** (Mid): their writing is framed in present time but may contain references to other time frames. Intermediate High: Narrations and descriptions are often but not always of paragraph length
	Errors may impede comprehensibility	**Intermediate** (High): even with numerous and perhaps significant errors, is generally comprehensible to native not used to the writing of non-natives.
Writing Conventions	Use of standard conventions of written language is inconsistent, which may cause confusion for the reader	**Intermediate** (Low): There may be basic errors in punctuation, spelling.

The redesigned Advanced Placement Spanish Language and Culture Exam requires students to demonstrate their ability to do the following tasks, which represent language functions across many different ACTFL Proficiency Levels; however, it is in the evaluation criteria that the performance expectations are defined for each rating (1-5):

- Identify and summarize the main points and significant details and make appropriate inferences and predictions from a spoken source, such as a broadcast news report or a lecture on an academic or cultural topic related to the Spanish-speaking world.
- Identify and summarize the main points and significant details and predict outcomes from an everyday conversation on a familiar topic, a dialogue from a film or other broadcast media, or an interview on a social or cultural topic related to the Spanish-speaking world.
- Identify and summarize main points and important details; make appropriate inferences and predictions from a written text such as a newspaper/magazine article or contemporary literary excerpt.
- Write a cohesive and coherent analytical or persuasive essay in reaction to a text or on a personal, academic, cultural or social issue, with control of grammar and syntax.
- Describe, narrate and present information or persuasive arguments on general topics with grammatical control and good pronunciation.
- Use information from sources provided to present a synthesis and express an opinion.
- Recognize cultural elements implicit in oral and written texts.
- Interpret linguistic cues to infer social relationships.
- Communicate via interpersonal and presentational written correspondence.
- Initiate, maintain and close a conversation on a familiar topic.
- Formulate questions to seek clarification or additional information.
- Use language that is semantically and grammatically accurate according to a given context.

From: Zalba, Rocio <rzalba@ed.sc.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 12:04 PM
To: Yow, Dana <danay@eoc.sc.gov>; Lavery, Matthew <mlavery@eoc.sc.gov>
Cc: Stokes, Stephen <sstokes@ed.sc.gov>; Austin, Kristi D <kdaustin@ed.sc.gov>; Black, Josh S <jsblack@ed.sc.gov>
Subject: [External] AP scores and SC Seal of Biliteracy

Dear Ms. Yow,

Thank you once again for inviting me to the EOC Subcommittee meeting. I appreciated the opportunity to present and address questions regarding the SC Seal of Biliteracy.

During our session, you requested that I provide research and data on the equivalency of AP scores and the proficiency requirements for the SC Seal of Biliteracy.

The Center for Advanced Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota has developed a website grounded on extensive research that includes many valuable resources related to Seals of Biliteracy. Below are two components that directly address your request:

1. Test Scores to ACTFL Proficiency Level Conversion
This resource outlines the corresponding scores for Intermediate Mid to Advanced Low proficiency levels across various assessments: AP, IB, STAMP4S, STAMP WS, AAPPL, and ALTA. As you know, these assessments are approved for use in our state.

2. Test Comparison Overview
This document compares the most widely used assessments for earning a Seal of Biliteracy. AP and IB assessments are included among the assessments reviewed, indicating that other states use these scores to grant their recipients a Seal of Biliteracy. However, please note that South Carolina does not grant a Seal of Biliteracy based on AP and IB scores.

Additionally, I have attached a document from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) that offers recommendations for establishing rules regarding the Seal of Biliteracy in Illinois. You will find a section titled **Comparison of ACTFL Proficiency Levels with Advanced Placement Exams** on pages 2-4.

I hope these resources provide you with the guidance you are seeking. Please feel free to reach out if you need any additional information.

Kindly,
Rocio

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: June 15, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Process for approval of Dual Enrollment for CCR

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY

Section 59-18-900 of the Education Accountability Act (EAA) as amended by Act 94 of 2017 requires the EOC to "determine the criteria for and establish performance ratings of excellent, good, average, below average, and unsatisfactory for schools." Furthermore, "the same categories of performance ratings also must be assigned to individual indicators used to measure a school's performance including, but not limited to, academic achievement, student growth or progress, graduation rate, English language proficiency, and college and career readiness." The EAA also encourages students to earn industry credentials to be career ready. In addition, the state longitudinal data system created by Section 59-18-1950 requires the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office to measure the continuous improvement of the state public education system and the college and career readiness and success of its graduates by documenting "working-aged adults in South Carolina by county who possess a postsecondary degree or industry credential."

CRITICAL FACTS

Per the SC accountability system, high schools receive an indicator rating for College / Career Readiness, which is the percentage of high school graduates who are college or career ready. While there are several metrics that can define both "college ready" and "career ready," students completing at least six credit hours in an approved dual enrollment course with a grade of C or higher are considered "college ready" in the current accountability system. Approved courses should be in English, mathematics, STEM, or social studies. EOC staff is proposing a revision to the process that was initiated in 2023 to further refine list of approved courses to include only those courses that meet the associate of science or associate of arts that transfer to a four-year degree, Bachelor of Science, or Bachelor of Arts degree and those that have been approved by CHE's Office of Academic Affairs.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

Timelines outlined within process documents.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC none

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

Requirements & Processes for CCR Approval of Dual Enrollment Courses

Beginning with 2026-2027 Accountability Year as Reported on 2027 School Report Cards

As determined by the EOC and described in the annual Accountability Manual, a student may be designated "**College Ready**" for the purpose of the College and Career Ready (CCR) indicator for High School Report Cards by completing **at least six (6) credit hours** (typically equivalent to 2 units of high school credit) in **approved dual enrollment courses** with **a grade of C or higher**.

To contribute to a student's College Ready designation, the course must have been approved for this purpose at the time it was taken by the student. Dual enrollment courses (also called "dual credit" courses) completed before a course receives approval cannot retroactively count toward the College Ready designation.

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) shall maintain a publicly accessible listing of approved dual enrollment courses that clearly indicates the earliest school year to which each approval applies. **Approval received during a given school year shall apply to courses taken no earlier than the fall semester *following* the date of approval.**

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) establishes the process, timelines, and criteria for the approval of specific dual enrollment courses for use in accountability. EOC members have established the following criteria for dual enrollment courses approved for use in the CCR indicator. **Courses approved to meet the College Ready requirement for CCR should meet all the following criteria:**

- Courses in English, Mathematics, Engineering, Computer Science, the Natural Sciences, or the Social Sciences
- Courses which satisfy a general education or content-specific course requirement towards an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree
- Courses which are likely to be accepted in transfer to a four-year institution to satisfy a general education or program-specific course requirement towards a baccalaureate degree (*i.e.*, not accepted ***only*** as free elective credit)

SCDE may submit new courses to the EOC for consideration for CCR approval. However, to receive a thorough review and informed decision, **courses submitted to the EOC later than May 1 cannot be approved in time for the upcoming school year**.

Consideration for approval shall follow these steps according to the following timeline:

1. SCDE Director of Assessment and Standards (or designee) submits list of courses for consideration to EOC Executive Director
2. EOC conducts initial review for satisfaction of above criteria and forwards list within 15 days to SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Office of Academic Affairs
3. Director, CHE Office of Academic Affairs facilitates review of submitted list to confirm the courses meet the above criteria, returning list to EOC Executive Director within 30 days
4. EOC Executive Director submits revisions and/or courses which receive final approval to SCDE Director of Assessment and Standards (or designee) within 15 days

***Note**: This draft was produced on 5/21/2026 to incorporate an amendment made by the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee on 5/18/2026. It has not been officially adopted and may be subject to further change.*

Approval for all courses shall be reviewed at least every five years. At the time of its review, each CCR-approved dual enrollment course shall be evaluated in the following manner:

- SCDE shall provide the EOC with the number of students who have enrolled in the CCR-approved dual enrollment course for the past five school years, disaggregated by school year and high school.
- SCDE shall provide the EOC with a list of students (including, at a minimum, their state student ID, graduation date, and high school of graduation) who meet all these criteria:
    - have taken the CCR-approved dual enrollment course,
    - have received a final grade of C or better,
    - were identified as College Ready by completing at least six (6) credit hours of approved dual enrollment courses with a grade of C or higher, and
    - graduated high school during the three most recent, complete school years.
- With the data provided above, the EOC will evaluate the course(s) by
    - determining the rate at which students take the dual enrollment course
    - determining the rate at which students taking the course are deemed College Ready
    - determining the rate at which students taking the course enroll in college within a year of high school graduation
    - determining the rate at which students who have taken the course and enrolled in college persist to a second year
- Outcomes for students taking the course being evaluated shall be compared to similar outcomes for comparable cohorts of South Carolina student (such as students who pursued other College Ready pathways).
- Informed by the evaluation findings, the EOC may recommend revocation of CCR approval for an evaluated course for either of the following reasons:
    - No enrollment or extremely low enrollment over the review period
    - Student outcomes which suggest the course is not promoting college readiness

Following the initial approval of this document, EOC staff shall request from SCDE the data necessary to review postsecondary outcomes for any dual enrollment course taken in South Carolina high schools (regardless of College Ready approval status) by students who graduated during the previous five school years. The purpose of this review is to determine the degree to which each course predicts postsecondary readiness outcomes. This review will be considered the first review for all currently approved courses, which will need to be reviewed again at least every five years from that point.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: June 18, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Industry Certifications and Credentials for School Year 2026-27

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
Section 59-18-900 of the Education Accountability Act (EAA) as amended by Act 94 of 2017 requires the EOC to "determine the criteria for and establish performance ratings of excellent, good, average, below average, and unsatisfactory for schools." Furthermore, "the same categories of performance ratings also must be assigned to individual indicators used to measure a school's performance including, but not limited to, academic achievement, student growth or progress, graduation rate, English language proficiency, and college and career readiness." The EAA also encourages students to earn industry credentials to be career ready. In addition, the state longitudinal data system created by Section 59-18-1950 requires the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office to measure the continuous improvement of the state public education system and the college and career readiness and success of its graduates by documenting "working-aged adults in South Carolina by county who possess a postsecondary degree or industry credential."

CRITICAL FACTS
The South Carolina Tiered Credential System, adopted by the EOC, is a structured framework that classifies industry-recognized credentials based on their alignment with workforce priorities, employer demand, and career progression opportunities. It helps students, educators, and employers understand the value of different credentials in preparing individuals for high-demand, high-wage careers. The system is organized into three tiers based on the economic impact, job market relevance, and career advancement potential of each credential.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
October 1 Cutoff: The credential submission window closes each year on October 1. All tier placements and TAC recommendations must be finalized by this date.
EOC Review: SCDE submits the final master credential list to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) for annual review and validation.
Final Approval: The EOC completes its review and provides formal approval or feedback by January. This year, the EOC will receive as information in January and take action in March/April 2026.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC
none

ACTION REQUEST

☒ **For approval** ☐ **For information**

ACTION TAKEN

☐ **Approved** ☐ **Amended**
☐ **Not Approved** ☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.
PO Box 11867 | 227 Blatt Building
Columbia SC 29211 | WWW.SCEOC.ORG

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, EOC Full Committee
FROM: Dana Yow
DATE: June 15, 2026
RE: Staff Recommendations regarding Tiered Certifications

EOC staff has reviewed the 19 certifications received from the SCDE for consideration as either a new credential or for tier re-evaluation in the stackable credential system. The EOC staff offers a recommendation of support to members of this subcommittee for the following:

1. 262: FAA 107 UAV License (Tier Reevaluation): **Tier 3**
2. P-638: Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge (New Certification): **Tier 2**
3. P-628: Broadcast Project Management (New Certification): **Tier 2**
4. P-635: YouScience Network Fundamentals (New Certification)**: Tier 2**
5. P-639: TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign (New Certification): **Tier 2**
6. P-640: TOSA Certification for Adobe Premier Pro (New Certification): **Tier 2**
7. P-641: YouScience Carpentry (New Certification): **Tier 2**
8. P-629: CAT SimsScholars Certification (New Certification)**: Tier 3**
9. P-630: CAT Simulator Certification: (New Certification): **Tier 2**
10. P-631: YouScience Exploring Computer Science: (New Certification): **Tier 1**
11. P-632: Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification: (New Certification): **Tier 2**
12. P-634: Harmony Premium Associate Certification: (New Certification): **Tier 3**
13. P-637: SMFA Turfgrass Science Certification (New Certification): **Tier 2**

In 2024, South Carolina transitioned to a three-tiered credentialing system to better align student industry credentials with workforce needs. The tiered system ensures that students earn credentials valued by employers, leading to higher job placement rates, career progression, and wage growth. The system encourages students to build upon entry-level certifications to earn higher-level, industry-valued credentials, creating clear career pathways rather than disconnected certifications.

Beginning with students entering high school in the 2024-2025 school year, career-ready status for CTE completers will be determined for use in the accountability system by earning a minimum of **three points** within this system.

In the interest of safeguarding the rigor and intent of the tiered credential system, the EOC recommends a **reconsideration of the following credentials** which were submitted:

14. 56: NCCER Core (Request for Tier Reevaluation): Tier 2
    EOC Staff Recommendation: Remain at current Tier 1

15. 575: Science 3D Animation 1 (Request for Tier Reevaluation): Tier 2
    EOC Staff Recommendation: Remain at current Tier 1

16. 618: NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential (Request for Tier Reevaluation): Tier 2
    EOC Staff Recommendation: Remain at current Tier 1

17. P-633: YouScience Game Development Fundamentals 1 (New Certification): Tier 2
    EOC Staff Recommendation: Tier 1

18. P-636: YouScience Retailing (New Certification): Tier 2
    EOC Staff Recommendation: Tier 1

19. P-627: YouScience Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1 (New Certification): Tier 2
    EOC Staff Recommendation: Tier 1

From:	Ivy Coburn
To:	Yow, Dana
Cc:	Herbert S Bocchino; Anna Duvall; jsblack@ed.sc.gov; Dale Winkler; Johnson-Jones, Hope
Subject:	[External] Materials for June EOC Meeting – 2026–27 Tiered Certification List and Supporting Documents
Date:	Friday, June 12, 2026 8:56:47 AM
Attachments:	Updated Secondary Certification Profiles.pdf

Greetings,

I am writing to share the latest resources that will support our discussion and action on the 2026–27 tiered certification list at Monday's meeting.

I have pulled the full list of 2026–27 tiered certifications that are currently under review into a single Google Doc. In this document:

- I have highlighted the **proposed tier** that was submitted by the Department.
- I have added an **EOC Tier Recommendation** column, reflecting the feedback and guidance provided by the EOC during the spring review cycle.
- I have also added a **proposed career-ready/not career-ready designation** column for our legacy students who will still fall under the one-tiered system.

For this legacy designation, I have applied the following logic based on our existing tier definitions:

- Certifications designated as **Tier 3** are proposed as **"career-ready"** (Yes), because they function as end-of-program, stand-alone credentials.
- Certifications designated as **Tier 1 or Tier 2** are proposed as **"not career-ready"** (No) as stand-alone credentials, as they would need to be bundled with an additional certification to meet the career-ready threshold.

All items that are **new since our last EOC meeting**, or that include an adjustment from prior designations, are **highlighted in yellow**. The intent is that the EOC will review and, as appropriate, approve the content and recommendations indicated by the yellow highlighting.

Where there is no EOC notation on an original tiered application, it is assumed that the previously submitted tier designation has already been accepted and does not require further action.

For your reference and review:

- Google Doc with 2026-27 List of Certifications: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eViCkc79V9fEGwUhp6kUYi5OiTPefe1nF1

xEdc7AAZ0/edit?usp=sharing

The Google Doc will be shared with **comment access** for EOC members and staff. If there are concerns or requested changes, comments may be added directly in the document; those comments will be resolved and appropriate adjustments made prior to using the final list to update PowerSchool for the 2026–27 school year.

In addition to the certification list, I am also providing the following supporting documentation:

- The eight TAC meeting summary reports, which capture business/industry and educator feedback by cluster.
- A combined PDF containing the 19 certification profile sheets for the certifications that are new or have adjustments under consideration for 2026–27 (attached).

Our goal for Monday's meeting is to secure EOC approval of the 2026–27 certification list—specifically the items and designations highlighted in yellow—so that the approved tiers and career-ready determinations can be incorporated into PowerSchool and made available for use next year.

Thank you in advance for your time and careful review.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information before the meeting.
Sincerely,

Ivy Coburn
Division Director, Education and Workforce
Southern Regional Education Board
592 10th St NW
Atlanta, GA 30318
Mobile: (985) 974-4416
ivy.coburn@sreb.org
www.sreb.org

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

56 - NCCER Core

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	56 - NCCER Core
Application Type	Tier Reevaluation
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Construction
Career Pathway(s)	Building Construction Technology Related: Electricity, Carpentry, and Masonry
Associated CTE Course(s)	Building Construction Technology 1 - 4
Vendor	NCCER
Description	Core: Introduction to Basic Construction Skills prepares individuals for entry-level positions on project sites by providing the basics in safety, hand and power tools, construction math, materials handling, construction drawings, rigging, and employability skills. NCCER Core consists of 10 different modules aligned with the South Carolina Building Construction Standards.

Certification ID and Name	56 - NCCER Core
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Basic Safety • Career Skills • Communication Skills • Conflict Resolution • Construction Drawings • Critical Thinking • Hand Signals • Hand Tools Handling • Leadership Skills • Materials Handling • Power Tools Handling • Personal Protective Equipment • Problem Solving • Tools Safety
Exam Blueprint	https://www.nccer.org/craft-catalog/core/ https://www.nccer.org/media/2024/08/NCCER-FULL-Catalog.pdf
Format	Computer-based, Performance-based
Questions	10 Modules - Ranging from 15 to 30 questions per test
Duration	1 hour
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes - after a required 2-day waiting period
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	56 - NCCER Core
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	$20
Cost for Instructor Training	The instructor must be NCCER-accredited. To become accredited, the instructor must complete the NCCER 2- to 3-day Course.
Other Costs	None

Workforce Relevance Details (SCDEW Review)

Certification ID and Name	56 - NCCER Core
Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages	
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	56 - NCCER Core
TAC Review Summary	CCER Core received strong, positive feedback as a foundational credential for construction trades; partners consider it an appropriate, high-value certification for high-school students that supports entry into apprenticeships and technical college programs.

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

262 - FAA Part 107 UAV License

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	262 - FAA Part 107 UAV License
Application Type	Tier Reevaluation & Cluster Reassignment
Recommended Tier	Tier 3 (Career Ready, 3 Points): High-rigor certifications that demonstrate career readiness and are recognized by employers for hiring or advancement.
Career Cluster	*Remove from Universal Certification Group* Supply Chain and Transportation (primary) Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture, and Public Service & Safety
Career Pathway(s)	490109 Drone Technology Related 150801 Aerospace Engineering Technology (SREB) 280101 Air Force JROTC 280301 Army JROTC 280505 Coast Guard JROTC 430203 Emergency and Fire Management Services 430107 Law Enforcement Services 280401 Marine Corps JROTC 280499 Navy JROTC 280502 Space Force JROTC 010205 Agricultural Mechanics and Technology
Associated CTE Course(s)	57T1 Drone Technologies 1 57T2 Drone Technologies 2 57T3 Drone Technologies 3
Vendor	Federal Aviation Administration

Certification ID and Name	262 - FAA Part 107 UAV License
Description	The FAA Part 107 UAS (Drone) certification is a professional license that allows anyone age 16 years or older to immediately qualify for commercial compensation. It requires extensive, complex analytical capabilities and formidable legal knowledge, as well as the application of aeronautical principles, including, but not limited to, safe trafficking throughout the National Airspace System. Drone practitioners must understand how to analyze aviation weather, aeronautical charts, daily flight restrictions and updates, electrical and mechanical maintenance procedures, airspace classifications and clearances, radio communications, and interpersonal crew resource management.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Regulations • Airspace and Requirements • Weather • Loading and Performance • Operations
Exam Blueprint	https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/training_testing/testing/acs/uas_acs.pdf
Format	Computer-based
Questions	60
Duration	2 hours
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes, applicants may retest after a 14-day waiting period. Applicants must pay the full price to retake the test.
Similar Approved Certifications	None

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	262 - FAA Part 107 UAV License
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	$175
Cost for Instructor Training	The certification requires a one-time $175 fee for initial training and testing, with free recertification every two years.
Other Costs	None

Workforce Relevance Details (SCDEW Review)

Certification ID and Name	262 - FAA Part 107 UAV License
Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages	27-4031.00 Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Film
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	262 - FAA Part 107 UAV License
TAC Review Summary	*Stakeholders strongly supported the FAA Part 107 UAV License as a rigorous, cross-pathway credential with clear real-world applications in agriculture, logistics, public safety, and environmental work, recommending it be treated as a high-tier option while acknowledging that only well-prepared students are likely to pass.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

575 - YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 1

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	575 - YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 1
Application Type	Tier Reevaluation
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Digital Technology
Career Pathway(s)	Game and Interactive Media Design Related: Web & Digital Communication, Digital Art & Design, and Graphic Communications
Associated CTE Course(s)	5350 Foundations of Animation
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The 3D Animation 1 certification validates a student's ability to create and manipulate 3D digital objects and environments using specialized software. It measures knowledge of fundamental 2D and 3D animation principles and production techniques, including planning, modeling, animating, and rendering. Candidates demonstrate artistic and technical skills by designing and animating original 3D characters and scenes.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Career Opportunities • Animation Production Pipeline • Animation Terms, Tools, and Interface • 12 Principles of Animation • Animating 3D Models • Animating Rigged 3D Characters • Animating Cameras • Render Animated Scenes
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/3D-Animation-1-1.pdf
Format	Computer-based

Certification ID and Name	575 - YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 1
Questions	38
Duration	90 minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 8 or higher
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	160 – ACE-Web Communications with Animate CC 359 – AutoDesk Maya 372 – YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 460 – Adobe Certified Professional (ACP) Using Adobe Animate 462 – Adobe Certified Professional Video Design Specialist (ACP-VDP)

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	575 - YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 1
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce Relevance Details (SCDEW Review)

Certification ID and Name	575 -YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 1
Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages	
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	575 - 3D Animation 1
TAC Review Summary	*For YouScience 3D Animation 1, the feedback framework was that it is currently treated as a Tier 1 exam, and TAC members should recommend changes only if they can show that employers value it or that it significantly eases transition into postsecondary animation or game programs.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

618 - NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	618 - NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential
Application Type	Tier Reevaluation
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge
Career Cluster	Public Service & Safety
Career Pathway(s)	All JROTC Programs (Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy)
Associated CTE Course(s)	JROTC 1 - 4 (3751, 3752, 3753, 3754)
Vendor	NOCTI
Description	NOCTI has collaborated with Subject Matter Experts from various military branches to develop the JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills credential, which focuses on core JROTC standards integrated across all branches. Approved JROTC programs are eligible to offer this opportunity to cadets as part of their leadership roles. This assessment measures technical skills at the occupational level and includes items that gauge factual and theoretical knowledge.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Team Collaboration • Interpersonal Skills and Communication • Ethics, Integrity, and Respect • Decision Making, Critical Thinking, and Planning • Management, Mentorship, and Performance Review • Leadership • Government, Civic Duty, and Citizenship • Career and Self Discovery
Exam Blueprint	https://www.nocti.org/wp-content/uploads/Blueprints/PartJROTCLeadEmpSkills9114.pdf
Format	Computer-based or Paper-based
Questions	100
Duration	2 hours

Certification ID and Name	618 - NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	No
Similar Approved Certifications	425 Skills USA Career Essentials A94 Microburst EmployABILITY Soft Skills Certification

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	618 - NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	$15
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce Relevance Details (SCDEW Review)

Certification ID and Name	618 - NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential
Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages	
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	618 - NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills Credential
TAC Review Summary	*There was no direct feedback on the NOCTI-JROTC Leadership and Employability Skills credential; in discussing JROTC and public-service pathways, however, partners underscored that leadership and employability skills are important, but any associated credential should genuinely support career or postsecondary advancement rather than simply being easy to deliver at scale.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-627 - YouScience Industry Certification: Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-627 -YouScience Industry Certification: Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Agriculture
Career Pathway(s)	Agricultural Mechanics & Technology Related: Horticulture, Plant & Animal Systems, and Biosystems Engineering & Technology
Associated CTE Course(s)	Agricultural Mechanics and Technology 5660
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The Agricultural Mechanics and Technology 1 industry certification exam assesses a learner's knowledge of the principles and techniques of power, structural, and technical systems used in the agricultural industry, particularly in production and services. Learners are tested on basic skills in hot and cold metalwork, tool reconditioning, plumbing, painting, bill of materials preparation, small gas engines, and welding, including practices related to soil and water management and the safe use of tools and equipment.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Personal and Leadership Development • Supervised Agricultural Experience • Safety Practices • Agricultural Structures • Plumbing Knowledge and Skills • Internal Combustion Engines • Metals

Certification ID and Name	P-627 -YouScience Industry Certification: Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Agricultural-Mechanics-and-Technology-1.pdf
Format	Computer-based
Questions	41
Duration	90 minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 70% or higher
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-627 - YouScience Industry Certification: Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-627 -YouScience Industry Certification: Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>49-3042</td><td>Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines</td><td>3,077</td><td>$61,500</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3011</td><td>Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians</td><td>1,360</td><td>$74,600</td></tr>
<tr><td>45-2091</td><td>Agricultural Equipment Operators</td><td>411</td><td>$42,800</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3041</td><td>Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians</td><td>378</td><td>$53,200</td></tr>
</table>
Additional related occupations:
Construction Laborers 47-2060</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>49-3042</td><td>Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines</td><td>None</td><td>Moderate-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3011</td><td>Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians</td><td>Postsecondary nondegree award</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>45-2091</td><td>Agricultural Equipment Operators</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>Long-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3041</td><td>Farm Equipment Mechanics and Service Technicians</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>Long-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-627 - Agricultural Mechanics & Technology 1
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification. Many industry partners are unfamiliar with YouScience Certifications.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-628 - Broadcast Project Management

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-628 - Broadcast Project Management
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Arts, Entertainment, and Design
Career Pathway(s)	Media Technology
Associated CTE Course(s)	Media Technology 1 – 4 (5540, 5541, 5542, 5543)
Vendor	National Public School Broadcast Network
Description	The Broadcast Project Management (BPM) Certification, issued by the National Public School Broadcast Network (NPSBN) in partnership with RundownHQ, validates student mastery of the complete broadcast production workflow—from story development and assignment management to scripting, coordination, and live operations. BPM directly reinforces course standards requiring students to plan, produce, and deliver broadcast-quality content. It assesses applied skills in: ● Pre-production: storyboarding, rundowns, and workflow organization ● Production: camera operation, lighting, audio, and on-set collaboration ● Post-production: editing, publishing, and project evaluation ● Management: leadership, scheduling, and ethical newsroom practices This alignment ensures the BPM Certification measures career-ready competencies that align with CTE Media Technology standards and industry expectations.

Certification ID and Name	P-628 - Broadcast Project Management
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Pre-Production Planning • Field and Studio Production • Script Rundown and Management • Post-Production and Editing • Project Leadership and Ethics
Exam Blueprint	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uKEGslRIlhaP-T_KZ2zf4tkUlu4xtCRt/view?usp=sharing
Format	Computer-based
Questions	50 multiple-choice questions and one practical scenario-based task
Duration	90 Minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 80%
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	There are none that are as extensive as BPM.

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-628 - Broadcast Project Management
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	
Cost for Instructor Training	$1,495
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-628 - Broadcast Project Management</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification does not align with statewide or regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>51-5111</td><td>Prepress Technicians and Workers</td><td>325</td><td>$44,800</td></tr>
</table>
Additional Related Occupations:
Broadcast Technician — 27-4012.00
Audio and Video Technician — 27-4011.00
Film and Video Editor / Camera Operator — 27-4031.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>51-5111</td><td>Prepress Technicians and Workers</td><td>Postsecondary nondegree award</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-628 - Broadcast Project Management
TAC Review Summary	*No specific comments were offered on Broadcast Project Management; however, in the broader digital/media discussion, business and postsecondary partners stressed that portfolios and a narrowed, high-value certification set are more important than maintaining a long list of lightly-used credentials.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-629 - CAT SimScholars Certification

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-629 - CAT SimScholars Certification
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 3 (Career Ready, 3 Points): High-rigor certifications that demonstrate career readiness and are recognized by employers for hiring or advancement.
Career Cluster	Construction
Career Pathway(s)	Heavy Equipment Operator
Associated CTE Course(s)	Heavy Equipment Operator (68B0,68B1,68B2) - Innovative Courses
Vendor	CAT Simulators/Simformotion
Description	The SIMSCHOLARS Certification is a comprehensive instructional curriculum designed to support the training and preparation of heavy equipment operators. It provides structured lesson plans, instructional materials, and aligned assessments that build foundational knowledge in equipment operation, safety, and industry practices.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Career Opportunities • Construction Stakes • Earthmoving • Earthmoving Equipment • Excavating • Grading Slopes • Identify Heavy Equipment • Mining • Operating Heavy Equipment • Prepare Graded Surfaces • Safety Requirements • SDCB Forklifts • Trenching • Utility Tractors
Exam Blueprint	https://simformotion.com/simscholars-curriculum/ https://lms.simscholars.com

Certification ID and Name	P-629 - CAT SimScholars Certification
Format	Computer-based, Performance-based
Questions	25-30 Depending on Module
Duration	No Time Limit - Class period is 2 hours and 30 minutes
Scoring	70-Beginner; 80-Intermediate; 85-Advanced
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-629 - CAT SimScholars Certification
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	Included in yearly subscription - $3,500/year
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	Yearly subscription

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-629 - CAT SimScholars Certification</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>49-3042</td><td>Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines</td><td>3,077</td><td>$61,500</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-9012</td><td>Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door</td><td>497</td><td>$63,100</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3043</td><td>Rail Car Repairers</td><td>175</td><td>$64,200</td></tr>
</table>
Additional related occupations:
Other Construction Equipment Operators 47-2073</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>49-3042</td><td>Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-9012</td><td>Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3043</td><td>Rail Car Repairers</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-629 - CAT SimScholars Certification
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-630 - CAT Simulator Certification

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-630 - CAT Simulator Certification
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Construction
Career Pathway(s)	Heavy Equipment Operator
Associated CTE Course(s)	Heavy Equipment Operator (68B0,68B1,68B2) - Innovative Courses
Vendor	CAT Simulators/Simformotion
Description	The NCCER simulation-based credential is an industry-recognized credential for heavy equipment operations that integrates Cat® simulator training with NCCER classroom curriculum and assessment. Through aligned resources from NCCER and Simformotion™, learners gain realistic, hands-on training in a safe virtual environment while developing the knowledge and skills required of heavy equipment operators. To earn the credential, organizations must offer heavy equipment operations training using the NCCER curriculum and Cat Simulator systems; simulator performance serves as the performance profile for each NCCER module. Candidates complete simulator training, submit a simulated performance evaluation through NCCER's performance application, and pass the associated NCCER module test to validate competency. Organizations that are not NCCER-accredited may still use Cat Simulators for instruction, but only accredited organizations can award the NCCER simulation-based credential.

Certification ID and Name	P-630 - CAT Simulator Certification
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Career Opportunities • Construction Stakes • Earthmoving • Earthmoving Equipment • Excavating • Grading Slopes • Identify Heavy Equipment • Mining • Operating Heavy Equipment • Prepare Graded Surfaces • Safety Requirements • SDCB Forklifts • Trenching • Utility Tractors
Exam Blueprint	https://catsimulators.com/nccer-credential/
Format	Computer-based, Performance-based
Questions	Varies by Exercise/Assessment on the Simulator
Duration	No Time Limit - Class Time - 2hours 30 minutes
Scoring	70-Beginner; 80-Intermediate; 85-Advanced
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-630 - CAT Simulator Certification
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	Included in yearly subscription - $3,500/year
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	Yearly subscription - $3,500/year

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-630 - CAT Simulator Certification</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>49-3042</td><td>Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines</td><td>3,077</td><td>$61,500</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-9012</td><td>Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door</td><td>497</td><td>$63,100</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3043</td><td>Rail Car Repairers</td><td>175</td><td>$64,200</td></tr>
</table>
Additional related occupations:
Other Construction Equipment Operators 47-2073</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>49-3042</td><td>Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-9012</td><td>Control and Valve Installers and Repairers, Except Mechanical Door</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>49-3043</td><td>Rail Car Repairers</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-630 - CAT Simulator Certification
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-631 - YouScience Industry Certification: Exploring Computer Science

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-631 - YouScience Industry Certification: Exploring Computer Science
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 1 (Introductory, 1 Point): Entry-level certification earned early in a CTE program sequence.
Career Cluster	Digital Technology
Career Pathway(s)	Programming and Software Development Related: Web & Digital Communications and Game & Interactive Media Design
Associated CTE Course(s)	Fundamentals of Computing 5023
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The Exploring Computer Science industry certification exam is designed to introduce learners to the breadth of the field of computer science through the exploration of engaging and accessible topics. The exam focuses on core computing concepts and assesses learners' understanding of why certain tools or languages might be used to solve particular problems. The goal is to evaluate learners' computational thinking practices of algorithm development, problem-solving, and programming within the context of problems relevant to their lives. The exam also covers topics such as artificial intelligence, web development, programming, and physical computing.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Computer science practices • Problem-solving with computers • Web development • Programming and algorithms
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Exploring-Computer-Science.pdf

Certification ID and Name	P-631 - YouScience Industry Certification: Exploring Computer Science
Format	Computer-based
Questions	34
Duration	60 Minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 70
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-631 -YouScience Industry Certification: Exploring Computer Science
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-631 -YouScience Industry Certification: Exploring Computer Science</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>15-1252</td><td>Software Developers</td><td>14,331</td><td>$118,800</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1231</td><td>Computer Network Support Specialists</td><td>2,069</td><td>$72,300</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1253</td><td>Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers</td><td>1,566</td><td>$93,900</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1251</td><td>Computer Programmers</td><td>1,205</td><td>$107,600</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1254</td><td>Web Developers</td><td>826</td><td>$83,400</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1255</td><td>Web and Digital Interface Designers</td><td>778</td><td>$78,000</td></tr>
<tr><td>25-1021</td><td>Computer Science Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>470</td><td>$93,400</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>15-1252</td><td>Software Developers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1231</td><td>Computer Network Support Specialists</td><td>Associate's degree</td><td>Moderate-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1253</td><td>Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1251</td><td>Computer Programmers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1254</td><td>Web Developers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>15-1255</td><td>Web and Digital Interface Designers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>25-1021</td><td>Computer Science Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>Doctoral or professional degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-631 -YouScience Industry Certification: Exploring Computer Science
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification. Many industry partners are unfamiliar with YouScience Certifications.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-632 - Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-632 - Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Arts, Entertainment, and Design
Career Pathway(s)	Media Technology
Associated CTE Course(s)	6124 Media Technology 1 6125 Media Technology 2 6126 Media Technology 3 6127 Media Technology 4
Vendor	Future Media Technology
Description	This certification validates foundational proficiency in video editing using Final Cut Pro, a professional, industry-standard editing software. Learners develop skills across the full editing workflow, including media organization, timeline editing, visual and audio enhancement, and exporting for digital and social media platforms. The certification is well-suited for emerging content creators, filmmakers, and social media professionals seeking to produce high-quality, polished video content for a variety of audiences and purposes.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Working with an iPhone for Video and Post-Production • Final Cut Pro for iPad • Workspaces- Import and Organize • Transitions, Speed, and Effects • Basic Clip Navigation, Creating Projects, and Editing Video • Working with Sound • Transforming Clips • Color Correction and Multicam • Publishing Video to Social • Titles

Certification ID and Name	P-632 - Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification
Exam Blueprint	https://fcpcertification.com/live-courses/final-cut-pro-for-social-media/
Format	Computer-based
Questions	50 questions
Duration	75 minute timed exam
Scoring	Passing Score: 80% or higher
Retest Option	Yes, after a 24 hour waiting period
Similar Approved Certifications	463 - Adobe Certified Professional Visual Design Specialist (ACP-VDS)

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-632 - Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	None
Testing Cost	$149
Cost for Instructor Training	$2,000
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-632 - Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification does not align with statewide or regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>27-4012</td><td>Broadcast Technicians</td><td>247</td><td>$ 47,280.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-4031</td><td>Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Film</td><td>245</td><td>$ 59,690.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-4032</td><td>Film and Video Editors</td><td>347</td><td>$ 49,630.00</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>27-4012</td><td>Broadcast Technicians</td><td>Associate's degree</td><td>Short-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-4031</td><td>Camera Operators, Television, Video, and Film</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-4032</td><td>Film and Video Editors</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-632 - Final Cut Pro Social Pro Certification
TAC Review Summary	*No direct comments were made about Final Cut Pro Social Pro; within the digital/media discussion, participants signaled that software-specific credentials should be retained only if employers actually request them, since portfolios and a smaller, better-targeted list are more important than accumulating many media badges.*

Links

Application Card - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2: Intermediate - Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge
Career Cluster	Digital Technology
Career Pathway(s)	Game and Interactive Media Design
Associated CTE Course(s)	Game Design And Development - 5352
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The Game Development Fundamentals industry certification exam assesses learners' knowledge and project-based experience of fundamental game development concepts relating to STEM. Concepts assessed include game design, scripting, creation of digital assets, graphic resources, animation, understanding of hardware, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and project management.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Video Game History • Communication Features and Game Interface Design • Game Platforms • Game Genres and Types • Game Design Production Cycle • Understanding Careers
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Game-Development-Fundamentals-1.pdf
Format	Computer-based
Questions	30 questions
Duration	1 hour

Certification ID and Name	P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1
Scoring	Passing Score: 72%
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None Identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>25-1199</td><td>Postsecondary Teachers, All Other</td><td>2,231</td><td>$62,200</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1014</td><td>Special Effects Artists and Animators</td><td>517</td><td>$86,900</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Certification ID and Name	P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1			
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	**SOC**	**Occupation**	**Typical Education Needed for Entry**	**Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency**
	25-1199	Postsecondary Teachers, All Other	Doctoral or professional degree	None
	27-1014	Special Effects Artists and Animators	Bachelor's degree	None

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-633 - YouScience Industry Certification: Game Development Fundamentals 1
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification. Many industry partners are unfamiliar with YouScience Certifications.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 3 (Career Ready, 3 Points): High-rigor certifications that demonstrate career readiness and are recognized by employers for hiring or advancement.
Career Cluster	Digital Technology
Career Pathway(s)	Game and Interactive Media Design (500411) Related: Web and Digital Communications (110801) Graphic Communications (100301) Digital Art and Design (500402)
Associated CTE Course(s)	Foundations Of Animation Course Code: 5350 Advanced Animation Course Code: 5351
Vendor	Toon Boom
Description	The Toon Boom Harmony Premium Associate Certification validates foundational skills in Toon Boom's industry-standard animation software, proving competency in key areas like software navigation, drawing, rigging cut-out puppets, compositing, applying effects, staging scenes, and exporting projects, essential for entry-level animation roles and further specialization. It confirms understanding of core animation principles and software functionality.

Certification ID and Name	P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• History of Animation • Animation Techniques • Animation Principles • Animation Pipeline • Efficiency & Organization • Project Creation • Interface Navigation • Drawing Tools • Bitmap Drawing • Design • Layout • Layers • Paperless Animation • Timing & Drawing Exposure • Visual Reference Tools • Color Styling • Color Palettes • Painting • Rigging • Cut-out Animation • Library & Templates • Lip-Sync • Sound • Import • Staging • Keyframes & Motion • Camera Move • Playback • Composting & Effects • Node System • 3D Space • Exporting
Exam Blueprint	https://learn.toonboom.com/files/modules/253/en/Toon%20Boom%20Harmony%20Premium%20Associate%20Certification%20Study%20Guide.zip
Format	Computer-based
Questions	35
Duration	45 minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes, each voucher allows three attempts at completing the exam.
Similar Approved Certifications	160 – ACE-Web Communications with Animate CC 359 – AutoDesk Maya 372 – YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation 460 – Adobe Certified Professional (ACP) Using Adobe Animate 461 – Adobe Certified Professional (ACP) Visual Effects & Motion Graphics Using Adobe After Effects 462 – Adobe Certified Professional Video Design Specialist (ACP-VDP) 463 - Adobe Certified Professional in Video Design 575 – YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation I 576 – YouScience Industry Certification: 3D Animation II 514 - Unity Certified User: Artist 515 - Unity Certified User: Programmer 516 - Unity Certified User: VR Developer

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	None
Testing Cost	$75
Cost for Instructor Training	None, training is free.
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

Certification ID and Name	P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification
Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages	Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.

SOC	Occupation	Current Employment	Median Annual Wage
25-1194	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary	1,306	$74,710
27-1024	**Graphic Designers**	**3,042**	$56,180
27-1014	Special Effects Artists and Animators	517	$86,900
15-1255	Web and Digital Interface Designers	778	$70,690
15-1254	**Web Developers**	**826**	$83,200

Certification ID and Name	P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification			
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	**SOC**	**Occupation**	**Typical Education Needed for Entry**	**Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency**
	25-1194	Career/Technical Education Teachers, Postsecondary	Bachelor's degree	None
	27-1024	**Graphic Designers**	**Bachelor's degree**	**None**
	27-1014	Special Effects Artists and Animators	Bachelor's degree	None
	15-1255	Web and Digital Interface Designers	Bachelor's degree	None
	15-1254	**Web Developers**	**Bachelor's degree**	**None**

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-634 - Harmony Premium Associate Certification
TAC Review Summary	*There was no specific feedback on Harmony Premium Associate, but TAC members cautioned against relying on platform-only credentials that lack a visible industry backer, recommending a focus on certifications tied to recognized companies or professional associations.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-635 - YouScience Industry Certification: Network Fundamentals

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-635 - YouScience Industry Certification: Network Fundamentals
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2: Intermediate - Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge
Career Cluster	Digital Technology
Career Pathway(s)	Networking Systems Related: Computer and Information Systems Security/Information Assurance Programming and Software Development Web and Digital Communications
Associated CTE Course(s)	Cyber Security Fundamentals 5370 Networking Fundamentals 5310
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The Network Fundamentals industry certification exam assesses the knowledge and skills required to implement a defined network architecture with basic network security. Learners demonstrate their ability to configure, maintain, and troubleshoot network devices using appropriate network tools. Learners also show an understanding of the features and purpose of network technologies, make basic solution recommendations, analyze network traffic, and are familiar with common protocols and media types.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	● Networking concepts ● Network installation and configuration ● Network media and topologies ● Network management ● Network security

Certification ID and Name	P-635 - YouScience Industry Certification: Network Fundamentals
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Network-Fundamentals.pdf
Format	Computer-based
Questions	67
Duration	1 hour and 20 minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	301 - Network Technology Associates

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-635 - YouScience Industry Certification: Network Fundamentals
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

Certification ID and Name	P-635 - YouScience Industry Certification: Network Fundamentals

Occupational Alignment with Mean Annual Wages

SOC Title	SOC Code	Annual Median Salary
Computer and Information Systems Managers	11-3021	$142,490
Computer Network Architects	15-1241	$112,850
Computer Network Support Specialists	**15-1231**	$66,560
Computer Science Teachers, Postsecondary	25-1021	$82,520
Computer Systems Analysts	**15-1211**	$94,740
Information Security Analysts	15-1212	$109,300

Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements

SOC	Occupation	Typical Education Needed for Entry	Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency
11-3021	Computer and Information Systems Managers	**Bachelor's degree**	**None**
15-1241	Computer Network Architects	Bachelor's degree	None
15-1231	**Computer Network Support Specialists**	**Associate's degree**	**Moderate-term on-the-job training**
25-1021	Computer Science Teachers, Postsecondary	Doctoral or professional degree	None
15-1211	**Computer Systems Analysts**	**Bachelor's degree**	**None**
15-1212	Information Security Analysts	Bachelor's degree	None

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-635 - YouScience Industry Certification: Network Fundamentals
TAC Review Summary	*IT and digital TAC members consistently pointed to CompTIA A+, Network+, Security+, and Cisco CCNA as the "core big three" or key networking credentials with clear value and recognition. They expressed skepticism about lower-profile networking certifications that do not appear in job postings and indicated those should likely be removed or deprioritized.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Marketing & Sales (Primary) Management & Entrepreneurship Financial Services
Career Pathway(s)	Marketing Analytics Marketing Communications Marketing Management Merchandising
Associated CTE Course(s)	Marketing 5421 Fashion Marketing 5410 Marketing Management 5431 Merchandising 5430
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The Retailing industry certification exam assesses learners' understanding of how to operate businesses that sell, rent, or lease goods and services. Learners demonstrate their understanding of the theory and application of merchandise/service assortment, pricing, promotion mix, location, store layout, and customer service activities necessary for successful retail operations. The exam also evaluates participation in a related CTSO organization for students enrolled in marketing courses.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Operations Management • Buying and Merchandising • Customer Experience • Sales and Promotions • Employability
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Retailing.pdf

Certification ID and Name	P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing
Format	Computer-based
Questions	42
Duration	50 minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 35.35 of 47 points
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>25-1011</td><td>Business Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>1,514</td><td>$79,060</td></tr>
<tr><td>13-1161</td><td>Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists</td><td>11,340</td><td>$66,110</td></tr>
<tr><td>11-2021</td><td>Marketing Managers</td><td>3,637</td><td>$124,000</td></tr>
<tr><td>19-3022</td><td>Survey Researchers</td><td>155</td><td>$63,400</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Certification ID and Name	P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing			
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	**SOC**	**Occupation**	**Typical Education Needed for Entry**	**Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency**
	25-1011	Business Teachers, Postsecondary	Doctoral or professional degree	**None**
	13-1161	**Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists**	**Bachelor's degree**	**None**
	11-2021	Marketing Managers	Bachelor's degree	None
	19-3022	Survey Researchers	Master's degree	None

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-636 - YouScience Industry Certification: Retailing
TAC Review Summary	*In both agriculture and marketing TACs, participants highlighted the need to distinguish between certifications that really support employability (e.g., OSHA-10, BASF, National Association of Landscape Professionals, SFMA) and those that exist only within a vendor's library. They repeatedly said the list should not be expanded simply to add more low-stakes or vendor-created tests that do not show up in job ads.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-637 - SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-637 - SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Agriculture
Career Pathway(s)	Horticulture (010601) Related: Plant and Animal Systems (011101) Biosystems Engineering Technology (140301)
Associated CTE Course(s)	Turf and Lawn Management 5654 Sports Turf Management 5655
Vendor	iCEV Provider: Sports Field Management Association
Description	The SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification verifies individuals who have obtained foundational knowledge and skills in the areas of turfgrass science and management, as well as the ability to pursue a career in the turfgrass industry. The certification assesses industry-recognized standards developed by the Sports Field Management Association. Comprised of sports field managers from across the country, SFMA serves as an official voice for green-industry professionals. The certification validates that individuals have acquired knowledge and skills in turfgrass development, turfgrass environment, preparation, practices and benefits. Those who earn the certification are more qualified and prepared to pursue a meaningful career in the turfgrass or sports field management industries. Additionally, the certification allows employers to identify and connect with more skilled candidates, filling gaps in the labor market and jumpstarting individuals' careers.

Certification ID and Name	P-637 - SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Benefits of Turfgrass • Turfgrass Anatomy, Identification and Adaptations • Turfgrass Environment • Turfgrass Cultural Practices • Playing Surface Preparation
Exam Blueprint	https://www.icevonline.com/hubfs/Certfications/Certification%20Blueprints/Blueprint_SFMATurfgrassScienceCert.pdf
Format	Computer-based
Questions	100
Duration	2 hours
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes, the candidate must pay the full exam price to retest.
Similar Approved Certifications	None Identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-637 - SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	None
Testing Cost	iCEV offers a certification subscription for $35/year, sold in bundles of 25 for $875. Certification vouchers cover one exam attempt and cost $50 for iCEV subscribers & $75 for non-iCEV subscribers.
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-637 - SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>25-1041</td><td>Agricultural Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>82</td><td>$88,000</td></tr>
<tr><td>25-9021</td><td>Farm and Home Management Educators</td><td>147</td><td>$52,900</td></tr>
<tr><td>11-9013</td><td>Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers</td><td>7,198</td><td>$81,500</td></tr>
<tr><td>37-1012</td><td>First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers</td><td>4,093</td><td>$58,500</td></tr>
<tr><td>37-3011</td><td>Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers</td><td>20,891</td><td>$37,400</td></tr>
</table>
Additional related occupations:
Construction Laborers 47-2060</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>25-1041</td><td>Agricultural Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>Doctoral or professional degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>25-9021</td><td>Farm and Home Management Educators</td><td>Master's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>11-9013</td><td>Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>37-1012</td><td>First-Line Supervisors of Landscaping, Lawn Service, and Groundskeeping Workers</td><td>High school diploma or equivalent</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>37-3011</td><td>Landscaping and Groundskeeping Workers</td><td>None</td><td>Short-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-637 - SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification
TAC Review Summary	*Stakeholders strongly supported keeping the SFMA Turfgrass Science Certification and recommended aligning it specifically to the horticulture pathway, citing rapid growth in turfgrass careers and strong industry recognition via SFMA even though it is delivered on the ICEV platform.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Advanced Manufacturing
Career Pathway(s)	Siemens Engineering Related: Machine Technology Mechatronics Integrated Technologies Core Engineering
Associated CTE Course(s)	Siemens Manufacturing and Automation - 57R1
Vendor	Siemens Digital Industries

Certification ID and Name	P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge
Description	The Siemens TIA (Totally Integrated Automation) Portal Basics Badge is awarded to students who demonstrate foundational understanding of Siemens TIA Portal software and S7-1200 PLC (Programmable Logic Controller) concepts, including creating projects, adding hardware, and answering basic programming questions. Students who complete the Siemens Manufacturing and Automation course within the Advanced Manufacturing pathway will have the knowledge and skills needed to sit for the certification exam. The Siemens SCE (Siemens Cooperates with Education) Automation Fundamentals Certification provides a structured method for training and verifying a candidate's ability to implement a Totally Integrated Automation solution using sound engineering and SIMATIC best practices. After meeting training and knowledge requirements—either through Siemens materials or experiential learning—candidates sit for a three-part electronic exam covering PLC, HMI (Human-Machine Interface)/Networking, and Drives, with the option to test and earn certification in each area independently.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Support creation of a PLC application program using Ladder Logic (LAD), following the SIMATIC recommended best practices • Troubleshoot errors associated with the automation system • Troubleshoot functional errors in the application program or equipment under control • Manage project-related tasks • Recognize key S7-1200 and TIA Portal features and documentation
Exam Blueprint	https://www.sitrain.us/LMS/CourseView.aspx?cps=1186&view=course&coursecode=SCT-CEPLCS1A
Format	Computer-based
Questions	90 multiple-choice
Duration	No time limit
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes. The candidate may take the exam up to three times in one calendar year.
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge
Proctor Required	None

Certification ID and Name	P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge
Test Site Requirements	None
Testing Cost	$0
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>11-9041</td><td>Architectural and Engineering Managers</td><td>3,142</td><td>$ 163,790.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>25-1032</td><td>Engineering Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>692</td><td>$ 96,720.00</td></tr>
<tr><td>17-2199</td><td>Engineers, All Other</td><td>1,725</td><td>$ 117,980.00</td></tr>
</table>
Other related occupations:
Electrical Engineers: 17-2071
Mechanical Engineers: 17-2141
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers: 51-2028</td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>11-9041</td><td>Architectural and Engineering Managers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>25-1032</td><td>Engineering Teachers, Postsecondary</td><td>Doctoral or professional degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>17-2199</td><td>Engineers, All Other</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-638 - Siemens Automation Fundamentals Certification PLC Badge
TAC Review Summary	*No one named the Siemens Automation Fundamentals PLC badge specifically, but feedback supports treating Siemens/PLC credentials as higher-tier, end-of-program options with clear hiring value in advanced manufacturing, rather than as low-tier early course certifications.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-639 - TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-639 - TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Arts, Entertainment, and Design
Career Pathway(s)	Digital Art and Design (500402) Related: Graphic Communications (100301) Media Technology (100299)
Associated CTE Course(s)	Digital Art And Design 1 – 4 (6120, 6121, 6121, 6123) Graphic Communications 1 – 4 (6200, 6201, 6202, 6203)
Vendor	Isograd
Description	The TOSA InDesign Certification validates a learner's proficiency in Adobe InDesign, assessing skills in layout design, text and image management, and document preparation for print and digital media. It aligns closely with South Carolina's Digital Art and Design and Graphic Communications CTE courses, which emphasize visual communication, digital publishing, and print production using industry-standard software. Integrating TOSA InDesign within these pathways reinforces core course objectives by providing students with a measurable, globally recognized credential that demonstrates professional-level design and production skills relevant to modern creative industries.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Interface, digital workspace, and fundamentals • Text and tables • Images and graphic objects • Preparation for printing
Exam Blueprint	https://static.TOSA.org/TOSAorg_1/pdf/skillsframeworks/indesign_en.pdf
Format	Computer-based

Certification ID and Name	P-639 - TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign
Questions	35
Duration	1 hour
Scoring	Numeric score between 1 and 1,000 points that corresponds to a proficiency level as described: Expert Level: 876 to 1,000; Advanced Level: 726 to 875; Productive Level: 551 to 725; Basic Level: 351 to 550; Beginner Level: 1 to 350. Students earn a certificate at the Productive Level and above.
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-639 - TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	Yes
Testing Cost	$16-$45 without courseware, $22.50-$70 with courseware
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-639 - TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>27-1019</td><td>Artists and Related Workers, All Other</td><td>150</td><td>$65,700</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1021</td><td>Commercial and Industrial Designers</td><td>486</td><td>$83,610</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1024</td><td>Graphic Designers</td><td>3,042</td><td>$56,180</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>27-1019</td><td>Artists and Related Workers, All Other</td><td>None</td><td>Long-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1021</td><td>Commercial and Industrial Designers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1024</td><td>Graphic Designers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-639 - TOSA Certification for Adobe InDesign
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-640 - TOSA Certification for Adobe Premiere Pro

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-640 - TOSA Certification for Adobe Premiere Pro
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Arts, Entertainment, and Design
Career Pathway(s)	Digital Art and Design (500402) Related: Media Technology (100299) Graphic Communications (100301)
Associated CTE Course(s)	Digital Art and Design 1 - 4 (6120, 6121, 6121, 6123) Graphic Communications 1 - 4 (6200, 6201, 6202, 6203) Media Technology 1 – 4 (6124, 6125, 6126, 6127)
Vendor	Isograd
Description	The TOSA Adobe Premiere Pro Certification validates a learner's ability to use industry-standard video-editing tools and assesses skills in project setup, visual editing, color correction, audio adjustments, motion graphics, and media publishing. It aligns closely with K-12 and CTE pathways in South Carolina that emphasize digital media production, audiovisual communication, and creative technology. Integrating TOSA Premiere Pro into these programs supports core course objectives by providing students with a measurable, globally recognized credential that demonstrates the professional-level editing and production skills required in modern digital media careers.
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Environment and Project Set Up • Visual Elements • Video Project Structure and Industry • Publishing Digital Media
Exam Blueprint	https://static.TOSA.org/TOSAorg_1/pdf/skillsframeworks/premierepro_en.pdf

Certification ID and Name	P-640 - TOSA Certification for Adobe Premiere Pro
Format	Computer-based
Questions	35
Duration	1 hour
Scoring	Numeric score between 1 and 1,000 points that corresponds to a proficiency level as described: Expert Level: 876 to 1,000; Advanced Level: 726 to 875; Productive Level: 551 to 725; Basic Level: 351 to 550; Beginner Level: 1 to 350. Students earn a certificate at the Productive Level and above.
Retest Option	Yes
Similar Approved Certifications	None identified

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-640 - TOSA Certification for Adobe Premiere Pro
Proctor Required	Yes
Test Site Requirements	None
Testing Cost	$16-$45 without courseware, $22.50-$70 with courseware
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

<table>
<tr><th>Certification ID and Name</th><th>P-640 - TOSA Certification for Adobe Premiere Pro</th></tr>
<tr><td>Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages</td><td>Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Current Employment</th><th>Median Annual Wage</th></tr>
<tr><td>27-1019</td><td>Artists and Related Workers, All Other</td><td>150</td><td>$65,700</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1021</td><td>Commercial and Industrial Designers</td><td>486</td><td>$83,610</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1024</td><td>Graphic Designers</td><td>3,042</td><td>$56,180</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>SOC</th><th>Occupation</th><th>Typical Education Needed for Entry</th><th>Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency</th></tr>
<tr><td>27-1019</td><td>Artists and Related Workers, All Other</td><td>None</td><td>Long-term on-the-job training</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1021</td><td>Commercial and Industrial Designers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
<tr><td>27-1024</td><td>Graphic Designers</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td><td>None</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-640 - TOSA Certification for Adobe Premiere Pro
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CAREER READINESS

P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry

Certification Details

Certification ID and Name	P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry
Application Type	New Certification
Recommended Tier	Tier 2 (Intermediate, 2 Points): Certifications requiring additional coursework, skills, or specialized knowledge.
Career Cluster	Construction
Career Pathway(s)	Carpentry
Associated CTE Course(s)	Carpentry 1 - 4 (6091, 6092, 6093, 6094)
Vendor	YouScience
Description	The Carpentry industry certification exam assesses the learner's ability to lay out, fabricate, erect, install, and repair wooden structures and fixtures using hand and power tools. The exam assesses knowledge of common systems of framing, construction materials, blueprint reading, concrete placement, siding, and mechanical systems. This certification is similar in nature to the NCCER certification but is accessible to students with Visual Disabilities
Skills/Concepts Assessed	• Materials, Fasteners, and Adhesives • Safety Practices • Concrete & Reinforcing Materials • Framing 5. Windows and Doors Installation • Roofing Installation • Insulation Installation • Drywall Installation and Finishing • Interior Finishing • Professional Skills
Exam Blueprint	https://www.youscience.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Carpentry.pdf
Format	Computer-based, Performance-based

Certification ID and Name	P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry
Questions	73
Duration	60 - 90 minutes
Scoring	Passing Score: 70%
Retest Option	Yes, after a prescribed waiting period
Similar Approved Certifications	326 - CTECS Carpentry Certification 26 - NCCER Carpentry

Administration Requirements

Certification ID and Name	P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry
Proctor Required	Yes - the instructor can serve as the proctor.
Test Site Requirements	No - any partnering site can host the exam.
Testing Cost	$20/student or $5,450 annual site license
Cost for Instructor Training	None
Other Costs	None

Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review)

The Workforce and Talent Development Alignment (SCDEW Review) section uses each program's primary CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code and SOC–CIP crosswalk data to illustrate alignment between CTE programs, regional occupations and median wages, and related postsecondary programs. Occupations listed in bold are also on the state's priority occupations list.

Certification ID and Name	P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry
Occupational Alignment with Median Annual Wages	Certification aligns with both statewide and regional priority occupations.

SOC	Occupation	Current Employment	Median Annual Wage
47-2031	**Carpenters**	**12,322**	**$ 48,910**
47-1011	**First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers**	**14,349**	**$74,240**

Certification ID and Name	P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry			
Alignment with Postsecondary Programs – Education and Training Requirements	**SOC**	**Occupation**	**Typical Education Needed for Entry**	**Typical On-the-Job Training Needed to Attain Competency**
	47-2031	**Carpenters**	**High school diploma or equivalent**	**Apprenticeship**
	47-1011	**First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers**	**High school diploma or equivalent**	**None**

Technical Advisory Committee Feedback

Certification ID and Name	P-641 - YouScience Industry Certification: Carpentry
TAC Review Summary	*No specific feedback was provided on this certification. Many industry partners are unfamiliar with YouScience Certifications.*

Links

Review Documentation - Contains full SCDE internal review, DEW review, and TAC review.

Full Application - Initially submitted application.