

TEACHER VARIETY

PATHWAYS TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION



Traditional Preparation

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM “TRADITIONALLY-PREPARED” TEACHER?

Traditionally-prepared teachers have completed a four- or five-year undergraduate teacher education program, or a one- to two-year graduate teacher education program, from an accredited college or university.

ARE THERE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN THE PRE-SERVICE EXPERIENCES OF TRADITIONALLY-PREPARED TEACHERS?

Though they have graduated from teacher education programs at accredited institutions of higher education (IHE), traditionally-prepared teachers may not all have acquired the same knowledge base or experienced the same variety of field experiences while completing their program. With regard to the knowledge base, required coursework could differ in such areas as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), literacy, and working with children in poverty. With regard to field experiences, some teacher education students will have had a variety of field experiences in diverse school settings, while others may have had fewer experiences in diverse settings. The location of an IHE may have been a factor in its ability to provide a variety of types of field experiences.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

Traditionally-prepared teachers have worked for at least four years, and in some cases up to six, to earn their teaching degrees and be eligible to teach in a South Carolina public school. They typically have been focused on the goal of becoming teachers and are confident in their choice of careers. Presumably they are excited to be starting their first position as a teacher, and they want to be successful. Even though they are at the beginning of their careers, these teachers have a broad base of knowledge and experiences on which to rely during their early years of teaching, including exposure to new strategies and techniques. They also should have basic familiarity with planning and execution of lessons as well as managing the classroom.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

In most cases traditionally-prepared teachers will be entering the “real world” of full-time employment, financial autonomy, and independent living as they exit their IHE and enter the public school system. They will be going through an adjustment period that goes beyond simply starting a new job. All new teachers may at times be overwhelmed with the realities of the classroom as compared to the idealism with which they began their year. They may find themselves questioning their preparation, mistrusting their judgment and feeling very isolated.

Program for Alternative Certification for Educators

WHAT IS PACE?

The Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) is a unique, state-sponsored program designed for career changers who have college degrees but have not taken the education courses and exams to certify them as teachers to be employed in public schools. To be admitted into the three-year program, candidates must take and pass the appropriate ETS Praxis II subject area examination. After they secure employment in a South Carolina public school, they begin the course work in the content area and grade level for which they were admitted to earn K-12, middle level, or secondary certification. Participants must successfully complete the initial ten-day course (PACE pre-service institute, which is offered in July and again in the winter), a second ten-day course (PACE in-service, which is offered in June), and six weekend seminars. Participants must also pass three required college courses approved by the Office of Educator Services as well as pass the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) Praxis exam appropriate to the teacher's certification grade level.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

These teachers are very diverse in age, ethnicity, training, experiences, and professions. Because they have had some experience working in a career, they often bring employment skills applicable to teaching. Generally speaking, they exhibit a maturity, perseverance, idealism, and intentionality in seeking teacher certification. Because most of these adults have families and must consider their financial obligations, they welcome the opportunity to receive a salary while at the same time earning their teacher certification at nominal fees. The coursework that this group of teachers complete through the twenty-six days of intense instruction builds knowledge of classroom management, instructional strategies, lesson plans, parent interactions, best practices, assessment, special needs students, education theorists, ADEPT, and much more.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

As is the case with most beginning teachers, the PACE teachers' idealism and optimism can get quickly hindered by the complexity and the challenges of the profession. Many are coming from careers in which they were highly capable and respected whereas others have left careers in which they lacked fulfillment. Placing high expectations on themselves, PACE participants strive to be highly effective teachers but often experience stress and various degrees of disillusionment in the process. Most are also spouses and parents who have family obligations as well, so often they are concerned about the time commitments of teaching.

Adjunct Teaching Certificate

WHAT IS AN ADJUNCT TEACHING CERTIFICATE?

The Adjunct Teaching Certificate gives individuals with knowledge and experience in certain content areas the opportunity to share their expertise in the classroom. Teachers with an adjunct certificate have at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college, as well as either a major in a current South Carolina certificate area or a passing score on the required content examination for the certificate area. They also must have had a minimum of five years of occupational work experience within the past ten years in, or related to, the content field of the certificate area.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

Teachers with adjunct certificates generally have a strong desire to teach and/or to "give back" to the community. In some cases they may be retired following a successful career in their field, and they may have been sought out to teach by the school district. These teachers will bring to the classroom a strong knowledge base, a maturity level, and a point of view centered in the realities of the world outside of the K-12, college, or university experience. They may teach only up to two credit-bearing classes per school year, so they generally will be working only a portion of the school day.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

These teachers likely have little or no experience as a teacher in the public school classroom setting. As a result, they may not be aware of the many routine procedures and expectations. They will have had little exposure to such responsibilities as planning, assessment, instructional strategies, and classroom management. They also may be unaware of standard strategies and techniques in these areas. Like all new teachers, they may at times be overwhelmed with the realities of the classroom and feelings of isolation and frustration. When working with teachers with adjunct certificates, avoid the use of typical education jargon with which they may be unfamiliar, and take steps to make them feel comfortable asking questions that otherwise may seem simplistic.

The American Board

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN BOARD?

The American Board is a non-partisan, non-profit organization established by the United States Department of Education. In June 2007 the South Carolina General Assembly passed the American Board for the Certification of Teacher Excellence Act, which allows public school districts or charter schools to hire individuals who use The American Board process to obtain a South Carolina teaching certificate in one of the following middle or secondary content areas: biology, chemistry, English language arts, general science, mathematics, or physics. These teachers have earned at least a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university, passed the required American Board examinations in the subject area, and met all program requirements.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

American Board-certified teachers generally have a strong desire to teach, having sought out The American Board process for obtaining teacher certification. In many cases they will have had work experience in their certification content area, and they may bring to the classroom a level of maturity and wisdom.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

These teachers likely have little or no experience as a teacher in the public school classroom setting. As a result, they may not be aware of the many routine procedures and expectations. They will have had little exposure to such responsibilities as planning, assessment, instructional strategies, and classroom management. They also may be unaware of standard strategies and techniques in these areas. Like all new teachers, they may at times be overwhelmed with the realities of the classroom and feelings of isolation and frustration. When working with American Board-certified teachers, avoid the use of typical education jargon with which they may be unfamiliar, and take steps to make them feel comfortable asking questions that otherwise may seem simplistic.

Teach For America

WHAT IS TEACH FOR AMERICA?

Teach for America (TFA) is a national program that recruits and trains top college graduates, who then commit to teach for two years in rural and high-need public schools. The South Carolina Board of Education adopted a resolution on October 13, 2010, to implement the TFA program in South Carolina. TFA participants must have earned at least a bachelor's degree (or higher) from a regionally accredited college or university or an institution with a teacher education program that has been approved by the South Carolina Board of Education. They also must have received a passing score on the required content area examination for the certification area. TFA participants must complete the approved TFA pre-service training institute as well as the regional orientation to the schools and communities in which the participants will be teaching.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

TFA participants are presumed to be eager to teach in rural and high-need schools. They will have had some pre-service training to learn about pedagogy and specific expectations in such areas as planning, assessment and classroom management. During their time in the TFA program, they also are assigned a full-time TFA instructional coach who will observe them and engage them in joint problem-solving to improve their practice. TFA participants receive toolkits that include sample assessments, standards, and teaching resources customized for their grade levels, subjects, and districts; they will meet periodically in content-area and grade-level learning teams; and they will have access to TFANet, a Web site that hosts online resource exchange and knowledge sharing.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

Like traditionally-trained teachers who are new college graduates, TFA participants will be entering the "real world" of full-time employment, financial autonomy, and independent living as they exit their intuitions of higher education and enter the public school system. They will be going through an adjustment period that goes beyond simply starting a new job. TFA participants may at times be overwhelmed with the realities of the classroom as compared to the idealism with which they began their year of teaching.

International Visiting Teachers Program

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL VISITING TEACHERS PROGRAM?

The South Carolina International Visiting Teachers Program has Memoranda of Understanding agreements with certain countries to allow teachers from those countries to fill teaching positions in South Carolina. A number of private companies also have programs to bring teachers to South Carolina from all over the world. International teachers typically have received visas to teach in this country for up to three years.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

These teachers generally will have been through a traditional training program in their home country and likely have had successful careers as teachers before deciding that they wish to teach in the United States. They should have a broad base of knowledge and experiences on which to rely. Presumably they also have a desire to learn about our culture and our educational system. They are excited to be starting a position as a teacher in the United States and will likely be open to receiving assistance and support.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

International teachers face many challenges during their time in South Carolina. They are at a disadvantage because they are immersed in a new education system, there may be significant cultural differences, and they are typically unfamiliar with the nuances of the English language as spoken in South Carolina. They may face differences in routine expectations in such areas as planning, assessment, and student discipline. What may be perceived as a weakness or inadequacy may simply be adjustment to a language or cultural difference. When working with international teachers, avoid the use of educational jargon and assist them in being prepared to encounter slang and other language nuances in the classroom; anticipate and discuss cultural differences; and always use specific examples and check to assure that they understand the information you are trying to convey.

Career and Technology Education Work-Based Certification

WHAT IS A CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION TEACHER?

Career and Technology Education (CATE) teachers are not required to have completed a traditional teacher training program. Instead, they complete intensive training during their first two years in the classroom. This training, known as the DIRECT program, covers methods of teaching, classroom management, curriculum development and assessment. CATE teachers have up to five years to complete all requirements for certification, which include state-required work certifications, coursework, and skill-competency examinations. CATE includes such areas as welding, culinary arts, automobile technology, cosmetology, electronics, health science technology, and carpentry.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

CATE teachers generally are eager to share their expertise with CATE students. They bring to the classroom a wealth of technical expertise gained from experience in their chosen professions. They also are likely to bring with them a level of maturity and wisdom that is beneficial to students in CATE classes. However, there may be great diversity in the educational background of these teachers. Some may have only high school diplomas, while others have college degrees.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

CATE teachers are making a transition from the workplace to the classroom and will generally be unfamiliar with routine procedures and expectations. In addition to the day-to-day challenges of a classroom, and in some cases a laboratory-type setting, these teachers are undergoing direct training in instructional practices, assessment, classroom management, etc. They may feel overwhelmed and/or frustrated with all of the requirements and expectations. When working with CATE teachers, avoid the use of typical education jargon with which they may be unfamiliar, and take steps to make them feel comfortable asking questions that otherwise may seem simplistic.

Montessori Certification

WHAT IS MONTESSORI CERTIFICATION?

The Montessori Method is a hands-on, individualized, and whole-child centered approach to learning and teaching, which is used worldwide. Montessori is a state-approved program, designated as a model for personalized learning. It is offered primarily at the pre-school and elementary level. In South Carolina, there are a small number of Montessori middle schools and plans are in place for a secondary Montessori program to be offered through grade 12. All Montessori teachers have been trained in the Montessori Method through an 18-24 month Montessori Teacher Education Program, including methods courses in which participants learn how to present lessons in the Montessori curriculum (across all areas) using Montessori materials/equipment.

Montessori teachers have entered the classroom in one of two ways. Some Montessori teachers hold a South Carolina teaching certificate and have simply added on Montessori Certification after completing a Montessori Teacher Education Program. Other Montessori teachers hold a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution, have completed a Montessori Teacher Education Program, and passed a Praxis II subject area exam and Praxis II "Principles of Learning and Teaching" (PLT) exam; these teachers do not hold a South Carolina teaching certificate as holding only Montessori Certification does not qualify educators to teach in non-Montessori classes in public schools.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

The Montessori teachers who possess only a Montessori Certification and not a South Carolina teaching certificate may have a bachelor's degree in a non-education major and bring some experience from working in another profession. Teachers serve as facilitators of learning in multi-age classrooms where students work at their own pace. All Montessori teachers understand that cooperation, respect for others and the environment, and responsibility for one's own learning are cornerstones of the Montessori philosophy.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

Many Montessori teachers work in traditional schools where the Montessori Method may not be fully understood or where they are one of only a few teachers using the Montessori Method. The uniqueness of their teaching pedagogy may cause them to experience feelings of isolation and frustration. When working with Montessori teachers, it is important to be aware of the Montessori Method.

Teachers of Tomorrow

WHAT IS TEACHERS OF TOMORROW?

Teachers of Tomorrow is a for-profit, national organization authorized in South Carolina as a non-traditional or alternative route to teacher certification. Candidates must have a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution or from an institution with teacher-preparation programs approved for certification purposes by the state of South Carolina. Candidates also must have earned a GPA of at least 2.5 and must pass all Praxis Core and subject area assessments. Once in the program, Teachers of Tomorrow candidates participate in 300 hours of comprehensive online and field-based coursework. During their first year of teaching, candidates receive on-going support from a Field Supervisor who works alongside the mentor and school administrator.

Candidates for Teachers of Tomorrow may pursue certification in the following areas: P-12 (art, dance, ESOL, health, media specialist, music, physical education, and theatre); middle level (language arts, math, science, and social studies); and secondary (agriculture, biology, business/marketing/computer technology, chemistry, English, family and consumer science, history, industrial technology, math, physics, science, and social studies).

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

While these teachers possess a bachelor's degree or higher, they have not completed a student teaching experience or a teacher preparation program. Some Teachers of Tomorrow candidates are career changers and bring work experience from another field. Alternately, some are traditional college graduates and now wish to obtain teacher certification. Similar to PACE teachers, Teachers of Tomorrow candidates are hired as a teacher of record and begin teaching before they are fully certified. The coursework that this group of teachers complete includes instructional rigor and student engagement, lesson preparation and content knowledge, instructional decision making, classroom management, child development, strategies for meeting the needs of all learners, and ethics.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

These teachers have no experience as a teacher in the public school classroom setting and are completing the program coursework while simultaneously working in the field. As a result, they may feel overwhelmed by the stresses of being both a teacher and a student. Depending on the time of the year and the teachers' progress through the Teachers of Tomorrow curriculum, they may have had little exposure to educational topics such as planning, assessment, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Teachers in this program work with a Field Supervisor and mentor, both assigned by Teachers of Tomorrow, as well as a school-level mentor; balancing these communications may present a challenge for the beginning teachers.

Other Alternative Certification Pathways

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OTHER PATHWAYS?

There are currently two alternative certification programs developed and facilitated by school districts: TeachCharleston and the Greenville Alternative Teacher Education (GATE) program. Both programs aim to recruit and retain adults interested in entering the teaching field who have a bachelor's degree with a minimum of a 2.75 cumulative GPA and a passing PRAXIS score. For TeachCharleston, candidates must have a minimum of 21 hours in math, science, or English coursework while GATE requires a major or emphasis in math, science, French, or Spanish. Both programs require an in-person interview and a writing sample as part of the selection process. Cohorts from both programs participate in training during the summer and school year as well as receive coaching and mentoring support. Upon successful completion of all requirements throughout the three-year commitment, participants will earn a professional teaching certificate.

Through a five-year grant, Columbia College has created the Alternative Pathways for Educator Certification (APEC) program. The college partners work with designated school districts to assist current non-certified employees who wish to seek certification. Candidates must be employed by a designated district and have an associate's or a bachelor's degree. They enroll in the program for two years and work as a cohort to complete four learning modules. During the first year, all participants carry out classroom duties under the supervision of a mentoring teacher. Participants may acquire their own classroom during the second year if they have earned a bachelor's degree. The modules are designed so that the participants receive either a bachelor's or master's degree upon completion as they seek their professional teaching certificate. They commit to teach in the district for an agreed-upon minimum number of years.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL ATTRIBUTES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

While these teachers possess an associate's or a bachelor's degree, they have not previously completed a student teaching experience or a teacher preparation program. Some of the candidates are career changers and bring work experience from another field while some have been working in the schools in other non-certified roles. Similar to PACE teachers, TeachCharleston and GATE candidates are hired as a teacher of record and begin teaching before they are fully certified; APEC candidates may become a teacher of record during the second year of the program.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GENERAL CHALLENGES OF THIS GROUP OF TEACHERS?

These teachers are completing the program coursework while simultaneously working in the field. They may feel overwhelmed by the stresses of being both a teacher and a student. Those who have been employed in the district may fear that others will assume they, because of their time at the school, have a working knowledge of the school, district, and classroom (ex. classroom management, pedagogy, etc.) that they may not yet possess. Depending on the teachers' progress through the programs, they may have had little exposure to educational topics such as planning, assessment, instructional strategies, and classroom management.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS, GO TO:

APEC: <https://www.columbiasc.edu/alternative-pathways-educator-certification>

GATE: <https://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/Employment/main.asp?titleid=gate>

TeachCharleston: https://www.ccsdschools.com/divisions/human_resources/teach_charleston