SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.
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REVISED AGENDA

SC Education Oversight Full Committee Meeting

Monday, October 26, 2026
1:00 p.m.
Room 433, Blatt Building

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

II. Approval of Full EOC Committee Minutes for
Retreat-August 9-10, 2026 ..... April Allen

III. Special Presentation:
Presentation from 2026 High School Data Trailblazer Award Winner,
Ashley Wardlaw, Principal, Blue Ridge High School (Greenville)

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

Information Item:
Beyond the Headlines: The EOC's In-Depth look at
2025-26 School Report Card Data .....Dana Yow & Dr. Matthew Lavery, Deputy Director, EOC

Action Items:
Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF), School Year 2024-25:
A Formative Review of Data Quality and Transparency .... Dr. Patty Tate

Alternative Instructional Methods Study,
School Year 2024-25..... Dr. Patty Tate

Psychometric Review of WIN Work-Ready Assessments ..... Dr. Patty Tate

V. EIA & Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee..... April Allen EIA Chair

Action Item:
Annual Report of the SC Teacher Loan Program ..... April Allen

VI. Adjournment

April Allen
CHAIR
Brian Newsome
VICE CHAIR
Tammy Achziger
Terry Alexander
Melanie Barton
Russell Baxley
Neal Collins
Bill Hager
Barbara B. Hairfield
Sidney Locke
Melissa Pender
Patty J. Tate
C. Ross Turner, III
Ellen Weaver

Dana Yow
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Full Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

August 9-10, 2026

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

Guests: Vincent Sheheen, Mayor of Camden, SC; Dr. Christina Melton, Associate with Creative Leadership Solutions; Britt Gardner, Principal, North Central Elementary School; Ryan Gerald, Principal, Green Sea Floyds Elementary School; Nick Harris, Principal, Green Sea Floyds Middle/High School; Dr. Jaime Hembree, Superintendent, McCormick County School District; Skip Hopkins, Principal, McCormick Middle School; Dr. Lee D'Andrea, consultant to the EOC; and, from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), Dr. Kristi Austin, Director of Assessment and Standards, and Dr. Vann Holden, Director of Accountability and Research.

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

EOC Chair April Allen opened the August 9th meeting and welcomed Camden Mayor Vincent Sheheen. Mayor Sheheen welcomed members to Camden and discussed the city's focus on entrepreneurship, tourism, Revolutionary War history, the arts, downtown development, and public education and thanked members for their service to public education. Following Mayor Sheheen, the committee approved the Full Committee minutes from the June 15, 2026 meeting.

Dana Yow provided an overview of the EOC's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, including the historical context for its development and the agency's progress over the five-year period. She explained that staff would highlight key accomplishments, lessons learned, challenges, and ways the work evolved, particularly through stronger partnerships and improved internal processes. Yow recognized EOC staff for their work in carrying out the plan and encouraged committee members to consider how the work should continue as the agency transitions to its next strategic plan. She noted that the review also provided an opportunity to celebrate the agency's accomplishments under the 2021-2025 plan.

Dr. Matthew Lavery reviewed work under the strategy focused on reporting facts, including improved access to verified statewide data, the development of pre-accountability and data-validation dashboards, strengthened data-request and quality-control processes, support for

interoperable data systems, and enhanced privacy protections. He noted that recent report-card correction activity involved fewer than one percent of records and highlighted Dashboard SC, report-card resources, National Student Clearinghouse data, Data Trailblazers, Be Present SC, and accessibility improvements to EOC web resources.

Staff then reviewed work focused on measuring change. The discussion included alignment of the pre-K-12 system with college- and career-readiness expectations; use of longitudinal data through the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development; evaluation of credentials, dual credit, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate outcomes; the Seal of Biliteracy; the tiered credential framework; value-added measures; the High School Student Success Indicator; the 4K waitlist pilot; the development of a CTE center report card; the Beating the Odds investigative study; Palmetto Gold and Silver; and other school recognition initiatives.

Tenell Felder reviewed the strategy focused on promoting progress. She highlighted the EOC's role in supporting the state accountability system, using research to inform policy and continuous improvement, and collaborating with agencies, schools, postsecondary partners, business and industry, and other stakeholder groups. Examples included the cyclical review of the accountability system, University of Georgia technical reviews, the multilingual learner indicator redesign, the Seal of Biliteracy, the Beating the Odds Investigative Study, Data Trailblazers, the 4K pilot, pre-accountability dashboards, and early childhood collaborative work.

Dr. Christina Melton, Associate with Creative Leadership Solutions, presented the proposed 2026-2031 Strategic Plan and reviewed the planning process that began in November 2025. She explained that the plan is intended to function as a living, visionary document rather than a static five-year plan and that implementation would include routine monitoring, committee updates, and revisions as needed. The plan maintains the EOC’s three overarching strategies: 1. Reporting Facts, 2. Measuring Change, and 3. Promoting Progress -- with updated objectives and methods designed to guide the agency’s work while allowing flexibility to respond to evolving priorities, responsibilities, and opportunities.

A motion was made to approve the proposed 2026-2031 Strategic Plan, and the motion received a second. During discussion, members expressed support for the plan's strong emphasis on student success and discussed the need for more timely longitudinal information on postsecondary outcomes, stronger connections between education and business and industry, durable skills such as attendance and accountability, teacher preparation and industry exposure, and continued attention to national, international, and regional benchmarks. Members also

suggested clarifying statutory requirements in the plan and more explicitly reflecting business and industry and teacher-preparation stakeholders. Staff indicated that the feedback would be incorporated into ongoing implementation and future revisions. Following discussion, April Allen called for the vote, and the committee approved the 2026-2031 Strategic Plan with all members unanimously in favor.

Members were provided a projected schedule of upcoming action items and reports, with the understanding that the schedule may change based on data availability and other external factors. Staff reiterated that the new strategic plan would be monitored through routine reporting to subcommittees and the full committee.

After the update the meeting was adjourned for the day.

On August 10th, EOC Chair April Allen opened the meeting and introduced Dr. Jenny May, EOC Director of Qualitative Research and Stakeholder Engagement, to present findings from the third year of the Beating the Odds Investigative Study. Dr. May reviewed the purpose and methodology of the study, which examines practices in high-poverty schools achieving strong academic outcomes. She summarized themes that have remained consistent across the three years of the study, including strong and visible leadership, high expectations, effective Tier 1 instruction, consistent use of data, supportive school cultures, and strong community engagement. Five schools participated in the third year: Green Sea Floyds Elementary School, Green Sea Floyds Middle/High School, North Central Elementary School, McCormick Middle School, and Woodfield Elementary School.

Dr. May introduced a panel consisting of Britt Gardner, Principal, North Central Elementary School; Ryan Gerald, Principal, Green Sea Floyds Elementary School; Nick Harris, Principal, Green Sea Floyds Middle/High School; Dr. Jaime Hembree, Superintendent, McCormick County School District; and Skip Hopkins, Principal, McCormick Middle School. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Lee D'Andrea, retired South Carolina superintendent and consultant to the EOC.

Panelists discussed the practices contributing to their schools' success, including establishing a culture of academic achievement, strengthening Tier 1 instruction, aligning expectations across grade levels, using data to guide instruction, developing teacher leaders, and creating shared ownership for student success. They described collaborative, supportive, and servant-leadership approaches centered on visibility, modeling expectations, building relationships, supporting teachers, developing staff capacity, and balancing delegation with accountability.

The panel also discussed challenges associated with sustaining improvement in high-poverty and rural schools, including overcoming historically low expectations and ensuring that students' circumstances do not limit expectations for achievement. Panelists emphasized parent and community engagement, wraparound services, K-12 collaboration, effective communication, and consistent expectations. The discussion concluded with an emphasis on recruiting and developing experienced, committed school leaders who are invested in their communities and equipped to lead challenging school environments.

EOC Chair April Allen welcomed representatives from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), including Dr. Abbey Duggins, Deputy Superintendent of the College, Career and Military Readiness Division; Dr. Kristi Austin, Director of Assessment and Standards; and Dr. Vann Holden, Director of Accountability and Research, to discuss the invalidation of certain 2026 SC READY mathematics assessment scores. Dana Yow provided a timeline of events, explaining that approximately 2,000 students in grades six through eight had been administered the calculator and non-calculator portions of the assessment in the incorrect sequence. She reviewed communications among SCDE, the EOC, the South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA), and the South Carolina Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), including SCDE's decision to invalidate the affected scores and its plan to seek guidance from the U.S. Department of Education regarding possible flexibility in accountability calculations.

Dr. Duggins explained that SCDE considered two primary questions: whether the affected scores were valid and how invalidated scores should be treated within the state's accountability system. The TAC unanimously advised that scores from assessments administered out of sequence should be invalidated because they could not be considered sufficiently valid, reliable, and comparable. Dr. Duggins emphasized that maintaining standardized administration was particularly important because 2026 was the first administration of the assessment aligned to the state's new mathematics standards and would establish a baseline for future years. SCDE determined that federal requirements appeared to provide no flexibility regarding inclusion of affected students in accountability calculations but planned to request a determination from the U.S. Department of Education.

Dr. Austin provided additional detail regarding the assessment's design and SCDE's investigation. She explained that the order of the two mathematics sections was intentional and that reversing them could expose students to content in the calculator section that could cue responses to items in the non-calculator section. She provided examples from grades six through eight demonstrating instances in which related concepts or information appeared close together when the sections

were taken in reverse order. SCDE also reviewed student testing telemetry individually and identified cases in which students had completed the sections in the correct order but submitted them incorrectly; those assessments were allowed to proceed to scoring. Assessments for which students actually accessed and completed sections out of order remained invalidated. Dr. Austin emphasized that the concern was not simply calculator use or failure to follow a procedural sequence, but whether exposure to content from one section could influence responses in another and compromise comparability.

Dr. Holden reviewed SCDE's modeling of the potential accountability impact. SCDE examined several hypothetical approaches, including assigning affected students the highest possible performance level, removing affected students from both the numerator and denominator, and predicting scores using other available student assessment data. While those approaches are not currently permitted under SCDE's interpretation of applicable requirements, the analysis indicated that the statewide impact on school academic achievement ratings would generally be minimal. SCDE reported that the affected students represented less than one percent of the statewide testing-eligible population. Dr. Holden emphasized, however, that SCDE would seek federal guidance on whether affected students could be excluded from both the numerator and denominator for accountability purposes.

Melissa Pender thanked SCDE for responding in advance to questions submitted by EOC members but expressed concern about the level of communication and collaboration with the EOC before the initial decision was announced. Pender stated that she first learned of the issue when the notification regarding invalidated scores was distributed to superintendents and subsequently contacted EOC staff for additional information. Yow confirmed that the EOC's involvement before July 13 had been limited primarily to responding to a question concerning whether flexibility existed in the accountability denominator and that EOC staff had not initially been provided the full details of the situation. Pender stressed that, given the EOC's role as an “honest broker,” members need sufficient information to accurately answer questions from educators and the public. She requested stronger communication and collaboration with the EOC on similar matters in the future.

Pender then questioned the scope and timing of SCDE's planned request to the U.S. Department of Education. SCDE indicated that the request had not yet been submitted and would ask whether federal requirements provide flexibility to exclude students with invalid scores from both the numerator and denominator of accountability calculations. SCDE committed to communicating the federal response to the EOC once received. Pender also asked whether comparable scrutiny

had been applied to other assessments, particularly ELA assessments whose sections may be administered in different sequences. Dr. Austin explained that the ELA assessment was intentionally designed so that its sections do not cue one another and may therefore be administered in different allowable sequences.

Pender questioned language in the TAC's guidance indicating that changes in administration “may” influence student responses and asked whether SCDE had considered scoring the affected assessments and comparing the results with existing student performance projections before invalidating them. Dr. Austin explained that the affected assessments were not scored because doing so would create scores whose comparability could not be established. She stated that the TAC's recommendation was to suppress the scores rather than create numerical results that could subsequently be interpreted as comparable to scores from properly administered assessments.

Patty Tate expressed concern on behalf of educators and students that students would experience accountability consequences resulting from adult error. She emphasized the effort students and educators devote to SC READY testing and questioned why the testing platform allowed students to access the second section before properly completing and submitting the first. Dr. Duggins acknowledged the concern and stated that SCDE had communicated with its testing vendor, DRC, and that the platform would be modified to prevent the same situation in future administrations. Dr. Holden clarified that individual students would not receive a reported score of zero; rather, no mathematics score would appear on the individual student report. The accountability consequence occurs only in the aggregate school report card calculation under existing rules.

Barbara Hairfield asked whether historical testing irregularities had been handled differently and whether the current situation could similarly be treated as an irregularity rather than an invalidation. SCDE responded that its current interpretation does not provide such flexibility but that the accountability treatment would be included in the request to the U.S. Department of Education. Hairfield also asked whether students would experience consequences in future growth calculations. Pender similarly asked whether the absence of a 2026 mathematics score would create a multi-year effect. Dr. Holden explained that affected students would be excluded from the mathematics student-progress calculation because that measure requires two consecutive years of scores. Their ELA results would continue to be included when available, but the absence of a 2026 mathematics score would also prevent calculation of mathematics growth for those students in the subsequent year.

Terry Alexander raised concerns about supervision during test administration and questioned how students could access assessment sections in ways inconsistent with required procedures. Dr. Duggins stated that test administration involves significant supervision and training. Hairfield asked whether students who were identified during the testing window could have been given another version of the assessment. Dr. Austin explained that, because this was the first year of the new assessment and all forms required common linking items, an alternate form was not available for this purpose. She noted that emergency forms would be available in future administrations. Hairfield also asked whether the Test Administration Manual explicitly warned that administering sections out of sequence could result in invalidation. Dr. Austin stated that the manual repeatedly required administration of the non-calculator section first but did not explicitly state that an incorrect sequence would result in no score; that warning will be added in the future.

The discussion included the scope of the affected population. SCDE reported that approximately 145 schools across 51 districts were affected, although the impact varied significantly by school and district. Dr. Austin noted that approximately 19 percent of affected students were students with disabilities and approximately five percent were multilingual learners, with the majority being general education students.

Dr. Mathis, representing the State Board of Education, discussed the difficulty of balancing the impact of adult testing errors on students with the requirements for a valid assessment system. Dr. Mathis asked whether SCDE would request federal consideration of the validity decision itself in addition to accountability flexibility. Dr. Duggins responded that SCDE considered the validity question resolved based on the TAC's recommendation and intended to seek federal guidance only on accountability consequences. She reiterated that assessments administered in different sequences were not comparable because students could have been exposed to different content before responding to particular items.

Alexander questioned whether protecting the integrity of the assessment was being prioritized over students affected by the error. Dr. Duggins responded that assessment integrity refers to ensuring that every student receives a standardized administration so that results can be considered valid and comparable.

Pender returned to the effect on students and families, noting that schools routinely review prior-year assessment results directly with students and that approximately 1,826 families would need an explanation for why their children sat for the assessment but did not receive mathematics scores. She emphasized the importance of transparent communication acknowledging that the

assessment was administered incorrectly through no fault of the students. Pender then asked why SCDE could not submit both questions to the U.S. Department of Education: whether flexibility exists regarding the decision to invalidate/not score the assessments and whether flexibility exists regarding the accountability treatment of those invalidated scores. She reasoned that obtaining federal guidance on both issues would allow EOC members to tell educators and the public that every available avenue had been pursued.

Pender further questioned the apparent tension between SCDE's finding that the accountability impact of the invalidated scores was statistically minimal and the position that scoring those assessments posed a significant threat to assessment validity. She stated that this distinction was difficult to explain to the public and reiterated that she would be more comfortable if SCDE presented both questions, along with the TAC's evidence and recommendations, to the U.S. Department of Education for consideration.

Additional discussion addressed historical invalidations and accountability consequences. Dr. Austin explained that invalidated scores have occurred in previous years and that SCDE must demonstrate through federal peer review that its assessments meet technical requirements for validity, reliability, comparability, and standardized administration. She also noted that testing monitors are desirable but not required and that test administrators receive training and acknowledge required testing practices.

Rep. Neal Collins asked whether affected schools could experience changes in their overall report card ratings. Dr. Holden explained that final effects could not yet be determined because student-progress results had not been received. He reiterated that modeling showed generally minimal changes in academic achievement scores, although the degree of impact differed by school.

Pender asked who would communicate directly with affected families. Dr. Austin stated that SCDE had provided superintendents with a communications toolkit containing a sample parent letter, information for districts, principals and teachers, and an example of the affected student report. The student report will not display a zero; it will indicate that no score is available and direct families to contact the child's school for additional information.

Sidney Locke asked what accountability would occur for the error, including consequences for individuals or the testing vendor. Dr. Austin responded that changes were being made to the testing system and that test-security violations apply when administrators fail to follow required procedures, while SCDE and its partners were implementing additional safeguards to prevent recurrence.

The committee then returned to Pender's request concerning the two questions. Dr. Duggins restated that SCDE originally considered: (1) whether the scores should be invalidated and (2) what flexibility exists regarding their impact on accountability. SCDE considered the first question resolved by the TAC's unanimous recommendation and planned to submit only the second question to the U.S. Department of Education. Discussion also addressed State Board of Education Regulation 43-100 and whether the State Board of Education should have an opportunity to consider the issue. Dr. Mathis stated that the State Board had not been given an opportunity to weigh in, and Pender asked why the matter had not gone before the State Board if the regulation provided a role for it. SCDE representatives reiterated that the affected tests had not been scored and that the TAC consisted of nationally recognized psychometric and assessment experts whose recommendation was based on technical validity considerations.

Pender again requested that both questions be submitted for federal review and asked whether other EOC members supported doing so. Dr. Duggins reiterated SCDE's confidence in the TAC's recommendation but stated that if the EOC felt strongly that the validity question should also be presented to the U.S. Department of Education, SCDE could include it. Chair Allen asked SCDE to restate its current plan. Dr. Holden explained that the department presently intended to ask whether students who sat for the assessment but received invalid scores could be excluded from accountability calculations rather than included under existing numerator and denominator requirements.

Yow proposed that EOC members hear directly from members of the TAC regarding how they reached their recommendation. Dr. Duggins agreed to arrange the discussion. Yow noted that, depending on attendance, the discussion could constitute a public meeting, and Dr. Duggins emphasized that the conversation would need to protect secure test items. Chair Allen indicated that the agenda should focus on how the TAC reached its recommendation regarding the invalidated assessments. Pender reiterated that she continued to question why both issues could not simply be presented to the U.S. Department of Education.

Chair Allen concluded that the EOC and SCDE would work together to schedule a public meeting with the TAC as quickly as possible so members could hear directly from the technical experts and resolve outstanding questions and concerns. She also suggested a future discussion of lessons learned from the 2026 test administration and the steps SCDE is taking to strengthen future administration and public confidence in the assessment system.

Next, Dr. Lavery provided an update on the Cyclical Review of the Accountability System and the status of the 19 recommendations developed by the Accountability Advisory Committee. He reported that three recommendations have been completed and one was determined not to be feasible. He noted that work on many of the remaining recommendations is beginning through the advisory group established as a result of the cyclical review.

Dr. Lavery explained that Recommendations 2 and 3 focus on studying the impact of the student progress indicator on school ratings and promoting an accurate understanding and appropriate use of that indicator. Research related to these recommendations will begin at the advisory group's upcoming meeting. Recommendations 4, 12, 13, and 14 address the points and weights assigned to indicators within the accountability system. The advisory group will examine these areas through a standard-setting process, including a review of indicator cut scores and how various measures contribute to overall school ratings.

The advisory group will also begin work on the recommendation to study alternatives for a more comprehensive and balanced assessment system. Dr. Lavery described this as a significant, longer-term effort that will examine assessments administered across the state, how they interact with one another, and whether the overall assessment system is coherent, balanced, and responsive to stakeholder needs. The committee will receive periodic updates as this work progresses.

Dr. Lavery noted that Recommendations 15 and 16 involve ongoing work to improve dashboards, visualizations, and supporting materials that help stakeholders understand the accountability system and use the information for continuous improvement. Recommendations 17, 18, and 19 relate to the Office of Leadership Effectiveness and its continuous improvement supports and designations.

Finally, Recommendations 9 and 10 focus on the College and Career Readiness (CCR) indicator and the various college- and career-readiness measures included within it. Additional research is planned, including a detailed review of dual enrollment courses taken by South Carolina students during the past five years. A data request has been submitted, and a kickoff meeting is planned to begin that work. Dr. Lavery concluded that most of the outstanding recommendations are moving into active implementation or research and stated that the committee will continue to receive updates as the work progresses.

Following Dr. Lavery's presentation and with no further business before the committee, Chair April Allen adjourned the meeting.

Photo credit: Greenville County Schools

Ashley Wardlaw serves as Principal of Blue Ridge High School in Greenville County, South Carolina, where she is committed to building strong relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for every student to thrive. Wardlaw began her career as a teacher and coach, serving in education for nine years before transitioning to school leadership as an assistant principal. As principal, she has focused on strengthening school culture, supporting educators, building community partnerships, and creating systems that promote student achievement and belonging. She is particularly passionate about advocating for students with disabilities and ensuring all students have access to the support and opportunities they need to succeed.

Wardlaw's leadership has been recognized with the 2026 Palmetto's Finest Award for Blue Ridge High School, as well as being named South Carolina Secondary Principal of the Year by the South Carolina Association of School Administrators and 4A Principal of the Year by the South Carolina Athletic Administrators Association. She holds a B.S. in Business Administration from the University of South Carolina Upstate, an M.A.T. and Ed.S. in Superintendent Certification through the University of Louisville.

2025-26 SC School Report Cards Highlight Growth and Opportunities for Continued Progress

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The 2025-2026 South Carolina School Report Cards were released Monday, October 12 at 10:00 a.m., and are available online at www.screportcards.com.

State law mandates the creation of annual school report cards with key data on student and school performance, as well as report cards that assist in "addressing the strengths and weaknesses" within schools.

*For the 2025-2026 school year:

- 317 schools received an overall Rating of *Excellent*, an increase from 267 the previous year;
- 357 schools were rated *Good*, an increase from 353 the previous year.
- 491 schools were rated *Average*, an increase from 485 the previous year
- 103 schools were rated *Below Average*; a reduction from 145 the previous year
- and 21 schools were rated *Unsatisfactory*, a reduction from 28 the previous year.

**State-operated schools that serve special populations of students (for example, Governor's Schools), are not included the above counts, and 17 schools did not receive ratings.*

A detailed look at the historical ratings by indicator can be found in the **South Carolina Education Oversight Committee's Summary of SC School Report Cards Overall Ratings and Indicators.**

"There is much to celebrate in this year's school report cards, and we applaud the students, educators, families and communities whose hard work is producing results. The goal for South Carolina students is clear: 75% of students meeting grade-level standards by 2030. We should celebrate how far we've come but there is more work to be done to achieve the state's goal," stated EOC Chair April Allen. "Meeting the state's goals helps ensure that more South Carolina students graduate prepared to pursue meaningful opportunities beyond high school."

The Education Oversight Committee, along with a broad-based group of stakeholders, determines the criteria by which public schools are held accountable. The EOC also establishes the criteria by which schools receive performance ratings. The SC Department of Education, a critical partner in the work, is directed to publish the report card for each school year pursuant to Section 59-18-930 of the SC Code of Laws.

Per the law, schools receive overall performance ratings of Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average and Unsatisfactory. Overall performance ratings are determined from indicator ratings which include Academic Achievement, Student Progress, High School Student Success and Graduation Rate. (For the complete list of report card indicator ratings, visit expectmoresc.com/sc-report-card)

Number and percentage of schools receiving Overall Ratings by school year

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS			HIGH SCHOOLS		
	2024	**2025**	**2026**	2024	**2025**	**2026**	2024	**2025**	**2026**
Excellent	124 (18%)	**131 (19%)**	**144 (21%)**	43 (12%)	**60 (17%)**	**73 (21%)**	63 (25%)	**76 (30%)**	**103 (40%)**
Good	187 (28%)	**200 (29%)**	**192 (28%)**	87 (25%)	**98 (28%)**	**105 (30%)**	42 (17%)	**55 (22%)**	**60 (23%)**
Average	250 (37%)	**257 (38%)**	**278 (41%)**	158 (46%)	**153 (44%)**	**152 (43%)**	69 (27%)	**75 (30%)**	**61 (24%)**
Below Average	86 (13%)	**83 (12%)**	**60 (9%)**	44 (13%)	**9 (3%)**	**20 (6%)**	56 (22%)	**31 (12%)**	**23 (9%)**
Unsatisfactory	25 (4%)	**7 (1%)**	**8 (1%)**	8 (2%)	**2 (2%)**	**5 (1%)**	14 (6%)	**14 (6%)**	**11 (4%)**
Number of Report Cards	672	**678**	**682**	340	**349**	**355**	244	**251**	**258**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Seventeen schools did not receive Overall Ratings.

Allen noted the EOC recently completed its review of the state's accountability system which was published in December 2025. The system's review is a cyclical examination that is statutorily required every five years.

"As we review South Carolina's accountability system, we are guided by a simple principle: students and families deserve an honest and meaningful picture of educational success. A diploma should carry value, and a designation of college or career readiness should reflect genuine preparation for what comes next," Allen noted. "As an honest broker, the EOC has a responsibility to continually examine and strengthen the system to ensure it delivers on that promise. Our ultimate accountability is to the students and families we serve."

Allen points to the committee's "Beating the Odds Investigative Study", an in-depth qualitative study of South Carolina schools serving high concentrations of students living in poverty while achieving strong academic outcomes.
"Now in it's third year, we are looking beyond the numbers to better understand the practices, leadership, school cultures, and strategies that contribute to their success. Our goal is not simply to recognize these schools for their accomplishments, but to identify lessons that can be shared and applied across the state," stated Allen. "By learning from schools that are succeeding despite significant challenges, we hope to turn research into meaningful action that expands opportunities for more South Carolina students."

Allen added the annual release of the school report cards provides another opportunity for all stakeholders to "turn information into action on behalf of young people."

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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The School Report Cards, scheduled to be released on October 12, 2026, are the fifth Report Cards released with ratings since 2019. The two-year pause occurred because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report cards will be available at https://screportcards.com/ following the state release at 10 am on Monday, October 12, 2026.

For additional detail about the accountability system and ratings within each indicator, go to https://expectmoresc.com/.

SC Education Oversight Committee Summary of the Overall Ratings and Indicators

Overall Ratings

- Based on a 100-point scale, per state law

Number and percentage of schools receiving Overall Ratings by school year

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS			HIGH SCHOOLS		
	2024	**2025**	**2026**	2024	**2025**	**2026**	2024	**2025**	**2026**
Excellent	124 (18%)	**131 (19%)**	**144 (21%)**	43 (12%)	**60 (17%)**	**73 (21%)**	63 (25%)	**76 (30%)**	**103 (40%)**
Good	187 (28%)	**200 (29%)**	**192 (28%)**	87 (25%)	**98 (28%)**	**105 (30%)**	42 (17%)	**55 (22%)**	**60 (23%)**
Average	250 (37%)	**257 (38%)**	**278 (41%)**	158 (46%)	**153 (44%)**	**152 (43%)**	69 (27%)	**75 (30%)**	**61 (24%)**
Below Average	86 (13%)	**83 (12%)**	**60 (9%)**	44 (13%)	**9 (3%)**	**20 (6%)**	56 (22%)	**31 (12%)**	**23 (9%)**
Unsatisfactory	25 (4%)	**7 (1%)**	**8 (1%)**	8 (2%)	**2 (2%)**	**5 (1%)**	14 (6%)	**14 (6%)**	**11 (4%)**
Number of Report Cards	672	**678**	**682**	340	**349**	**355**	244	**251**	**258**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Seventeen schools did not receive Overall Ratings.

Ranges of scores necessary to receive overall Ratings by school type

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Excellent	61-100	56-100	67-100
Good	53-60	48-55	60-66
Average	42-52	36-47	51-59
Below Average	34-41	29-35	40-50
Unsatisfactory	0-33	0-28	0-39

Indicator Ratings

Academic Achievement: Indicator determines if students in a school are meeting state standards in English Language Arts (Reading and Writing) and Math.

*Counts 35 points for Elementary and Middle Schools; 25 points for High Schools

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in Academic Achievement indicator by school year

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS			HIGH SCHOOLS		
	2024	**2025**	**2026**	2024	**2025**	**2026**	2024	**2025**	**2026**
Excellent	170 (25%)	**201 (30%)**	**218 (32%)**	57 (17%)	**61 (17%)**	**67 (19%)**	21 (9%)	**33 (13%)**	**68 (27%)**
Good	140 (21%)	**134 (20%)**	**131 (19%)**	64 (19%)	**71 (20%)**	**77 (22%)**	44 (18%)	**42 (17%)**	**56 (22%)**
Average	224 (33%)	**254 (37%)**	**267 (39%)**	128 (37%)	**137 (39%)**	**142 (40%)**	73 (31%)	**85 (34%)**	**76 (30%)**
Below Average	121 (18%)	**81 (12%)**	**59 (9%)**	74 (21%)	**67 (19%)**	**54 (15%)**	74 (31%)	**54 (22%)**	**39 (15%)**
Unsatisfactory	17 (3%)	**8 (1%)**	**7 (1%)**	17 (5%)	**13 (4%)**	**15 (4%)**	27 (11%)	**34 (14%)**	**13 (5%)**
Number of Report Cards	672	**678**	**682**	340	**349**	**355**	239	**251**	**252**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Twenty schools did not receive Academic Achievement indicator Ratings.

Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on SC READY by school year State Performance (Elementary and Middle Schools)

English Language Arts*

2024-25	2025-26
60.3%	**61.5%**

Mathematics*

2025-26
47.8%

* Due to the revisions of the 2023 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts and the revisions of the 2025 South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for Mathematics, both from the previous versions approved in 2015, the rates at which students Meet or Exceed grade level expectations on tests of the new standards are not directly comparable to the same metric on tests of the previous standards. The ELA SC READY tested the new standards for the first time during the 2024-25 school year, and the Mathematics SC READY tested the new standards for the first time during the 2025-26 school year.

Percent Earning a C or better on End-of-Course exams by school year State Performance (High Schools)

English 2

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
66.84%	67.4%	66.4%	68.5%	67.8%

Algebra I

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
42.3%	44.86%	47.8%	51.6%	67.1%*

* While 67.1% of South Carolina High School students scored a "C" or higher on the Algebra I End of Course assessment the 2025-26 scores are not directly comparable to the prior year due to the fact that the sample of students who took the Algebra One End-of-Course exam is considerably smaller and substantially different from previous years.

Preparing for Success*: This indicator determines if students in a school are meeting state standards in Science (as measured by SC READY Science given in 4th and 6th grades) in Elementary Middle Schools. For High Schools, the indicator measures performance on both the Biology I and U.S. History and the Constitution End-of-Course exams.

*Preparing for Success *was not* calculated or reported for elementary and middle schools for the 2024 Report Cards to allow scoring for the new SC READY Science test to be developed.

10 points for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in Preparing for Success by school year

	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS			HIGH SCHOOLS		
	2024	2025	2026	2024	2025	2026	2024	2025	2026
Excellent	—	74 (11%)	89 (14%)	—	29 (9%)	33 (10%)	17 (7%)	17 (7%)	18 (7%)
Good	—	88 (13%)	90 (14%)	—	44 (14%)	44 (14%)	11 (5%)	14 (6%)	18 (7%)
Average	—	189 (29%)	200 (30%)	—	90 (28%)	112 (35%)	66 (26%)	71 (28%)	74 (29%)
Below Average	—	168 (26%)	164 (25%)	—	85 (27%)	80 (25%)	79 (34%)	82 (33%)	78 (31%)
Unsatisfactory	—	134 (21%)	116 (18%)	—	68 (22%)	50 (16%)	61 (26%)	66 (26%)	64 (25%)
Number of Report Cards	—	678	659	—	349	319	234	250	257

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Seventy-six schools did not receive Preparing for Success indicator Ratings.

Percent Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on SC READY/PASS Science by school year
State Performance (Elementary and Middle Schools)

Science

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
46.0%	43.7%	Not measured.	49.5%	51.8%

Percent Earning a C or better on End-of-Course exams by school year
State Performance (High Schools)

Biology I

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
42.6%	42.9%	47.9%	44.0%	44.8%

U.S. History and the Constitution

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
39.3%	44.67%	41.5%	45.7%	47.1%

Student Progress: This indicator determines how students are growing or improving academically in ELA and Math and how the lowest performing 20% of students in a school are growing academically.

*Counts 35 points for Elementary and Middle Schools; does not count for High Schools

**Scoring assumes there are 20 or more Multilingual Learners in a school.*

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in Student Progress indicator by school year

St Prog. Rating	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS		
	2024	2025	2026	2024	2025	2026
Excellent	75 (11%)	**81 (12%)**	**60 (9%)**	22 (6%)	**57 (16%)**	**69 (20%)**
Good	145 (22%)	**185 (28%)**	**174 (26%)**	52 (15%)	**83 (24%)**	**100 (28%)**
Average	307 (46%)	**279 (42%)**	**317 (47%)**	143 (42%)	**132 (38%)**	**123 (35%)**
Below Average	109 (16%)	**94 (14%)**	**104 (15%)**	91 (27%)	**54 (16%)**	**45 (13%)**
Unsatisfactory	33 (5%)	**31 (5%)**	**20 (3%)**	32 (9%)	**22 (6%)**	**15 (4%)**
# of Cards	669	**670**	**675**	340	**348**	**352**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Nineteen elementary and middle schools did not receive Student Progress indicator Ratings.

Multilingual Learners' Proficiency: Indicator determines if students in a school who are non-native-English speakers are meeting growth targets to learn the English Language.

*Counts 10 points for all schools with 20 or more Multilingual Learners.

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in Multilingual Learners' Progress indicator by school year

MLP Rating	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS			HIGH SCHOOLS		
	2024	2025	2026	2024	2025	2026	2024	2025	2026
Excellent	8 (1%)	**6 (2%)**	**4 (1%)**	2 (1%)	**1 (1%)**	**— (0%)**	1 (1%)	**— (0%)**	**— (0%)**
Good	63 (18%)	**56 (16%)**	**62 (17%)**	11 (6%)	**14 (8%)**	**7 (4%)**	10 (7%)	**10 (7%)**	**6 (4%)**
Average	160 (46%)	**168 (47%)**	**176 (49%)**	48 (27%)	**43 (25%)**	**48 (29%)**	35 (25%)	**38 (27%)**	**34 (25%)**
Below Average	107 (31%)	**122 (34%)**	**111 (31%)**	83 (47%)	**91 (53%)**	**89 (54%)**	74 (52%)	**77 (55%)**	**72 (52%)**
Unsatis-factory	10 (3%)	**6 (2%)**	**6 (2%)**	31 (18%)	**24 (14%)**	**21 (13%)**	22 (15%)	**16 (11%)**	**26 (19%)**
# of Cards	348	**358**	**359**	175	**173**	**165**	142	**141**	**138**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. 644 schools without 20 or more Multilingual Learners did not receive ratings for this indicator.

School Climate: Indicator uses results from the Teacher and Student Climate surveys to measure perceptions of safety, working conditions, instructional focus, and social-physical environment.

*Counts 10 points for Elementary and Middle Schools; 5 points for High Schools

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in School Climate Indicator

Sch Clim. Rating	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS			MIDDLE SCHOOLS			HIGH SCHOOLS		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Excellent	135 (20%)	**162 (24%)**	**197 (29%)**	44 (13%)	**71 (21%)**	**77 (22%)**	31 (13%)	**50 (20%)**	**58 (23%)**
Good	128 (19%)	**137 (20%)**	**152 (22%)**	84 (25%)	**91 (27%)**	**89 (26%)**	41 (17%)	**57 (23%)**	**51 (20%)**
Average	212 (32%)	**215 (32%)**	**214 (31%)**	109 (32%)	**127 (37%)**	**133 (38%)**	78 (32%)	**93 (38%)**	**98 (39%)**
Below Average	123 (18%)	**109 (16%)**	**86 (13%)**	57 (17%)	**42 (12%)**	**37 (11%)**	53 (22%)	**35 (14%)**	**37 (15%)**
Unsatis-factory	70 (11%)	**49 (7%)**	**33 (5%)**	43 (13%)	**9 (3%)**	**11 (3%)**	38 (16%)	**11 (4%)**	**9 (4%)**
# of Cards	668	**672**	**682**	337	**340**	**347**	241	**246**	**253**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. For this indicator, 14 schools did not receive a rating.

High School Student Success: This indicator shows if high school students have earned the required 24 credits (four in English and four in math) to be eligible for graduation in four years OR shows if students have reached a successful high school outcome within five years of beginning high school.

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in High School Student Success by school year

High School Student Success	2024	2025	2026
Excellent	69 (28%)	**78 (31%)**	**85 (33%)**
Good	72 (29%)	**103 (41%)**	**80 (31%)**
Average	59 (24%)	**45 (18%)**	**55 (21%)**
Below Average	27 (11%)	**13 (5%)**	**19 (7%)**
Unsatisfactory	18 (7%)	**11 (5%)**	**18 (7%)**
Number of Cards	245	**252**	**257**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Three high schools were not rated for this indicator.

Graduation Rate: Indicator determines what percentage of students who entered the high school in the 9th grade graduated in at least 4 years.

*Counts 19 points for High Schools only.

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in Graduation Rate indicator by school year

Graduation Rate Rating	2024	2025	2026
Excellent	84 (35%)	111 (44%)	125 (50%)
Good	73 (30%)	79 (32%)	75 (30%)
Average	61 (25%)	39 (16%)	38 (15%)
Below Average	16 (7%)	10 (4%)	3 (1%)
Unsatisfactory	8 (3%)	8 (3%)	8 (3%)
Number of Cards	**242**	**242**	**249**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Eleven high schools were not rated for this indicator.

State Graduation Rate

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
84.6%	**81.0%**	**81.1%**	**82.2%**	**83.3%**	**83.8%**	**83.8%**	**85.4%**	**86.7%**	**87.5%**

College and Career Ready: Indicator determines if students who are graduating from a high school are prepared for college or careers after graduating.

*Counts 25 points for High Schools only.

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings in College and Career Ready indicator by school year

CCR Rating	2024	2025	2026
Excellent	85 (35%)	114 (46%)	**151 (61%)**
Good	68 (28%)	71 (29%)	**57 (23%)**
Average	66 (27%)	53 (21%)	**31 (12%)**
Below Average	17 (7%)	3 (1%)	**6 (2%)**
Unsatisfactory	6 (2%)	6 (2%)	**4 (2%)**
Number of Cards	**242**	**247**	**249**

Note: Totals do not include Career Centers or Special Schools. Eleven high schools were not rated for this indicator.

Percent of Students College OR Career Ready

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
65.8%	64.7%	71.5%	75.1%	78.9%

*Students can be counted more than once as they may meet more than one option.

Percent of Students College AND Career Ready

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
29.0%	29.3%	30.6%	31.2%	31.9%

Percent of Students Career Ready

2020-21	2021-22	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
55.7%	62.8%	69.6%	73.3%	77.3%

Career Ready Detail

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
CTE completer with certification	17.5%	20.6%	25.1%	28.9%	**35.5%**
Work-based learning	5.3%	7.7%	9.7%	11.0%	**12.1%**
Level 3 or higher on Career Readiness assessment	54.1%	47.8%	55.1%	54.9%	**56.0%**
ASVAB	5.9%	6.9%	9.0%	10.6%	**11.8%**
SC High School Employability Credential	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	**0.8%**

Percent of Students College Ready

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
32.0%	32.6%	32.5%	33.0%	33.5%

College Ready Detail

CR Measure	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
ACT: 20 or higher	11.3%	11.8%	12.4%	10.2%	**9%**
SAT: 1020 or higher	20.5%	20.0%	19.3%	20.0%	**18.3%**
AP: 3 or higher	14.9%	15.1%	14.9%	15.7%	**17%**
IB: 4 or higher	0.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	**0.6%**
Dual Credit: C or better	14.1%	15.2%	15.8%	17.5%	**11.8%**
Cambridge C or better	0.04%	0.04%	0.03%	0.11%	**0.09%**

We reached out to EOC Executive Director Dana Yow with five questions about how the ratings are calculated, what they tell parents and whether the continuing improvement in school ratings reflects genuine academic progress.

1. **What does a school's overall report card rating actually measure?** How does the EOC determine which indicators count, how much weight they carry and what qualifies a school for an Excellent, Good or Average rating?

South Carolina's public schools are measured in several areas, called performance indicators. Many of these indicators are required by state or federal law, while others were approved by the SC Education Oversight Committee for use in our state's school accountability system.

Schools receive ratings for individual indicators as well as an Overall School Rating, which must be calculated out of 100 points according to state law. Much like student grades, student indicators are rated based on five levels of performance. The highest performance level is a Rating of "Excellent" while the lowest level of performance is "Unsatisfactory."

This ratings system is designed to provide parents, teachers and stakeholders with a simple way to evaluate overall whether a particular school is exceeding, meeting, or not meeting the criteria described in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.

State end-of-year academic tests, like SC READY and End-of-Course assessments, compose a significant portion of a school's rating. The tests themselves are designed to measure if students are meeting or exceeding grade level expectations in a particular subject. For elementary and middle schools, 35 out of a possible 100 points are available to a school and goes up as more students in the school are achieving grade level success in Reading, Writing, and Math. For high schools, 25 out of a possible 100 points are designated for students who take the English 2 and Algebra I End-of-Course assessments.

The Preparing for Success indicator, worth 10 points for elementary, middle and high schools, shows if students in a school are meeting state standards in Science and Social Studies. As a state, we do not currently assess Social Studies in elementary and middle schools so that entire indicator represents 4th and 6th grade Science performance for elementary and middle schools. For high schools, that indicator measures the success of students on both the Biology I and U.S. History and the Constitution End-of-Course assessments.

Student Progress is a rated indicator for elementary and middle schools – also composing 35 out of the 100 points. This indicator measures how well students are

growing academically, year over year, as compared to other students statewide with similar prior achievement. High schools do not receive this indicator.

High schools are also rated on three indicators that are unique to them:

1. The High School Student Success indicator, which is based on the percent of students who are either considered on track to graduate within four years (taking an English and math each year of high school) or who have achieved a successful high school outcome (a diploma, GED, or High School Employability Credential) within five years.
2. The four-year on-time graduation rate.
3. The College- and Career-Ready indicator, which is based on the percent of students who meet at least one of the 11 criteria for college- and career-readiness within four years of high school.

Schools who have at least 20 Multilingual Learners (MLs) also receive a rating for this indicator, which shows if MLs in the school are meeting specific growth targets to learn the English language within five years.

Finally, South Carolina's accountability system is unique among other states in that it includes an indicator that measures school climate, which has been shown to be a strong predictor of student achievement. A high School Climate rating indicates that teachers and students have favorable perceptions of their school environment which includes instructional focus, working conditions, safety, and the social-physical environment.

Here is a handy chart to show how the 100 points are split out:

Indicator	Elementary / Middle Schools	High Schools
Academic Achievement	35	25
Student Progress	35	—
Preparing for Success	10	10
School Climate	10	5
Multilingual Learners' Progress	10	10
Graduation Rate	—	19
High School Student Success	—	12
College & Career Readiness	—	19
Total:	**100**	**100**

Note: — = Not applicable.

2. **How can a school earn a Good or Excellent rating when a substantial percentage of its students aren't performing at grade level?** How do student

growth and the partial credit awarded for lower achievement levels affect the final score?

For more than 25 years, the EOC has conducted public opinion research to better understand what South Carolinians expect of their public schools. The most recent survey, conducted in 2025, reaffirmed a consistent expectation: schools earning an overall rating of *Excellent* should have *at least* 80% of their students performing at grade level.

Current school performance results indicate a gap between public expectations and what the ratings represent. In the 2026 release of school report cards, 75% of students attending a school with an overall rating of *Excellent* met or exceeded grade level expectations. However, individual schools receiving an Excellent overall rating range from 47% to 100% of students meeting or exceeding grade level expectations. Of all students attending a school with an overall rating of *Average,* 45 percent of students were meeting or exceeding grade level standards.

When SC developed its unified state and federal accountability system in 2017 (there were two systems before 2017), the EOC used student performance on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as a reference point. South Carolina used the three broad performance levels set for NAEP, a test given across states to a sample of students in each state to help determine the distribution of overall ratings.

When the first cyclical review of the accountability system occurred in 2020 and individuals convened to discuss necessary improvements to the system, members strongly preferred the state "take time to study some components more fully before determining if/how they should be included in the accountability system over moving quickly to implement any system change recommendations." Recognizing the significant disruptions caused by the pandemic, including a two-year pause in school report card ratings, SC maintained continuity in its accountability system rather than implementing sweeping changes.

More recently, the EOC conducted its second five-year review of the state's accountability system, releasing it in December 2025. During that review, there was little agreement about whether our current expectations are set at the right levels. In a statewide survey, fewer than one-third of respondents believed the current standards were appropriate. Others thought they were either too high, too low, or were unsure. There are also concerns about whether the current system fairly reflects the performance of schools serving different groups of students, including high proportions of students with disabilities.

Ultimately, the committee recommended a review of these standards using a process that is clear, fair, and based on evidence. Specifically, the committee recommended the state considering two important questions with accompanying directives:

1. What should schools be expected to achieve? Establish clear expectations for what schools should accomplish to earn each rating.
2. What do actual school performance data tell us? Use data to determine whether those expectations are both challenging and realistically achievable.

School ratings are important signals to stakeholders about performance that is valued and the outcomes we want South Carolina students to attain. The meaning and interpretation of each rating should reflect these values in a manner that is clear, consistent, and supported by evidence.

Per the directive of the cyclical review, the EOC is committed to beginning a standard-setting process in early 2027 to answer these two questions; that process will commence following the expected release of the 2026 NAEP in January 2027.

3. **South Carolina schools have shown sustained improvement in their report card ratings. How do we know those gains reflect genuine improvements in student learning rather than the way the accountability system calculates scores?**

While improved report card ratings are encouraging, our focus must remain on whether more South Carolina students are demonstrating the knowledge and skills necessary for success beyond the classroom.

By state law, academic content standards go through a revision process every seven years. The most recent subject area to be reviewed was mathematics. New content standards for math were adopted in 2023 along with a revised course sequence (Geometry is now offered before Algebra I).

For the most recent report card release, SC READY Math results cannot be directly compared with the prior year because the assessment given last year measured different standards using a different scoring scale.

Changes to the recommended high school mathematics course sequence have also affected Algebra 1 results. Although the Algebra 1 assessment itself did not substantially change, the number of students taking the exam dropped from more than 60,000 in previous years to approximately 9,000 this year. Those students represent a substantially different group, including students taking Algebra 1 later than expected or repeating the course. In addition, high school report cards also report the results of Algebra 1 assessments taken last year by current ninth grade students while they were in middle school. Consequently, year-over-year comparisons of Algebra 1 results would be misleading.

These changes do not diminish the hard work of students and educators, but they do underscore the importance of distinguishing improvements in school ratings from actual gains in student learning.

To determine whether students are truly making progress, it is wise to consider multiple measures of achievement, including results from assessments that allow for meaningful comparisons over time, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

4. **Have changes to the accountability system over the past five years made it easier or harder for schools to earn higher ratings?** Can parents legitimately compare a school's 2026 score with its score in 2022?

South Carolina's school accountability system has undergone several changes over the past five years, including adjustments to the measures used to evaluate school performance and how those measures contribute to overall ratings. These changes are important to consider when comparing school ratings over time.

While parents can look at a school's ratings from 2022 and 2026 to see how its reported performance has changed, those ratings should not be viewed as a direct, apples-to-apples comparison without accounting for changes to the system.

5. If you were a parent evaluating your child's school, what would you look at beyond the overall rating? What are the biggest limitations of the report cards, and what conclusions should parents avoid drawing from them?

I advise parents and others to not just look at the ratings but look at the report cards themselves. The information is a window into a school: the successes and challenges they have faced and some that may still be occurring. The EOC's Beating the Odds Investigative Study has shown the importance of a strong, visible leader in a school; users can find out how long a principal has been at a school from the report card. Student safety is always of great importance to parents when evaluating a school environment for their child. The Student Safety indicator, an un-rated Indicator, provides that information from the front page of each school's report card. Each of the rated indicators also has a details page that can give additional insight into how those points were earned.

In the end, school report cards measure the important, demanding, and complex work that students and educators do every day in South Carolina schools and try to summarize it in a total score and an overall rating—a simple metric that can be quickly understood. Overall ratings are often a good starting point from which to evaluate a school; it is often necessary to look beyond them for a thorough evaluation.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: October 26, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
ESTF Year 1 (School Year 2024-25) Formative Review

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
§SECTION 59-8-150 Requirements for education service providers, department, and Education Oversight Committee.

(E) The Education Oversight Committee shall:

(1) comply with all student privacy laws;

(2) report on and publish associated learning gains and graduation rates to the public by means of a state website with data aggregated by grade level, gender, family income level, number of years participating in the program, and race and a report for any participating school if at least fifty-one percent of the total enrolled students in the private school participated in the program in the prior school year or if there are at least thirty participating students who have scores for tests administered. If the Education Oversight Committee determines that the thirty participating-student cell size may be reduced without disclosing the personally identifiable information of a participating student, the Education Oversight Committee may reduce the participating-student cell size, but the cell size may not be reduced to fewer than ten participating students;

(3) evaluate and report the academic performance of scholarship students compared to similar public school populations; and

(4) collaborate with the department to develop and administer an annual parental satisfaction survey for all parents of scholarship students on issues relevant to the program, to include effectiveness and length of the program participation. Results of this survey must be provided to the General Assembly by December thirty-first of each year.

CRITICAL FACTS
The EOC staff sent the report to the SCDE staff on Wednesday, September 9, 2026 in advance of publication in the packet. A response memo was sent back to the EOC on September 11; that memo is included in the subcommittee meeting packet and is publicly posted on September 14.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

- **September 21, 2026:** anticipated ASA subcommittee approval of first-year report of Year 1 formative report.
- **October 26, 2026:** Year 1 report goes to full EOC
- **December 14, 2026:** Full EOC to receive report of assessment results from ESTF Years 1 and 2.
- **September 21, 2026:** Presented to ASA Subcommittee for approval.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC
Cost: no impact

ACTION REQUEST

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

ACTION TAKEN

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

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

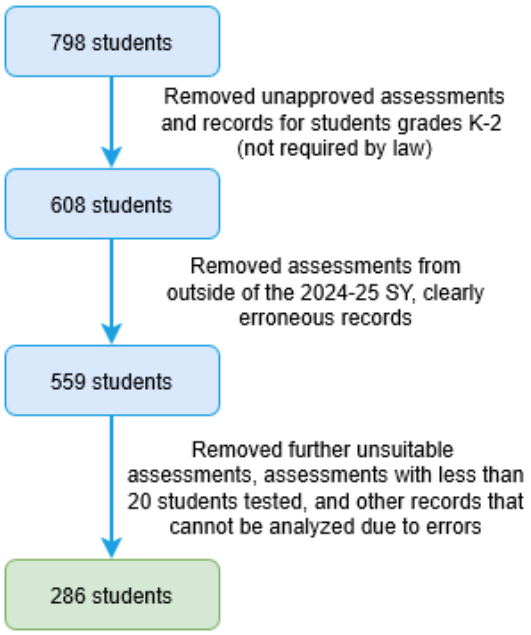
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.

Education Scholarship Trust Fund, Year One (School Year 2024-25)

A Formative Review of Data Quality and Transparency

Submitted to the EOC Academic Standards Subcommittee, September 21, 2026

The Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF) completed its first operational year in 2024-25. Under Act 8 of 2023, as amended by Act 11 of 2025, the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) is charged with reporting the learning gains and graduation rates of participating students and comparing their academic performance to similar students in South Carolina's public schools.



This first-year report is formative in purpose. Its aim is to strengthen the foundation on which future evaluations will rest by examining how *complete, accurate,* and *transparent* the program's assessment data proved to be in its first year. That examination found that the data received cannot yet support a valid account of how participating students performed. Reportable results survived for only 286 of the 2,879 students admitted to the program, about one in ten, a sample too limited and too unlikely to represent all participants to serve as a reliable basis for conclusions about student outcomes. Analyses of participant achievement are therefore deferred to a future report to be released by December 31, 2026, once data from the 2025-26 School Year (the second operational year) allow them to be conducted reliably. What follows is what this first year does make clear: where the data fell short, and what would place the next evaluation on firmer ground.

Data Completeness and Quality

The EOC received assessment records for 798 unique students, 13 fewer than the 811 SCDE reported as having taken approved assessments. Preparing those records for analysis required removing data at several stages, for reasons that recurred throughout the file: assessments not approved for the program, scores for students in grades not required to test, tests taken outside the 2024-25 school year, records with clear errors, and assessments taken by too few students to report. The figure above traces that reduction from the 798 students received to the 286 whose records were both usable and reportable.

Beyond the records set aside, three gaps limited what any first-year analysis could accomplish. The gaps are:

1. No prior-year achievement was collected, so year-over-year learning gains could not be measured, and no comparison could support cause-and-effect conclusions.
2. Incomplete student demographic information was provided to the EOC, preventing reliable reporting of outcomes by grade, gender, family income, and race.
3. No graduation data were reported to the EOC, so the graduation-rate reporting the law requires could not be completed.

Two further patterns bear on data quality directly. A small number of interim and benchmark assessment records, all from online charter schools, showed within-year growth so large that it contradicted the same students' state test results, a sign that some interim scores are not being administered or recorded reliably. And several of the assessments submitted, though nationally normed, lacked evidence of alignment to South Carolina's academic standards or the linking studies needed to relate them to the state tests. Both are preconditions indicated in the law for using an assessment to gauge progress against state expectations.

Viewed in context, these conditions are not unexpected for the first year of a program of this complexity, particularly one whose authorizing law was altered by the courts and the General Assembly during the year it was first being implemented. They are, however, the most important finding this evaluation can offer. Before the program's effect on student learning can be appropriately reported, the data describing that learning must be more complete, more accurate, and more transparent. The recommendations that follow are directed at that goal.

EOC Staff Recommendations

- **Require State-approved, standards-aligned assessments.** Limiting participants to the state summative assessments, or to interim and benchmark assessments approved for use under Section 59-18-310 of the SC Code, would ensure results are comparable across students and aligned to the standards against which their progress is measured. The use of many different, unaligned assessments was the single largest obstacle to analyzing outcomes this year.
- **Deliver assessment results on a fixed, timely schedule.** Set delivery deadlines for program participants so that the first transmission of data to the EOC coincides with the statewide public release of end-of-year summative results (SC READY and EOCEP), and so that all requested evaluation data reach the EOC no later than the public release of School Report Cards. Such a schedule would allow the annual evaluation of ESTF outcomes to be published by the end of each calendar year.
- **Route assessment data through the State's interoperable data system.** Hand-entered and manually retrieved data introduced avoidable error. Routing ESTF assessment data through the Ed-Fi enabled system already used for public schools would improve accuracy.
- **Collect prior-year achievement.** Without a baseline, neither year-over-year learning gains nor valid comparisons to similar students are possible. Prior-year scores are the prerequisite for the growth analyses the program is designed to support.
- **Provide graduation data in National Student Clearinghouse format.** This would satisfy the graduation-rate reporting required by Act 11 and allow postsecondary outcomes to be compared to similar students. Participating education service providers could be offered the same postsecondary reporting the EOC provides to all South Carolina public high schools.
- **Give evaluators appropriate access to fund-use records.** Access to the ClassWallet marketplace backend, subject to applicable privacy and security requirements, would allow the EOC to connect how funds are spent to the outcomes students achieve.

- **Collect and report reasons for program withdrawal.** Reporting why students and families leave the program would provide context for patterns of attrition and missing assessment data and help identify opportunities for program improvement.
- **Examine interim and benchmark assessment integrity statewide.** The implausible and contradictory interim scores found here are unlikely to be unique to ESTF. A statewide review would gauge the scope of the issue and inform more secure administration of these assessments.
- **Require sufficient alignment evidence to support every linking study.** A linking study relates scores on a non-state assessment to the state test, but it cannot show that the assessment measures the content South Carolina's standards define. Only an alignment study can establish that, and it is the foundation on which a valid linking rests. Before a nationally normed assessment is approved as a measure of progress toward South Carolina standards, it should carry a technically sound alignment study to those standards, documented transparently enough for the EOC to verify its quality independently. However rigorous its statistical methods, a linking study cannot substitute for that alignment evidence; the two are complementary and non-substitutable requirements.

The first year of the ESTF program did not yet yield a dependable picture of how participating students are performing. It did yield a clear account of what stands between the program and that picture, along with a concrete path toward closing the gap. The EOC offers these findings and recommendations in that constructive spirit and looks forward to publication of a fuller evaluation in December 2026 as the data mature.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Education Oversight Committee

FROM: South Carolina Department of Education

DATE: September 11, 2026

RE: Education Scholarship Trust Fund, Year One (SY 2024-25) Report

The South Carolina Department of Education appreciates the Education Oversight Committee's formative review of the first year of the Education Scholarship Trust Fund program and shares the EOC's interest in ensuring that future program evaluations are supported by accurate, complete, and useful data.

SCDE has been transparent in providing the EOC the program data available to the Department. At the same time, we readily acknowledge the data-quality challenges associated with the ESTF's first operational year. While the Department clearly communicated the statutory assessment requirement and the assessments approved for participating students, implementation in the first year of any new and complex program presents challenges. Those challenges were compounded significantly when, during the program's first year, the South Carolina Supreme Court's *Eidson* decision removed independent schools, which had been the primary full-time education service providers participating in the program, from ESTF eligibility.

Following that decision, the Department worked directly with participating families to ensure students could satisfy the program's assessment requirements and to collect the information necessary to comply with the law. As SCDE communicated at the time, portions of that information necessarily depended on parent reporting and manual collection processes. Those processes allowed the Department to meet the immediate needs of a rapidly changing program, but they were never intended to represent the mature data infrastructure for ESTF going forward.

Context for the data the EOC received. During the 2024–25 school year, 2,879 students participated in the program at some point; however, many exited during the year for routine reasons such as voluntary withdrawal, return to public school, relocation, or other eligibility changes. At year's end, 1,440 students remained enrolled. Of those, 452 were exempt from testing under state law, including students in grades K–2 and six students with documented disabilities. An additional 136 did not ultimately provide usable assessment data due to circumstances such as graduation or data transfer issues, and a

subset of students was later removed from the program for failure to submit a required test. As a result, 798 students submitted assessment data to SCDE — the number upon which the EOC's analysis is based. The difference between the original enrollment figure and the number of reportable results is therefore largely explained by program attrition, statutory testing exemptions, and the EOC's own analytical screening criteria, not by a systemic failure of data collection.

The Department therefore views many of the issues identified in the EOC's report not as new discoveries, but as useful confirmation of process improvements SCDE had already identified and, in many cases, implemented for the 2025-26 school year. Notably, the Department has already established an earlier and more structured timeline for transmitting 2025-26 assessment data to the EOC, consistent with the timeline recommended in this report.

Among the additional process improvements already implemented or underway are:

> **Assessment collection infrastructure.** A dedicated digital platform now receives and stores student assessment documentation, replacing Year One's manual processes and including standardized templates, approved-assessment guidance, and a set collection timeline.
>
> **Standardized enrollment, graduation, and residency data.** Dropdown menus for district and school of residence replace the former free-text fields, the Department is procuring school attendance-area data to enable automated address-to-school matching, and education service providers are now required to report graduation information through a structured collection process.
>
> **Quarterly enrollment verification.** Families now complete verification forms each quarter under a formal operating procedure. Accounts are suspended for non-completion, and address documentation is actively reviewed through program integrity processes.
>
> **Systematic cross-office process improvement.** An operations team organized around assessments, address verification, and data reporting has documented first-year pain points, built standard operating procedures for each core function, and is developing a consolidated data platform as the program's authoritative reporting source.

As this work continues, SCDE welcomes recommendations that strengthen the program and is committed to acting on those that fall within the Department's authority under Title 59, Chapter 8. Several of the EOC's recommendations align with improvements the Department has already begun or can readily advance. Where the EOC’s recommendations contemplate new requirements or data collection beyond what is

currently established in law, additional legal, technical, or policy consideration will be needed to ensure consistency with the governing statute and the respective roles of SCDE, the EOC, education service providers, and participating families. With that framework in mind, SCDE has implemented or plans to implement the following initiatives addressed in the report:

Encourage use of the state summative or formative assessment where practical, while recognizing that Section 59-8-150 expressly provides families and education service providers with multiple assessment pathways and expressly prohibits the state from requiring independent schools to change their curriculum. SCDE should actively communicate these statutory options to education service providers and families and should develop guidance clarifying logistical procedures for ESTF students who elect to take SC READY at a public school site. The Department worked closely with the Charter Institute at Erskine in 2025-26 to offer SC READY to ESTF students at sites across the state.

Require independent test administration for non-state assessments. Testing fidelity is a prerequisite for score validity. Any approved non-state assessment used to satisfy § 59-8-150(C)(1)(b) should be administered by a department-approved third-party test administrator to provide a controlled proctored environment, standardized protocol, and consistent data reporting.

Route ESTF program data through the State's interoperable data system. Hand-entered and manually retrieved data introduced avoidable error. ESTF assessment data, student demographic information, and third-party administrator data will be routed through the Ed-Fi enabled system already used for public schools. Consolidating program data in a single interoperable system will improve accuracy and place ESTF evaluation data on the same infrastructure that supports statewide accountability reporting.

Refine the assessment approval and linking framework for the alternative testing pathway. For ESTF students who do not take SC READY or a state-approved formative assessment per 59-8-150(C), SCDE will define an administrative review process under which test publishers submit content crosswalks and blueprint comparisons against the SC College- and Career-Ready Standards, and SCDE staff evaluate submissions for completeness, plausibility, and the absence of disqualifying content gaps. For each assessment approved through this process, SCDE will continue to apply its developed equi-percentile concordance methodology, the most appropriate and cost-effective type of linking study, using South Carolina student data to establish score relationships with SC READY. SCDE will also continue to publish annually a list of all approved assessments, including SC READY, state-approved formative assessments, and approved norm-referenced

instruments, together with the alignment and concordance methodologies and interpretive guidance for families and education service providers.

Most importantly, the Department believes the appropriate focus is forward. The first year of ESTF was truly a "Year Zero": a new program implemented under extraordinary circumstances and substantially disrupted midway through its first operational year. The 2025-26 program is operating under a different statutory framework, with stronger processes, better data collection, and lessons learned from that first year already incorporated into implementation.

SCDE looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the EOC as the data mature and as South Carolina develops a sound, sustainable framework for evaluating the program's effectiveness.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: October 26, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Evaluation of WIN Assessment

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

(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.

CRITICAL FACTS
Changes in the new WIN assessment prompted a review of both the process that occurred to change the standards and a psychometric review of the assessment pursuant to Section 59-18-320 of the SC Code of Laws.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

- **September 21, 2026:** ASA subcommittee review of UGA review of WIN assessment
- **October 26, 2026:** anticipated EOC review of UGA analysis of WIN assessment; 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

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

Cost: $29,902.98 assessment conducted 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

WIN Work Ready Assessments

Pre-Operational Assessment and Equating Processes

UGA 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

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1. Purpose and Scope of Review

This review evaluates the technical and procedural quality of the pre-operational processes used for the WIN Work Ready Assessments from item and test development to operational use. The purpose of this review is to determine whether assessment development activities were conducted in accordance with generally accepted assessment best practices and whether sufficient evidence exists to support valid and defensible interpretations of scores.

Subject matter experts from the University of Georgia reviewed available documentation and evidence related to assessment design, item development, field testing, psychometric evaluation, form construction, alignment, standard setting, and readiness for operational implementation.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the University of Georgia reviewed the following primary documents provided by the WIN Team:

- WIN Work Ready Assessments Technical Report
- WIN ASA_Alignment Report 2025
- WIN ASA_Field Testing Summary
- WIN ASA_Standard Setting Report 2025

In addition to these reports, the WIN Team also provided ancillary materials and artifacts supporting test development activities, such as administration materials, panel training materials, and rating sheets.

1.1 Assessment Purpose

The WIN Work Ready Assessments were designed to measure foundational academic skills required for success in job-specific training programs and workforce preparation activities. Assessment development was grounded in the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Information Network (O*NET, released in 1997), an online database that provides profiles for hundreds of occupations including required skills, daily job duties, experience requirements, wages and employment trends, and job zones. Assessment items are aligned to learning objectives linked to O*NET Job Zones and associated workplace skill expectations. The assessment framework was revised in 2024-2025 following a re-review of O*NET data that identified additional workplace readiness skills requiring additional learning objectives (WIN, 2026a, 2026b, 2026d).

The intended interpretation of assessment results is that examinees are credentialed and possess the foundational math, reading, and data literacy skills necessary to successfully engage in training at a particular job level. The results are not intended to indicate readiness for a specific job, but rather readiness for job specific training and positioned for successful progress.

The development of the current assessment edition involved a multi-year process starting with research and framework development, followed by a 2024 update that incorporated new high-demand workplace skills. Key activities to support these updates included refreshing the item pool, developing and field testing new items, conducting alignment studies to ensure the match between learning objectives and operational forms, and establishing new performance standards

and cut scores using a Modified Angoff methodology (Cizek & Bunch, 2007; WIN, 2026b, 2026c, 2026d).

2. Test Design and Blueprint

This section summarizes how the WIN Team translates the O*NET Content Model into test blueprints that define what content is measured on the WIN Work Ready Assessments and how learning objectives complexity progresses over five achievement levels. Consistent with the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014), the WIN Team documents what is being measured, the intended examinee population, and the intended uses of test scores.

2.1 Development of the Test Blueprint

The ***test blueprint*** serves as the primary mechanism for ensuring content alignment and supporting valid interpretations of test scores. Specifically, it describes which learning objectives are assessed, how often they appear, and how much each objective contributes to the overall score (Nunally, 1978; Sireci, 1998).

Assessment development for the WIN Work Ready Assessments was guided by test blueprints organized around learning objectives, achievement levels, and content strands. Work Ready Math, Work Ready Reading, and Work Ready Data each include five achievement levels representing increasing complexity and workplace readiness demands. Learning objectives, discrete skills, and strands were used to define the content domain and guide item development activities (WIN, 2026a, 2026b). Item development, review, and selection processes are governed by the test blueprint.

2.2 Item Types

All assessment items are traditional selected-response (multiple-choice) items, including a stem (question) and requiring examinees to select one correct answer from four options. Available documentation describes item development and blueprinting procedures based on selected-response formats and does not indicate that alternative item types were considered during the development of test specifications or test blueprints.

2.3 Universal Design Principles

Universal design principles are applied from the outset to make tests accessible, fair, and appropriate for the widest range of students (Laitusis & Karvonen, 2025). Rather than addressing accessibility only after tests are developed, the guiding design specifications for the WIN Work Ready Assessments consider accessibility across all phases of development to support valid measurement for all learners.

Universal design principles guide decisions related to language demand, visual presentation, response formats, and interaction design. Items are reviewed for clarity, readability, and potential sources of bias, and accessibility features. These practices are intended to reduce barriers to access by addressing accessibility considerations during assessment development.

The technical report indicates that each item is reviewed at the concept stage and again throughout the development process for bias and sensitivity. Checklists were used to flag stereotyping, gender, ethnicity, religion, or class biases, and emotionally charged topics (WIN, 2026a).

2.4 Evaluation and Recommendations

Evaluation

The WIN documentation indicates that the test blueprint guides item development, form construction, and score reporting, supporting representative coverage of the intended content domain. The WIN test blueprint provides a structured framework linking learning objectives, content strands, and achievement levels to the intended interpretations of scores. The assessment design incorporates procedures intended to promote accessibility, fairness, and content alignment through the application of universal design principles and multiple stages of item review. These practices reduce the need for accommodations by addressing access at the design stage rather than retrofitting accessibility after development.

The selected-response item type supports efficient administration and scoring while providing broad coverage of the targeted content domain. However, some learning objectives may involve skills that could also be measured through performance-based or constructed-response tasks such as “Measure the length, width, and height of products and materials” to fully assess the intent of the skill.

Overall, the documented blueprint and design processes are consistent with generally accepted assessment development practices and provide an appropriate foundation for subsequent development activities.

Recommendations

The WIN Team could expand technical documentation describing the development, review, and approval of test blueprints, including the roles of subject matter experts and other stakeholders involved in decision-making. Additional documentation regarding blueprint governance would strengthen evidence supporting content validity and assessment oversight.

Additionally, future reviews could consider evaluating the alignment between selected-response item types and the skills being measured, particularly for learning objectives that emphasize complex performance or application, to ensure that assessment methods continue to provide the strongest evidence of intended knowledge and skills.

3. Item Development and Review

Item development and review processes are critical to assessment quality because test score validity depends on the quality, alignment, fairness, and accessibility of individual test items. Effective assessment programs use well-established item development procedures, multiple

stages of review, and quality control processes to ensure items accurately measure intended knowledge and skills while minimizing irrelevant barriers to performance.

The WIN documentation describes a structured item development process involving subject matter experts with relevant domain knowledge and experience and well versed in academic and workforce standards, assessment design principles, accessibility, and bias and sensitivity review process. Items were developed using established specifications and underwent multiple review stages before field testing, including content review, editorial review, bias and sensitivity review, accessibility review, and quality assurance review (WIN, 2026a). Item development procedures emphasized alignment with learning objectives, clarity of language, fairness, and adherence to universal design principles. This is in accordance with the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014).

3.1 Item Development

Item development is a multi-step process designed to ensure that test items are accurate and aligned to the learning objectives. This process is typically guided by item specifications and style guidelines that define expectations for content, format, and rigor. The technical report describes the criteria for developing the parts of an item (WIN, 2026a).

Every item is reviewed at the "concept stage" and throughout the development process, particularly for bias and sensitivity issues. Checklists are used to determine no stereotyping is present and there is no bias based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. Following stereotyping and bias reviews, items were reviewed for potentially emotionally charged topics.

The item development procedures emphasize alignment to learning objectives, multiple review activities, and consideration of fairness and accessibility throughout development.

3.2 Item Review

Professional editors review items for length, text density, word usage, sentence structure, and grammar to improve readability and clarity. Following this, the executive content development team conducts a final quality assurance review to verify that items align with learning objectives, contain a single correct answer, feature parallel options, remain free of bias or sensitivity issues, and utilize clear language and graphics (WIN, 2026a).

3.3 Evaluation and Recommendations

<u>Evaluation</u>

The documentation indicates that WIN implemented a structured and multi-stage item development and review process designed to support item quality, alignment, fairness, and accessibility. Item development activities were guided by learning objectives and included multiple review points, checking for content accuracy and alignment, bias and sensitivity, editorial quality, and overall quality assurance. This is evidence that multiple safeguards were incorporated to support the quality of items before field testing.

Overall, the documented procedures reflect generally accepted assessment development practices by emphasizing alignment to learning objectives, systematic review, and attention to fairness and accessibility throughout the development process. There is reasonable evidence that item development and review activities were conducted in an industry-accepted manner.

Recommendations

No significant concerns were identified regarding item development and review procedures. Future technical documentation could provide additional information regarding any training that is provided to item developers and reviewer guidelines and process for agreement. Such information would provide additional transparency regarding item quality control and development governance.

4. Field Testing and Psychometric Analysis

Before new test items are used to calculate student scores, they are first administered through a structured field testing process. After test items have been reviewed and approved by content experts for accuracy and by reviewers for potential bias, the items are embedded in operational test forms as field test items. Responses to field test items do not affect scores; rather, they provide data to evaluate how items function.

4.1 Field Testing

Newly developed items were field tested between January and April 2025 using a matrix-sampling design in which unscored field-test items were embedded within operational assessment administrations (WIN, 2026c). Examinees were presented with five to eight embedded field-test items under operational testing conditions. This approach allowed field-test responses to be collected under conditions that closely resembled operational administration while minimizing burden on individual examinees.

Field-test sample sizes were substantial, including approximately 58,427 Work Ready Math examinees, 56,016 Work Ready Reading examinees, and 56,128 Work Ready Data examinees (WIN, 2026c). Approximately half of the sample consisted of South Carolina high school students participating with prior approval from the South Carolina Department of Education.

After field testing is complete, a series of statistical analyses are conducted to evaluate how each item performed. The analyses examine multiple aspects of item quality, including:

- **Difficulty** – whether the item is appropriately challenging for students.
- **Discrimination** – how well the item distinguishes between students with stronger and weaker overall performance.
- **Distractor performance (for selected-response items)** – how students respond to the incorrect answer choices and whether those options function as intended.

These analyses were used to evaluate item performance and identify items that warranted additional review or revision. Items violating one or more criteria were flagged for review and possible revision. Modified items were not immediately transitioned into operational use but instead remained eligible for future field testing to establish new psychometric evidence.

The field testing process generated empirical evidence regarding item functioning under operational testing conditions and informed subsequent psychometric review activities. The large sample size provides a strong basis for evaluating item functioning and supporting psychometric decision-making.

4.2 Item Selection and Form Construction

Form construction is the process of selecting items for operational use in a manner that maintains content representation, psychometric quality, and comparability across test forms. Effective form construction helps ensure that score interpretations remain consistent regardless of which operational form an examinee receives.

WIN documentation indicates that forms were developed collaboratively by the content development team and psychometrician following the results from field testing. Item selection was informed by assessment blueprints and psychometric analyses. The assessments use fixed-form designs, and two parallel forms were developed for each Work Ready assessment. Operational forms were equated using common-item psychometric methodologies to support score comparability across administrations (WIN, 2026a).

4.3 Alignment Study

The WIN Team conducted an alignment study in August 2025 as part of the assessment revision process (WIN, 2026b). The study was designed to evaluate whether assessment items appropriately reflected the intended learning objectives and supported valid score interpretations.

The alignment study was conducted following substantial revisions to Work Ready Math, Work Ready Reading, Work Ready Data, including the addition of new learning objectives identified through a review of updated O*NET workforce-readiness data. Eight subject matter experts participated in the standard setting process. Panelists represented across baccalaureate, graduate, and post-graduate levels and had expertise in K-12 and adult education, workforce experience, and corrections experience. They represented four states in the South; one participant was from South Carolina. Panelists were selected through a structured recruitment and interview process intended to ensure relevant expertise and diverse perspectives (WIN, 2026b).

Prior to conducting the review, panelists received an orientation and training session led by the WIN psychometrician. Reviewers were provided with assessment forms, learning objectives, examples of the skills associated with each objective, and standardized scoring materials. Panelists independently reviewed items and evaluated whether each item appropriately measured its intended learning objective.

The review process required panelists to compare the content and cognitive demands of each item to the specified learning objectives. Because the learning objectives incorporated both knowledge and skills and level of complexity, alignment judgments simultaneously evaluated content representation and degree of rigor. Individual judgments were collected, and agreement rates were calculated across reviewers. Figure 1 shows a sample score sheet that documents individual reviewer decisions for each item.

Figure 1. Panelist Score Sheet [Sample]

	ALIGNMENT				ROUND 1						ROUND 2			
Question #	FORM 1	FORM 2		Question #	level 2	level 3	level 4	level 5		Question #	level 2	level 3	level 4	level 5
1	Yes	Yes		1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Yes	Yes		2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Yes	Yes		3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	Yes		4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	Yes		5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Yes	Yes		6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	Yes	Yes		7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Yes	Yes		8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Yes	Yes		9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Yes	Yes		10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Results demonstrated strong alignment for Work Ready Math and Work Ready Reading and moderate-to-strong alignment for Work Ready Data (WIN, 2026b). While the Data assessment showed a higher proportion of moderately aligned items than the other content areas, no Data items were classified as weakly aligned.

4.4 Other Testing Activities

In addition to development activities, assessment programs establish procedures to support secure and standardized administration, accessibility, and score integrity. The assessments are typically delivered online through a web-based proprietary system. Online versions are offered in in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language. Paper versions including standard booklet, large print, and Braille are also available. The technical report itself did not provide details regarding administration procedures, test security requirements, accommodation policies, or administrator training presentations. This may be because WIN provides customized test administration materials for partners like South Carolina districts and schools that are posted in the state's online resource center.

4.5 Evaluation and Recommendations

<u>Evaluation</u>

The documentation indicates that WIN implemented field-testing and psychometric evaluation processes that support developing quality items and operational forms. Field-test items were administered under conditions closely resembling operational testing. The documented field testing process reflects accepted assessment development practices by collecting item performance data under operational testing conditions. Further, sample sizes exceed those typically required for stable estimation of classical and IRT item statistics. These analyses provide evidence that test items are technically sound, measure student knowledge accurately, and operate fairly across student groups.

The documented form construction procedures demonstrate appropriate consideration of both content and psychometric characteristics. The use of blueprint-driven item selection, psychometric review, parallel forms, and equating procedures provides evidence that WIN took reasonable steps to support consistent score interpretation across forms.

The alignment study provides additional validity evidence supporting the relationship between assessment content and the learning objectives. WIN's documentation describing panelist expertise, training, independent evaluations, agreement rates, and process for flagged items supports the conclusion that operational forms adequately represent the intended workplace-

readiness learning objectives and contribute to defensible interpretations of scores. The documented procedures provide evidence that WIN evaluated and improved content alignment through a systematic review process.

Overall, the field testing, psychometric analysis, form-construction, and alignment-review activities are consistent with generally accepted assessment-development practices and provide substantial evidence supporting the technical quality of the operational assessments.

Recommendations

Future technical documentation could provide additional details regarding item selection criteria and form construction decision rules to increase transparency regarding development of operational forms; however, the information reviewed provides sufficient evidence that accepted form development practices were followed.

Continued review of moderately aligned Work Ready Data items may further strengthen alignment evidence in future assessment revisions and support continued monitoring of content representation. No significant concerns were identified regarding the alignment study methodology.

Future technical documentation could include descriptions of WIN-recommended administration procedures, test security protocols, accommodation policies, administrator training, and test security measures to provide standardized guidance and evidence supporting secure and consistent implementation. Although supporting state administration materials were reviewed, incorporating recommended best practices into technical documentation would provide additional evidence supporting standardized implementation across testing settings.

5. Standard Setting and Cut Scores

Standard setting is the process through which performance standards and associated cut scores are established to support meaningful interpretation of assessment results. Because the WIN Work Ready Assessments underwent substantial revision in August 2025, including the addition of new learning objectives derived from updated O*NET analyses and lengthening the test forms, WIN conducted a new standard setting study prior to the operational release of the revised assessments in December 2025.

The standard setting process was designed to establish the minimum score required for each of the five achievement levels used by the Work Ready Math, Work Ready Reading, and Work Ready Data assessments. These achievement levels are linked to progressively more complex foundational workforce-readiness skills and corresponding O*NET Job Zones. The resulting cut scores provide the basis for classifying examinees into achievement levels and support interpretation of assessment results in relation to workforce preparation and career readiness.

5.1 Standard Setting Methodology

WIN employed a Modified Angoff (Yes/No) method to establish cut scores for each assessment (WIN, 2026d). The study was conducted virtually and facilitated by a WIN psychometrician. The Modified Angoff approach is a widely recognized standard setting methodology used in

educational and credentialing assessments because it relies on subject matter expert judgments regarding the performance expected of minimally competent candidates at each performance level.

Under the Modified Angoff approach, panelists reviewed every item and determined whether a borderline examinee at a specified achievement level would be expected to answer the item correctly. This approach simplifies judgments to a binary decision, thereby reducing cognitive burden and promoting consistency of judgments across panelists. The methodology focuses on the knowledge and skills represented in the performance/achievement level descriptors and the characteristics of examinees functioning at the threshold between adjacent achievement levels. Panelists discussed the skills that distinguish adjacent achievement levels and used those distinctions to guide judgments regarding expected item performance. This process ensures that cut score recommendations are rooted in the intended meaning of the achievement levels rather than item difficulty alone.

5.2 Panelists and Training

Eight subject matter experts participated in the standard setting process. These panelists were the same committee from the August 2025 Alignment Study (WIN, 2026b, 2026d). Panelists represented across higher education levels and had expertise in K-12 and adult education, workforce experience, and corrections experience. They represented different states; one participant was from South Carolina.

Prior to conducting the review, panelists received an orientation and training session led by the WIN psychometrician. Training included an overview of the purpose of standard setting, the role of subject matter experts, the definition and interpretation of the performance level descriptors, security requirements related to assessment materials, and instruction on implementing the Modified Angoff methodology. Sample items were reviewed, and panelists practiced making judgments using the established procedures before beginning. Figure 2 shows a sample score sheet provided during training that illustrates the process for individual panelist decisions for each item.

Figure 2. Panelist Judgement Score Sheet [Sample from Training Materials]

	ROUND 1			
Question #	level 2	level 3	level 4	level 5
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				

The training was intended to establish a common understanding of achievement level expectations and judgment procedures.

5.3 Rounds of Judgment and Use of Data

The standard setting process included two rounds of independent judgments (WIN, 2026d). During the first round, panelists independently reviewed items and recorded Yes/No judgments regarding whether a borderline examinee at each achievement level would answer the item correctly. Panelists made these judgments using the performance level descriptors, assessment forms, and scoring materials provided during training. Individual judgments were collected, and agreement rates were calculated across panelists.

Following completion of the first round, panelists participated in facilitated discussions focused on areas of disagreement and items that generated the greatest variability in ratings. To support these discussions, panelists were provided with summary information showing the distribution of cut score recommendations, average recommendations, and measures of variability across panelists. Individual panelist identities were protected through the use of numeric identifiers. Discussions focused on the interpretation of performance level descriptors, the characteristics of borderline examinees, and the rationale underlying differing judgments. Importantly, panelists were not encouraged to seek consensus regarding cut scores; rather, discussions were intended to improve shared understanding of the achievement level expectations and judgment task.

Following discussion, panelists completed a second round of independent judgments. After Round 2, summary statistics and panelist distributions were again reviewed and discussed. The documentation notes that panelists did not express concerns regarding the resulting recommendations after the second round and that the degree of change between rounds was relatively small. Based on the stability of results and supporting research indicating that two rounds frequently produce defensible results, the decision was made not to conduct a third round of judgments.

The documentation describes how panel recommendations were reviewed and transformed into operational cut scores that were subsequently adopted for operational use. The process included trained subject matter experts, defined performance level descriptors, training methods with borderline examinees, multiple rounds of judgment, discussion, and evaluation of panelist convergence. Documentation additionally describes how resulting panel recommendations were transformed into operational cut scores and adopted without modification (WIN, 2026d).

5.4 Evaluation and Recommendations

<u>Evaluation</u>

The documentation reviewed provides evidence that the standard setting process was a formal testing event, facilitated by a psychometrician, informed by established performance/ achievement level descriptors, and supported by educator and workforce expert judgments. The standard setting report provides evidence of panelist convergence through documentation of individual ratings, means, and standard deviations across both rounds. The inclusion of multiple rounds, structured discussion, performance level descriptor review, and quantitative feedback are consistent with accepted practices intended to improve the quality and consistency of expert judgments and the resulting cut score recommendations. Although the documentation acknowledges limitations associated with panel size and the absence of impact data at the time of the standard setting, the overall evidence indicates that the panel recommendations were

translated into operational cut scores through a systematic, documented, and professionally accepted process suitable for operational use.

The standard setting process is consistent with generally accepted practices for criterion-referenced assessments and provides sufficient evidence supporting the defensibility of achievement level classifications and associated score interpretations. No significant concerns were identified regarding the standard setting methodology or implementation procedures.

Recommendations

All panelists were drawn from southeastern states (South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Florida). Future standard setting studies may benefit from including subject matter experts from additional geographic regions to further broaden the range of perspectives informing achievement level expectations.

In addition, future reviews could incorporate post-administration impact data and stakeholder feedback to provide supplementary evidence regarding the appropriateness and consequences of the achievement level classifications after operational implementation.

6. Scale Scores, Achievement Levels, and Reporting

Following administration and scoring, examinee responses are transformed into achievement-level classifications and reported in a manner intended to support interpretation of foundational workforce-readiness skills. The intended interpretation of assessment results is that examinees possess varying levels of foundational math, reading, and data literacy skills associated with workplace preparation and success in occupational training.

6.1 Scoring and Scale Scores

Items are scored dichotomously, with responses marked either correct or incorrect.

Once responses are scored, raw scores are transformed to a reporting scale. The technical report indicates that item response theory methodologies are used to support score scaling and comparability across operational forms, while the standard-setting report documents the conversion of raw-score cut scores to the operational reporting scale through test characteristic curve and theta-based transformation procedures. Reliability estimates were strong, ranging from 0.84 to 0.91, and classification accuracy estimates ranged from approximately 0.75 to 0.78 (WIN, 2026a), providing evidence that scores are sufficiently consistent for their intended uses.

6.2 Achievement Levels

The WIN Work Ready Academic Skills Assessments include five achievement levels for each content area: Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, and Level 5. The standard setting event defined the characteristics of borderline examinees and established cut scores, and raw cut scores were established for each achievement level across the three assessments.

Table 1 shows a sample set of achievement levels and descriptors for math.

Table 1. Math Achievement Levels and Anchors [Sample from Standard Setting]

Achievement Level	Achievement Level Descriptor (Anchors)
1	A participant who has earned an Achievement Level 1 in Work Ready Math has the foundational math skills to succeed in preparatory programs for O*NET Job Zone 1 career pathways. Participants can apply basic problem solving strategies and mathematical understandings to solve 1-step mathematical problems in the context of Job Zone 1 occupations.
2	A participant who has earned an Achievement Level 2 in Work Ready Math has the foundational math skills to succeed in preparatory programs for O*NET Job Zone 2 career pathways. Participants can apply problem solving strategies and mathematical understandings to solve mathematical problems in the context of Job Zone 2 occupations.
3	A participant who has earned an Achievement Level 3 in Work Ready Math has the foundational math skills to succeed in preparatory programs for O*NET Job Zone 3 career pathways. Participants can apply problem solving strategies and mathematical understandings to solve mathematical problems in the context of Job Zone 3 occupations.
4	A participant who has earned an Achievement Level 4 in Work Ready Math has the foundational math skills to succeed in preparatory programs for O*NET Job Zone 4 career pathways. Participants can apply problem solving strategies and advanced mathematical understandings to solve mathematical problems in the context of Job Zone 4 occupations.
5	A participant who has earned an Achievement Level 5 in Work Ready Math has the foundational math skills to succeed in preparatory programs for O*NET Job Zone 5 career pathways. Participants can apply advanced, complex mathematical reasoning to solve problems in the context of Job Zone 5 occupations.

The achievement levels are directly linked to learning objectives, performance (achievement) level descriptors, and O*NET job zone expectations.

6.3 Reporting and Intended Uses of Results

Assessment results are intended to communicate examinees' levels of foundational workforce-readiness skills in mathematics, reading, and data literacy. They are designed to determine whether examinees possess the foundational academic skills necessary to succeed in training associated with various occupational pathways.

The WIN documentation reviewed primarily focused on assessment development and technical characteristics. Limited documentation was available regarding operational score reports, stakeholder-facing interpretive guides, or other reporting resources intended to support score use and interpretation.

6.4 Evaluation and Recommendations

Evaluation

The documentation reviewed indicates that WIN implemented scoring, scale score reporting, and achievement level classification procedures that are consistent with generally accepted psychometric practices. Assessment forms were developed and equated using common-item methodologies and psychometric analyses designed to maintain consistency of score interpretations across administrations.

Reported reliability and classification accuracy estimates provide evidence that assessment results are sufficiently consistent for their intended purposes. Additional psychometric analyses, including dimensionality analyses and differential item functioning, further support the appropriateness of the scoring model and resulting score interpretations.

The documented relationship among learning objectives, achievement level descriptors, standard setting judgments, and cut scores provides evidence supporting meaningful interpretation of achievement classifications. The achievement level framework appears aligned with the intended use of the assessments as measures of foundational workforce-readiness skills rather than preparation for specific occupations (WIN 2026a, 2026d).

Overall, the scoring, scaling, and achievement-level classification procedures provide reasonable evidence supporting the consistency, interpretability, and intended uses of assessment results.

Recommendations

The WIN documentation describes the intended uses and interpretations of assessment results; however, limited evidence was available regarding operational score reports, user guides, or stakeholder-facing materials intended to support score interpretation.

Future technical documentation and reviews could include sample score reports, interpretative guides, and related reporting resources to provide additional evidence that score meanings, limitations, and appropriate uses are communicated clearly to students, educators, workforce partners, and other stakeholders.

7. Conclusion

Based on the documentation reviewed, the WIN Team implemented a comprehensive assessment development process that included blueprint development, item development and review, field testing, psychometric analysis, alignment studies, standard setting, and score scaling activities. The procedures described are generally consistent with accepted assessment development practices and provide evidence supporting the validity and defensibility of score interpretations for the intended purposes of the WIN Work Ready Assessments.

Noted strengths of the assessment program include the structured item review process, extensive field testing sample sizes, documented psychometric analyses, formal alignment study, and well-accepted standard setting methodology. These activities collectively contribute evidence supporting content validity, score reliability, and achievement level interpretations.

Recommendations provided throughout this report focus primarily on expanding technical documentation related to blueprint governance, form construction procedures, score reporting resources, and recommended administration practices. These recommendations are intended to enhance transparency and documentation rather than address substantive concerns regarding assessment quality. Specific opportunities include providing additional information about blueprint approval processes, form construction procedures, and reporting materials that support appropriate score interpretation and use. Although administration and test security materials and training are customized for each state, WIN may also benefit from documenting a core set of recommended practices that apply across states.

Overall, the evidence reviewed supports the conclusion that the WIN Work Ready Assessments were developed through a process consistent with professional assessment practices and are appropriately prepared for operational use within the intended context.

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

WIN Work Ready Assessments

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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

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Summary

This document reviews the WIN Work Ready Math, Reading, and Data Assessments and evaluates the extent to which these assessments provide valid and reliable evidence for measuring foundational employability skills associated with career readiness. The review examines the alignment of the assessments of their intended learning objectives and achievement levels, evaluates evidence related to content validity and internal structure, and considers the reliability and appropriateness of achievement level classifications used to support credential attainment and reporting.

The review of the WIN Work Ready Assessments yielded several key findings. Overall, the test blueprints appropriately define the knowledge and skills measured by each assessment and reflect the progression of achievement levels aligned to O*NET Job Zones. The operational forms were consistent with blueprint specifications, and all learning objectives identified on the blueprints were represented across the reviewed forms. Item reviews indicated that the assessments are generally well aligned to the intended learning objectives, with only a small number of items on the WIN Work Ready Data recommended for content review or objective re-alignment. Overall, the alignment between assessment items and the intended learning objectives was strong and supports the content validity of the assessments.

With respect to cognitive complexity, the WIN Work Ready Assessments incorporate a range of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels intended to measure increasingly complex applications of skills and knowledge. The DOK distributions identified in the *Test Maps* appear reasonable and generally consistent with the intended purpose of workforce-readiness assessments. However, item-level reviews indicated that a number of items classified as DOK 3, particularly within the Reading and Data assessments, function operationally at a DOK 2 level because the correct responses can often be identified through straightforward interpretation or application of readily available information. While these findings do not raise concerns regarding overall assessment quality, a broader review of DOK classifications and distributions is recommended to ensure that the cognitive demands of operational forms reflect the intended blueprint specifications.

Evidence based on the internal structure of the assessments indicated that the WIN Work Ready Assessments generally function as intended. Classical Test Theory analyses demonstrated appropriate ranges of item difficulty and strong item discrimination across the Math, Reading, and Data assessments. Item response theory analyses showed that item difficulties span the ability continuum, supporting the validity of score interpretations and classification decisions. Dimensionality analyses provided evidence that each assessment measures a single dominant construct, and reliability estimates were strong. The multiple forms equating process was sound, supporting the use of multiple forms for each assessment. Due to insufficient sample sizes, DIF and subgroup analyses are incomplete, but are strongly recommended for additional evidence regarding fairness and validity. Additionally, model fit evaluations and post-equating checks are recommended for continued assurance of valid score comparisons.

The evaluation also examined achievement level classifications for the WIN Work Ready Assessments. Achievement level cut scores were established using a recognized standard-setting methodology and applied to 1-PL-based ability estimates to classify students into five

achievement levels corresponding to established O*NET Job Zones. Classification quality indices indicated acceptable classification accuracy and consistency. When feasible given blueprint and content constraints, we recommend adding more difficult items to better scale and classify higher ability examinees.

Overall, the WIN Work Ready Assessments demonstrate sound technical quality and provide valid and reliable evidence regarding the prerequisite career readiness skills required for success in occupations aligned to the corresponding O*NET Job Zones. The assessments are generally aligned to their intended learning objectives, exhibit appropriate psychometric characteristics, and support meaningful achievement level classifications linked to career readiness outcomes. Although the assessments are functioning as intended, targeted refinements, including reviewing flagged content and DOK alignment issues, conducting differential item functioning analyses when feasible, and expanding item coverage at higher difficulty levels, would further strengthen the validity, interpretability, and utility of assessment results.

1. WIN Work Ready Assessments

This report reviews the WIN Work Ready Assessments, a suite of career-readiness assessments covering academic skills measuring Math, Reading, and Data. This review evaluates the three component subtests, or employable skills, of the WIN Work Ready Assessments. These subtests are utilized for the *South Carolina Career Ready Test* and are conducted on behalf of the South Carolina Oversight Committee in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education.

1.1 South Carolina Career Ready Test Overview

The *South Carolina Career Ready Test* is a statewide assessment administered to all eleventh-grade students to measure foundational workplace skills identified as essential for career readiness. The assessment evaluates students in four key areas: soft skills, math, reading, and data analysis.

The South Carolina Career Ready Test incorporates the WIN Work Ready Assessments to measure students' proficiency in employability skills. South Carolina students who pass the WIN Work Ready Assessments earn the South Carolina Work Ready Credential, demonstrating mastery of foundational math, reading, and data analysis skills. Students who also pass the soft skills component earn the South Carolina Work Ready Essential Soft Skills Credential, which validates competencies in effective communication, professionalism, teamwork and collaboration, critical thinking, and problem solving. Both credentials are endorsed by the National Work Readiness Council and are designed to help educators, workforce development professionals, and employers determine students' readiness for post-secondary education, technical training, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and employment opportunities.

The mathematics, reading, and data assessments are assigned a scale score and an achievement level score from 1 to 5 based on the U.S. Department of Labor O*NET Job Zones, which categorize occupations based on the education, experience, and training typically required for successful job performance. Students who achieve Levels 2 through 5 earn a corresponding Work Ready Credential, reflecting readiness for occupations within those job zones.

The WIN Work Ready Assessments are organized around learning objectives aligned to achievement levels and O*NET Job Zones. Within each assessment, related skills are grouped into strands that represent broad domains of workplace competencies and help define the knowledge and skills measured by each assessment. Together, these components guide the development of authentic assessment items that measure students' ability to apply career readiness skills in workplace-relevant contexts.

1.2 Review Process

With the support of the Education Oversight Committee, experts from the University of Georgia evaluated the WIN Work Ready Assessments for reliability and validity in assessing the prerequisite career readiness skills required to successfully complete preparatory programs for jobs categorized by the corresponding achievement level / job zone. The evaluation process follows 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 WIN Team for evaluation:

- 100A and 200B Test Forms
- For each Work Ready assessment:
    - Blueprint and Test Maps
- WIN Work Ready Assessments Technical Report

The Test Maps included metadata about individual items and psychometric indices. The test contractor calculated all parameters; no additional estimation of item or test parameters was conducted. The items reviewed for content validity were presented in the new/current edition of all three-component assessment, and the psychometric review is based on the summaries from the Technical Report which reported on the new editions released December 2025. The n-counts are relatively small and will be updated as more data is collected.

This report was prepared by the University of Georgia and examines critical elements of the WIN Work Ready Assessments 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 aligns assessment items to learning objectives and cognitive complexity levels such as Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Traditionally, such as in state assessments, test blueprints are content based maps and used to define how many items are dedicated to each content domain. The WIN Work Ready Assessments use a progression of skills and cognitive demand. They are designed with Achievement Levels 1-5 aligned to O*NET Job Zones 1-5 with roughly equal items aligned to each achievement level.

2.1 Coverage of Learning Objectives

The learning objectives stated in the test blueprints encompass all the learning objectives that underpin both the curriculum and the assessments. The learning objectives reflect the most common (most in-demand) foundational work readiness skills required across the nearly 1,000 occupations classified by O*NET. The learning objectives are comprehensive for the curriculum and the assessments but are not occupation specific and therefore do not reflect all O*NET defined discrete skills.

Because all learning objectives are represented on the test blueprints, the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) did not need to evaluate and ensure balanced weighting across content domains (reporting categories). Rather, each achievement level comprises approximately 20% of each assessment. Table 1 through Table 3 summarize the number of learning objectives and items aligned with each achievement level as reflected in the provided *New Blueprint and Test Form Composition*.

Table 1. Test Blueprint for Work Ready Math

Achievement Level	**Test Blueprint**	
	Number of Objectives	**Number of Items per Achievement Level**
1	7	8
2	7	8
3	7	8
4	6	8
5	4	8
Total Number of Items		**40**

Table 2. Test Blueprint for Work Ready Reading

Achievement Level	Test Blueprint	
	Number of Objectives	Number of Items per Achievement Level
1	5	8
2	6	8
3	5	8
4	5	8
5	4	8
Total Number of Items		**40**

Table 3. Test Blueprint for Work Ready Data

Achievement Level	Test Blueprint	
	Number of Objectives	Number of Items per Achievement Level
1	4	6
2	5	6
3	6	7
4	7	7
5	3	6
Total Number of Items		**32**

Recommendation: N/A

2.2 Depth of Knowledge Distribution

The WIN Work Ready Assessments use a progression of Achievement Levels 1-5 aligned to O*NET Job Zones 1-5 (National Center for O*NET Development, 2026), which are the foundations for scoring, standard setting, credential attainment, and reporting. The framework for each of the assessments has increasing cognitive complexity built into the learning objectives. Each achievement level builds on the prior level, with the application of skills increasing with each level.

The assessments do not specifically employ Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) as an operational assessment framework. The test blueprints and score reports do not classify items by DOK level or provide DOK distributions. However, in the Test Maps, all items are assigned to a DOK level, indicating that DOK is actively used during item development and blueprinting.

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 WIN Work Ready Assessments with the provided *New Blueprint and Test Form Composition* tables (December 2025). The assessments were reviewed for item alignment to learning objectives and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels. Two SMEs independently reviewed each item for objective 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 assessments was reviewed by an educational measurement expert at the University of Georgia.

3.1 Coverage by Achievement Level

Items on the WIN Work Ready Assessments were reviewed for alignment to achievement level and evaluated against each blueprint. First, the provided *Test Maps* were evaluated against each *New Blueprint and Test Form Composition* tables. Then, all items were reviewed for alignment to each achievement level.

Table 4 through Table 6 summarize the number of items aligned with each achievement level as reflected in the provided *Test Map*s.

Table 4. Coverage by Achievement Level for Work Ready Math

Achievement Level	Test Blueprint		Test Map	
	Number of Objectives	Number of Items per Achievement Level	Number of Items per Achievement Level	% of Assessment
1	7	8	8	20%
2	7	8	8	20%
3	7	8	8	20%
4	6	8	8	20%
5	4	8	8	20%
Total Number of Items			**40**	**100%**

Table 5. Coverage by Achievement Level for Work Ready Reading

Achievement Level	Test Blueprint		Test Map	
	Number of Objectives	Number of Items per Achievement Level	Number of Items per Achievement Level	% of Assessment
1	5	8	8	20%
2	6	8	8	20%
3	5	8	8	20%
4	5	8	8	20%
5	4	8	8	20%
Total Number of Items			**40**	**100%**

Table 6. Coverage by Achievement Level for Work Ready Data

Achievement Level	Test Blueprint		Test Map	
	Number of Objectives	Number of Items per Achievement Level	Number of Items per Achievement Level	% of Assessment
1	4	6	6	19%
2	5	6	6	19%
3	6	7	7	22%
4	7	7	7	22%
5	3	6	6	19%
Total Number of Items			**32**	**100%***

**due to rounding at each level, total does not equal 100%*

The number of items on the WIN Work Ready Assessments by achievement level align with the number stated on the test blueprints.

Math: All learning objectives on the test blueprint are represented on both forms of the math assessment.

Reading: All learning objectives on the test blueprint are represented on both forms of the reading assessment.

Data: All learning objectives on the test blueprint are represented on both forms of the data assessment.

Recommendation: N/A

3.2 Alignment to Learning Objectives

All items on the WIN Work Ready Assessments were reviewed for alignment to learning objectives. Table 7 highlights items flagged during review. There were no items flagged for learning objective alignment in the Work Ready Math and Work Ready Reading assessments.

Table 7. Alignment to Learning Objectives for Work Ready Data

Form	Item #	Objective on Test Map	Suggested Re-alignment	Notes
100A	20	DGI4.1	DAD4.5	Item does not align to the sources stated in DGI4.1: interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Recommend alignment to DAD4.5: trends and relationships between variables.
200B	11	NA	NA	Item does not have a correct answer, review content. The key is stated as D but there is no error; Katie Kite's rental fee is correct. The rental is 8 days, so 1 week + 1 day = $700.
200B	20	DGI4.1	DAD4.5	Same item has Form A, Item 20.
200B	21	NA	NA	The purpose and structure of the graphic is unclear. It appears to function as a range map or spatial display rather than a traditional chart or graph (such as coordinate grid), but key elements of the display are difficult to interpret. While Answer A appears to be the best choice because changing the order of the ranges may improve readability, the item may benefit from clearer visual design or a more explicit indication of the graphic's purpose.
200B	29	NA	NA	The correct answer is C, but choice B may also be plausible because the trend for admitted students could reasonably be extrapolated to approximately 5,100 in Year 6. The graph may support more than one defensible prediction. Consider revising the values, answer choices, or

				graph scale to ensure a single best answer is clearly supported by the data.

Recommendation: Overall, the items on the WIN Work Ready Assessments are well aligned with the stated learning objectives. Review alignment and content flag for the Data assessments.

3.3 Depth of Knowledge

All items are assigned to a DOK level in the Test Maps only, suggesting that WIN uses DOK as an internal measure of cognitive complexity during item development and blueprinting, while achievement levels are used for external reporting and credential decision-making.

Items on the Test Map are classified as DOK 1, DOK 2, or DOK 3. This evaluation uses the following descriptions as guidelines for DOK. 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.

Items on the WIN Work Ready Assessments were reviewed for DOK distribution and evaluated against each Test Map.

3.3.1 Distribution of DOK Levels

Table 8 through Table 10 summarize the number and percentage of items aligned with each DOK level as reflected in the provided Test Map.

Table 8. DOK Distribution for Work Ready Math (Test Map)

DOK	Form 1		Form 2	
	Number of Items	**% of Assessment**	**Number of Items**	**% of Assessment**
1	7	17.5%	6	15%
2	27	67.5%	28	70%
3	6	15%	6	15%
Total	**40**	**100%**	**40**	**100%**

Table 9. DOK Distribution for Work Ready Reading (Test Map)

DOK	Form 1		Form 2	
	Number of Items	**% of Assessment**	**Number of Items**	**% of Assessment**
1	11	27.5%	13	32.5%
2	13	32.5%	13	32.5%
3	16	40%	14	35%
Total	**40**	**100%**	**40**	**100%**

Table 10. DOK Distribution for Work Ready Data (Test Map)

DOK	Form 1		Form 2	
	Number of Items	**% of Assessment**	**Number of Items**	**% of Assessment**
1	4	12.5%	2	6.25%
2	16	50%	18	56.25%
3	12	37.5%	12	37.5%
Total	**32**	**100%**	**32**	**100%**

Recommendation:

The DOK distributions for the WIN Work Ready Assessments appear reasonable and consistent with the intended purpose of a workforce-readiness assessment. While the intended proportion of DOK 3 items is substantial in each section, item-level reviews flag many items that function operationally as DOK 2. As a result, a full form-level analysis is recommended to determine whether the delivered assessments adequately reflect the cognitive complexity is intended.

> Math: The Math assessments demonstrate balanced DOK distribution with strong emphasis on application of math concepts and procedural problem-solving (DOK 2). The assessments focus on applying formulas, proportional reasoning, interpretation of information, data, graphs, and decision-making.

Reading: The Reading assessments suggest rigorous assessments with a substantial emphasis on DOK 3 reasoning. The item review in the following section suggests that many designated DOK 3 items function operationally as DOK 2. As a result, the operational forms may not fully achieve the intended distribution of higher complexity.

Data: The Data assessments place substantial emphasis on DOK 3 reasoning and evidence-based interpretation. However, similar to Reading, several items classified as DOK 3 appeared to function operationally as DOK 2. Consequently, the implemented forms may contain a lower proportion of DOK 3 items than intended.

3.3.2 Review Items for DOK Level

All items on the WIN Work Ready Assessments were reviewed for DOK level.

Evaluation: Table 11 through Table 13 highlights items flagged during review.

Table 11. Alignment to DOK for Work Ready Math

Form	Item #	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
100A	22	1	2	Item asks students to find the volume of cylinder, then compute costs. Students apply knowledge and calculate using multiple steps. Item is similar to #21, classified as DOK 2.
200B	3	1	2	Item asks students to analyze multiple pieces of information, verify totals, identify discrepancies, and evaluate a business decision. The item requires more than recall or simple computation. Item is similar to Form 100A #8, classified as DOK 2.

Table 12. Alignment to DOK for Work Ready Reading

Form	Item #	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
100A	20	3	2	Item asks students to analyze how word choice affects readers, but the distractors are relatively weak and only one interpretation is supported. Students are not required to evaluate multiple reasonable interpretations.

Form	Item #	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
100A	22	3	2	Item asks students to analyze purpose and audience to identify where the passage would most likely appear, but there is only one clear fit. The distractors are implausible, limiting strategic reasoning.
100A	25	3	2	Item asks students to determine the purpose of a company letter. The item approaches DOK 3, but students are not required to justify how specific details or sections of the letter support the purpose.
100A	26	3	2	Item asks students to analyze how a word contributes to the meaning of the letter. The item stem targets abstract vocabulary analysis, but only one interpretation aligns with the context, limiting the need for deeper evaluation.
100A	29	3	2	Item asks students to identify words contributing to an optimistic tone. To increase the rigor, item could require students to justify their conclusion or compare multiple plausible tone interpretations and determine which is better supported by evidence.
100A	30	3	2	Item asks students to determine how the author supports a claim. Item approaches DOK 3 because students evaluate evidence; however, the distractors are easily eliminated and do not require students to evaluate the relative strength of multiple plausible pieces of evidence.
100A	33	3	2	Item asks students to identify evidence supporting a statement/idea. The item stem resembles evidence-based reasoning, but students are only required to match the statement to a supporting detail. Students do not evaluate multiple or competing pieces of evidence.
100A	34	3	2	Item asks students to determine which visual would add to the meaning of the

Form	Item #	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
				passage. Item stem approaches DOK 3 reasoning, but only one choice clearly aligns with the passage's focus, reducing overall complexity.
100A	35	3	2	Item asks students to determine the format of a passage and explain its impact on readers. The second part of the item stem ("effect") suggests DOK 3 reasoning, but the choices combine structure and effect, allowing students to identify the correct choice without deeper reasoning.
100A	37	3	2	Item asks students to determine how an expert quote supports the author's purpose. Item stem approaches DOK 3 analytical thinking, but students are not required to explain why the quote supports the purpose better than alternative evidence.
200B	10	2	1	Item asks students to recall the meaning of "Open Enrollment" using information stated directly in the memorandum. Students locate the definition explicitly provided in the passage.
200B	20	3	2	Item asks students to analyze how word choice affects the tone, but the distractors are relatively weak and only one interpretation is supported. Students are not required to evaluate multiple reasonable interpretations or justify conclusions.
200B	22	3	2	Item asks students to identify the tone of passage. The item stem is attempting higher-level tone analysis, but the correct response is supported by explicit features of the passage, and the distractors are comparatively weak.

Form	Item #	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
200B	25	3	2	Item asks students to identify the intended audience based on phrases. Students use contextual clues and document purpose to make an inference. The item does not require students to justify how multiple details support the audience determination or evaluate alternative audiences.
200B	28	3	2	Item asks students to determine the main purpose of the listed activities. Students synthesize information from a section of the passage, but the answer is a straightforward interpretation of the activities presented. The item does not require evaluation of competing purposes or supporting evidence.
200B	30	3	2	Item asks students to determine which activity would not contribute to the requirements. Students compare an activity against explicitly stated criteria and identify the mismatch. The item does not require strategic reasoning or evaluation.
200B	34	3	2	Item asks students to identify the effect of formatting. The item stem targets analysis of text structure; however, one answer clearly aligns with the purpose of the formatting while the distractors are relatively implausible.
200B	38	3	2	Item asks students to identify evidence supporting the author's claim. The item stem approaches evidence-based reasoning, but students are only required to match a claim to a supporting detail explicitly stated in the passage.

Table 13. Alignment to DOK for Work Ready Data

Form	Item #	DOK on Test Map	Suggested DOK	Notes
100A	1	2	1	Item asks students to identify the purpose of research questions. Students recall a basic concept about information gathering.
100A	19	3	2	Item asks students to interpret a graph and identify the occupation with the strongest employment opportunity. Students compare several data categories, but the item does not require them to evaluate multiple indicators or justify why one occupation represents the best opportunity.
100A	23	3	2	Item asks students to analyze a graph containing multiple variables and identify an industry that meets specific criteria. The item approaches DOK 3 because students must consider multiple data relationships simultaneously; however, students are only required to locate the correct industry rather than explain how the variables interact to support the conclusion.
100A	24	3	2	Item asks students to determine the relationship between advertising and sales. Students interpret the trends and relationships in a graph, but the item does not require DOK 3 level reasoning such as evaluating alternative explanations, justifying the strength of the relationship, or determining limitations in the data. Item is similar to #10 and #29.
100A	26	3	2	Item asks students to determine which conclusion is best supported by a graph. The item approaches DOK 3 because students evaluate data and compare conclusions; however, the distractors are relatively easy to eliminate and do not require students to weigh the relative

				strength of multiple plausible interpretations.
100A	31	3	2	Item asks students to identify an implication supported by survey data. The item stem targets higher-order reasoning by requiring students to move beyond direct observation; however, only one conclusion is plausible, limiting the need for deeper evaluation.
100A	32	3	2	Item asks students to compare data from two time periods and determine the most likely implication. The item approaches DOK 3 because students identify patterns and draw conclusions; however, students are not required to evaluate alternative interpretations of the data or explain the evidence supporting their conclusion.
200B	16	2	3	Item asks students to determine which survey response is related to a research question but not relevant to answering it. Students must evaluate the relationship between the research question and multiple pieces of information and distinguish between related and relevant evidence, aligned with DOK 3 reasoning.
200B	19	3	2	Item asks students to draw a conclusion supported by a graph showing job openings and unemployment. Students interpret trends, but the item does not require them to evaluate the strength of multiple plausible conclusions.
200B	23	3	2	Item asks students to determine the relationship between fuel economy and various driving speeds. Students interpret the overall pattern of the graph, but the item does not require DOK 3 level reasoning such as explaining how the variables interact or justifying one interpretation over competing choices.
200B	24	3	2	Item asks students to determine the relationship shown in a graph comparing age ranges across employment

				arrangements. Item does not require deeper evaluation beyond the visible relationships.
200B	26	3	2	Item asks students to determine the trends shown in a graph of the number of movers and mover rates over time. The answer is straightforward and does not require reasoning beyond the visible relationships.
200B	31	3	2	Item asks students to identify the most likely implication supported by data across multiple graphs. Students move beyond direct observation and make a modest inference from the graphs. However, students are not required to evaluate competing explanations or justify why one implication is better supported than another.

Recommendation:

Overall, the WIN Work Ready Assessments items varied in their alignment with the stated DOK levels. Most flags involved items designated as DOK 3 that appeared to function operationally as DOK 2 because students could arrive at the correct answer through straightforward or concrete interpretation, application of stated criteria, or identification of a clearly supported answer. A recurring pattern was that items intended to measure strategic thinking but did not require students to engage in the evaluation, justification, comparison, or evidence-based reasoning typically associated with DOK 3 items.

The most DOK alignment flags occurred in the Reading and Data assessments.

> Math: Review the two flagged items and either update the associated metadata or revise the items to more accurately reflect the intended DOK classification. The Work Ready Math assessment generally demonstrates appropriate alignment between the intended and stated DOK levels. Overall, no substantial DOK alignment concerns were identified.
>
> Reading: Although the test map identifies several Reading items as DOK 3, many function operationally as DOK 2. The item stems often attempt to target strategic thinking or abstract reasoning; however, the answer choices limit the cognitive demand of the task because the key is clearly supported by the text while the distractors are comparatively weak. As a result, students are required to identify and interpret parts of the text rather than evaluate, justify, and compare competing ideas that are typically associated with DOK 3 items.

Review the flagged items and consider revisions that require students to engage in strategic thinking or abstract reasoning. For example, items addressing author purpose, tone, and word choice could be strengthened by asking students to evaluate multiple plausible interpretations and determine which is best supported by the text. These revisions would more closely align item complexity with DOK 3 expectations for strategic thinking, evaluation, and evidence-based reasoning.

Data: Although the test map identifies several Data items as DOK 3, many function operationally as DOK 2. The item stems often attempt to target strategic thinking through data interpretation, trend analysis, prediction, and evidence-based conclusions; however, the answer choices frequently reduce the cognitive demand because the correct response can be identified from a straightforward reading of the graph, chart, or dataset while the distractors are comparatively weak. As a result, students are required to identify patterns, interpret information, and select supported conclusions rather than evaluate, justify, or analyze the relative strength of multiple conclusions/ explanations that are typically associated with DOK 3 items.

Review the flagged items and consider revisions that require students to engage in stronger evidence-based reasoning. For example, items involving trend analysis, predictions, implications, and conclusions could be strengthened by asking students to evaluate multiple plausible interpretations, determine which conclusion is best supported by the available data, compare competing explanations, or analyze how multiple variables interact to influence outcomes. These revisions would more closely align item complexity with DOK 3 expectations for strategic thinking, evaluation, and data-driven reasoning.

In addition to the item-level DOK review, a comprehensive, holistic review is recommended to determine whether each assessment adequately reflects the cognitive demands and distribution parameters specified in the test blueprint. Consider the cumulative impact of any proposed DOK reclassifications, as shifts across multiple items may affect the overall balance of cognitive complexity represented within and across forms.

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 analysis was conducted. Rather, materials provided by SCDE and WIN, including the technical report, field testing summary, 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 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 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 score (also termed point-biserial) 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 tend to get the item incorrect more often than low scoring examinees, which is a flag for immediate item review.

Evaluation: Results from CTT analysis are displayed in Table 14.

Overall, each assessment has an appropriate range of item difficulties to properly assess students across the span of ability levels. Additionally, most item-total correlations are above 0.30, indicating that items discriminate adequately. The field test summary document indicates stringent and appropriate criteria for item flagging, review, and revision, including flags for items that are too easy for the sample, too difficult for the sample, and items with low discriminatory power. Altogether, the difficulty and item-total correlation estimates provide preliminary evidence that the items are functioning properly for the math, reading, and data assessments.

Recommendation: N/A

Table 14. Classical Test Theory Item Statistics

Assessment	Number of Items	Mean *p*-value (range)	Mean Item-Total Correlation (range)	Percentage of Items Flagged
Work Ready Math (Field Test)	75	0.48 (0.08 - 0.96)	0.31 (-0.23 - 0.64)	31%
Work Ready Reading (Field Test)	215	0.61 (0.14 - 0.96)	0.37 (-0.06 - 0.59)	14%
Work Ready Data (Field Test)	67	0.53 (0.12 - 0.89)	0.31 (-0.05 - 0.57)	24%
Work Ready Math (Operational Form 1)	40	0.57 (0.22 - 0.96)	0.41 (0.23 - 0.55)	8%*
Work Ready Math (Operational Form 2)	40	0.57 (0.20 - 0.95)	0.43 (0.21 - 0.64)	8%*

Work Ready Reading (Operational Form 1)	40	0.65 (0.36 - 0.89)	0.43 (0.24 - 0.59)	0%
Work Ready Reading (Operational Form 2)	40	0.65 (0.38 - 0.94)	0.42 (0.22 - 0.57)	5%*
Work Ready Data (Operational Form 1)	32	0.61 (0.31 - 0.87)	0.38 (0.17 - 0.57)	3%
Work Ready Data (Operational Form 2)	32	0.59 (0.34 - 0.84)	0.38 (0.15 - 0.58)	3%

Note. Blue shaded rows are field tests. Green shaded rows are operational. *Some flagged (easy) items were included to cover learning objectives.

3.4.2 1-PL Item Statistics

The one-parameter logistic (1-PL) item response theory model was used for calibration and scaling. While it makes strong assumptions about items, the 1-PL 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 1-PL model includes ability estimates and item parameter estimates. The 1-PL model assumes that each item discriminates equally and 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 the WIN assessment purposes, difficulty parameters should span the ability distribution (e.g., -3 to 3) to reliably locate all examinees.

When applying the 1-PL model, it is important to assess the degree to which the data fits the model. 1-PL model fit statistics, including infit and outfit, residual-based item fit statistics, and chi-square tests can quantify the differences between observed responses and model-predicted responses.

Evaluation: Results from 1-PL model psychometric analyses are displayed in Table 15. Overall, each assessment has a sufficient range of item difficulties to properly assess students across the span of ability levels.

Table 15. 1-PL IRT Model Item Parameters

Assessment	Number of Items	Mean 1-PL Difficulty (Range)
Work Ready Math (Field Test)	75	0.23 (-3.54 - 3.62)
Work Ready Reading (Field Test)	215	0.00 (-3.00 - 2.81)
Work Ready Data (Field Test)	67	0.32 (-2.09 - 3.04)
Work Ready Math (Operational Forms)	40	-0.83 (-3.98 - 1.28)
Work Ready Reading (Operational Forms)	40	-1.10 (-3.54 - 0.83)
Work Ready Data (Operational Forms)	32	-0.60 (-2.22 - 1.03)
Note. Blue shaded rows are field tests. Green shaded rows are operational.		

Recommendation: Each operational form's model and item fit statistics should be included for a complete evaluation. Additionally, if feasible within blueprint constraints, more difficult items (b > 1.2) could be included to more precisely scale and classify higher ability examinee.

3.4.3 Dimensionality

The item response theory models used to scale the WIN assessments 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 contributes to item responses, then the validity and interpretation of scale scores are called into question. To assess dimensionality, common approaches are exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and principal components analysis (PCA). Within both frameworks, when the first component accounts for substantially more variance than subsequent components, it is an indicator that the first factor is dominant and that the unidimensionality assumption has been satisfied (Zopluoglu & Davenport, 2017).

Evaluation: Results from EFA visualizations (scree plots) of the dimensionality of each assessment indicated that for each assessment, the first factor was dominant, and the unidimensionality assumption was met.

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. In 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 WIN assessments, Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates were strong, ranging from 0.84 - 0.91. SEM values ranged from 2.42 to 2.69. Raw score SEMs in this range are adequate considering there were 32 – 40 operational items. In summary, reliability is adequate for the WIN assessment scaling purposes.

Recommendation: Reliability estimates could be provided at the subgroup level for additional evidence of fairness and validity. Reliability estimates should also be provided at the achievement level cut-scores (e.g., conditional SEMs at cut scores).

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 WIN assessments, subgroups of interest could be gender (male/female), racial/ethnic groups, disability status (no/yes), multilingual status (no/yes), and different form accommodations. 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., 1999).

Evaluation: In the test development phase, item writers followed guidelines for fairness and sensitivity to minimize bias under Universal Design principles, and each item was reviewed by professional editors and the executive content team. Due to insufficient subgroup sizes, DIF analysis has not yet been completed.

Recommendation: Evaluation to be completed after DIF analysis is conducted.

3.4.6 Equating Multiple Forms

For each of the three WIN assessments, WIN administers two forms. This is done primarily for security purposes. When multiple forms of an assessment are administered, steps must be taken to ensure that all forms provide valid and reliable scores, are comparable, and do not bias against any individuals. Equating is the statistical process of adjusting scores from different forms so they can be used interchangeably (Kolen & Brennan, 2014). For example, if Form A is more difficult than Form B, then a score of 75 on Form A may correspond to a score of 84 on Form B. Equating is the statistical process of finding the equivalent score adjustments.

For the WIN assessments, all items are calibrated using equivalent groups and are therefore on the same scale. Using the 1-PL IRT model, each total score corresponds to an ability estimate and scale score. With the total score – ability correspondence for each form, the forms can be equated by mapping ability estimates on each form to the corresponding scores on each form.

Evaluation: The process outlined in the technical report is sound. For each assessment, forms were very similar in terms of difficulty, so equating adjustments were minimal. The true score equating process was applied appropriately using the 1-PL IRT model. Based on the process applied, different forms can be used interchangeably with no concerns with threats to validity or bias.

Recommendation: After future administrations, post-equating checks should be conducted to ensure that the 1-PL difficulty parameter estimates remain appropriate and support a valid equating process.

4. Achievement Level Classifications

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

- **Job Zones 1-2:** occupations that need very little to some preparation
- **Job Zone 3:** occupations that need medium preparation
- **Job Zone 4:** occupations that need considerable preparation
- **Job Zone 5:** occupations that need extensive preparation

This evaluation concerns the degree to which these classifications are valid and reliable. Data for this section comes from the technical report (WIN, 2026).

Evaluation: A modified Angoff standard setting was used to determine the WIN assessment achievement level cut scores. This method is commonly applied in industry and accepted as a valid procedure for standard settings (Cizek & Bunch, 2007). The cut scores were then applied to the ability estimates derived from the 1-PL scaling process to classify students into the achievement levels. Classification accuracy estimates ranging from 0.75 - 0.78 and consistency indices ranging from 0.66 - 0.71 indicate acceptable consistency for classification into the five achievement levels.

Recommendation: As noted earlier, there were very few items located near Level 3/4 and Level 4/5 operational cut scores. More difficult items could be added to improve accuracy and consistency of Level 4 and Level 5 classifications.

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EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

DATE: October 26, 2026

ACTION ITEM:
Annual Report of the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program, 2024-25

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY
The Teacher Quality Act of 2000 provides that the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) "shall review the (SC Teacher) loan program annually and report to the South Carolina General Assembly. Pursuant to Section 59-26-20(j) of the South Carolina Code of Laws of 1976, as amended.

CRITICAL FACTS
This report provides information for the Fiscal Year 2023-24 implementation of the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS
The study began in March of 2025 with the collection and analysis of data conducted by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education in collaboration with the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation, South Carolina Department of Education, and CERRA.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC
Cost: $10,000: study

Fund/Source: EIA funds appropriated for operation of the agency.

ACTION REQUEST

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

ACTION TAKEN

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

SC TEACHER LOAN PROGRAM

Annual Report 2024-25

PREPARED BY:
DANA YOW

PRESENTATION TO:
EIA AND IMPROVEMENT MECHANISMS SUBCOMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.

Annual Report on the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program for Fiscal Year 2024-25

The Teacher Quality Act of 2000 directs the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to conduct an annual review of the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program (TLP) and to report its findings and recommendations to the South Carolina General Assembly. Pursuant to 59-26-20(j) of the South Carolina Code of Laws, the annual report documenting the program in Fiscal Year 2024-25 follows.

Report Findings and Recommendations....3

Overview of Teacher Loan Program....5

TLP Governance....6

TLP Types of Loans....7

Description of Applicants and Borrowers....18

Teacher Pipeline in SC....22

Appendices....28

Acknowledgements

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff expresses its appreciation to the following organizations that provided data and data analysis for this report:

- South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
- South Carolina Student Loan Corporation
- South Carolina Department of Education
- South Carolina Teacher Education Advancement Consortium through Higher Education Research (SC-TEACHER) at the University of South Carolina
- Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) at Winthrop University

Report Findings

Administration of TLP

- The TLP Revolving Loan Fund balance is currently at $25.9 million. A TLP loan recipient who does not fulfill all his teaching commitment must repay the entire loan amount that has not been cancelled, plus interest. These monies are paid into the revolving loan fund.
- The number of TLP Type 1 Applicants and Recipients (919 and 819, respectively), reflects a declining trend and are at the lowest level since at least 2010-11.
- Academic issues and Praxis continue to be the primary reasons for Application denial although it should be noted that the number of denials due to Praxis passage is the lowest it has been since 2011, at 14.
- The number of Borrowers who have had their loans 100% cancelled and are still teaching is not available, as the SLC does not have the means to track them.
- Teacher Cadets continue to account for nearly half of all Type 1 TLP Applicants; however, the 458 Teacher Cadet TLP Applicants for 2024-25 was the lowest number since at least 2010-11, showing a steady decline in participation in the program.
- Based on the available 2024-25 data, none of the three TLAC goals can be confirmed as being met.
- Over 60% of SC schools qualified as Critical Need for TLP in 2024-25.
- TLP Type 2 recipients declined overall, from 43 in 2021-22 to 37 in 2024-25, a reduction of 6 recipients (about 14%).
- For 2024-25, there were 251 TLP Type 3 / PACE recipients, a decrease of 31 from the previous year.

Teacher Pipeline in SC

- SC reported 336.6 fewer vacant positions in School Year 2025-26 than in School Year 2024-25. These data include both teaching positions and service positions like school librarians, counselors, and psychologists.
- There were 824 Teaching Fellows in SC colleges and universities in 2024-25, an increase of 54 from the previous year.
- Overall, the data indicate a gradual reduction in the share of hires coming from traditional in-state teacher-preparation programs, in-state transfers, and more recently, out-of-state recruitment. At the same time, alternative certification and international recruitment became increasingly important sources of teachers, suggesting that districts have expanded their reliance on nontraditional pathways to fill vacancies.
- Bachelor's-level, in-state enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined substantially since 2016, despite growth at research institutions and a few private colleges.
- Master's-level, in-state enrollment fell 19.1%, from 2,678 students in 2016 to 2,167 in 2025. Public institutions remained the primary providers, although their enrollment declined 8.8%, from 1,883 to 1,717 students.
- State scholarships are reaching more SC students overall, but education majors represent a shrinking portion of recipients. Across the three major state scholarships, the percentage of recipients enrolled in education programs fell from 8.8% in 2016 to 6.6% in 2025, a decline of 2.2 percentage points.

Recommendations

1. The Teacher Loan Program (TLP) should be modernized and strengthened through a streamlined, accessible application process and a comprehensive review of its policies, forms, and technology. The goal should be to create a one-stop financial aid experience for aspiring teachers while ensuring that TLP remains aligned with related South Carolina programs, including Teaching Fellows and the LIFE, HOPE, and Palmetto Fellows scholarships and enhancements.

    - As part of this modernization effort, the State should reevaluate the definitions and methodology used to identify critical subject areas and geographic areas eligible for loan forgiveness. This review should consider parity with Teaching Fellows and the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows enhancements, as well as the potential effects of any policy changes on current and former TLP recipients. Clear transition provisions should be established to ensure that changes are fair and sound.

    - TLP, Teaching Fellows, and LIFE/Palmetto Fellows promissory notes should be reviewed and compared to identify best practices for common terms, conditions, service obligations, repayment requirements, and recipient responsibilities. TLP forms and agreements should then be updated to reflect those best practices and provide applicants with clear, consistent information.

    - Together, these improvements would reduce administrative burdens, eliminate duplicative applications, improve coordination across state programs, and make it easier for qualified South Carolina students to access financial support for becoming teachers. A modernized TLP would be more efficient, more equitable, and better positioned to expand the State's educator pipeline.

2. Through the Teacher Loan Advisory Committee (TLAC), develop and adopt a new set of strategic, measurable, and targeted program goals for the TLP, including goals for participating educator preparation programs (EPPs). These goals should reflect current educator pipeline conditions, regional workforce needs, and the distinct staffing challenges of South Carolina school districts, replacing the program's existing goals.

3. Expand the capacity of the Teaching Fellows program, which would help address the state's teacher shortage, strengthen the local educator pipeline, and ensure that talented SC high school students are not turned away from serving South Carolina classrooms. In December 2025, the EOC recommended the appropriation of Educaiton Improvement Act (EIA) dollars be increased for Teaching Fellows, allowing for an increase of 20 additional scholarships.

4. Consider amending the South Carolina Code to expand eligibility for career-changer loans to participants in alternative teacher certification programs beyond PACE, subject to eligibility criteria and program parameters established in consultation with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE).

Overview of Teacher Loan Program

The South Carolina Teacher Loan Program (TLP) was authorized by the South Carolina General Assembly as part of the Education Improvement Act (EIA) of 1984, last substantively updated in 2004.

The TLP is a financial incentive program offering three types of forgivable loans for the express purpose of encouraging talented and qualified state residents to enter the teaching profession in critical need subject areas or critical geographic need areas, which are defined annually by the State Board of Education.

Changes and Progress Since the Previous Report

This year's report provides an update on the Teacher Loan Program, including changes implemented since the previous reporting period and progress made in response to recommendations identified in last year's report.

- The program has continued to evolve, with adjustments intended to strengthen its administration, improve participant support, and enhance overall effectiveness. Encouragingly, positive movement has been made in several of the areas highlighted previously. This report outlines those developments, assesses the program's status, and identifies opportunities for continued improvement.

- Based on EOC recommendations made in December 2025, changes in provisos were made in the 2026-27 Appropriations Act that strengthen the governance and accountability of the existing Teacher Loan Program (TLP) and create two new uses of TLP revolving funds: teacher loan refinancing and additional loan forgiveness for teachers in rural districts. See Appendix D for the recommendations that the EOC sent to the General Assembly in December 2025. Appendix C provides text of proviso language that was included in the 2026-27 Appropriations Act.

- Proviso 1A.72 in the 2026-27 Appropriations Act redirects up to $10 million from the TLP revolving fund toward refinancing existing student loan debt for teachers in SC public schools. Also, within that proviso, a second $5 million directs the Department of Education to identify the rural districts based on data demonstrating difficulty recruiting and retaining certified teachers.

- Proviso 1A.6 in the 2026-27 Appropriations Act expands the TLAC from primarily an advisory/maintenance committee toward a more active governance, monitoring, advocacy, evaluation, and program-improvement role, while also requiring modernization of the TLP application process.

- The South Carolina Student Loan Corporation provided the EOC with additional information regarding the Teacher Loan Program's revolving loan account. The information provided greater clarity regarding the account's financial position and the potential implications of using revolving account funds for additional teacher loan initiatives. Based on this information and the Student Loan Corporation's transparency in responding to the EOC's questions, the EOC determined that the proposed proviso to use up to 50 percent of interest earned, investment earnings, and late fees in the Teacher Loan Program revolving account for teacher student loan refinancing was not necessary and the proviso recommendation was revised.

- A question about Teaching Fellows participation was added to the TLP application.

- The TLAC has continued to provide updates on streamlining the TLP application process as well as developing and promoting a TLP marketing toolkit.

TLP Governance

For the purposes of this report, the TLP is governed by SC Code 59-26-20 and 59-26-30 (Appendix A-1); Provisos 1A.7 and 1A.57 of the 2024-25 General Appropriations Bill (Appendix A-2); and State Regulation 62-110, et al (Appendix B). Pursuant to these regulatory provisions, the program is governed collectively by five separate entities, as described below:

State Board of Education (SBE) and SC Department of Education (SCDE): SBE, in conjunction with SCDE, determines the TLP's Areas of Critical Needs (subject and geographic) pursuant to statutory requirements annually.

SC Student Loan Corporation (SLC): The SLC, a private entity which also has other loan administrative functions, is directed by statute to administer the SC Teacher Loan Program, which includes the process for applications, loans, and loan forgiveness/cancellation or repayment.

Education Oversight Committee (EOC): The Teacher Quality Act of 2000 directs the EOC to perform a review of the program annually and report to the General Assembly (Appendix A-1). The EOC is also to receive and review budget requests from the SLC before making recommendations for EIA funding to the General Assembly.

SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE): Pursuant to the 1984 authorizing legislation for the program, CHE promulgated the original regulations for the program, followed by several updates. The governing statute provides for CHE's role in the program: "Appropriations for loans and administrative costs incurred by the corporation are to be provided in annual amounts, recommended by the CHE, to the State Treasurer for use by the corporation."

Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA); Teacher Loan Advisory Committee (TLAC): Since Fiscal Year 2013-14, budget provisos have directed CERRA to "appoint and maintain the South Carolina Teacher Loan Advisory Committee" (TLAC). These are the current goals of the TLAC:

1. The percentage of African American applicants and recipients of the TLP should mirror the percentage of African Americans in the South Carolina teaching force.
2. The percentage of male applicants and recipients of the TLP should mirror the percentage of males in the South Carolina teaching force.
3. Eighty percent of the individuals receiving loans each year under the TLP should enter the South Carolina teaching force.

Critical Need Subject Areas: The data used for determining critical need subject areas are reported by South Carolina school districts through the Annual Supply and Demand Survey administered by CERRA. Additional teacher certification data have been provided by the SCDE Office of Educator Services. Determinations were made using the United States Department of Education (USED) formula for designating teacher shortage areas: the percentage of positions in a given subject area (i.e., certification field) that are unfilled, filled by educators in an alternative route program, or filled by educators holding an out-of-field permit.

Critical Geographic Need Areas: Areas are designated based upon schools with a report card rating of Below Average or Unsatisfactory, teacher turnover rate of 20% or higher for the last three years, or a school poverty index of 70% or higher.

Teacher Loan Program: Types of Loans

The Teacher Loan Program offers three types of loans. The sections below describe each loan type in detail, including its funding, eligibility criteria, program requirements, and recent developments.

The TLP is funded through the General Assembly Annual Appropriations bill - primarily from the EIA, and also from the General Fund. Additional funds for the same purpose may also be used from a Revolving Loan Fund.

In addition, separate funding has been allocated to the Student Loan Corporation to the SCDE under SC Aid to School Districts since SY 2000-01, when statute was amended to add two more loan forgiveness types: Loans to "Career Changers" (Type 2) teaching in areas of critical need; and funds to reimburse individuals seeking educator certification through an alternative preparation program (Type 3) for their cost to participate in Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE), SCDE's critical needs alternative teacher certification program.

Pursuant to authorizing Statute 59-26-30(j), "Funds generated from repayments to the program must be retained in a separate account and used as a revolving account for the purpose that the funds were originally appropriated." Program loans are non-competitive, so the SLC determines if more funds are needed than appropriated to cover approved applications and will request the amount needed from the Revolving Fund Account from the State Treasurer (for all three loan types). The Revolving Loan balance is noted on Table 1.

Teacher Loan Program: Type 1 Loans

At program inception in 1984, TLP loans (Type 1/TLP) became available for qualified state residents enrolled in traditional education preparation programs at public or private colleges and universities for the sole purpose and intent of becoming certified teachers in SC areas of critical academic or geographic need. Freshmen and sophomores may borrow up to $2,500 per year; juniors, seniors, 5th year undergraduates, and graduate students may borrow up to $7,500 per year, with an aggregate maximum of $27,500.

TLP Loan Type 1: Eligibility and cancellation provision

- U.S. citizen or permanent resident, and a South Carolina resident.
- Enrolled in and making satisfactory academic progress at an accredited institution on at least a half-time basis, enrolled in a program of teacher education, or have expressed an intent to enroll in such a program.
- Entering freshmen: Ranked in the top 40% of their high school graduating class and have an SAT or ACT score equal to or greater than the SC average for the year of high school graduation: 1023 and 19, respectively for SY 2023-24 applicants; 1020 and 18 for 2024-25; 1008 and 18 for 2025-26. (Note: the average SAT score has dropped 15 points in two years).
- Enrolled undergraduates, including second-term freshmen, must have a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale, and must have taken and passed Praxis Core (unless exempt from Praxis Core requirement).
- Entering graduate students must have at least a 2.75 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Graduate students who have completed at least one term must have a GPA of 3.5 or better on a 4.0 scale.
- If previously certified to teach, applicant must be seeking initial certification in a different critical subject area.
- Loan recipients may have their loan cancelled (forgiven) at the greater of 20% or $3,000 per year of teaching in critical subject or geographical areas in South Carolina, or at the greater of 33 1/3% or $5,000 per year of teaching in both a critical subject area and a critical geographic area.

TLP Loan Type 1: Funding

The SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE) makes recommendations to request funds for the TLP's traditional loan (Type 1) appropriation through the annual EIA appropriation process. Table 1 provides an overview of the revenues, loans, payments, and revolving loan balances over time.

Table 1

SC Teacher Loan Program: EIA Revenues and TLP Type 1 Loans Over Time

Year	EIA Appropriation	Revolving Funds from Repayments	Total Dollars Available	Administrative Costs	% of Total Dollars Spent on Administration	Amount Loaned	Revolving Loan Balance*
2010-11	$4,000,722	$1,000,000	$5,000,722	$345,757	6.9	$4,654,965	
2011-12	$4,000,722	$1,000,000	$5,000,722	$359,201	7.2	$4,641,521	
2012-13	$4,000,722	$1,000,000	$5,000,722	$351,958	7.0	$5,648,764	
2013-14	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$329,971	6.2	$4,517,984	
2014-15	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$317,145	6.2	$4,594,799	
2015-16	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$319,450	6.2	$4,460,184	
2016-17	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$326,460	6.4	$4,540,310	
2017-18	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$720,420	14.2	$4,369,461	
2018-19	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$325,000	6.4	$4,764,461	
2019-20	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$512,000	10.0	$4,679,409	
2020-21	$5,089,881	$1,061,135	$6,151,016	$540,000	8.8	$5,573,559	
2021-22	$5,089,881	$1,000,000	$6,089,881	$503,080	8.3	$4,979,310	
2022-23	$5,089,881	$500,000	$5,589,881	$506,951	9.1	$4,827,723	$20,079,370**
2023-24	$5,089,881	$0	$5,089,881	$520,726	10.2	$4,548,046	$23,032,269**
2024-25	**$5,089,881**	**$260,000**	**$5,349,881**	**$526,134**	**9.8**	**$4,690,646**	**$25,932,061****

Source: South Carolina Student Loan Corporation

*Revolving Loan Fund data provided by the Student Loan Corporation includes Loan Payments (Transfers from SLC), Investment Income, and Change in Unrealized Gain/(Loss).
**FY 2022-23 Ending Balance 06/30/2023, as provided by The Student Loan Corporation.
***FY 2023-24 Ending Balance 6/30/2024, as provided by the Student Loan Corporation.
****FY 2024-25 Ending Balance 6/30/2025, as provided by Student Loan Corporation.

TLP Loan Type 1: Applicants and Borrowers

- There were 919 applications submitted in 2024-25 for TLP: Type 1 loans, 48 fewer than the previous year.
- The number of Applicants and Recipients (919 and 819, respectively), reflects a declining trend and are at the lowest level since at least 2010-11.
- Of the 919 applicants in 2025, 819 (89%) were approved. The previous year, 85% of applicants were approved. Table 2 shows historical data since 2010-2011.
- The number of TLP Type 1 loan recipients presently teaching and having their loans cancelled in 2025 was 1,039.
- Approximately 34% of Type 1 Borrowers have had their loans cancelled 100% by fulfilling the teaching requirement (7,855 out of 23,000). The data in Table 3 shows TLP Type 1 borrower status cumulatively over time.
- Teacher Cadets continue to account for nearly half of all Type 1 TLP Applicants; however, the 458 Teacher Cadet TLP Applicants for 2024-25 was at the lowest number since at least 2010-11, showing a steady decline in participation in the program. Table 6 shows the impact that the Teacher Cadets program has had on TLP borrowing over time.
- Although the number of individuals enrolled in an in-state Bachelor's level Educator Preparation Program (EPP) for Fall 2025 increased 4.7% over the previous year (see Appendix F), the number of TLP Type 1 undergraduate applicants decreased from 825 to 759.
- The number of graduate-level applicants increased by 3 applications since 2024, the enrollment in in-state Masters level education programs has decreased from 2,346 in 2024 to 2,167 in 2025. See Appendix #.
- For the last three years, 34.2% of all Type 1 Borrowers have had 100% of their loan cancelled by fulfilling the teaching requirement.
- The number of Type 1 Borrowers reported as presently teaching and having loans cancelled decreased by 54 from 2024 (1,093 to 1,039).
- Academic issues and Praxis continue to be the primary reasons for Application denial although it should be noted that the number of denials due to Praxis passage is the lowest it has been since 2011, at 14.
- The number of Borrowers who have had their loans 100% cancelled and are still teaching is not available, as the SLC does not have the means to track them.

Table 2

Summary of TLP Type 1 Loan Applications and Loan Approvals (Historical)

					Reason for Denial				
Year	Total Applied	Approved	Cancelled	Denied	Academic Reason	Credit Problem	Inadequate Funds	No Praxis Passage	Other*
2010-11	1,717	1,114	97	506	89	4	308	72	33
2011-12	1,471	1,086	81	304	116	1	80	62	45
2012-13	1,472	1,112	85	275	134	1	37	64	39
2013-14	1,462	1,109	73	280	143	0	0	74	54
2014-15	1,448	1,130	66	252	144	1	3	67	37
2015-16	1,396	1,128	44	224	117	4	4	50	49
2016-17	1,401	1,166	31	204	101	0	0	62	41
2017-18	1,399	1,132	38	229	83	0	68	52	26
2018-19	1,453	1,207	40	206	89	0	14	59	44
2019-20	1,426	1,155	21	250	97	0	62	50	41
2020-21	1,250	1,063 (85%)	53	132	58	0	**0	41	33
2021-22	990	861 (87%)	27	102	49	0	0	21	32
2023-24	967	820 (85%)	27	120	63	0	0	34	23
2024-25	919	819 (89%)	20	80	51	0	0	14	15

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation
Note: Data is for Type 1/TLP loans ("traditional" TLP) only; does not include Type 2 (TLC/Career Changers) or Type 3 (PACE).
* Other: Reasons for Denial include (1) not a SC resident, (2) enrollment less than half time, (3) ineligible critical area, (4) not seeking initial certification, (5) received the maximum annual and/or cumulative loan and (6) application in process.
** Beginning 2020-21, the SLC resumed the use of RLF funds to augment the EIA Appropriation for Type 1/TLP loan applications.

Table 3

TLP Type 1 Recipients (Borrowers) Status: Cumulative to Date

Loan Status	TLP Type 1 Loan Recipient/Borrower Status as of 6/30/2023		TLP Type 1 Loan Recipient/ Borrower Status As of 6/30/2024		TLP Type 1 Loan Recipient/ Borrower Status As of 6/30/2025	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Loans paid off through monthly payments, loan consolidation, or partial cancellation	10,380	47.4%	10,686	47.6%	11,005	47.9%
Loans cancelled 100% by fulfilling teaching requirement	7,609	34.7%	7,701	34.3%	7,855	34.2%
Never eligible for cancellation and are repaying loan	2,319	10.6%	2,341	10.4%	2,468	10.7%
Presently teaching and having loans cancelled	1,008	4.6%	1,093	4.9%	1,039	4.5%
Previously taught but not currently teaching	338	1.5%	356	1.6%	372	1.6%
Loan discharged due to death, disability, or bankruptcy	168	0.8%	170	.8%	170	0.7%
In Default	91	0.4%	91	.4%	91	0.4%
CUMULATIVE LOANS ISSUED	21,913	100%	22,438	100%	23,000	100%

Source: South Carolina Student Loan Corporation
*There is a duplicated count across years.

Reasons a loan application may be denied include:

- Applicant does not meet academic requirements or has a credit problem.
- Applicant has not met the Praxis requirement.
- Program funds (including from the Revolving Loan Fund) are insufficient.
- Other: Not a SC resident, enrolled less than half-time, ineligible critical area, not seeking initial certification, has already received maximum annual and/or cumulative amount, or application is in process.

Table 4

TLP Type 1 Loan Recipients by Academic Level Status Over Time

	Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	5th Year Undergrad.	1st year Grad.	2nd Year Grad.	3+ Year Graduates	Total
2010-11	126	120	254	379	43	107	62	23	1,114
2011-12	191	109	292	312	22	122	37	1	1,086
2012-13	173	138	270	345	22	118	43	3	1,112
2013-14	191	138	279	341	17	111	30	2	1,109
2014-15	199	134	256	373	17	117	31	3	1,130
2015-16	177	165	248	369	10	122	33	4	1,128
2016-17	189	148	280	360	11	135	40	3	1,166
2017-18	236	154	255	338	21	94	32	2	1,132
2018-19	230	170	299	344	14	101	47	2	1,207
2019-20*	201	166	296	350	18	76	50	1	1,157**
2020-21	184	150	232	357	5	55	78	1	1,063
2021-22	110	117	215	274	8	61	73	3	861
2022-23	121	101	209	275	9	69	65	4	853
2023-24	119	131	170	270	11	62	54	3	820
2024-25	97	114	224	254	2	66	57	5	819

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation

* The increases in the maximum loan annual loan amount for Juniors, Seniors, and Graduate students and the aggregate maximum loan amount were implemented in 2019-20.

**The academic level of two TLP recipients was unknown.

Table 5

TLP Type 1 Applicants and Recipients: Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Level

	Undergraduate		Graduate		Unknown		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Applicants							
2021-22	815	82.3%	171	17.3%	4	.4%	990
2022-23	831	82.6%	175	17.4%	0	0%	1,006
2023-24	825	85.3%	141	14.6%	1	.1	967
2024-25	759	82.6%	144	15.7%	16	1.7%	919
Recipients							
2021-22	724	84.1%	137	15.9%	0	0%	861
2022-23	715	83.8%	138	16.2%	0	0%	853
2023-24	701	85.5%	119	14.5%	0	0%	820
2024-25	691	84.4%	128	15.6%	0	0%	819

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation

Table 6

TLP Type 1 Loan Applicants from Teacher Cadet Program (Historical)

Year	Total Number of Applicants	Teacher Cadets	% of TLP applicants	Not Teacher Cadets	% of TLP applicants	Unknown	% of TLP applicants
2010-11	1,717	662	39.0	1,024	60.0	31	2.0
2011-12	1,471	601	41.0	830	56.0	40	3.0
2012-13	1,472	556	38.0	871	59.0	45	3.0
2013-14	1,462	597	41.0	843	58.0	22	2.0
2014-15	1,448	615	43.0	808	56.0	25	2.0
2015-16	1,396	600	43.0	769	55.1	27	1.9
2016-17	1,401	621	44.3	775	55.3	5	0.4
2017-18	1,399	666	47.6	723	51.7	10	.7
2018-19	1,453	715	49.2	726	50.0	12	0.8
2019-20	1,426	716	50.2	703	49.3	7	0.5
2020-21	1,250	644	51.5	602	48.2	4	0.3
2021-22	990	475	48.0	513	51.8	2	0.2
2022-23	1,006	481	47.8	522	51.9	3	0.3
2023-24	967	471	48.7	494	51.1	2	0.2
2024-25	919	458	49.85	458	49.85	3	.03

Source: Student Loan Corporation

Teacher Loan Program: Type 2 and 3 Loans

TLP Type 2/Career Changer

Act 393 of 2000 subsequently added loan forgiveness provisions to assist Career Changers (Type 2/TLC) with becoming certified teachers employed in SC areas of critical need. Participants may borrow up to $15,000 per year and up to an aggregate maximum of $60,000.

- TLC Type 2 recipients declined overall, from 43 in 2021-22 to 37 in 2024-25, a reduction of 6 recipients (about 14%).
- Sixty-nine Type 2 Borrowers are presently teaching in a critical needs area.
- For the last three years, 45.9% of all Type 2 Borrowers have had 100% of their loan cancelled by fulfilling the teaching requirement, increasing by 12 from 2024 (504 to 516).
- The number of Type 2 Borrowers reported as presently teaching and having loans cancelled decreased by 1 from 2024 (70 to 69).
- Recipients were predominantly graduate students in every year, ranging from 65% to 74% of recipients. In 2024–25, 26 of 37 recipients (70%) were graduate students, compared with 11 undergraduates (30%).
- Undergraduate participation remained relatively small and stable, ranging from 11 to 14 recipients annually.

Eligibility:

- U.S. citizen or permanent resident, and a SC resident.
- Have held a baccalaureate degree for at least three years or worked as an instructional assistant in an SC public school.
- Been employed for at least three years.
- Enrolled in and making satisfactory academic progress at an accredited institution on at least a half-time basis.
- Must be enrolled in a program of teacher education or have expressed an interest in enrolling in such a program.
- Enrolled undergraduate students, including second-term freshmen, must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale, and must have passed and taken Praxis Core (unless exempt from Praxis Core requirement).
- Entering graduate students must have at least a 2.75 GPA on a 4.0 scale; those who have completed at least one term must have a GPA of 3.5 or better on a 4.0 scale.

Loan cancellation provisions:

All loan recipients may have their loan canceled at a rate of 20% or $3,000, whichever is greater, per year of teaching in critical subject areas or critical geographic locations in South Carolina; loan recipients who teach in both a critical subject area and a critical geographic area may have their loan canceled at a rate of 33.3% per year or $5,000, whichever is greater.

TLP Type 3 / PACE

Act 393 of 2000 also added loan forgiveness for participants in the state's Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) for critical needs subject area certification. Statutory language is interpreted to mean that PACE is the only alternative certification program eligible for Type 3 loans although there are currently 16 approved alternative certification programs in SC. The PACE loan forgiveness application states that participants may borrow up to $750 per year, not to exceed a total maximum of $5,000.

- For 2024-25, there were 251 PACE recipients, a decrease of 31 from the previous year.

Eligibility:

- Must be pursuing a course of study leading to certification as described by the SCDE under the PACE program.
- Must teach in the critical area prescribed in the PACE program on a full-time basis in South Carolina (either a critical geographic area to be determined at time of employment, or in a critical subject area as indicated at time of application), in a public preschool, elementary, or secondary school. (Note: SCDE PACE website information indicates PACE eligibility only for PACE approved content areas and also allows employment as a part-time teacher.)

Loan cancellation provisions:

Loan recipients may have their annual reimbursement loan cancelled 100% by teaching at least 152 days.

A loan recipient who does not fulfill all his/her teaching commitment must repay the entire loan amount that has not been cancelled, plus interest. These monies are paid into the revolving loan fund.

Table 7

SC Teacher Loan Program: General Fund Appropriations and TLP Loans (Type 2/Career Changers and Type 3/PACE) Expenditures, 2022-2025

Year	General Fund Appropriation	Type 2/Career Changer Total Loan Amount	No. of Type 2/Career Changer Loans	Type 3/PACE Total Loan Amount	No. of Type 3/PACE Loans	Total Amount Loan Type 2 & 3	Total Number of Loans Type 2 & 3
2021-22	$1,065,125	$439,833	43	$192,500	257	$632,433	300
2022-23	$1,065,125	$406,701	40	$175,775	236	$582,476	276
2023-24	$1,065,125	$505,893	42	$211,305	282	$717,198	324
2024-25	$1,065,125	$444,301	37	$187,858	251	$632,159	288

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation

Table 8

TLP Type 2 Recipients (Borrowers) Status: Cumulative to Date

Loan Status	TLP Type 2 Recipient/Borrower Status As of 6/30/2023		TLP Type 2 Recipient/Borrower Status As of 6/30/2024		TLP Type 2 Recipient/Borrower Status As of 6/30/2025	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Loans paid off through monthly payments, loan consolidation, or partial cancellation	292	27.9%	300	27.8%	318	28.3%
Loans cancelled 100% by fulfilling teaching requirement	489	46.7%	504	46.7%	516	45.9%
Never eligible for cancellation and are repaying loan	142	13.6%	141	13%	158	14.1%
Presently teaching and having loans cancelled	62	5.9%	70	6.5%	69	6.1%
Previously taught but not currently teaching	33	3.2%	32	3%	31	2.8%
Loan discharged due to death, disability, or bankruptcy	28	2.7%	32	3%	32	2.8%
In Default	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
CUMULATIVE LOANS ISSUED	1,046	100%	1,079	100%	1,124	100%

Source: South Carolina Student Loan Corporation

Table 9

TLP Type 2 Loan Recipients by Academic Level Status Over Time:

	Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors	5th Yr Undergrad	1st year Grad.	2nd Year Grad.	3+ Year Graduates	Total
2021-22	0	1	1	8	1	12	20	0	43
2022-23	0	1	3	10	0	9	17	0	40
2023-24	0	1	3	4	3	12	18	1	42
2024-25	0	0	2	9	0	10	15	1	37

Source: South Carolina Student Loan Corporation

Table 10
TLP Type 2 Recipients by Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Level

	Undergraduate		Graduate		Unknown		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Recipients							
2021-22	11	26%	32	74%	0	0%	43
2022-23	14	35%	26	65%	0	0%	40
2023-24	11	26%	31	74%	0	0%	42
2024-25	11	30%	26	70%	0	0%	37

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation

SC Teaching Fellows Program

The SC General Assembly began funding the South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program in 1999. The Program's mission is to recruit talented high school seniors into the teaching profession and to help them develop leadership qualities while in college. Each year, the program provides Fellowships to up to 230 high school seniors who have demonstrated substantial academic achievement, a history of service to their school and community, and/or work experience, and who also possess a desire to teach in South Carolina.

Teaching Fellows participate in advanced enrichment programs at Teaching Fellows Institutions, have professional development opportunities, and are involved with communities and businesses throughout the state. They receive up to $24,000 in fellowship funds (up to $6,000 per year for four years) while completing a degree that leads to initial teacher certification. The fellowship provides up to $5,700 for tuition and direct education expenses (including room and board) and $300 for specific enrichment programs administered by CERRA. All Teaching Fellows awards are contingent upon funding from the SC General Assembly. Fellows agree to teach in a South Carolina public school for one year for every year they receive the Fellowship.

2022-23 TEACHING FELLOWS	2023-24 TEACHING FELLOWS	2024-25 TEACHING FELLOWS
775	770	824

Source: CERRA

TLP Type 1, 2, and 3 (PACE) Recipients at Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education; Teaching Fellows by Institution

Table 11: TLP Loans by Institution

Institution	2022-23 TLP Loan Recipients	2023-24 TLP Loan Recipients	2024-25 TLP Loan Recipients
	2022-23 Teaching Fellows	2023-24 Teaching Fellows	2024-25 Teaching Fellows
ANDERSON UNIV.	105	99	88
	100	104	109
BENEDICT COLLEGE			
BOB JONES UNIVERSITY		1	1
CHARLESTON SOUTHERN UNIV.	25	21	14
	49	44	42
CITADEL	6	6	8
CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY		1	
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY	134	135	138
	75	101	101
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY	24	25	24
	51	47	59
COKER COLLEGE	4	6	10
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON	33	33	26
	73	61	61
COLUMBIA COLLEGE	17	29	26
			**
COLUMBIA INT'L UNIV.	5	3	2
CONVERSE COLLEGE	24	23	17
ERSKINE COLLEGE	1	1	
FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY	30	21	20
	31	35	34
FURMAN UNIVERSITY	12	7	10
HORRY-GEORGETOWN TECH	1		
LANDER UNIVERSITY	59	69	68
	65	70	80
LIMESTONE COLLEGE	2		1
NEWBERRY COLLEGE	5	3	4
			**
NORTH GREENVILLE UNIVERSITY	35	29	23
			**
PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE	5	4	3
SC STATE UNIVERSITY	5	2	2
SOUTHERN WESLYAN UNIVERSITY	22	20	20
USC – AIKEN	22	17	8
	34	28	36
USC – BEAUFORT	7	8	5
USC – COLUMBIA	151	160	172
	138	132	140
USC – UPSTATE	64	50	49
	32	30	39
WINTHROP UNIVERSITY	76	73	97
	127	118	123
WOFFORD	1	1	
TOTAL (JUST SC INSTITUTIONS) *	875	847	836
PACE LOANS	236	282	251
OUT-OF-STATE	16	15	20
TOTAL TLP (ALL RECIPIENTS)	1,127	1,144	1,107

Sources: SC Teacher Loan Program - TLP Recipients by Institution
* Total does not include Teaching Fellows; TFs may be recipients of TLP
** Columbia College, Newberry College, and North Greenville University are reported to accept their first freshman Teaching Fellows cohorts for the 2025-26 academic year.

Description of Applicants and Borrowers: All TLP Types

Tables 12 and 13 illustrate trends in the distribution of applications to the program by race/ethnicity and by gender. Of note, TLP Applicants have historically been predominantly white and/or female.

- The number of African American Applicants decreased for the first time since 2021-22; in 2025, only 188 (15.2% of applicants) were African-American.
- The number of white Applicants to the TLP program has continued to decrease, falling to 863 in 2025. The unknow ethnicity category has increased, indicating a hesitance to include that information by applicants.
- The number of male applicants decreased for the third year in a row (from 246 to 241), to its lowest level since at least 2010-11. The number of female applicants increased by 33.
- Asian and Hispanic Applications are not disaggregated due to small numbers.
- HBCU participation in the TLP declined substantially, from a high of 13 recipients in 2016-17 to just two in 2024-25, an 85% decrease.

Table 12
Applications to the Teacher Loan Program by Race/Ethnicity (Historical)

Year	# Applications	Ethnicity							
		African American		Other		White		Unknown	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2010-11	1,717	228	13.0%	35	2.0%	1,373	80.0%	81	5.0%
2011-12	1,471	215	15.0%	20	1.0%	1,171	80.0%	65	4.0%
2012-13	1,472	242	16.0%	23	2.0%	1,149	78.0%	58	4.0%
2013-14	1,462	248	17.0%	20	1.0%	1,147	79.0%	47	3.0%
2014-15	1,448	234	16.0%	24	2.0%	1,149	79.0%	41	3.0%
2015-16	1,396	230	16.5%	35	2.5%	1,086	77.8%	45	3.2%
2016-17	1,401	141	11.8%	30	2.5%	996	83.5%	26	2.2%
2017-18	1,399	183	13.1%	35	2.5%	1,136	81.2%	45	3.2%
2018-19	1,453	199	13.7%	38	2.6%	1,184	81.5%	32	2.2%
2019-20	1,426	210	14.7%	40	2.8%	1,128	79.1%	48	3.4%
2020-21	1,654	314	19.0%	96	5.8%	1,163	70.3%	81	4.9%
2021-22	1,315	236	18.0%	73	5.5%	929	70.6%	77	5.9%
2022-23	1,284	200	15.5%	52	4.0%	931	72.5%	101	8.0%
2023-24	1,314	236	17.9%	75	5.7%	912	69.4%	92	7.0%
2024-25	1,235	188	15.2%	69	5.6%	863	69.9%	115	9.3%

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation

Table 13
Teacher Loan Program Applicants by Gender (Historical)

Year	# Applications	Male	%	Female	%	Unknown	%
2010-11	1,717	316	18.4	1,324	77.1	77	4.5
2011-12	1,471	281	19.1	1,122	76.3	68	4.6
2012-13	1,472	244	16.6	1,168	79.3	60	4.1
2013-14	1,462	248	17.0	1,179	80.6	35	2.4
2014-15	1,448	262	18.0	1,155	79.8	31	2.1
2015-16	1,396	265	19.0	1,102	78.9	29	2.1
2016-17	1,401	254	18.1	1,114	79.5	33	2.4
2017-18	1,399	233	16.7	1,125	80.4	41	2.9
2018-19	1,453	250	17.2	1,187	81.7	16	1.1
2019-20	1,426	258	18.0	1,145	80.3	23	1.6
2020-21	1,654*	336	20.3	1,277	77.2	41	2.5
2021-22	1,315*	267	20.3	1,017	77.3	31	2.4
2022-23	1,284	246	19.2	1,003	78.1	35	2.7
2023-24	1,314	241	18.3	1036	78.9	37	2.8
2024-25	1,235	226	18.3	974	78.9	35	2.8

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation

Note: Application Totals reported for Tables 9 and 10 differ from those in Tables 8, 11, and 12-A, perhaps due to a difference in the content of data reported from prior years.

Table 14 is related to the current TLAC goals: These are the current goals of the TLAC:

1. The percentage of African American applicants and recipients of the TLP should mirror the percentage of African Americans in the South Carolina teaching force.
2. The percentage of male applicants and recipients of the TLP should mirror the percentage of males in the South Carolina teaching force.
3. Eighty percent of the individuals receiving loans each year under the TLP should enter the South Carolina teaching force.

Based on the available 2024-25 data, none of the three TLAC goals can be confirmed as being met:

- African American representation: African Americans comprised 10.1% of TLP recipients, compared with 17.3% of South Carolina's teaching workforce, indicating that African Americans are underrepresented among TLP recipients by approximately 7 percentage points.
- Male representation: Male recipients accounted for 15.3% of TLP recipients. Since females represent 79.3% of the state's teaching workforce, males comprise approximately 20.7% of the workforce. Therefore, males are underrepresented among TLP recipients by approximately 5 percentage points. This comparison should be interpreted cautiously because 3.4% of recipients did not report gender.
- Entry into the teaching workforce: The available data do not establish whether 80% of annual TLP recipients enter the South Carolina teaching force. Although 1,039 Type 1 recipients were reported as presently teaching and having loans cancelled in 2025, this figure is cumulative and does not correspond directly to the 819 recipients from the 2024-25 cohort. As a result, the 80% goal cannot be verified with the current data.

Table 14

Type 1 & Type 2 Loan Recipients by Gender and Ethnicity for 2024-25

Gender	TLP Loan Number 2024-25 (%)	*SC-TEACHER South Carolina Teacher Workforce: 2024-25*	*SC-TEACHER: National Teacher Workforce 2020-21*
Male	125 (15.3%)	N/A	23%
Female	666 (81.3%)	79.3%	77%
Not Answered	28 (3.4%)	N/A	N/A
Total	**819 (100%)**	**79.3%**	**100%**
Ethnicity	TLP Loan Number 2024-25 (%)	South Carolina Teacher Workforce 2024-25*	National Teacher Workforce (2020-21)*
African American	83 (10.1%)	17.3%	6%
White	631 (77.0%)	76.5%	80%
Asian	NR	2.5%	2%
Hispanic	25 (3.1%)	2.7%	9%
American Indian	NR	N/A	N/A
Not Answered	63 (7.7%)	N/A	0%
Other	NR	N/A	3%
Total	**819 (100%)**	**96.8%**	**100%**

Source: SC Student Loan Corporation and SC-TEACHER.
NR: Not reportable due to less than 20 participants in subgroup
* South Carolina Teacher Workforce Profile for 2024-25, published April 2026, SC-TEACHER
COE - Characteristics of Public School Teachers, National Center for Education Statistics

Table 15

TLP Type 1 and 2 Loan Recipients Attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities/HBCUs (Historical)

Institution	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Benedict College	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Claflin University	0	2	0	2	2	2	1	0	1	0
Morris College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC State University	7	10	1	3	2	6	4	5	2	2
Voorhees University									*0	0
TOTAL:	7	13	1	5	4	8	5	5	3	2

Source: SC Teacher Loan Program

* Voorhees University was added to the Table beginning 2023-24.

Over 60% of SC schools qualified as Critical Need for TLP in 2024-25

The criteria used in designating Critical Geographic Area schools have evolved over time, with the SBE considering multiple factors. For a period of time and as required by statute, the SBE used the definitions in the federal Perkins Loan Program as the basis for defining them. Statute was again changed by Act 307 of 2004, and for students seeking loan forgiveness under the program July 1, 2004. Critical Geographic Areas were redefined as those schools with:

- an overall rating of Below Average or At-Risk/Unsatisfactory;
- an average teacher turnover rate for the past three years of 20% or higher; or
- a poverty index of 70% or higher.

Schools Qualified as Critical Geographic Need: 2021-22 through 2023-24, For TLP Loan Cancellation 2022-23 through 2024-25

(Total and Disaggregated by School Level, with percentages based on number of school report cards by level)

Criterion Met Based Upon Ratings SY:	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total Number of Schools by Level	**1,365**	**1,366**	**1,370**	**1,402**
Primary Level	64	59	60	60
Elementary Level	674	674	676	680
Middle Level	334	340	339	349
High School Level	253	253	252	260
Career Centers	40	40	43	47
Total Number of Schools Qualifying as Critical Need for SC Teacher Loan Program	**841 (61.6%)**	**819 (59.9%)**	**809 (59.1%)**	**891 (63.5%)**
Primary Level	56 (87.5%)	47 (79.6%)	50 (83.3%)	47
Elementary Level	438 (65.0%)	428 (63.5%)	431 (63.8%)	457
Middle Level	215 (64.4%)	213 (62.6%)	207 (61.1%)	239
High School Level	126 (49.8%)	130 (51.4%)	119 (47.2%)	143
Career Centers	6 (15.0%)	1 (.02%)	2 (4.7%)	5

Source: SC Department of Education, https://ed.sc.gov/educators/recruitment-and-recognition/critical-need-areas/archive/ Note: Under "Type of School," some schools may be designated in more than one category

The Teacher Pipeline in SC

CERRA conducts a Supply and Demand Survey of all regular school districts, statewide Charter School authorizers (South Carolina Public Charter School District, etc.), Palmetto Unified, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, to collect data for annual report documenting the number of teacher positions, teachers hired, teachers leaving, and vacant teacher positions. For 2024-25, 71 of the 75 districts responded to the survey. CERRA publishes the Supply and Demand Report on its website annually.

Tables 16 A and B show the number of vacant teaching and service positions, by teaching field, as self-reported by districts to CERRA, and pursuant to CERRA's reporting instructions, for the beginning of the 2024-25 school year, and the net change over since the beginning of 2023-24. In their report, CERRA notes that a 'teacher' is a certified educator in a classroom-based teaching position or a school-based service position" (school counselor, etc.) so presumably positions filled by non-certified teachers (as allowed within statutory parameters) are counted as vacancies. Of note:

- At the beginning of the 2025-26 school year, South Carolina reported 548.55 vacant teaching positions, a decrease of 323.55 positions from 2024-25.
- Vacancies were highest in grades 9-12 (207.75), followed by PK-5 (180.30) and grades 6-8 (160.50).
- Special Education had the most vacancies by far, with 148.5 positions, including 67.5 in PK-5, 42.5 in grades 6-8, and 38.5 in grades 9-12.
- Other fields with relatively high vacancy levels were Science (48.0), Mathematics (37.0), Other/interventionists (34.0), Music (31.5), and English/Language Arts (26.5).
- Most teaching fields experienced declines in vacancies compared with 2024-25. The largest decreases were in Special Education (90.5), Mathematics (55.5), Music (16.7), Multilingual Learner programs (24.1), and English/Language Arts (22.5).
- A small number of fields reported increases, including Other/interventionist positions (+27.0), Agriculture (+1.0), Computer Science (+2.5), Health (+2.0), Industrial Technology (+1.0), and Theater (+4.0).
- Literacy/Reading vacancies remained unchanged at 10.5 positions.
- Overall, the data indicate a substantial reduction in reported vacancies, but Special Education and several secondary-level content areas remain the most significant areas of workforce need.
- When accounting for service positions in schools, there were 1,042 vacant positions in 2025-26, a decrease of approximately 32% from the previous year.
- Speech-Language Pathologist positions had the largest number of service-field vacancies, with 68.13 positions.
- School Psychologist vacancies increased by 10.3 positions, despite the overall decline in service-field vacancies.
- School Counselor vacancies showed the largest decrease, falling by 15.5 positions.

SC reported 336.6 fewer vacant positions in School Year 2025-26 than in School Year 2024-25. These data include both teaching positions and service positions like school librarians, counselors, and psychologists.

Source: https://www.cerra.org/page/supply-and-demand

Table 16-A
Positions Reported Vacant at the Beginning of the 2025-26 School Year

Teaching Fields	Number of Vacant Teaching Positions SY 25-26, By Grades Served				Change from 24-25
	PK - 5	6 - 8	9 - 12	Total	
Agriculture	0.00	1.00	6.00	7.00	1.0 ▲
Art	9.75	6.25	5.00	21.00	13.5 ▼
Business & Marketing	0.00	4.00	11.00	15.00	2.0 ▼
Career & Technical Education (CTE work-based)	0.00	1.00	17.50	18.50	7.5 ▼
Computer Science	0.00	2.00	2.00	4.00	2.5 ▲
Dance	1.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	1.0 ▼
Driver Training	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.0 ▲
Early Childhood/Elementary (grades PK-2)	31.00	0.00	0.00	31.00	31.0 ▼
Early Childhood/Elementary (grades 3-5)	27.00	0.00	0.00	27.00	54.50 ▼
Early Childhood/Elementary (grade 6)	0.00	4.00	0.00	4.00	2.0 ▲
English/Language Arts	0.00	15.50	11.00	26.50	22.50 ▼
Family & Consumer Science	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.0 ▼
Gifted & Talented	3.50	0.25	0.50	4.25	3.25 ▼
Health	0.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	2.0 ▲
Industrial Technology	0.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.0 ▲
Literacy/Reading	5.00	4.00	1.50	10.50	No change
Mathematics	1.00	19.00	17.00	37.00	55.50 ▼
Montessori	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.0 ▼
Multilingual Learner Program (previously ESOL)	3.00	3.05	1.25	7.30	24.1 ▼
Music	14.25	7.75	9.50	31.50	16.7 ▼
Physical Education	6.80	4.20	4.00	15.00	6.50 ▼
Science (biology, chemistry, physics, etc.)	1.00	21.00	26.00	48.00	8.0 ▼
Social Studies (economics, history, psychology etc.)	0.00	9.00	13.00	22.00	18.50 ▼
Special Education	67.50	42.50	38.50	148.50	90.5 ▼
Theater	0.00	3.00	4.00	7.00	4.0 ▲
World Language	6.50	4.00	8.00	18.50	6.0 ▼
Other (reading/math interventionists)	3.00	5.00	26.00	34.00	27.0 ▲
Total	180.30	160.50	207.75	548.55	323.55 ▼

Source: Vacancies - CERRA. Critical Need Fields - Pursuant to SC Student Loan Corporation loan application for 2025-26 as identified by the SC Department of Education, as based upon CERRA's 2025-26 Annual Supply and Demand Report (November 2025), all teaching and instructional service Field Positions are now identified as Critical Need Subject Areas https://www.cerra.org/page/supply-and-demand

Table 16-B
Service Fields Reported Vacant at the Beginning of the 2025-26 School Year

Service Fields	Number of Vacant Positions in 25-26	Change from 24-25
School Librarian	17.00	3.0 ▼
School Counselor	15.00	15.5 ▼
School Psychologist	54.55	10.3 ▲
Speech Language Pathologist	68.13	7.8 ▼
Other	3.00	3.0 ▲
Total	157.68	13.0 ▼

Table 17
Data from CERRA's Annual Educator Supply and Demand Survey Reports at Beginning of School Years 2019-20 through 2025-26 (Historical)

School year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
							Total	Change From 24-25
Certified educators leaving positions they held the previous school year	6,650	5,996	6,927	8,321	7,499	6,532	6,179	353 fewer
Graduates of a SC Bachelor's or master's level initial educator preparation program	2,067	2,226	2,123	2,081	1,957	2,081	Not yet available	N/A
Early career departures (5 or less years of experience)	2,367	2,551	2,390	3,015	2,782	2,331	2,113	218 fewer
Departures -Transferred to another SC public school district	1,670	1,346	1,569	2,187	2,193	1,732	1,571	161 fewer
Departures – Retirements	1,190	1,105	1,278	1,444	1,125	1,250	1,152	98 fewer
Positions vacant after the start of each school year	556	699	1,063	1,474	1,613	1,042	706	336 fewer

Source: CERRA https://www.cerra.org/o/cerra/page/supply-and-demand
Note: In the Six-Year Data Table, CERRA noted that its data, obtained from CHE, includes students who graduated from (1) a SC **public or private** institution with a **bachelor's** degree eligible for teacher certification, or (2) a SC **public** institution with a **master's** degree eligible for certification. Further, it noted that master's level data are not available for private institutions).

Table 18
Key Data from CERRA's Annual Educator Supply and Demand Survey Reports at Beginning of School Years 2019-20 through 2025-26 (Historical)

School year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	
							Total	Change From 24-25
Certified educators leaving positions they held the previous school year	6,650	5,996	6,927	8,321	7,499	6,532	6,179	353 fewer
Graduates of a SC Bachelor's or master's level initial educator preparation program	2,067	2,226	2,123	2,081	1,957	2,081	Not yet available	N/A
Early career departures (5 or less years of experience)	2,367	2,551	2,390	3,015	2,782	2,331	2,113	218 fewer
Departures -Transferred to another SC public school district	1,670	1,346	1,569	2,187	2,193	1,732	1,571	161 fewer
Departures – Retirements	1,190	1,105	1,278	1,444	1,125	1,250	1,152	98 fewer
Positions vacant after the start of each school year	556	699	1,063	1,474	1,613	1,042	706	336 fewer

Source: CERRA https://www.cerra.org/o/cerra/page/supply-and-demand
Note: In the Six-Year Data Table, CERRA noted that its data, obtained from CHE, includes students who graduated from (1) a SC **public or private** institution with a **bachelor's** degree eligible for teacher certification, or (2) a SC **public** institution with a **master's** degree eligible for certification. Further, it noted that master's level data are not available for private institutions).

Table 19
Sources of Teacher Hires from CERRA Supply and Demand Survey Reports (Historical)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
New Graduates from Teacher Education Programs in SC	24.7%	21.0%	21.6%	22.8%	24%	22.37%	17.4%	17% (1,390)	17% (1,276)	18.4% (1,190)
Transferred from one district, charter school or special school in SC to another district	33.5%	30.9%	31%	30.7%	29%	28.97%	31.1%	28% (2,331)	(30%) (2,184)	26.4% (1708)
Hired from another state	15.3%	16.9%	16%	13.0%	23%	15.52%	15.3%	13% (1,059)	13% (969)	12.9% (835)
Alternative Certification Programs	6.2%	7.4%	8.5%	5.6%	10%	8.8%	9.6%	11% (923)	12% (853)	12.1%(783)
From Outside US	3.7%	4.8%	5%	0.8%	1.0%	4.4%	5.7%	7% (579)	7.5% (550)	5.1% (332)
Other Teachers	4.9%	7.1%		4.3%		10.14%	1.2%			

Source: CERRA Supply and Demand Report https://www.cerra.org/o/cerra/page/supply-and-demand

Table 20
Student Percentage Receiving Scholarships for Fall Term Who Are in Education Programs* (Historical)

Fall	HOPE	LIFE	Palmetto Fellows	Total
2009	14.4%	11.1%	6.5%	10.6%
2010	12.7%	11.0%	6.7%	10.5%
2011	9.9%	10.2%	6.3%	9.6%
2012	13.2%	9.6%	6.0%	9.3%
	12.5%	9.3%	5.9%	9.0%
2014	11.1%	9.3%	5.7%	8.9%
2015	11.2%	9.2%	5.6%	8.8%
2016	11.5%	9.1%	6.0%	8.8%
2017	11.1%	8.6%	5.9%	8.4%
2018	10.4%	8.3%	6.2%	8.1%
2019	11.4%	8.2%	5.9%	8.1%
2020	10.5%	8.3%	5.9%	8.1%
2021*	8.8%	7.8%	5.4%	7.5%
2022*	7.7%	7.3%	4.7%	6.9%
2023*	**8.5%**	**6.8%**	**4.4%**	**6.6%**
2024	**8.3%**	**6.5%**	**4.4%**	**6.2%**
2025	**9.1%**	**6.9%**	**3.9%**	**6.6%**

Source: SC Commission on Higher Education

* Beginning with Fall 2021, CHE Education Program data includes students enrolled in all programs within the 13.xxxx Education CIP code family, as well as students enrolled in non-education programs with an education option leading to initial certification/licensure.

State scholarships are reaching more students overall, but education majors represent a shrinking portion of recipients. Education majors make up a declining share of scholarship recipients. Across the three major state scholarships, the percentage of recipients enrolled in education programs fell from 8.8% in 2016 to 6.6% in 2025, a decline of 2.2 percentage points. See Appendix F.

Data provided by CHE in Appendix F illustrate trends in enrollment in SC's teacher preparation institutions. Of note:

- South Carolina's in-state enrollment in education-related bachelor's programs has fallen considerably since 2016, despite growth at research institutions and a few private colleges.
- Out-of-state enrollment in bachelor's education programs grew modestly overall, driven entirely by strong gains at public universities, while independent colleges experienced a significant decline.
- In-state enrollment in master's-level education programs decreased substantially over the decade, with the steepest losses among independent institutions. Public institutions remained the dominant provider, while growth at USC-Upstate, Lander, USC-Aiken, and Columbia College offset some declines elsewhere.
    - Total in-state enrollment in master's-level programs declined 19.1%, from 2,678 students in 2016 to 2,167 in 2025.
    - Public institutions accounted for most enrollment, but declined 8.8%, from 1,883 to 1,717 students.
    - Research institutions fell 20.0%, largely because enrollment at USC-Columbia dropped 43.7%, despite Clemson growing 57.7%.
- Out-of-state enrollment in master's-level education programs grew over the decade, but the pattern changed significantly. Enrollment shifted away from comprehensive public institutions and toward senior independent institutions, especially Columbia College and Columbia International University.

Appendices

Appendix A:
Teacher Loan Program Statute

Appendix A:
Teacher Loan Program Statute

SECTION 59-26-20. Duties of State Board of Education and Commission on Higher Education.

The State Board of Education, through the State Department of Education, and the Commission on Higher Education shall:

(a) develop and implement a plan for the continuous evaluation and upgrading of standards for program approval of undergraduate and graduate education training programs of colleges and universities in this State;

(b) adopt policies and procedures which result in visiting teams with a balanced composition of teachers, administrators, and higher education faculties;

(c) establish program approval procedures which shall assure that all members of visiting teams which review and approve undergraduate and graduate education programs have attended training programs in program approval procedures within two years prior to service on such teams;

(d) render advice and aid to departments and colleges of education concerning their curricula, program approval standards, and results on the examinations provided for in this chapter;

(e) adopt program approval standards so that all colleges and universities in this State that offer undergraduate degrees in education shall require that students successfully complete the basic skills examination that is developed in compliance with this chapter before final admittance into the undergraduate teacher education program. These program approval standards shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) A student initially may take the basic skills examination during his first or second year in college.

(2) Students may be allowed to take the examination no more than four times.

(3) If a student has not passed the examination, he may not be conditionally admitted to a teacher education program after December 1, 1996. After December 1, 1996, any person who has failed to achieve a passing score on all sections of the examination after two attempts may retake for a third time any test section not passed in the manner allowed by this section. The person shall first complete a remedial or developmental course from a post-secondary institution in the subject area of any test section not passed and provide satisfactory evidence of completion of this required remedial or developmental course to the State Superintendent of Education. A third administration of the examination then may be given to this person. If the person fails to pass the examination after the third attempt, after a period of three years, he may take the examination or any sections not passed for a fourth time under the same terms and conditions provided by this section of persons desiring to take the examination for a third time.

Provided, that in addition to the above approval standards, beginning in 1984-85, additional and upgraded approval standards must be developed, in consultation with the Commission on Higher Education, and promulgated by the State Board of Education for these teacher education programs.

(f) administer the basic skills examination provided for in this section three times a year;

(g) report the results of the examination to the colleges, universities, and student in such form that he will be provided specific information about his strengths and weaknesses and given consultation to assist in improving his performance;

(h) adopt program approval standards so that all colleges and universities in this State that offer undergraduate degrees in education shall require that students pursuing courses leading to teacher certification successfully complete one semester of student teaching and other field experiences and teacher development techniques directly related to practical classroom situations;

(i) adopt program approval standards whereby each student teacher must be evaluated and assisted by a representative or representatives of the college or university in which the student teacher is enrolled. Evaluation and assistance processes shall be locally developed or selected by colleges or universities in accordance with State Board of Education regulations. Processes shall evaluate and assist student teachers based on the criteria for teaching effectiveness developed in accordance with this chapter. All college and university representatives who are involved in the evaluation and assistance process shall receive appropriate training as defined by State Board of Education regulations. The college or university in which the student teacher is enrolled shall make available assistance, training, and counseling to the student teacher to overcome any identified deficiencies;

(j) the Commission on Higher Education, in consultation with the State Department of Education and the staff of the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation, shall develop a loan program in which talented and qualified state residents may be provided loans to attend public or private colleges and universities for the sole purpose and intent of becoming certified teachers employed in the State in areas of critical need. Areas of critical need shall include both geographic areas and areas of teacher certification and must be defined annually for that purpose by the State Board of Education. The definitions used in the federal Perkins Loan Program shall serve as the basis for defining "critical geographical areas", which shall include special schools, alternative schools, and correctional centers as identified by the State Board of Education. The recipient of a loan is entitled to have up to one hundred percent of the amount of the loan plus the interest canceled if he becomes certified and teaches in an area of critical need. Should the area of critical need in which the loan recipient is teaching be reclassified during the time of cancellation, the cancellation shall continue as though the critical need area had not changed. Additionally, beginning with the 2000-2001 school year, a teacher with a teacher loan through the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation shall qualify, if the teacher is teaching in an area newly designated as a critical needs area (geographic or subject, or both). Previous loan payments will not be reimbursed. The Department of Education and the local school district are responsible for annual distribution of the critical needs list. It is the responsibility of the teacher to request loan cancellation through service in a critical needs area to the Student Loan Corporation by November first.

Beginning July 1, 2000, the loan must be canceled at the rate of twenty percent or three thousand dollars, whichever is greater, of the total principal amount of the loan plus interest on the unpaid balance for each complete year of teaching service in either an academic critical need area or in a geographic need area. The loan must be canceled at the rate of thirty-three and one-third percent, or five thousand dollars, whichever is greater, of the total principal amount of the loan plus interest on the unpaid balance for each complete year of teaching service in both an academic critical need area and a geographic need area. Beginning July 1, 2000, all loan recipients teaching in the public schools of South Carolina but not in an academic or geographic critical need area are to be charged an interest rate below that charged to loan recipients who do not teach in South Carolina.

Additional loans to assist with college and living expenses must be made available for talented and qualified state residents attending public or private colleges and universities in this State for the sole purpose and intent of changing careers in order to certified become teachers employed in the State in areas of critical need. These loan funds also may be used for the cost of participation in the critical needs certification program pursuant to Section 59-26-30(A)(8). Such loans must be cancelled under the same conditions and at the same rates as other critical need loans.

In case of failure to make a scheduled repayment of an installment, failure to apply for cancellation of deferment of the loan on time, or noncompliance by a borrower with the intent of the loan, the entire unpaid indebtedness including accrued interest, at the option of the commission, shall become immediately due and payable. The recipient shall execute the necessary legal documents to reflect his obligation and the terms and conditions of the loan. The loan program, if implemented, pursuant to the South Carolina Education Improvement Act, is to be administered by the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation. Funds generated from repayments to the loan program must be retained in a separate account and utilized as a revolving account for the purpose that the funds were originally appropriated. Appropriations for loans and administrative costs incurred by the corporation are to be provided in annual amounts, recommended by the Commission on Higher Education, to the State Treasurer for use by the corporation. The Education Oversight Committee shall review the loan program annually and report to the General Assembly

Notwithstanding another provision of this item:

(1) For a student seeking loan forgiveness pursuant to the Teacher Loan Program after July 1, 2004, "critical geographic area" is defined as a school that:

(a) has an absolute rating of below average or unsatisfactory;

(b) has an average teacher turnover rate for the past three years that is twenty percent or higher; or

(c) meets the poverty index criteria at the seventy percent level or higher.

(2) After July 1, 2004, a student shall have his loan forgiven based on those schools or districts designated as critical geographic areas at the time of employment.

(3) The definition of critical geographic area must not change for a student who has a loan, or who is in the process of having a loan forgiven before July 1, 2004.

(k) for special education in the area of vision, adopt program approval standards for initial certification and amend the approved program of specific course requirements for adding certification so that students receive appropriate training and can demonstrate competence in reading and writing braille;

(l) adopt program approval standards so that students who are pursuing a program in a college or university in this State which leads to certification as instructional or administrative personnel shall complete successfully training and teacher development experiences in teaching higher order thinking skills;

(m) adopt program approval standards so that programs in a college or university in this State which lead to certification as administrative personnel must include training in methods of making school improvement councils an active and effective force in improving schools;

(n) the Commission on Higher Education in consultation with the State Department of Education and the staff of the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation, shall develop a Governor's Teaching Scholarship Loan Program to provide talented and qualified state residents loans not to exceed five thousand dollars a year to attend public or private colleges and universities for the purpose of becoming certified teachers employed in the public schools of this State. The recipient of a loan is entitled to have up to one hundred percent of the amount of the loan plus the interest on the loan canceled if he becomes certified and teaches in the public schools of this State for at least five years. The loan is canceled at the rate of twenty percent of the total principal amount of the loan plus interest on the unpaid balance for each complete year of teaching service in a public school. However, beginning July 1, 1990, the loan is canceled at the rate of thirty-three and one-third percent of the total principal amount of the loan plus interest on the unpaid balance for each complete year of teaching service in both an academic critical need area and a geographic need area as defined annually by the State Board of Education. In case of failure to make a scheduled repayment of any installment, failure to apply for cancellation or deferment of the loan on time, or noncompliance by a borrower with the purpose of the loan, the entire unpaid indebtedness plus interest is, at the option of the commission, immediately due and payable. The recipient shall execute the necessary legal documents to reflect his obligation and the terms and conditions of the loan. The loan program must be administered by the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation. Funds generated from repayments to the loan program must be retained in a separate account and utilized as a revolving account for the purpose of making additional loans. Appropriations for loans and administrative costs must come from the Education Improvement Act of 1984 Fund, on the recommendation of the Commission on Higher Education to the State Treasurer, for use by the corporation. The Education Oversight Committee shall review this scholarship loan program annually and report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly. For purposes of this item, a 'talented and qualified state resident' includes freshmen students who graduate in the top ten percentile of their high school class, or who receive a combined verbal plus mathematics Scholastic Aptitude Test score of at least eleven hundred and enrolled students who have completed one year (two semesters or the equivalent) of collegiate work and who have earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale. To remain eligible for the loan while in college, the student must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

SECTION 59-26-30. Cognitive assessments for teachers and teacher certification; examinations; regulations.

(A) In the area of cognitive assessments for teachers and teacher certification, the State Board of Education, acting through the State Department of Education, shall:

(7) award a teaching certificate to a person who successfully completes the scholastic requirements for teaching at an approved college or university and the examination he is required to take for certification purposes;

(8) award a conditional teaching certificate to a person eligible to hold a teaching certificate who does not qualify for full certification under item (7) above provided the person has earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a major in a certification area for which the board has determined there exists a critical shortage of teachers, and the person has passed the appropriate teaching examination. The

board may renew a conditional teaching certificate annually for a maximum of three years, if the holder of the certificate shows satisfactory progress toward completion of a teacher certification program prescribed by the board. In part, satisfactory progress is the progress that the holder of a conditional certificate should complete the requirements for full certification within three years of being conditionally certified;

Appendix B

SC Student Loan Corporation - Teacher Loan Fund Program CHE Regulation 62-110, et al

Appendix B
SC Student Loan Corporation - Teacher Loan Fund Program CHE Regulation 62-110, et al

ARTICLE II
Student Loan Corporation

(Statutory Authority: Act 512 Part 2 Section 9 Division 2 Subdivision C Subpart 1 (6), Acts of Joint Resolutions of South Carolina 1984)

Subarticle A

General Introduction

62-110. Introduction.

The South Carolina Student Loan Corporation, hereinafter called the Corporation, is an eligible lender under the South Carolina Student Loan Program (FFELP) as administered by the State Education Assistance Authority, hereinafter called the Authority, and has been designated pursuant to the South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984 to administer a loan program for State residents who wish to become certified teachers in the State in areas of critical need. All loans made under this program shall be subject to the regulations contained herein. Loans shall be made available without regard to race, sex, color, national origin, age or marital status.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 10, Issue No. 5, eff May 23, 1986. Amended by State Register Volume 11, Issue No. 5, eff May 22, 1987; State Register Volume 13, Issue No. 3, eff March 24, 1989; State Register Volume 17, Issue No. 2, eff February 26, 1993; State Register Volume 18, Issue No. 3, eff March 25, 1994; State Register Volume 26, Issue No. 5, Part 1, eff May 24, 2002.

Editor's Note

See SCSR 44-6 Doc. No. 4968, effective May 18, 2020 for 90 days, which promulgated emergency amendments to SC ADC 62-110 to 62-132, allowing a temporary waiver of Section 62-120(A)(6) of the SC Teachers Loan Program Regulation that references late Spring SAT and ACT examinations for 2020-21 Academic Year.

See SCSR 44-8 Doc. No. 4971, effective August 14, 2020 for 90 days, which promulgated emergency amendments to SC ADC 62-110 to 62-132, allowing a temporary waiver of Section 62-120(A)(6) of the SC Teachers Loan Program Regulation that references late Spring SAT and ACT examinations for 2020-21 Academic Year.

Subarticle B

General Regulations Relating to Borrowers

62-120. Borrower Eligibility.

A. To be eligible to receive a loan under the Teachers Loan Program a student shall:

(1) Be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States; and

(2) Be a bona fide resident of South Carolina, as defined in applicable State statutes governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes at public colleges and universities within this State; and

(3) Have been accepted for enrollment, or enrolled in good standing in an eligible institution as defined in the Regulations of the Authority and further defined as follows:

(a) For institutions located in South Carolina, those:

(i) Which offer baccalaureate or higher degree programs which are approved for initial teacher certification by the State Board of Education (Board); or

(ii) Whose highest offering is the Associate of Arts or Associate of Science Degrees which are designed for transfer to baccalaureate programs including those in teacher education, and which are eleemosynary institutions accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;

(b) For institutions located out of the State, those institutions which are regionally accredited and which offer baccalaureate or higher degree programs which are approved for initial teacher certification by the appropriate credentialing agency in that State; and

(4) Be enrolled on at least a half-time basis; and

(5) Indicate a desire and intent to teach in South Carolina in an area of critical need as defined by the Board annually; and

(6) If an undergraduate student who has completed one year (two semesters or the equivalent) of collegiate work and who is attending a South Carolina institution, has taken and passed a "Basic Skills Test" as required by the Board for entrance into a program of teacher education; or if an undergraduate who has not completed one year of collegiate work did achieve a score equal to or greater than the mean score achieved by all examines in South Carolina taking the SAT or ACT in the year of graduation from high school or in the most recent year for which such figures are available; and

(7) If an undergraduate student or a first-time graduate student, have attained a cumulative grade point ratio of at least 2.75 GPR (on a 4.0 scale) in collegiate work; or if an undergraduate who has not completed one semester of college work have graduated in the top 40% of his high school class or have received a high school diploma through completion of adult education courses or passing the GED; and

(8) If an undergraduate student, be formally admitted to an undergraduate teacher education program or if the student is not yet formally admitted to such a program the Department of Education, or its equivalent, at an eligible institution must certify that the student has expressed an intent and desire to enter the field of teaching, and is enrolled in a teacher education program at a time required by the institution; and

(9) If a continuing graduate student, have maintained a 3.5 GPR (on a 4.0 scale) on graduate work; and

(10) If a graduate student, have not previously been certified to teach, but entering a program for the specific purpose of becoming certified; or, if previously certified in a non-critical area, entering a program for the specific purpose of becoming certified to teach in a subject area which is defined by the Board as an area of critical need; and

(11) Be eligible in all other respects as may subsequently be required by the Corporation.

B. To be eligible to receive a loan up to the amount designated for individuals changing careers a student shall:

(1) Meet the eligibility requirements of 62-120(A). Students who have previously earned a baccalaureate degree will not be required to meet the academic standards specified in 62-120(A)(6), (7) and (9) during the initial year of teacher training. All applicable academic requirements must be met for all subsequent years; and

(2) Possess a baccalaureate degree or at the time of initial application be employed as an instructional assistant in the South Carolina public school system; and

(3) Have completed a baccalaureate degree a minimum of three years prior to the beginning of the teacher training (instructional assistants are exempt from this requirement); and

(4) Have been employed on a full time basis for minimum or three years, or the equivalent in part time employment, prior to the beginning of the teacher training; and

(5) Are not receiving any other funds through this program for the same period of teacher training.

C. To be eligible to receive a loan up to the amount designated for individuals participating in the Critical Needs Certification Program a student must be enrolled in the Critical Needs Certification Program as certified by the Board.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 10, Issue No. 5, eff May 23, 1986. Amended by State Register Volume 11, Issue No. 5, eff May 22, 1987; State Register Volume 13, Issue No. 3, eff March 24, 1989; State Register Volume 17, Issue No. 2, eff February 26, 1993; State Register Volume 18, Issue No. 3, eff March 25, 1994; State Register Volume 25, Issue No. 5, Part 1, eff May 24, 2002.

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Subarticle C

General Regulations Relating to Loan Maximums, Administration and Repayment

62-130. Loan Maximums.

A. The maximum amount an eligible student may borrow under this program, is established by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, hereinafter called the Commission.

B. The maximum amount a borrower meeting the eligibility criteria in 62-120(B) may borrow shall not be limited by any definition used by the institution in determining the eligibility for financial aid and receipt of these funds shall not affect any federal, state or private assistance which the student may be eligible to receive.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 10, Issue No. 5, eff May 23, 1986. Amended by State Register Volume 11, Issue No. 5, eff May 22, 1987; State Register Volume 17, Issue No. 2, eff February 26, 1993; State Register Volume 18, Issue No. 3, eff March 25, 1994; State Register Volume 26, Issue No. 5, Part 1, eff May 24, 2002.

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62-131. Loan Administration.

A. All loans shall be secured by a Promissory Note. Loan shall bear interest from the date of disbursement of funds to the borrower at the rate as may be specified by the Commission.

B. The proceeds of a loan shall normally be disbursed by academic registration period, but not sooner than required by the student to meet his educational expenses. A check made co-payable to the borrower and to the institution will be forwarded to the institution for distribution to the borrower; provided, however, that in situations in which it is not feasible to issue the check co-payable, the check will be made payable to the borrower alone and forwarded to the institution. Nothing in this section shall preclude loan funds being transferred to the institution by electronic means.

(1) Borrowers participating in the Critical Needs Certification Program will receive a single disbursement annually. A check will be made payable to the borrower and forwarded directly to that borrower.

C. The student and institution shall agree to return to the Corporation any refunds applicable to these loans to which the student is entitled due to withdrawal of the student from the institution.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 10, Issue No. 5, eff May 23, 1986. Amended by State Register Volume 11, Issue No. 5, eff May 22, 1987; State Register Volume 17, Issue No. 2, eff February 26, 1993; State Register Volume 18, Issue No. 3, eff March 25, 1994; State Register Volume 26, Issue No. 5, Part 1, eff May 24, 2002.

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62-132. Repayment.

A. A student who receives loans under this program shall be eligible to have the greater of 20% or three thousand dollars of the loan(s) cancelled for each full year, or the greater of 10% or one thousand five hundred dollars for each complete term of teaching experience as defined by the Board in the State in an area of critical need, up to a maximum of 100% of the amount of the loan(s) plus the interest thereon. There shall be no cancellation for partial terms.

(1) Upon employment in an eligible subject area, as defined by the Board at the time of loan application or subsequently, the borrower will be entitled to cancellation of all loans received under this program that are outstanding at the time of employment.

(2) Upon employment in a geographic area of critical need, the borrower will be entitled to cancellation of all loans received under this program even if such geographic area is subsequently no longer defined by the Board as one of critical need. If a borrower changes employment from one geographic area to another, cancellation of loans received under this program will be provided only if the geographic area to which the borrower is moving is defined as an area of critical need at that time. Defined Geographic areas of critical need will be provided to the borrower at the time the borrower begins to seek employment.

B. Borrowers who simultaneously meet the requirements described in A(1) and A(2) above shall be eligible to have the greater of 33 1/3% or five thousand dollars of the loan(s) cancelled for each full year, or the greater of 16 2/3% or two thousand five hundred dollars for each complete term, of teaching experience as defined by the Board, up to the maximum of 100% of the amount of the loan(s) plus the interest thereon. There shall be no cancellation for partial terms.

C. If a borrower does not meet the requirements for cancellation as specified in paragraph A above, the borrower must begin repayment of the loan(s) received under this program in accordance with the Regulations of the Corporation and subject to the terms of the Promissory Note(s), unless otherwise agreed to by the Corporation and the borrower. If a borrower does not initially meet the requirements for cancellations as set forth in paragraph A above, but subsequently does so, there will be no refund or credit provided for any amount paid; provided, however, any unpaid balance at the time the borrower begins teaching in an area of critical need will be eligible for cancellation subject to the regulations contained herein.

(1) Repayment of principal amount of a loan made under this program together with the interest, shall be made in monthly installments beginning six (6) months, after the date on which the borrower ceases to carry at least one-half the normal full-time academic work load at an eligible institution as defined by the Corporation or for borrowers participating in the Critical Needs Certification Program immediately upon disbursement of the loan funds. The monthly installment shall be at a rate which will repay the loan in not less than five (5) years nor more than ten (10) years from the beginning of the repayment period, unless the Corporation, at the request of the borrower, specifically provides a prepayment schedule that will repay the loan during a period of less than five (5) years. Unless specifically authorized by the Corporation, the monthly installment shall be at a rate of not less than $50 per month. A borrower may accelerate repayment of the loan, in whole or in part, without penalty. Repayment of the loan is not required when the borrower is eligible for cancellation under 62-132 (A) of these regulations.

(2) In the event a borrower dies, the obligation to make any further repayment shall be cancelled upon receipt of a Certification of Death, (or upon receipt of such other evidence approved by the Corporation.) In the event a borrower becomes totally and permanently disabled, the obligation to make any further repayment shall be cancelled upon receipt of certification by a licensed physician.

(3) The Corporation shall have authority to assess a late charge for failure of the borrower to pay all or part of an installment within ten (10) days after its due date. The amount of such charge may not exceed six cents (.06) for each dollar of each installment due.

(4) The Corporation shall have the authority to collect form the borrower reasonable attorney's fees and other costs and charges necessary for the collection of any amount not paid when due.

(5) Nothing in this section shall preclude any forbearance for the benefit of the borrower which may be agreed upon by the parties to the loan and approved by the Corporation

D. The Corporation shall develop and maintain such procedures, subject to the approval of the Commission, as may be necessary to carry out applicable provisions of Act 512, Acts of Joint Resolutions of South Carolina, 1984 (Educational Improvement Act), as amended, and as may be required to exercise reasonable care and diligence in the making and collection of loans.

HISTORY: Added by State Register Volume 10, Issue No. 5, eff May 23, 1986. Amended by State Register Volume 11, Issue No. 5, eff May 22, 1987; State Register Volume 17, Issue No. 2, eff February 26, 1993; State Register Volume 18, Issue No. 3, eff March 25, 1994; State Register Volume 25, Issue No. 3, eff March 23, 2001; State Register Volume 26, Issue No. 5, Part 1, eff May 24, 2002.

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Appendix C: Provisos Related to Teacher Loan Program in 2026-27 Appropriations Act

Appendix C: Provisos Related to Teacher Loan Program in 2026-27 Appropriations Act

1A.6. (SDE-EIA: CHE/Teacher Recruitment) (A) Of the funds appropriated in Part IA, Section 1, VIII.F. for the Teacher Recruitment Program, the Commission on Higher Education shall distribute a total of ninety-two percent to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA-South Carolina) for a state teacher recruitment program, of which at least seventy-eight percent must be used for the Teaching Fellows Program specifically to provide scholarships for future teachers, and of which twenty-two percent must be used for other aspects of the state teacher recruitment program, including the Teacher Cadet Program and $166,302 which must be used for specific programs to recruit minority teachers: and shall distribute eight percent to South Carolina State University to be used only for the operation of a minority teacher recruitment program and therefore shall not be used for the operation of their established general education programs. Working with districts with an absolute rating of At-Risk or Below Average, CERRA will provide shared initiatives to recruit and retain teachers to schools in these districts. CERRA will report annually by October first to the Education Oversight Committee and the Department of Education on the success of the recruitment and retention efforts in these schools. The Commission on Higher Education shall ensure that all funds are used to promote teacher recruitment on a statewide basis, shall ensure the continued coordination of efforts among the three teacher recruitment projects, shall review the use of funds and shall have prior program and budget approval. The South Carolina State University program, in consultation with the Commission on Higher Education, shall extend beyond the geographic area it currently serves. Annually, the Commission on Higher Education shall evaluate the effectiveness of each of the teacher recruitment projects and shall report its findings and its program and budget recommendations to the House and Senate Education Committees, the State Board of Education, and the Education Oversight Committee by October first annually, in a format agreed upon by the Education Oversight Committee and the Department of Education.

(B) With the funds appropriated CERRA shall also appoint and maintain the South Carolina Teacher Loan Advisory Committee upon recommendations by the Education Oversight Committee. The Committee shall be composed of one member representing each of the following: (1) Commission on Higher Education who shall serve as chair of the Committee; (2) State Department of Education; (3) Education Oversight Committee; (4) Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement; (5) South Carolina Student Loan Corporation; (6) South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA); (7) a local school district human resources officer; (8) a public higher education institution with an approved teacher education program; and (9) a private higher education institution with an approved teacher education program. The members of the committee representing SCASFAA, a local school district, and the public and private higher education institutions shall serve a single two-year term on the committee. The committee must be staffed by CERRA, and shall meet at least four times annually. The committees responsibilities are limited to its duties for: (1) establishing, monitoring, and reporting progress on goals for the Teacher Loa Program; (2) facilitating communication among the cooperating entities; (3) actively advocating for program participants; (4) using the most recent program evaluation reports as a guide, recommending policies and procedures necessary to promote and publicize the program, as well as developing specific recommendations for changes necessary to statute, regulation, and/or proviso necessary to modernize and streamline the program, enhance its alignment and parity with other teacher recruitment initiatives; and (5) annually, by February 1 and August 1, submitting a summary of meetings held during that period and actions taken to conform with each state duty to the Commission on Higher Education and to the Education Oversight Committee for inclusion in the annual program evaluation.

(C) In conformance with the 2025 Teacher Loa Program (TLP) Report Finding and Recommendations, the Student

Loan Corporation shall:

(1) review and revise TLP applications and submit a plan to the Commission on Higher Education for implementing an online application process; and

(2) add a question on the TLP application which will designate applicant as a Teaching Fellow recipient.

1A.56. (SDE-EIA: Teacher Loan Program) With the funds appropriated for the Teacher Loan Program and with funds in the revolving fund, in the current fiscal year the annual maximum award for eligible juniors, seniors and graduate students is $7,500 per year and the aggregate maximum loan amount is $27,500.

1A.72. (SDE-EIA: Teacher Loan Program) Of the available funds in the Teacher Loan Program revolving account administered by the SC Student Loan Corporation, up to $5,000,000 shall be made available through a program administered by the Student Loan Corporation to assist in refinancing student loan debt for all certified teachers employed in the public schools of the State. An additional $5,000,000 from the revolving loan account will be made available to teachers in rural school districts for loan forgiveness patterned after the SC Teacher Loan Program. The Department of Education will identify the rural school districts for inclusion in loan forgiveness using data that documents the difficulty of the districts in recruiting and retaining certified teachers. The Student Loan Corporation must have both programs operational by the end of the fiscal year.

Appendix D

EIA and EAA Budget and Proviso Requests for FY 2026-27

Approved by EOC Dec. 8, 2025

Recommendations from the EOC for FY 2026-27 EIA Funding and Proviso Recommendations

Adopted by the EOC on December 8, 2025

Background

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act (EIA) of 1984, Part II, SECTION 9 of Act 512 of 1984, the Fiscal Year 1984-85 General Appropriations Act, had seven objectives:

A. Raising Student Performance by Increasing Academic Standards
B. Strengthening the Teaching and Testing of the Basic Skills
C. Elevating the Teaching Profession by Strengthening Teacher Training, Evaluation, and Compensation
D. Improving Leadership, Management, and Fiscal Efficiency of Schools at All Levels
E. Implementing Strict Quality Controls and Rewarding Productivity
F. Creating More Effective Partnerships Among the Schools, Parents, Community, and Business
G. Providing School Buildings Conductive to Improved Student Learning

The initial EIA appropriation in Fiscal Year 1984-85 was $217,265,860. The total amount of general funds appropriated to the South Carolina Department of Education in Fiscal Year 1984-85 was $852,508,991. Of this amount, $754,988,127 was appropriated to the Education Finance Act, which is comparable to our State Aid to Classrooms appropriation today of $4,531,474,416 in the current fiscal year.

Education Finance Act	$754,988,127
All other General Fund	$ 97,520,764
Total General Funds	$852,508,991

Appendix A summaries the EIA appropriation for Fiscal Year 1984-85.

The EIA also created the Select Committee, a nine-member legislative committee composed of the following individuals. Only a member of the legislature could serve as chair:

(1) Speaker of the House of Representatives or his designee.
(2) Lieutenant Governor or his designee.
(3) Chairman of the Education and Public Works Committee of the House of Representatives or his designee.

(4) Chairman of the Education Committee of the Senate or his designee.
(5) State Superintendent of Education or his designee.
(6) Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education or his designee.
(7) Governor or his designee.
(8) Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives or his designee.
(9) Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Senate or his designee.

One of the responsibilities of the Select Committee was "to assist in, recommend and supervise the expenditure of funds for the Education Improvement Act."

When the Education Accountability Act (EAA) of 1998 was enacted into law, the Education Oversight Committee replaced the Select Committee and added to its membership representatives from the business community. The responsibilities of the EOC were also expanded.

EIA Subcommittee Recommendations, FY 2026-27

For the 2026-27 funding year, the availability of new recurring EIA funds is **$98,944,087**. The amount of nonrecurring EIA funds is **$84,060,581**.

Appendix B summarizes all new EIA fund requests made to the EOC, which total **$210,053,058**.

Recurring Fund Recommendations

For Fiscal Year 2026-27, the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee recommends ***increasing*** the appropriation to the following EIA line-item appropriations because these programs have demonstrated measurable return on investment:

1. **Teaching Fellows Scholarship Program** – The Teaching Fellows program is designed to recruit talented high school seniors in SC into the teaching profession. According to CERRA, 93% of graduates who received the Teaching Fellows scholarship have either satisfied their loan or are currently teaching for loan forgiveness in a SC public school. Candidates must complete a rigorous selection process that includes an interview and presentation. According to CERRA, there is currently a waitlist of 61 freshman and 57 sophomores for the program.
    - An increase of 20 additional scholarships at $24,000 for the entire four years, which equates to **$640,000**.

- Increase the scholarship amount from $6000 to $10,000 for junior and senior years at a cost of **$1,756,000** (108 Fellows at juniors and seniors for $4,000 each)*

2. **State Aid to Classrooms** – Increasing the minimum teacher salary to at least $50,000 by 2026 has been a priority of Governor McMaster and the General Assembly. Increasing teacher salaries has also been a priority of the EIA fund since its inception. A 2025 Report from SC-TEACHER showed that SC school districts bordering North Carolina employed about 10 to 41 percent of their teachers on reciprocity certificates in 2023-24, suggesting that SC's higher teacher salaries are attracting teachers from neighboring states. Since State Aid to Classrooms is funded by General Funds and by EIA funds, the Subcommittee defers to the legislature on the amount of new EIA funds that will be used to increase State Aid to Classrooms.
    - Request from SC Department of Education of $150,000,000**;** recommended **$80,892,384** (remaining from general fund)
3. **Increase in special schools' teacher salaries** of **$650,454**

For Fiscal year 2026-27, the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee recommends ***decreasing*** the appropriation to the following EIA line-item appropriations due to reduced demand for the program:

1. **National Board Certification** – For 2024-25, $34,500,000 has been allocated for National Board certification stipends. There are currently 3,545 teachers eligible for the stipend at a cost of $17,725,000. The number of new National Board teachers has been increasing over the past three years (from 35 to 98 teachers); however, the total number of national board teachers has been decreasing over the past three years (from 3,821 to 3,447 teachers).
    - Recommended to reduce the amount allocated to National Board by ($5,000,000)

For Fiscal Year 2026-27, the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee recommends ***additional investment in the following initiatives***.

1. **Teacher Career Ladder** of $1,400,000 million recurring funds – The original EIA legislation included a teacher incentive pay program, which was discontinued over time. South Carolina has long focused on retaining high quality teachers in the classroom. Creation of a career ladder would sustain these efforts.
2. **Instructional Materials** - $10,000,000

3. **Instructional Support** - $8,205,249
4. **Project Read** - $250,000
5. **SC Council in Economics** - $150,000

Nonrecurring Fund Recommendations

1. **School Safety** $5,000,000
2. Remaining nonrecurring funds to be determined by General Assembly

Summary of EIA Recommendations

Recurring Funds

Increase Funding*

Palmetto Teaching Fellows (increases the number of Teaching Fellows)	$640,000
(increases junior and senior year scholarships)	$1,756,000
State Aid to Classrooms (Teaching Salaries)	$80,892,384
Special Schools Teacher Salaries	$650,454
Teacher Career Ladder Pay	$1,400,000
Instructional Materials	$10,000,000
Instructional Support (Hub, LMS, SSO)	$8,205,249
Project Read	$250,000
SC Council on Economics	$150,000

**Note revisions in amounts for Teaching Fellows and State Aid to Classrooms from EOC recommendation. Original calculations were not accurate.*

Decrease Funding

National Board	($5,000,000)

Total Recurring **$98,944,087**

Nonrecurring

School Safety	$5,000,000

Unallocated Nonrecurring **$79,060,581**

Concerns/Issues for Future Recommendations

1. The EIA Subcommittee raised significant concerns about the effectiveness of the teacher recruitment and retention programs funded with EIA dollars. This year, roughly **$67.2 million** was appropriated for these initiatives, including **$18.7 million** specifically for teacher recruitment initiatives. Yet, based on program data, only **90 teachers in 2025** could be confirmed for programs other than the CERRA Teaching Fellows Program. In 2025, **177 Teaching Fellows** graduated from SC postsecondary institutions. The impact of the remaining $48.5 million of funds could not be quantified. The Subcommittee concluded that high administrative costs and unclear outcomes indicate a low return on investment and warrant further analysis.

Teacher Recruitment/Retention Programs	**EIA Dollars Appropriated FY 25-26**	**Certified Teachers/Graduates confirmed 2025**
SDE Teach SC	$727,650	
CHE Centers for Excellence	$1,100,000	31
SC State SC Minority Teacher Program	$339,482	6
Clemson Call Me Mister	$1,195,000	29
CERRA Teaching Fellows	$4,509,039	177
CERRA Rural Recruitment Initiative	$7,598,392	
USC CAP and TIP	$1,950,000	
USC Teacher Residency	$1,000,000	0
SC Tech Foundation Teach to Tech*	$1,500,000	
Teacher Strategic Compensation	$5,000,000	
Teach for America	$2,000,000	24
Teacher Loan	$5,089,881	
CERRA ProTeam, Teacher Cadet	$670,905	
National Board	$34,500,000	
Total EIA Dollars for Recruitment and Retention	**$67,180,349**	**267**

***new EIA-funded program**

2. The EIA Subcommittee has concerns regarding the EIA funding allocated for the SC Youth Challenge Program and program outcomes. The EOC staff, along with the Adjutant General's office, has plans to conduct a site visit to Youth Challenge in Eastover, SC in the spring 2026. A recommendation will be forthcoming in the summer 2026 from the EOC staff, in consultation with the Adjutant General's office, regarding future funding recommendations.

3. The EIA Subcommittee has concerns regarding the incentives allowed for pursuant to the Rural Teacher Recruitment Incentive (RRI) funds proviso. A clear return on investment on many of these incentives cannot be determined. As per proviso 1A.44, the EOC is required to conduct an evaluation of the impact of RRI funds. The evaluation report is due June 30, 2026. The EIA Subcommittee recommends a review of the evaluation report before making a recommendation on the continuation of funds.
4. The EIA Subcommittee would like to see an expansion of the current full day, 4K program in South Carolina. For the current school year 2025-2026, only one school district has opted not to participate in the full day, 4K program. Currently, $128.8 million in EIA and general fund revenues is appropriated for the full day 4K program with 84 percent of these funds coming from the EIA.
5. Leadership in schools was a concern expressed by the EIA Subcommittee. While many schools have strong principals, it is a desire for all schools to have opportunities and access to high quality leadership. Principal leadership is key to a school's academic success. The success is attained by establishing high academic expectations, creating a positive school climate, and by supporting teachers and setting clear expectations. Training, coaching and mentorships should be established to generate a high-quality pipeline of principals across South Carolina.

Appendix A

EIA Appropriations Fiscal Year 1984-85	
X. Education Improvement	
A. Raise Academic Standards:	
Aid to Subdivisions:	
Increase Credits for High School Diploma	$5,020,449
Five-Year-Old Kindergarten	$1,800,000
Advanced Placement (AP) courses	$669,000
Gifted and Talented Program	$3,700,000
Modernize Vocational Equipment	$7,000,000
Handicapped Student Services	$1,000,000
Subtotal:	***$19,189,449***
B. Basic Skills:	
Personal Service (New Positions)	$107,774
Operating Expenses	$224,952
Aid to Subdivisions:	
Basic Skill Test	$5,274
Four-Year Early Childhood	$2,400,000
Basic Skill Remediation	$60,500,000
Exit Exam Child	$5,000
Subtotal:	***$63,243,000***
C. Teaching Profession:	
Personal Service (New Positions)	$124,000
Other Operating Expenses	$2,220,400
Aid to Subdivisions:	
Teacher Salaries	$60,180,181
Employer Contributions	$9,287,321
Teacher Incentive Pay	$450,000
State Agency Teacher Pay	$603,000
Teacher Inservice Training	$1,250,000
Competitive Teacher Grants	$200,000
Mental Health Pupil Teacher	$595,000
Subtotal:	***$74,909,902***

D. Leadership Management & Efficiency	
Personal Service (New Positions)	$270,839
Other Operating Expenses	$379,171
Aid to Subdivisions:	
Principal Leadership	$74,290
Administrative Apprentice	$500,000
Salary Supplement Principals	$1,800,000
Subtotal:	***$3,024,300***
E. Quality Control & Production	
Personal Service (New Positions)	$205,000
Other Operating Expenses	
Aid to Subdivisions:	
Innovation Program Grant	$250,000
Subtotal:	***$455,000***
F. School Building Aid	
Aid to Subdivisions:	
Construction and Renovation	$55,738,136
Subtotal:	***$55,738,136***
G. School Intervention Program	
Personal Service (New Positions)	$137,747
Other Operating Expenses	$38,400
Classified Positions:	
Subtotal:	***$176,147***
H. EIA Implementation	
Personal Service (New Positions)	$396,870
Other Operating Expenses	$133,056
Subtotal:	***$529,926***
TOTAL:	**$217,265,860**

Appendix B.

New EIA Requests for 2026-27

Program Name	Amount
State Aid to Classrooms	$150,000,000
Special Schools Salaries	$650,454
Instructional Support (Hub, LMS, SSO)	$8,206,249
Summer Reading Camps	$30,000,000
Instructional Materials	$16,885,759
Pattison's Academy	$224,015
Palmetto Excel	$300,000
Literacy and Distance Learning	$250,000
SC Autism	$180,000
STEM SC	$250,000
SC Council on Economic Education	$150,000
SC Educational Partnerships (USC)	$160,000
CHE Centers for Excellence	$11,300
BabyNet Autism	$785,281
Regional Education Centers	$500,000
The Continuum	$1,000,000
Project Read	$500,000

Total Requests	**$210,053,058**

EOC Proviso Revision Requests FY 2026-27
(to be considered by EOC EIA Subcommittee, 12/1/2025)

Proviso REVISION Request

1.46. (SDE: Full-Day 4K) (D) Public and private providers shall be funded for instructional costs at a minimum rate of $5,100 per student enrolled. Eligible students enrolling during the school year or withdrawing during the school year shall be funded on a pro rata basis determined by the length of their enrollment. Private providers transporting eligible children to and from school shall also be eligible for reimbursement at a minimum of $620 per eligible child transported. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide an equitable distribution above the minimum between public and private providers. First Steps and the Department of Education must provide a quarterly report beginning October 1 detailing funding above the minimum made to any provider to the Governor, the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. All providers who are reimbursed are required to retain records as required by their fiscal agent. New providers participating for the first time in the current fiscal year and enrolling between one and six eligible children shall be eligible to receive at a minimum of $1,000 per child in materials and equipment funding, with providers enrolling seven or more such children eligible for funding at a minimum of $10,000. The Department of Education and the Office of First Steps Readiness are authorized to utilize carry forward funds and federal funds to supplement the amount expended for materials and equipment. Providers receiving equipment funding are expected to participate in the program and provide high-quality, center-based programs as defined herein for a minimum of three years. Failure to participate for three years will require the provider to return a portion of the equipment allocation at a level determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as requested by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps. The Department of Education shall only provide funding for public school students whose complete records have been entered into PowerSchool based on the one hundred and thirty-five day student average daily membership. For the current fiscal year, providers may enroll pay-lunch children who score at or below the twenty-fifth national percentile on two of the three DIAL-3 subscales by July 1 if at least seventy-five percent of the total number of children eligible or the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program in a district or county are projected to be enrolled in that program, Head Start, or ABC Child Care Program as determined by the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps, Child Early Reading Development and Education Program. Providers may receive

reimbursement for these children if funds are available. By September 1, the Department of Education and the Office of First Steps must collect the documented waiting lists, share the lists, and determine a process to notify parents of eligible students of available slots in all approved providers. The Department of Education is required to offer waivers allowing students with disabilities to be served in multi-categorical classroom settings based on similar cognition and abilities. Funding appropriated for CERDEP may be carried forward and expended for the same purpose. **School districts participating in the EOC wait list pilot are exempt from the September 1 requirement.**

Rationale for request: Most recently available data show that over 400 children in South Carolina spent time on a waitlist to access free, state-funded 4K. At the same time, there were over 2,300 available seats across the state. The process of collecting point-in-time data of eligible children waiting to access 4K is not efficient in matching children with available seats. It has previously been reported that pupils in poverty who access CERDEP-funded early childhood education are more likely to demonstrate readiness than their similarly-eligible counterparts. As a result, understanding how waitlists function across early childhood sectors to provide free 4K to eligible families is imperative in preparing our youngest learners for kindergarten. Understanding waitlists and the most efficient enrollment processes to match children with a 4K seat they are eligible for protects the investment South Carolina has made in early childhood education. During the spring and summer of 2025, the EOC worked with SCDE, SC First Steps, and two SC school districts to pilot a waitlist pilot that involved transfer of "real time" data and supported matching ensure that all eligible young children benefit from the state's investment in early childhood education. The pilot followed a collaborative convening of early childhood stakeholders hosted by the EOC. The work was time-intensive for all parties involved but was successful. The proposed change would provide relief from one requirement for participating districts.

Proviso REVISION Request

1A.44. (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 the statewide 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 participant's 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.~~

Rationale for request: The EOC will have completed the evaluation of ROI by the end of the fiscal year.

Proviso REVISION Request

1A.6. (SDE-EIA: CHE/Teacher Recruitment) **(A)** Of the funds appropriated in Part IA, Section 1, VIII.F. for the Teacher Recruitment Program, the Commission on Higher Education shall distribute a total of ninety-two percent to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA-South Carolina) for a state teacher recruitment program, of which at least seventy-eight percent must be used for the Teaching Fellows Program specifically to provide scholarships for future teachers, and of which twenty-two percent must be used for other aspects of the state teacher recruitment program, including the Teacher Cadet Program and $166,302 which must be used for specific programs to recruit minority teachers: and shall distribute eight percent to South Carolina State University to be used only for the operation of a minority teacher recruitment program and therefore shall not be used for the operation of their established general education programs. Working with districts with an absolute rating of At-Risk or Below Average, CERRA will provide shared initiatives to recruit and retain teachers to schools in these districts. CERRA will report annually by October first to the Education Oversight Committee and the Department of Education on the success of the recruitment and retention efforts in these schools. The Commission on Higher Education shall ensure that all funds are used to promote teacher recruitment on a statewide basis, shall ensure the continued coordination of efforts among the three teacher recruitment projects, shall review the use of funds and shall have prior program and budget approval. The South Carolina State University program, in consultation with the Commission on Higher Education, shall extend beyond the geographic area it currently serves. Annually, the Commission on Higher Education shall evaluate the effectiveness of each of the teacher recruitment projects and shall report its findings and its program and budget recommendations to the House and Senate Education Committees, the State Board of Education, and the Education Oversight Committee by October first annually, in a format agreed upon by the Education Oversight Committee and the Department of Education.

(B) With the funds appropriated CERRA shall also appoint and maintain the South Carolina Teacher Loan Advisory Committee **upon recommendations by the Education Oversight Committee**. The Committee shall be composed of one member representing each of the following: (1) Commission on Higher Education **who shall serve as chair of the Committee;** (2) State ~~Board~~ **Department** of Education; (3) Education Oversight Committee; (4) Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement; (5) South Carolina Student Loan Corporation; (6) South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators **(SCASFAA)**; (7) a local school district human resources officer; (8) a public higher education institution with an approved teacher education program; and (9) a private higher education institution with an approved teacher education program. The members of

the committee representing **SCASFAA, a local school district, and** the public and private higher education institutions ~~shall rotate among those intuitions and~~ shall serve a **single** two-year term on the committee. The committee must be staffed by CERRA, and shall meet at least ~~twice~~ **four times** annually. The committee's responsibilities are limited to **its duties for**: (1) establishing, **monitoring, and reporting progress on** goals for the Teacher Loan Program; (2) facilitating communication among the cooperating ~~agencies~~ **entities**; (3) **actively** advocating for program participants; ~~and~~ (4) **using the most recent program evaluation reports as a guide,** recommending policies and procedures necessary to promote, **and publicize** ~~maintain~~ the program **as well as developing specific recommendations for changes necessary to statute, regulation, and or proviso necessary to modernize and streamline the program, enhance its alignment and parity with other teacher recruitment initiatives, and (5) annually by February first and August first, submitting a summary of meetings held during that period and actions taken to conform with each stated duty to the Commission on Higher Education, and to the Education Oversight Committee for inclusion in the annual program evaluation.**

(C) In conformance with the 2025 Teacher Loan Program (TLP) Report Finding and Recommendations, the Student Loan Corporation shall:

(1) Review and revise TLP program applications and submit a plan to the Commission on Higher Education for implementing an online application process;

(2) Add a question on the TLP application which will designate applicant as a Teaching Fellow recipient;

(3) Provide audited financial statements for the TLP, which shall include the Revolving Loan Fund and sources of all charitable dollars to outside entities as well as the funding source that seeded the philanthropic arm of the Student Loan Corporation.

Rationale for request: These revisions are reflective of recommendations adopted by the EOC in June 2025 in the 2025 Teacher Loan Report.

Proviso REVISION Request

1A.72. (SDE-EIA: Teacher Loan Program) Of the available funds in the Teacher Loan Program revolving account administered by the SC Student Loan Corporation, **up to fifty percent of the interest earned, investment earnings, and late fees in the program revolving account,** ~~up to $5,000,000~~ shall be made available **through a program administered by the Student Loan Corporation** to assist in refinancing student loan debt for all certified teachers employed in the public schools of the State. An additional $5,000,000 from the revolving loan account will be made available to teachers **in rural school districts** for loan forgiveness patterned after the SC Teacher Loan **Program** ~~in the following school districts based on the number of teacher vacancies and/or the number of teachers of record uncertified in the subject area in which they are teaching: Bamberg, Allendale, Calhoun, Jasper, Lee, and McCormick school districts that show a vacancy rate of ten percent or greater based on the 2024-25 Teacher Supply and Demand Report~~. **The Department of Education will identify the rural school districts for inclusion in loan forgiveness using data that documents the difficulty of the districts in recruiting and retaining certified teachers.**

The Student Loan Corporation must have both programs operational by the end of the fiscal year.

Rationale for request: These revisions are reflective of the recommendations adopted by the EOC in June 2025 in the 2025 Teacher Loan Report. Additionally, staff recommends that SC Dept. of Education determine the criteria by which teachers in rural school districts will be given priority.

Appendix E

Findings and Recommendations from Teacher Loan Evaluation, published October 2025

2023-24 Findings and Recommendations

The 50+ detailed recommendations presented in last year's TLP Report for FY 2022-23 recapped previously included a broad array of technical and strategic suggestions directed at enhancing or modernizing the TLP Program, and a few others closely associated with the teacher pipeline, such as Teacher Cadets and Teaching Fellows. Some of the recommendations would have entailed a collaborative effort involving multiple entities to evaluate, determine the efficacy and value of moving forward with the most impactful ones, then to prioritize and develop actionable steps for implementation. In approving the 2024 TLP report, the EOC provided a directive to the TLAC to provide recommendations on addressing the findings from the report.

In response to 2024 TLP Report Recommendations, the Teacher Loan Advisory Committee (TLAC) has met twice as a whole since its publication, and developed three new program goals with action steps for each, as described in Appendix C-2:

1. Streamline the SC Teacher Loan application process.
2. Develop and promote a Marketing toolkit.
3. Retain educators.

As a starting point for addressing these goals, SLC has begun exploring online application options, and a Proviso for the action step to "Establish a one-time refinance opportunity through the SC Student Loan Corporation" which was included in the 2025-26 Appropriation Bill. CERRA is charged with appointing and maintaining the TLAC but has experienced leadership turnover since the last report, which has likely hampered progress on these goals.

Overall Findings 2023-2024:

- TLP governance, funding, operations, and contribution to the teacher pipeline continue to remain essentially the same as described in the last two TLP Reports.
- Though the number of critical need areas for teaching for loan forgiveness has expanded significantly and the loan cap has increased, the number of TLP Type 1 loan applicants and recipients is trending to a steady decline; both were at their lowest respective levels since at least 2010-11.
- Further evidence that TLP may be underutilized: Slightly less than 8% of Fall 2024 Bachelor's and Master's level education program enrollees received TLP loans; by comparison, 43% of undergraduates in education programs received HOPE, LIFE, or Palmetto Fellows Scholarships. Also, there were no recipients from any of the technical colleges.
- Over time, TLP's "identity," desirability, and advantages appear to have been impacted by other successful financial aid options and programs that have evolved. It is positioned against other programs which may offer more flexibility and/or do not carry interest, and therefore may be more appealing, i.e., Teaching Fellows, HOPE, LIFE, Palmetto Fellows, and more recently, the LIFE/Palmetto Fellows Enhancement.
- Historically, approximately half of Type 1 applicants self-identified as Teacher Cadets. Teacher Cadets have been in decline; CERRA's 2023-24 Annual Report noted 167 Teacher Cadet sites, the lowest since FY 2020.
- The number of Type 1 borrowers presently teaching and having loans cancelled in the last eight years has ranged from 932 (2022) to 1,173 (2017) and has increased slightly to 1,093 over the last few years.
- There is continued concern about public awareness and perception of the TLP as a forgivable loan. Three websites of large IHEs did not show the current Type 1 loan amount for juniors, seniors, and 5th year; one had an incorrect SAT/ACT score requirement; two had no TLP information at all. Inconsistent communication about the Teacher Loan Program could result in those who are aware of TLP considering it to be much more of a loan than as a potential scholarship.

Options for Subcommittee Consideration:

1. Continue the program "as is," and direct/authorize the TLAC to address specific, strategic actionable recommendations needed to reposition TLP as a more viable financial aid program that fills a teacher pipeline need not being met – which could include:
    - Continue current governance, features, and funding, with CERRA as the sole convener of the TLAC (the only entity responsible for "recommending policies and procedures necessary to promote and maintain the program.")
    - Rebranding it as a loan-to-scholarship (e.g., for Teaching Fellows applicants who were not selected).
    - Developing strategic, measurable, targeted program goals (including for EPPs) that are reflective of the current educator pipeline environment unique to districts.
    - Revise the current model and definitions used for determining critical subject and geographic areas to conform with any program modifications adopted.
2. Streamline the application process, transitioning to an existing platform such as Kaleidoscope (used by CERRA for Teaching Fellows), or Element 451, a digital platform currently used by CHE for HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows, including the new Enhancements).

3. Continue the program with modified governance: Amend program governance to revise, clarify, and strengthen the role, responsibilities, leadership, and composition of the Teacher Loan Advisory Committee &/or the Student Loan Corporation.

4. Transition to a state entity with the full governing authority and resources necessary to identify and address strategic changes needed for all program functions, to include reinventing/redesigning the program as a key component of a South Carolina Education Pathway model, and market it accordingly.

Governance Findings 2023-24:

- The SC Student Loan Corporation's (SLC) "administer only role," while subject to interpretation, inhibits the Corporation's ability to intentionally or exclusively market and modernize the 40-year-old Teacher Loan Program and may create confusion regarding expectations of the SLC in its role as such. The SLC's "administer only" role was entrenched to an even greater degree when "physical custody of TLP assets was transferred from the Corporation to an account held at the State Treasury" during fiscal year 2022, according to a Finding in its 2024 financial statement. Further, as also stated in its 2024 financial statement, the SLC is "…not an agency, instrumentality, or department of, or otherwise affiliated with the State of South Carolina ("the State").

Options regarding Governance for Subcommittee Consideration:

1. Do one or more of the following via statute or proviso:
   - Designate a single state entity (such as SDE, CERRA, or the CHE) as the governing authority for the entire TLP program; clarify authority, role, parameters, duties, etc. of the governing entity.
   - Amend TLAC Proviso 1A.6, reconstituting TLAC appointments, leadership, authority, and committee expectations – to include directing the Committee to submit a proposal for strategic, measurable program goals to the EOC for review and approval by a date certain.
   - Designate a strategic committee to perform a comprehensive review of existing statute, provisos, and regulations and document proposed corrections, updates, and clarifications to the EOC for review and approval by a date certain.

Funding/Fiscal Findings 2023-24:

- Note 2 of SLC's audited financial statement for fiscal year ended June 30, 2024, states that "During the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2024, the Student Loan Corporation decided to remove the program from its Consolidated Statement of Financial Position to better comply with US GAAP reporting," which resulted in:
  - An Audit Finding on SLC's June 30, 2024 financial statement may be found in Appendix E. The link to SLC Financial Statements may be found on SLC's home page.
  - Beginning with FYE June 30, 2024, reduced transparency for the Revolving Loan Fund Balance- a key indicator of TLP viability and historically included in SLC's annual financial audit – since it is no longer included in the SLC financial statement and a separate FYE 2024 audit for TLP was not found on SLC's website. The RLF balance was requested and received from the SLC and has been added to Table 1.
  - The SLC subsequently submitted a request to the CHE for an additional $16,190 in its FY 2025-26 budget to cover the expense of a separate (from SLC) audit for the TLP.
- In addition to Loan Payments ($1,970,355), the June 30, 2024 Revolving Loan Fund Balance includes Investment Income ($553,034) and Change in Unrealized Gain/(Loss) ($429,535). Loan Payments (repayments from borrowers) were $161,000 less than for the previous year.
- FY 2025-26 Proviso 1A.76 directs up to $10 million of funds from the Revolving Loan Fund be made available for two teacher loan forgiveness options.
- No new appropriations have been requested for the program since 2012-2013.

Funding/Fiscal Options for Subcommittee Consideration:

- Place TLP under an entity where it is appropriate to be included in the financial statement of a state entity.
- Explore viability of restoring inclusion of TLP to the SLC Consolidated Statement of Financial Position (for continuity and transparency).

- Request SLC to provide externally audited TLP and RLP fund balances for 2023, 2024, and 2025.
- Within the aforementioned strategic committee, require a proposal aligned with Teacher Pipeline Findings and Recommendations for long-term strategic use of RLF or other funds directed at initiatives for recruiting high school students into the teaching profession. Information for related initiatives in other states may be found in ECS's current 50-State Comparison: (https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-2025-03)

Loan Forgiveness Findings 2023-24:

- Criteria being used for designating Critical Needs Subject Areas (CNSA), based upon a formula to identify teacher shortage areas, has evolved over time such that today all teaching and instructional service fields and 60% of all SC public schools meet the criteria. The program started with math and science as the only two critical subject areas. This expansion makes more borrowers eligible for accelerated forgiveness, accelerating their potential exit from the classroom without further incentives.
- For the beginning of the 2024-25 school year, the number of vacancies decreased in all but 5 of the 32 Teaching Fields and Service Positions, with significant decreases in Early Childhood, ELA, Math, Science, and Special Education: if this trend continues, the number of areas designated as critical need may decrease going forward.
- The process involved for SLC to track and monitor borrowers entering the loan forgiveness stage of TLP is as follows: SLC receives college enrollment verification from the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), which places the borrower into a grace period after graduation. SLC then requests that the borrower have the district office where they are to be teaching to complete the initial deferment from verifying employment in the coming year. Once completed, a deferment is added to the account during the year of teaching. After that year, SLC receives a new confirmation that the teacher completed the year of service, including the number of hours taught, school district, subject taught, etc., then confirms that the borrower is eligible for (a year of) forgiveness, writes off the forgivable amount; this process is then completed each year until the balance is $0.

Loan Forgiveness Options for Subcommittee Consideration:

- Re-evaluate the current model and definitions used for determining critical subject and geographic areas used for loan forgiveness, considering parity with Teaching Fellows and LIFE/Palmetto Fellows Enhancements and the impact of changing the policy on current and past TLP recipients.
- Incentivize retention by accelerating the loan forgiveness rate (e.g., 10/10/20/20/40% vs. 20%/year).

Loan Application and Eligibility Findings 2023-24:

- There are other state-funded programs with a service obligation that are also targeted at providing financial assistance (via forgivable loans) to talented and/or outstanding, qualified state residents desiring to teach in South Carolina public schools. Though similar, terms, conditions, and loan provisions (interest rate, late fees, repayment requirements, etc.) on the respective promissory notes vary, and may at best be confusing to all but the most financial-savvy students – and possibly misleading -- especially those who qualify for multiple programs and may need to make decisions about which loan-associated program best meets their needs.
- TLP applications are paper-based, labor-intensive, and must go through several hands.
- Enrolled/continuing TLP borrowers must fill out the same application as first-time applicants.
- Of the 16 South Carolina-approved Alternative Route Programs, only PACE program participants are eligible for Type 3 (Alternative Route) TLP loans. For 2024-25, more than 10% (775) of the 7,381 hires new to the profession from SC-approved alternative certification programs, so this is a significant source of new hires for districts.

Loan Application and Eligibility Options for Subcommittee Consideration:

- Review and compare TLP, Teaching Fellows, and LIFE/Palmetto Fellows promissory notes, identify best practices for common components of terms and conditions, and update forms accordingly.
- Remove statement from the Type 1/Type 2 application emphasizing "Due to limited state funding, meeting all criteria and deadlines does not ensure your receipt of a SC Teachers/ Career Changers Loan", and from the Type 3 application

"IMPORTANT: STATE FUNDING IS LIMITED SO PLEASE APPLY EARLY", since loan demand does not currently exceed available funds.

- Develop and implement a streamlined and online TLP application process, with a one-stop portal for EPP candidate to seek financial aid. Explore viability of using existing vendors used by other SC entities for online scholarship management platforms (or the Common Application platform), such as:
  - CERRA/Teaching Fellows- Kaleidoscope https://www.mykaleidoscope.com/
  - CHE/Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, HOPE- Element 451 https://element451.com/product/applications
  - Incorporate TLP applications into the Teaching Fellows application process (e.g., if realign/reposition/reinvent TLP as a companion program).
  - The Common Application platform: https://www.commonapp.org/ Common Application is a platform that helps streamline an essential part of the admissions process for students by making it possible for first-time and transfer applicants to apply to multiple colleges at once – so they only must fill out details that most schools require once – such as name, address, and extracurricular activities. Applications from this platform are accepted by more than 1,100 schools, including 20 colleges and universities in South Carolina. As suggested by the TLAC, Since Common Application does not include all of the fields needed to qualify for TLP, the TLAC has said it may be appropriate to consider allowing institutions of higher education to certify TLP applicants before sending them to the SLC for processing.
- Amend SC Code 59-26-30(A)(8) regarding loans for Career Changers to expand eligibility to other alternative teacher certification programs besides just PACE, pursuant to parameters agreeable with SDE.
- Amend regulations, application/promissory note, website information, guidelines, and any other forms to conform to any changes.

TLAC Program Goal Findings 2023-24:

- TLAC goals are narrowly drawn, difficult to assess with integrity, and not currently used to drive improvement.
- Disparate data is collected for loan-for-forgiveness programs available to teachers (TLP, Teaching Fellows, LIFE/Palmetto Fellows Enhancement), making it difficult to assess progress on any new measurable goals that might be implemented and whether the needs of EPP students are being met.

TLAC Program Goal Options for Subcommittee Consideration:

- Request a proviso directing TLAC to develop new goals in conforming with recommendations from the EOC.
- With input and support from CHE, develop a common road map for EPPs to follow in retention of EPP enrollees, leveraging available financial aid to graduate with minimal debt.
- Identify a common set of data (with specifically-defined definitions) to be collected for TLP, Teaching Fellows, and LIFE/ Palmetto Fellows and used for measuring new TLP goals, and as input for the TLP Report – to include all phases of the teacher pipeline

Value of the TLP on Teacher Pipeline 2023-24:

- Over the life of the program, 7,701 (34%) of Type 1 borrowers have had their loan cancelled 100% by fulfilling the teaching requirement (Table 7-A), and during school years 2016-17 through 2023-24, the number of Type 1 borrowers teaching for forgiveness per year ranged from 932 to 1,173- evidence that the program does contribute directly to the teacher pipeline. However, it would be beneficial if more data associated with teacher retention after TLP loans are satisfied could be collected and reported. (For example, CERRA reports that 1,181 of loan-satisfied Teaching Fellows are still employed in SC public schools and districts).
- The original intent of the program was strategic and intentional when developed 40 years ago; it has not been adjusted and positioned to accommodate evolving conditions, as reflected in the general decline in the number of applications.
- South Carolina's population has grown and changed: We saw a 36.6% population growth between 2000 and 2024. According to RFA's website, as of July 1, 2023 South Carolina was the 23rd most populous state with an estimated 5,373,555 residents. This was 90,600 more people than the 2022 population of 5,282,955, making South Carolina the fastest growing state by percent change, and the 5th fastest by numeric change.
- CHE's latest statistical abstract shows that 76% of undergraduates in SC IHE's are in-state students, so those in the 24% from out-of-state who wish to teach are not eligible for TLP. Disaggregated data for in-state vs. out-of-state EPP enrollees has been requested from

CHE to determine if there is a correlation between the declining trend in the number of TLP applicants/recipients and the number of in-state EPP enrollees.

- Numerous alternative teacher certification programs have been implemented to help support the teacher pipeline; for 2024-25, a significant number (775, or 10.5%) of new hires to the profession were from an SC-Approved Alternative Certification Program. PACE, however, remains the only such program eligible for Type 3 TLP loans. Establishing a five-year pilot program to permit qualifying schools to hire noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to ten percent of its entire teaching staff, the result of implementing Act 30 of 2025, may drive the expectation to rethink the PACE limitation.
- Similar efforts and programs subsequently developed may have the unintentional effect of supplanting TLP's intent (Teaching Fellows, Call Me Mister, Bridge Programs, HOPE, LIFE, Palmetto Fellows, and the recently added LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Enhancement, etc.)
- TLP is not widely marketed, and is not always readily accessible or included in all EPP IHE web sites, and anecdotal evidence suggest it is not as well-known as LIFE, HOPE, Palmetto Fellows, Teaching Fellows, Call Me Mister, etc.
- The number of Teacher Cadet sites and of students served by the program have not rebounded since COVID, which has likely had an adverse effect on TLP application data. Teacher Cadets historically comprise about half of TLP applicants, but their number declined this year and has not rebounded since COVID. (See Table 11).
- Barriers to program sustainability include:
  - Indistinct program positioning and differentiation with the other loan-for-forgiveness programs.
  - TLP is the only loan-for-forgiveness option that has content and/or geographic area teaching requirements and carries interest if in repayment.
  - Absence of widespread program marketing and conflicting, missing or not readily accessible, incorrect website information across the spectrum (of associated entities and IHEs).
  - Absence of ready availability of all reliable data for tracking, monitoring, targeted marketing, etc.
  - Program name implies negative perception of a "loan"
  - Paper-based, labor-intensive application in a digital world.

Teacher Pipeline Options for Subcommittee Consideration:

- Revisit 2022-23 TLP report recommendations to:
  - Develop a cohesive, statewide, and district-level teacher recruitment strategy with specific goals and expectations for each component of the teacher pipeline.
  - Increase focus on early teacher pipeline initiatives (ProTeam, Teacher Cadets, Bridge programs, Call Me Mister, etc.)
  - Rethink/reorganize Teacher Recruitment initiatives to clarify intent, identify and establish best practices and effective pipelines, establish common metrics and reporting requirements to be used for measurable results.
- Establish a collaborative effort with SCDE, CHE, and CERRA to establish a process and expectations for elevating Teacher Cadets at the high school/career center, district, and state level.
- Compare FAFSA, Teaching Fellows, HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows (including recent associated Enhancement) applications, processes, and timelines to that of TLP; identify and implement best practices for TLP.
- Increase focus on all Alternative Certification programs: SDE to establish parameters and criteria patterned after PACE for other programs to quality for TLP besides just PACE. (The number of PACE Type 3 recipients increased 19% from 2022-23).
  - Prioritize the Education Career cluster. Considerations for leveraging RLF or other funds to do so could include:
  - Enhance the existing state-recognized CTE program for Education (currently a career cluster with Training) managed end-to-end at SCDE, with a dedicated, experienced staff person dedicated solely to managing statewide implementation. Since 2018, 19 high school students

have achieved Completer status in this program AND passed Praxis Core. Consider the use of performance-based assessments that enhance the value of the program (as Pennsylvania currently does).

- Using the SDE Agriculture model (see Proviso 1A.25), develop an education pathway model that includes credits aligned with ensuring early success in public and private EPPs, such as having passed the Praxis Core. As an incentive to students, the loan cap could increase from $2,500 to $5,000 for freshman and sophomore TLP applicants who have passed Praxis Core (and raise their overall cap accordingly to $32,500).
- Establish and implement a registered teacher apprenticeship model that supports an education pathway.
- Offer competitive grants for Grow-Your-Own programs for high school students, which at least 10 states are doing, and/or paraprofessionals as Texas does.

Appendix F

CHE Tables: In-state and Out-of-state enrollments over time for SC Teacher Preparation Programs

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Fall Enrollment in Bachelor's Level Education Programs[1]
In-State Student Headcounts

Institution	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% Change 2016 to 2025
Research Institutions											
Clemson University	441	474	508	515	587	613	622	628	639	710	61.0%
U.S.C. - Columbia	900	791	752	752	700	678	692	703	761	823	-8.6%
Research Subtotal	**1,341**	**1,265**	**1,260**	**1,267**	**1,287**	**1,291**	**1,314**	**1,331**	**1,400**	**1,533**	**14.3%**
Comprehensive Teaching Institutions											
The Citadel	34	32	28	23	25	24	24	23	18	18	-47.1%
Coastal Carolina University	419	420	398	387	384	363	300	282	294	336	-19.8%
College of Charleston	399	428	417	379	372	365	340	290	297	331	-17.0%
Francis Marion University	315	299	311	311	333	253	254	202	188	158	-49.8%
Lander University	413	412	436	402	404	402	332	355	384	445	7.7%
South Carolina State University	419	421	410	346	336	360	361	338	336	290	-30.8%
U. S. C. - Aiken	327	329	329	322	315	274	238	236	225	229	-30.0%
U. S. C. - Beaufort	112	122	114	112	104	84	87	73	81	73	-34.8%
U. S. C. - Upstate	632	630	634	581	506	452	430	376	372	387	-38.8%
Winthrop University	966	952	874	743	736	632	547	521	469	470	-51.3%
Comprehensive Subtotal	**4,036**	**4,045**	**3,951**	**3,606**	**3,515**	**3,209**	**2,913**	**2,696**	**2,664**	**2,737**	**-32.2%**
Public Subtotal	**5,377**	**5,310**	**5,211**	**4,873**	**4,802**	**4,500**	**4,227**	**4,027**	**4,064**	**4,270**	**-20.6%**
Senior Independent Institutions											
Allen University									11		*NA*
Anderson University	445	482	452	441	435	390	361	360	335	382	-14.2%
Benedict College	54	59	97	51	38	34	35	23	22	27	-50.0%
Bob Jones University	98	115	99	129	121	123	112	94	104	63	-35.7%
Charleston Southern University	546	538	539	682	689	481	232	209	204	210	-61.5%
Claflin University	170	158	165	166	180	154	137	117	115	109	-35.9%
Coker University	85	82	77	84	58	49	40	30	32	46	-45.9%
Columbia College	187	197	196	177	174	212	244	266	273	335	79.1%
Columbia International University	34	34	36	40	38	38	39	31	38	27	-20.6%
Converse University	96	126	130	111	99	104	75	88	73	98	2.1%
Erskine College	72	20	14	34	72	74	49	59	60	71	-1.4%
Furman University	23	19	13	14	27	17	15	13	18	18	-21.7%
Limestone University[2]	130	111	92	75	75	75	86	54	60		*NA*
Morris College	70	65	54	43	32	24	24	27	25	27	-61.4%
Newberry College	143	120	122	115	100	86	64	95	118	130	-9.1%
North Greenville University	280	295	307	296	300	287	314	304	303	315	12.5%
Presbyterian College	26	20	20	22	22	24	22	17	15	22	-15.4%
Southern Wesleyan University	123	185	125	116	97	101	109	128	137	134	8.9%
Voorhees University					49	57		86	69	78	*NA*
Wofford College	6	6	7	5		1					-100.0%
Sr Independent Subtotal	**2,588**	**2,632**	**2,545**	**2,601**	**2,606**	**2,331**	**1,958**	**2,001**	**2,012**	**2,092**	**-19.2%**
Grand Total	**7,965**	**7,942**	**7,756**	**7,474**	**7,408**	**6,831**	**6,185**	**6,028**	**6,076**	**6,362**	**-20.1%**

[1] *Education Programs include students enrolled in all programs within the 13.xxxx CIP code family as well as students enrolled in non-education programs with an education option leading to initial certification/licensure.*

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Fall Enrollment in Bachelor's Level Education Programs[1]
Out-of-State Student Headcounts

Institution	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% Change 2016 to 2025
Research Institutions											
Clemson University	138	128	125	145	178	246	286	301	306	283	105.1%
U.S.C. - Columbia	210	211	196	174	165	156	169	196	227	252	20.0%
Research Subtotal	**348**	**339**	**321**	**319**	**343**	**402**	**455**	**497**	**533**	**535**	**53.7%**
Comprehensive Teaching Institutions											
The Citadel	11	13	9	10	13	17	16	16	15	16	45.5%
Coastal Carolina University	290	338	300	285	287	303	328	366	427	437	50.7%
College of Charleston	104	105	103	108	130	151	161	181	220	242	132.7%
Francis Marion University	5	4	9	11	9	7	6	5	8	12	140.0%
Lander University	16	11	16	20	19	21	18	15	20	17	6.3%
South Carolina State University	50	46	37	23	23	19	29	57	52	65	30.0%
U. S. C. - Aiken	26	15	24	27	29	22	16	9	9	13	-50.0%
U. S. C. - Beaufort	10	15	13	15	12	10	11	18	20	12	20.0%
U. S. C. - Upstate	14	21	23	21	19	17	8	6	11	18	28.6%
Winthrop University	34	39	35	34	31	29	32	34	37	31	-8.8%
Comprehensive Subtotal	**560**	**607**	**569**	**554**	**572**	**596**	**625**	**707**	**819**	**863**	**54.1%**
Public Subtotal	**908**	**946**	**890**	**873**	**915**	**998**	**1,080**	**1,204**	**1,352**	**1,398**	**54.0%**
Senior Independent Institutions											
Allen University									12		*NA*
Anderson University	69	69	60	70	62	55	59	57	52	47	-31.9%
Benedict College	26	23	38	35	28	30	24	15	18	12	-53.8%
Bob Jones University	253	266	234	280	269	269	263	216	199	126	-50.2%
Charleston Southern University	64	60	62	86	83	54	27	27	37	42	-34.4%
Claflin University	20	18	20	20	24	23	25	16	17	13	-35.0%
Coker University	12	8	2	5	4	2	2	6	6	8	-33.3%
Columbia College	9	9	11	8	7	5	5	8	5	5	-44.4%
Columbia International University	14	14	21	22	19	18	19	20	19	18	28.6%
Converse University	16	11	14	13	13	13	10	7	19	13	-18.8%
Erskine College	28	12	5	10	25	22	14	19	13	15	-46.4%
Furman University	46	26	21	25	23	32	27	21	19	19	-58.7%
Limestone University[2]	48	46	46	37	37	42	51	17	24		*NA*
Morris College	11	11	7	3	4	3	2	3	3	4	-63.6%
Newberry College	23	26	30	23	19	22	16	22	20	23	0.0%
North Greenville University	76	85	56	55	56	40	41	38	41	32	-57.9%
Presbyterian College	8	7	6	6	3	7	6	4	4	5	-37.5%
Southern Wesleyan University	22	29	20	15	12	14	16	19	17	13	-40.9%
Voorhees University					85	47		47	58	79	*NA*
Wofford College	3	4	1								-100.0%
	748	**724**	**654**	**713**	**773**	**698**	**607**	**562**	**583**	**474**	**-36.6%**
	1,656	**1,670**	**1,544**	**1,586**	**1,688**	**1,696**	**1,687**	**1,766**	**1,935**	**1,872**	**13.0%**

[1] *Education Programs include students enrolled in all programs within the 13.xxxx CIP code family as well as students enrolled in non-education programs with an education option leading to initial certification/licensure.*

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Fall Enrollment in Masters Level Education Programs[1]
In-State Student Headcounts

Institution	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% Change 2016 to 2025
Research Institutions											
Clemson University	189	254	318	351	340	367	371	419	388	298	57.7%
U.S.C. - Columbia	620	474	349	395	445	490	401	393	375	349	-43.7%
Research Subtotal	**809**	**728**	**667**	**746**	**785**	**857**	**772**	**812**	**763**	**647**	**-20.0%**
Comprehensive Teaching Institutions											
The Citadel	233	229	195	160	157	200	202	215	197	189	-18.9%
Coastal Carolina University	316	294	239	209	196	173	133	107	117	115	-63.6%
College of Charleston	107	80	69	54	48	78	72	50	42	47	-56.1%
Francis Marion University	70	76	111	102	107	85	80	74	71	59	-15.7%
Lander University	26	24	21	35	38	56	223	306	246	174	569.2%
South Carolina State University	99	107	95	66	78	51	45	36	38	45	-54.5%
U. S. C. - Aiken	4	1	9	16	18	11	13	10	10	13	225.0%
U. S. C. - Beaufort						12	12	5	1		*NA*
U. S. C. - Upstate	22	23	16	308	381	317	304	291	225	251	1040.9%
Winthrop University	197	163	163	170	187	197	162	143	141	177	-10.2%
Comprehensive Subtotal	**1,074**	**997**	**918**	**1,120**	**1,210**	**1,180**	**1,246**	**1,237**	**1,088**	**1,070**	**-0.4%**
Public Subtotal	**1,883**	**1,725**	**1,585**	**1,866**	**1,995**	**2,037**	**2,018**	**2,049**	**1,851**	**1,717**	**-8.8%**
Senior Independent Institutions											
Anderson University	123	131	139	171	174	169	182	146	79	54	-56.1%
Bob Jones University	11	5	12	10	8	13	13	11	13	17	54.5%
Charleston Southern University	55	39	72	47	33	33	29	27	26	23	-58.2%
Claflin University	27	23	17	14	13	8	8	8	9	3	-88.9%
Coker University	18	35	46	28	36	34	28	13	9	9	-50.0%
Columbia College	59	54	51	69	124	147	140	136	142	137	132.2%
Columbia International University	24	24	23	29	23	31	21	18	20	26	8.3%
Converse University	160	161	189	148	127	95	65	67	67	86	-46.3%
Furman University	119	80	82	65		65	62	41	33	31	-73.9%
Limestone University[2]								13	9		*NA*
Newberry College										9	*NA*
North Greenville University	32	28	38	26	31	16	20	23	18	22	-31.3%
Southern Wesleyan University	167	105	88	93	77	47	26	20	11	8	-95.2%
Voorhees University							33	37	59	25	*NA*
Sr Independent Subtotal	**795**	**685**	**757**	**700**	**646**	**658**	**627**	**560**	**495**	**450**	**-43.4%**
Grand Total	**2,678**	**2,410**	**2,342**	**2,566**	**2,641**	**2,695**	**2,645**	**2,609**	**2,346**	**2,167**	**-19.1%**

[1] *Education Programs include students enrolled in all programs within the 13.xxxx CIP code family as well as students enrolled in non-education programs with an education option leading to initial certification/licensure.*

[2] *Institution closed after spring semester 2025.*

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Fall Enrollment in Masters Level Education Programs[1]
Out-of-State Student Headcounts

Institution	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% Change 2016 to 2025
Research Institutions											
Clemson University	106	134	183	271	314	275	205	200	186	153	44.3%
U.S.C. - Columbia	119	95	80	87	98	119	106	98	102	95	-20.2%
Research Subtotal	**225**	**229**	**263**	**358**	**412**	**394**	**311**	**298**	**288**	**248**	**10.2%**
Comprehensive Teaching Institutions											
The Citadel	14	17	16	9	13	14	17	7	11	17	21.4%
Coastal Carolina University	50	49	59	46	43	37	35	24	16	19	-62.0%
College of Charleston	17	8	9	9	10	15	16	13	8	15	-11.8%
Francis Marion University	5	1	2	8	4	29	28	12	6	5	0.0%
Lander University	3	3	5	4	3	9	6	11	12	8	166.7%
South Carolina State University	1	4	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	200.0%
U. S. C. - Aiken				2		2	2	1			*NA*
U. S. C. - Beaufort											*NA*
U. S. C. - Upstate	1	2	3	10	14	11	5	6	5	6	500.0%
Winthrop University	76	55	47	49	41	46	40	22	29	33	-56.6%
Comprehensive Subtotal	**167**	**139**	**145**	**138**	**129**	**164**	**150**	**98**	**88**	**106**	**-36.5%**
Public Subtotal	**392**	**368**	**408**	**496**	**541**	**558**	**461**	**396**	**376**	**354**	**-9.7%**
Senior Independent Institutions											
Anderson University	58	72	59	51	54	47	46	25	5	7	-87.9%
Bob Jones University	45	52	63	45	62	81	79	77	84	97	115.6%
Charleston Southern University	3	2	15	3	3	2	4	6	5	5	66.7%
Claflin University	1	2		1		1		2	1	1	0.0%
Coker University			2	1			6	5	1	1	*NA*
Columbia College	7	3	1	1	28	91	92	89	85	60	757.1%
Columbia International University	45	45	33	160	279	322	230	198	198	197	337.8%
Converse University	8	9	12	9	9	6	5	3	6	21	162.5%
Furman University	10	16	11	10		3	2	7	5	5	-50.0%
Limestone University[2]									1		*NA*
Newberry College								1		2	*NA*
North Greenville University	8	5	6	1	4	7	9	9	3	2	-75.0%
Southern Wesleyan University	5	7	8	4	8	3	2	1	1		-100.0%
Voorhees University							1	18	62	31	*NA*
Sr Independent Subtotal	**190**	**213**	**210**	**286**	**447**	**563**	**476**	**441**	**457**	**429**	**125.8%**
Grand Total	**582**	**581**	**618**	**782**	**988**	**1,121**	**937**	**837**	**833**	**783**	**34.5%**

[1] *Education Programs include students enrolled in all programs within the 13.xxxx CIP code family as well as students enrolled in non-education programs with an education option leading to initial certification/licensure.*

[2] *Institution closed after spring semester 2025.*

South Carolina Commission on Higher Education
Comparison of Scholarship Recipients and Education Programs[1]
By Geographic Origin and Education Major

Scholarship		Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Palmetto Fellows											
Total Recipients	In-State	7,440	8,068	8,657	9,057	9,229	9,085	8,710	8,645	8,427	9,169
	Out-of-State	67	97	84	70	78	65	59	69	57	34
Education Program Recipients	In-State	450	476	535	534	548	494	410	380	326	380
	Out-of-State	2	2	1	2	4	3	0	0	1	0
	Palmetto Total	**7,507**	**8,165**	**8,741**	**9,127**	**9,307**	**9,150**	**8,769**	**8,714**	**8,484**	**9,203**
	Precent Education Majors	**6.0%**	**5.9%**	**6.1%**	**5.9%**	**5.9%**	**5.4%**	**4.7%**	**4.4%**	**3.9%**	**4.1%**
LIFE Recipients											
Total Recipients	In-State	37,843	39,672	41,120	41,019	41,837	39,857	37,998	38,910	40,047	43,344
	Out-of-State	425	594	575	581	542	441	315	312	368	314
Education Program Recipients	In-State	3,442	3,447	3,429	3,391	3,484	3,117	2,772	2,666	2,610	2,996
	Out-of-State	20	26	21	30	40	24	10	9	14	11
	LIFE Total	**38,268**	**40,266**	**41,695**	**41,600**	**42,379**	**40,298**	**38,313**	**39,222**	**40,415**	**43,658**
	Precent Education Majors	**9.0%**	**8.6%**	**8.3%**	**8.2%**	**8.3%**	**7.8%**	**7.3%**	**6.8%**	**6.5%**	**6.9%**
HOPE Recipients											
Total Recipients	In-State	3,755	3,420	3,767	3,478	3,870	4,251	4,348	4,591	4,427	5,071
	Out-of-State	40	57	27	65	35	29	29	33	40	51
Education Program Recipients	In-State	430	383	393	401	406	373	339	390	371	463
	Out-of-State	5	1	0	1	2	3	1	1	1	3
	HOPE Total	**3,795**	**3,477**	**3,794**	**3,543**	**3,905**	**4,280**	**4,377**	**4,624**	**4,467**	**5,122**
	Precent Education Majors	**11.5%**	**11.0%**	**10.4%**	**11.3%**	**10.4%**	**8.8%**	**7.8%**	**8.5%**	**8.3%**	**9.1%**
Grand Total		**49,570**	**51,908**	**54,230**	**54,270**	**55,591**	**53,728**	**51,459**	**52,560**	**53,366**	**57,983**
Precent Education Majors		**8.8%**	**8.4%**	**8.1%**	**8.0%**	**8.1%**	**7.5%**	**6.9%**	**6.6%**	**6.2%**	**6.6%**

[1] *Education Programs include students enrolled in all programs within the 13.xxxx CIP code family as well as students enrolled in non-education programs with an education option leading to initial certification/licensure.*

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

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