

1980 S.C. Op. Atty. Gen. 15 (S.C.A.G.), 1980 S.C. Op. Atty. Gen. No. 80-5, 1980 WL 81889

Office of the Attorney General

State of South Carolina

Opinion No. 80-5

January 17, 1980

***1 Subject: Education, Teacher Certification**

(1) Act No. 187 of 1979 requires the State Board of Education to adopt program approval standards for student teaching programs in South Carolina's teacher training institutions as a prerequisite to teacher certification.

(2) The program approval standards, which are effective for the school year 1981–82, require Fall 1981 graduates who are candidates for teacher certification, to have completed one semester of student teaching, which teaching must comply with the standards.

To: Dr. Charlie G. Williams
State Superintendent of Education

Questions:

- (1) What is the meaning of the clause ‘one semester of student teaching’, contained in § 59–26–20(h)?
- (2) What is the date that program approval standards must take effect, pursuant to § 59–26–20(h), which code section specifies, ‘beginning with the 1981–82 school year?’

Statutes and Cases:

§ 59–26–10, *et seq.*, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended; [Laird v. Nationwide Ins. Co.](#), 243 S.C. 388, 134 S.E.2d 206 (1964); [Martin v. Nationwide Mutual Ins. Co.](#), 256 S.C. 577, 183 S.E.2d 451 (1971); *Words and Phrases*, Vols. 38, 38A. (1967); *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam Co. (Springfield, Mass. 1965).

Discussion:

I. In Act No. 187, Acts and Joint Resolutions of South Carolina, 1979 (codified as § 59–26–10, *et seq.*, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended), the General Assembly created an ‘. . . act to provide for a fair and comprehensive program for the training, certification, initial employment and evaluation of public educators in this State.’ Section 59–26–20(h) states:

The State Board of Education, through the State Department of Education, and the Commission on Higher Education shall: . . . (h) Adopt program approval standards so that beginning with the 1981–82 school year 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.

The duty to formulate the required program approval standards is given to the State Board of Education, which programs must be implemented through the agencies of the State Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education.

A long-standing rule of statutory construction holds that language used within a statute is an aid in ascertaining the legislative intent. [Laird v. Nationwide Insurance Co.](#), 243 S.C. 388, 134 S.E.2d 206 (1964). Further, the language used is to be interpreted in its ordinary and popular significance, unless something within the statute requires a different interpretation. [Martin v. Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co.](#), 256 S.C. 577, 183 S.E.2d 451 (1971).

Applying the above rules of statutory construction to § 59–26–10(h), the terms ‘semester’ and ‘student teaching’ should be accorded their ordinary and popular definitions, if possible. ‘Student teaching’ is defined in [Webster's Third New International Dictionary](#), G. & C. Merriam Co. (Springfield, Mass. 1965), as ‘practice teaching’, which is defined as, ‘teaching by a student preparing for a teaching career for the purpose of practicing educational skills and methods under the supervision of an experienced teacher.’ ‘Semester’ is defined as, ‘either of the two periods of instruction commonly 18 weeks in length into which an academic year is usually divided.’ *Id.* See also [Words and Phrases](#), Vol. 38A., p. 325 (1967). These, of course, are but general definitions of the terms, and research has failed to indicate any definition of the terms in South Carolina law. Act No. 187 of 1979 is also silent as to particular meaning for the two terms, therefore, bearing in mind the usual definitions, the specific requirements of ‘one semester of student teaching’ are left to the discretion of the statutorily designated State Board of Education.

*2 II. The term ‘school year’ is traditionally regarded as the nine months of the school term. [Words and Phrases](#), Vol. 38, p. 475 (1967). The term is not specifically defined in South Carolina; however, § 59–1–200 defines ‘scholastic year’ as follows, ‘The scholastic year shall begin on the first day of July of each year and end on the thirtieth day of June following.’ § 59–1–200 does not expressly apply to colleges and universities, though. See § 59–1–10.

A majority of colleges operate with fall and spring semesters and probably a summer term. Colleges on a quarter system are somewhat different. No matter which system is in effect, § 52–26–20(h) should operate in the same manner. The statute mandates implementation at the college level, effective for the 1981–82 school year; which is to say, prospective teachers, graduating from any South Carolina teacher training institution in either Fall 1981 or Spring 1982 and thereafter, must have been required to ‘successfully complete one semester of student teaching.’

Conclusion:

Act No. 187 of 1979 requires the State Board of Education to adopt program approval standards for student teaching in this state's teaching training institutions, and prospective teachers graduating from such institutions, commencing with the Fall semester 1981, must have successfully completed one semester of student teaching in order to qualify for teacher certification.

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