

Alternative Certification: A Path to Teaching in South Dakota

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Administrative Rules of South Dakota:

This document contains the allowable options within the South Dakota educator certification rules, [ARSD 24:28](#) for alternative certification to fill vacant teaching position with individuals that did not complete a teacher preparation program. These rules were specifically created for districts who are struggling to find certified educators.

Basic Overview:

Eligibility

Individuals who have not previously completed, and are not currently enrolled in, a teacher preparation program may be eligible to become fully certified through South Dakota's Alternative Certification route.

Not a University Program

The South Dakota alternative certification process is not a university educator preparation program.

- It is directly tied to employment in a South Dakota public or department-accredited school.
- It has not been evaluated for other states' certification requirements.
- Course is required from a regionally-accredited institution of higher education with a C or higher.

School Responsibility

When a South Dakota public or department-accredited school hires an individual through the alternative certification route:

- The school assumes responsibility for ensuring the candidate meets all requirements to become a fully certified South Dakota teacher.
- The educator, employing school, and the South Dakota Department of Education work collaboratively to ensure compliance with all rules and requirements.

Definition

Alternative certification is the process established by the Department by which an eligible individual completes certification requirements as a teacher or administrator while employed in a public or department-accredited school.

Timeline

This multi-step pathway allows eligible candidates up to three years to meet certification requirements while being employed and paid as a teacher in a South Dakota public or department-accredited school.

Alternative Certification: Options for Teaching

General Education (GE)

[ARSD 24:28:11](#) General education alternative certification.

- Leads to a General Education (GE) Alternative Certification Completion, in South Dakota.
 - General education content areas such as math, science, social science, English, PE, art, music, etc.
- An applicant may teach as a grade five through eight elementary teacher, secondary teacher or K-12 teacher while pursuing alternative education.
- Restrictions:
 - Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree or higher.
 - An applicant may not teach early childhood education, elementary self-contained or subject-specific grades K through four, early childhood special education, or special education.

Teach for America (TFA)

ARSD [24:28:13](#) Teach for America alternative certification.

- Leads to a Teach for America (TFA) Alternative Certification Completion, in South Dakota.
- An applicant may act as an elementary teacher, secondary teacher, or K-12 teacher while pursuing certification.
- An applicant may receive a CTE alternative certificate if the requirements for CTE alternative certification are met.
- Restrictions:
 - Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree or higher; additional requirements are available on the [TFA website](#) to become a participant.
 - An applicant may not teach early childhood education, early childhood special education, or K-12 special education.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

ARSD [24:28:12](#) Career and technical education alternative certification.

- Leads to a professional teaching certificate upon completion of the CTE alternative certificate requirements, in South Dakota.
 - An applicant for CTE alternative certification may teach grade seven through twelve CTE endorsement areas while pursuing certification.
 - CTE Content areas such as Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, Construction, Business Management and Administration
- Restrictions:
 - An applicant may not teach early childhood education, elementary education, early childhood special education, or K-12 special education.
 - An applicant for CTE alternative certification may add secondary and K-12 education endorsement areas if the applicant meets all endorsement requirements **and** holds a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Other Information:
 - Individuals who want to teach CTE but not complete the additional coursework requirements may prefer to apply for a [CTE Instructor Permit](#).
 - [Comparison of CTE Alternative Certification and CTE Instructor Permit](#).
 - [South Dakota CTE Certification website](#)

Responsibilities of the applicant:

Prior to applying for teaching positions:

You will need an alternative preliminary certificate. According to ARSD 24:28:10:01, an applicant for a general education alternative certificate, career and technical education (CTE) alternative certification, Teach for America (TFA) alternative certification, and administrator alternative certification shall hold an alternative preliminary certificate.

Eligibility for Alternative Preliminary:

According to ARSD 24:28:10:02, the general requirements is that an applicant shall have one of the following:

- 1) Have a bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution of higher education;
- 2) Have an associate of applied science (A.A.S.) degree or higher in a CTE field;
- 3) Have 4,000 documented hours of work experience in a CTE field; or
- 4) Hold a national certification in a related CTE field.

Step 1:

1. Create a mySD.gov account <https://www.sd.gov/educator>
2. Complete your Educator Profile
3. Complete the Initial Educator Application making the following selections on Certificate Type & Options section:
 - Certificate Type: Alternative Preliminary
 - Level: None
 - Preparation: Alternative Preliminary
 - Endorsement: Blank
4. Additional action items:
 - a. Tips on [Submission of Official Transcripts](#)
 - b. Form EPV2 CTE Work Experience found on the [SD DOE Certification Forms](#)
 - c. Submit additional documentation upon request.

Step 2:

1. Apply for teaching positions in a SD public or department-accredited school.
2. Following an offer of employment by a SD public or department-accredited school. Return to the Educator Portal <https://www.sd.gov/educator> and complete appropriate Alternative Certification route application:
 - a. GE and TFA Alternative Certification Route Application
 - i. Content areas such as math, science, social science, English, PE, art, music
 - b. CTE Alternative Certification Route Application
 - i. Content areas such as Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences
 - c. Submit additional documentation upon request.
3. Request for you SD public or department-accredited school to complete Form AC1 Alternative Certification District Intent to Employ found on the [SD DOE Certification Forms](#)
4. After the certificate is issued; share the certificate and deficiency notice with your hiring SD public or department accredited school.

Step 3:

1. Review [pre-approved courses](#) for meeting SD Alternative Certification requirements.
2. Register for courses to complete the requirements outlined on your deficiency notice that was sent with your certificate.

3. When offered a contract renewal for a second year apply using the [SD Educator Portal](#) and use the Alternative Certification Renewal Application.
4. You must submit documentation towards your completion including proof of progress towards completing the requirements of the Alternative Certification route including one of the following:
 - An official transcript showing the completion of a required course;
 - A Praxis scoresheet showing the passing of a required test; OR
 - Documentation showing that you have registered for either a required course or test
5. Request for you SD public or department-accredited school to complete Form AC2 Alternative Certification Annual Progress Report found on the [SD DOE Certification Forms](#)
6. After the certificate is issued; share the certificate and deficiency notice with your hiring SD public or department accredited school.

Step 4:

1. When all requirements have been completed, and you have been offered a contract renewal for your position; apply using the [SD Educator Portal](#) and use the Alternative Certification Renewal Application.
 - When you apply answer "Transition" to the question "Do you want to transition to a professional certificate or renew your alternative certificate?"
2. Submit documentation of any remaining credits or state-designated testing.
3. Request for you SD public or department-accredited school to complete Form AC8 Alternative Certification District Sign-off found on the [SD DOE Certification Forms](#)
4. After the certificate is issued share the certificate with your hiring SD public or department accredited school.

Responsibilities of the district:

The SD state accreditation system requires that all accredited or approved non-public schools comply with state law, administrative rule, and Department of Education policy. [ARSD §§ 24:43:02:02](#) and [24:43:04:02](#).

Prior to interviewing:

1. Verify the applicant for the position holds an alternative preliminary certificate.
2. Ensure that the position being offered is allowed to be filled by alternative certification.

Offering a contract:

1. Following the offer of employment to an individual holding an alternative preliminary certificate the district needs to complete the Form AC1 Alternative Certification District Intent to Employ found on the [SD DOE Certification Forms](#)
2. Review the employer requirements according to Administrative Rules:
 - General Education (GE) - [ARSD 24:28:11:08](#)
 - Career and Technical Education (CTE) - [ARSD 24:28:12:08](#)
 - Teach for America (TFA) - [ARSD 24:28:13:08](#)
3. **SDCL 13-43-5. Certificate required before contract signed--Exception when academic training being completed.** A teacher may sign a contract only upon exhibition of a valid certificate to teach the courses and grades in the school contemplated under the contract and to qualify the school for accreditation. A person is eligible to sign a contract if the person is completing academic training which would qualify the person for issuance or renewal of a teaching certificate. However, if a certificate is not issued prior to the time for performance of the contract, the contract is thereafter void. Prior to making payment under the contract, the

validity of the certificate shall be verified through the Department of Education's public online certification database.

Payment of a contract:

- **SDCL 13-42-1.2. Certificate required for teachers, administrators, and other educational professionals in schools.** No person may draw wages as a teacher, administrator, or other educational professional in any public school or other accredited school who does not have a valid certificate.

Annual Requirements:

1. Obtain an updated certificate from the educator each year.
2. Review the customized and detail deficiency notice sent to the educator each year with the updated certificate.
 - You will need this information for completing the Form AC2.
 - Review remaining coursework and testing requirements with the educator.
 - Pre-approved courses for meeting SD Alternative Certification requirements.
 - ETS/Praxis Tests registration: South Dakota State-Designated Tests
3. Complete the appropriate SD DOE Certification Forms and submit annually to the South Dakota Department of Education, Office of Educator Certificate to confirm that the applicant will have progress toward the completion of the alternative certification route requirements until all have been met.
 - Form AC2 Alternative Certification Annual Progress Report
 - Complete this form when a renewal contract is offered for year 2 and year 3.
 - Form AC8 Alternative Certification District Sign-off
 - Complete this form when all requirements have been met and confirmed.
 - This is an indication that the district is confident in authorizing the educator to receive a SD professional teaching certificate.

Scope of the certificate issued:

An alternative teaching certificate holder may not teach grades or content areas beyond the endorsements listed on the certificate. According to ARSD 24:28:01, an endorsement is the content and subject areas in which an educator is certified.

Other important certification information:

- Available Endorsements and requirements to add: https://www.sd.gov/411?id=x_end_search
- South Dakota ETS Praxis Testing: <https://praxis.ets.org/state-requirements/southdakota-tests.html>
- Pre-approved courses meeting requirements for Alternative Certification:
<https://doe.sd.gov/certification/prep.aspx>
- South Dakota Mentoring Program: <https://doe.sd.gov/Mentoring/>
- Forms for South Dakota Certification: <https://doe.sd.gov/certification/forms.aspx>