

## Public Comment on ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification

- Amy Humpal
  - English Language Arts, Bon Homme
  - Proponent
  - Tyndall
  - May 29, 2026
  - ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification
  - Expressed support for proposed rules changes. “The new proposal is much more streamlined and easier to understand than the current rules. The language for adding endorsements is clear and concise. In addition, requirements for recertification are now more in line with what should be expected for educators, administrators, and specialists. I appreciate the time the DOE has spent in proposing these changes.”
  
- Chrissy Peterson
  - Special Services Director, Meade
  - Proponent
  - Sturgis
  - June 8, 2026
  - ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification
  - “I am in full support of the proposed rule change to eliminate unnecessary barriers for certification. I especially support changing the unnecessary requirements for certain preparations to add Early Childhood SPED endorsements. Living in the Black Hills, I am accustomed to having enough teacher applications to fill my positions because people want to live in the Hills. However, this is not the norm anymore. As of June 8, 2026, I still have two special education openings with no viable applicants. In May, I juggled key positions to help manage the vacancies. One was moving one of my veteran special education teachers to the vacant early intervention special education classroom. This teacher is outstanding and year after year, has developed skills in children that only master educators can do. My mentioned teacher has an elementary/special education degree from Black Hills State University. Under the current certification rules, she would still need to go through the “hoops” of obtaining an Early Childhood SPED endorsement just to teach 3–5-year-olds. That is a hard sell for a veteran teacher who already has a proven track record of successfully teaching young children with disabilities. By eliminating unnecessary requirements, districts would have more flexibility in placing special education teachers where students need them most. More importantly, experienced teachers like mine would not have to take additional classes or pass another Praxis exam simply to prove what years of successful teaching have already demonstrated that they are GREAT teachers. Thank you for your consideration.”

- Mitchell Reed
  - Superintendent, Florence
  - Proponent
  - Watertown
  - June 8, 2026
  - ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification
  - See included letter
  
- Bert Falak
  - Director, Northeast Technical High School
  - Proponent
  - Watertown
  - June 17, 2026
  - ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification
  - “I am writing in support of the proposed rule changes to CTE alternative certification. These changes represent a practical step forward for Career and Technical Education in South Dakota. They reduce unnecessary barriers, streamline the certification process, and create greater consistency across the CTE system. I especially support the continued recognition and expansion of the CTE instructor permit pathway, as well as additional flexibility in endorsements. In my experience, the permit pathway is essential. Many of our strongest CTE instructors come from skilled trades and industry backgrounds, and this pathway allows schools to bring those individuals into the classroom in a practical and workable way while maintaining flexibility for program needs. Overall, these proposed rule changes make sense, reduce confusion, and will benefit CTE programs, teachers, and students. While they will not solve every CTE staffing challenge, they are a practical and positive step in the right direction. I support the proposed changes and encourage their approval.”

Received after the deadline

- Bobbie Jo Donovan
  - College & Career Readiness Manager, Rapid City
  - Proponent
  - Rapid City
  - June 17, 2026 (after 9 am deadline)
  - ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification
  - “Hello. My name is Bobbie Jo Donovan, and I serve as the College & Career Readiness Manager for Rapid City Area Schools. I am also a past president of the South Dakota Association for Career and Technical Education. One of my responsibilities is supporting our CTE teachers and programs across the district, and I work closely with new teachers as they navigate the certification process.

I want to share my support for the proposed certification rule changes. From my experience, these changes make sense and address some of the challenges we've seen when trying to bring qualified professionals into the classroom. The updates help remove unnecessary barriers, provide clearer certification pathways, and still maintain the high expectations we have for educators in South Dakota.

These changes are especially important for districts like Rapid City. Like many schools across the state, we continue to face challenges finding and retaining qualified teachers in specialized CTE areas. We have talented industry professionals who want to teach and share their expertise with students, but sometimes the certification process can be difficult to navigate. Providing additional pathways to certification and endorsement gives schools more flexibility while ensuring teachers are prepared to be successful in the classroom.

I am also excited to see the alignment with the updated Career Cluster Framework and the flexibility it creates as CTE programs continue to evolve. Our workforce needs are constantly changing, and our certification system should be able to adapt as new programs and career opportunities emerge. These updates will help schools offer relevant, high-quality programs while giving educators more options to build their credentials and expand their teaching opportunities.

Overall, I believe this rules package is a positive step forward for Career and Technical Education in South Dakota. It supports teachers, helps districts meet workforce and staffing needs, and ultimately benefits students by expanding access to strong CTE programs that prepare them for future careers.”

- Tom Culver
  - Former Avon Superintendent, Incoming Bon Homme Superintendent
  - Proponent
  - Avon
  - June 18, 2026 (added written comments due to potential conflict)
  - ARSD 24:28 Educator Certification
  - “Good morning to the South Dakota Board of Education Standards, My name is Tom Culver and I will be taking over as the Superintendent of the Bon Homme School District on July 1. I am submitting my testimony in writing due to a previous conflict in my schedule. I am representing myself with my testimony.

I am testifying in support of eliminating the Alternate Preliminary Certificate. My previous administrative position was as the Superintendent of the Avon School District. A few years ago, our Shop/Industrial Tech Teacher retired after many years as a South Dakota educator. The district advertised for a new teacher to take over that position. We did not receive any applicants for the position. After several months we decided to explore other options to find a teacher. In the community there was a young man that graduated from Avon in the early 2000's and was working construction. I approached him about the position and he decided to take on the new endeavor.

Our Principal worked with him over the Spring and Summer to apply for the Alternative Certificate. Both the Principal and the Teacher Candidate filled out the application for the Alternative Preliminary Certificate and believed they were finished with that step. In the fall when our Administrative Assistant was filling out the PRF, they discovered the teacher did not have the proper certificate.

I am asking the Board to consider eliminating the Alternative Preliminary Certificate. I believe it is an extra step that the teachers applying for the Alternative Certificate don't need to complete. In this case, the teacher candidate considered quitting and not going any further toward becoming a teacher. By eliminating this step, I don't believe we are lowering our standards. I believe we are not going to frustrate Alternative Certificate Candidates due to the repetitive steps and they end up quitting. We are critically short of teachers in our State, so we cannot afford to lose any prospective new teachers.

I want to thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.”

# FLORENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT 14-1

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To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Florence School District, I am writing in strong support of the proposed changes to Career and Technical Education (CTE) certification rules. These updates represent a thoughtful and practical approach to strengthening educational opportunities for students while addressing workforce shortages that continue to impact schools across South Dakota.

The proposed rule changes simplify and clarify the alternative certification process, provide greater flexibility in obtaining endorsements, align certification pathways with the updated Career Cluster Framework, and remove unnecessary barriers that prevent qualified industry professionals from entering the classroom. Just as importantly, these changes continue to ensure educators receive appropriate preparation in instructional methods, classroom management, assessment practices, and student learning. This balance of flexibility and accountability will help schools recruit highly qualified individuals while maintaining the quality of instruction students deserve.

For rural school districts such as Florence, these changes are especially important. Small districts often face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly in specialized Career and Technical Education fields. While our communities are fortunate to have highly skilled professionals working in agriculture, manufacturing, skilled trades, business, health sciences, technology, and other career sectors, current certification requirements can discourage these individuals from sharing their expertise with students.

The proposed changes create a clearer and more accessible pathway for these professionals to become educators. Local experts often bring the most up-to-date industry knowledge, practical experience, and workforce connections. They can help students understand how classroom learning applies to real-world careers while providing authentic, hands-on experiences that prepare students for life after graduation. Too often, schools are forced to bypass these highly qualified candidates because of unnecessary certification barriers. This not only limits students' opportunities but also weakens the connection between schools and the workforce needs of their communities.

Additionally, the proposed flexibility in endorsements and certification pathways will allow districts to expand and sustain CTE programming that may otherwise be difficult to offer due to staffing shortages. By making endorsement options more accessible and aligning pathways with modern workforce demands, schools can provide students with a broader range of career exploration opportunities and technical skill development experiences. These changes will help ensure that CTE programs remain relevant as industries continue to evolve and new career opportunities emerge.

Students stand to benefit significantly from these proposed updates. They will have greater access to instructors with current industry expertise, expanded course offerings, and stronger connections to local

businesses and workforce opportunities. These experiences help students develop the technical, academic, and employability skills necessary for success in college, technical education programs, military service, and the workforce.

South Dakota's future workforce depends on strong Career and Technical Education programs. In an era where recruiting qualified educators has become increasingly difficult, flexibility is essential. These proposed changes provide schools with practical solutions while maintaining high standards for instruction. They strengthen partnerships between schools and industry, support workforce development, and create additional opportunities for students to succeed.

The Florence School District strongly supports these proposed rule changes and appreciates the Department's efforts to modernize certification pathways while preserving the quality and integrity of Career and Technical Education programs. We believe these updates will benefit students, schools, employers, and communities throughout South Dakota for years to come. Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to preparing South Dakota students for successful futures.

Sincerely,

Mitch Reed  
Superintendent  
Florence School District 14-1