



# Smithville ISD

## Certification Delay of Teacher Certification Requirements Application

Academic Year	DOI Restrictions
2025-2026	District maintains currently approved DOI plan which may include exemptions from 21.003
2026-2027	District can no longer include K-5 reading and mathematics teachers in DOI plan exemptions from 21.003
2027-2028	District can no longer include all foundational subject teachers (i.e., reading/English language arts, math, science, and social studies) in any grade level in DOI plan exemptions from 21.003

### Justification & Rationale:

Smithville ISD currently employs 118 teachers (12 alternatively certified), with two unfilled teaching positions. Smithville ISD faces significant certification challenges due to geographic location and recruitment difficulties when competing with urban districts. The financial burden of additional certification is substantial for our teaching staff, and losing experienced teachers during this transition would severely disrupt educational continuity essential to our students' success. Granting this delay of certification requirements will allow our dedicated teachers time to complete certification requirements while continuing to serve our students effectively, preventing turnover in our community where every educator plays a critical role.

### Key Challenges:

- Rural location recruitment challenges
- Limited local access to certification programs
- Financial constraints for teachers pursuing additional certification
- Need to retain quality experienced teachers during transition
- Timeline needed for teachers to complete requirements

- Impact of teacher turnover on student continuity

### **Educator Preparation Partner: Teachworthy & Indiana Wesleyan University**

Smithville ISD recognizes several challenges in the certification process that require personal goal setting and cohort collaboration internally to ensure Smithville ISD will have internal and external resource support for each uncertified teacher's specific status. This includes:

- a. Candidates who have completed a degree and certification but have not passed the content or PPR test.
- b. Teachers who are delayed in performance in a current program must ensure the timely completion of EPP requirements within a district-defined schedule to comply and stay employed.
- c. Teachers who have a degree that is not in an EPP program will be asked to join a partnering district EPP and complete a district-defined schedule to stay employed.
- d. Candidates who are part of the Smithville ISD GYO PREP program who are not degreed and serving as a paraprofessional will be degreed within three years.
- e. Candidates who are part of a current Smithville ISD GYO will pursue the certification on the current track that was established by Smithville ISD and complies with the timeline of this waiver's expectations.
- f. Candidates who are serving in SpEd or Bilingual education and seeking pathway clarification this year (2025-26) from TEA in timely available options for these high-demand areas with multiple non-certified teachers. Aligning with the above stated options will be a requirement for candidates.
- g. Smithville ISD is currently evaluating all uncertified candidates and determining the feasibility of those teachers who can become certified before the 2025-26 school year begins and earn the incentive from TEA.

### **Strategies to Address Certification Requirements:**

#### **1. Strategy 1: Phased Certification Completion & Teacher Support Program**

Annual Reduction Goals:

- Year 1 (2026-27): Reduce alternatively certified teachers from 10% to 7% (4 teachers achieving full certification)
- Year 2 (2027-28): Reduce to 4% (4 additional teachers certified)
- Year 3 (2028-29): Reduce to 2% or below (remaining teachers certified)

Priority Focus Areas by Subject/Grade Level:

Phase 1 Priority: Secondary STEM and Special Education (historically hardest to fill positions)

Phase 2 Priority: Elementary core subjects and Bilingual/ESL

Phase 3 Priority: Electives and supplemental positions

Teacher Support Initiatives:

- Collaborating with Teachworthy as Smithville ISD's Educator Preparation Program partner.
- District-funded certification exam fees and study materials (estimated \$300 per teacher)
- Partnering with ESC Region 13 for online certification preparation courses
- Mentorship pairing: each alternatively certified teacher assigned to veteran certified teacher
- Release time for certification testing and coursework (2 professional development days per semester)
- Stipend incentive of \$1,000 upon successful certification completion via TEA as allowable
- Monthly cohort meetings share resources and progress

We will meet with two groups of uncertified teachers regarding this change in law to emphasize

the urgency of this change. The following assumes our plan is either not approved by the SISD

School Board or TEA. We do not want to have to let any teachers go as a result of this law; however, it is a possibility pending approval of the plan mentioned above. It is only fair that teachers are aware of this and work urgently toward completing their certification requirements this school year.

- The PreK-5th-grade (reading and math) group is the most urgent; they have one year to obtain certification, or they will be eligible to apply for an open secondary position if available. If there are no open positions posted at the time of teacher contract renewal, this group would not be receiving a contract.
- The second group has until the end of the 2027 school year to get certified, and it includes PreK-5th-grade science and social studies teachers in addition to all secondary teachers who teach reading, math, science, or social studies. This group would be eligible to apply for any open position in CTE, Fine Arts, or PE. If there are no open positions posted at the time of teacher contract renewal, this group would not be receiving an extension.

## 2. Strategy 2 Grow-Your-Own & Regional Recruitment Pipeline

### Future Pipeline Development:

- Educational Aide to Teacher Program: Identify 3-5 current paraprofessionals annually interested in teaching careers; provide tuition assistance and mentorship through alternative certification programs
- Smithville High School Partnership: Create "Future Educators" pathway course; offer dual credit education courses through partnership with local community colleges

### Regional Recruitment Strategies:

- Establish partnerships with Bastrop County and surrounding districts for shared alternative certification cohorts (reducing per-district costs)
- Competitive incentive package for newly certified teachers: signing bonus (\$3,000), housing assistance information for relocating teachers, and student loan repayment support (\$500/year for 5 years)
- Virtual job fairs targeting career changers in Austin metro area (45 minutes from Smithville) highlighting rural teaching benefits and lower cost of living

### Long-term Sustainability:

- Summer para-educator academy for high school students interested in education careers
- Formalized onboarding and retention program to reduce turnover: first-year teacher support team, new teacher orientation, and 3-year mentorship commitment

### Success Metrics:

1. 90% retention rate for alternatively certified teachers completing certification
2. At least 2 "grow-your-own" candidates entering teaching pipeline annually by Year 2
3. Reduction in time-to-fill vacancies from average 90 days to 60 days by Year 3

### Compliance Timeline:

- Proposed delay period-2 years

- Milestone dates for teacher certification progress
- Target completion date for full compliance
- Quarterly progress reporting plan

Smithville ISD will ensure a comprehensive personal plan for year-to-year reductions in uncertified Teachers assigned to foundation curriculum courses until full compliance is achieved by the 2029–2030 school year. The district will track all candidates aligned to their certification plan and timeline. Smithville ISD will plan for “just in time” resources to support any struggling teacher from internal staff, external partners, or third-party vendors to ensure teachers are on track for completion of certification. Dashboard audits will be conducted monthly to ensure teachers are not getting off track in the degree, certification course, or test preparation.

Identification of Uncertified Teachers (5 examples)

Name	Current Position	Experience	Training	License	Certification Content Plan
Teacher 1	SpEd Para	3 years in the District as a SpEd Student support para and 5 years overall in education	30 hours of Higher Ed Credits with foundational courses Priority to Teacher orientation	EA III	SpEd K-12
Teacher 2	Support Teacher	7 years in the district 3 as site secretary and 4 as instructional para	SpEd Disability Training Para to Teacher orientation Safety training Behavior Mgt Training 14 hours of CPE credit from TW Lesson plan Training  70 hours of College Credit	EA II	K-5 Foundation
Teacher 3	Para in grade 2	None	MA Degree in Fine Arts	None	K-5 Foundation
Teacher 4	Para in Middle School	9 months serving as a Self-Contained aide in the math classroom	60 hours of college with a focus on Business  TW 14 hours of CPE training 15 hours of Professional Development in	None	4-8 Core

			Pedagogy from the District		
Teacher 5	Supporting Teacher	Three years experience in district. One year as a para and two years as a support teacher in Biology and Earth Science	14 hours of CEP credit from TW  Para to Teacher orientation  44 hours of college from IWU and 30 credits transferred from Assessed learning in district professional development, new teacher orientations, lesson planning, evaluations, PLCs and classroom mgt.	EA III	9-12 Science

**Community Engagement & Transparency**

School Board Meetings:

- January 2026:
  - a. Inform board of intent for application.
  - b. Post to the district website notice of intent for application.
- February 23, 2026: Board votes on approval of application.
- March/April 2026: Report on commissioner's decision

Date of Board Approval:

February 23, 2026