



Philanthropy Advocates empowers philanthropy to invest and engage in public and higher education policy and advocacy. We work to protect, promote, and improve public and higher education so that all Texas students can achieve their educational goals from cradle to career. Together, we work to ensure that Texas students have access to **effective teachers**.

THE CHALLENGE

Teachers have a greater impact on student achievement than any other in-school factor.¹ As teachers gain experience, their students see gains on measures of student achievement as well as other measures of success.²

OVER ONE-THIRD OF TEXAS TEACHERS HAVE LESS THAN FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE³

These teachers are located disproportionately at campuses with higher percentages of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.⁴

Given the impact of effective teachers on student outcomes and the volume of new teachers in Texas, research and policy have placed considerable emphasis on improving the quality of teacher preparation in the state. With more than 120 entities offering over 250 distinct preparation programs, Texas likely has a more diverse landscape of teacher preparation programs than any other state. This is particularly true given that alternative certification programs prepare 50% of all new Texas teachers.⁵

Despite the number of routes to teacher certification, Texas has also provided significant flexibility to Texas school districts to hire teachers who are not certified. In addition to alternative certification, the Texas Association of School

Boards documented six additional ways to “qualify an uncertified teacher.”⁶ Additionally, beginning in 2015, the Texas Legislature permitted school districts in Texas to become “districts of innovation” and to waive a variety of requirements, including the requirement for teachers to be certified. As of June 2020, almost 85% of Texas school districts have become districts of innovation.⁷

Through both, preparation routes and policies permitting uncertified teachers to serve as classroom teachers, there are many routes to prepare teachers to meet workforce demand. However, despite some increases in new teacher retention in recent years,

ABOUT 40% OF NEW TEACHERS LEAVE THE CLASSROOM WITHIN THEIR FIRST FIVE YEARS.⁸

While different preparation pathways achieve different levels of teacher retention, teacher retention challenges create ongoing staffing challenges and a revolving door of novice teachers at struggling campuses. In the face of staffing challenges, flexibility is available for school districts to hire uncertified teachers. We aim to understand the impact of this practice on students and the overall teacher workforce pipeline.

RESEARCH FOCUS

While there is emerging data about teachers who are certified through the state’s teacher preparation program, little is known about the impact of the various pathways an individual may enter a classroom without certification or preparation. This research study seeks to understand the prevalence of those pathways as well as the impact they have on students and the overall teacher workforce pipeline in Texas.

ENGAGE

This work is made possible by pooled funding from Philanthropy Advocates members in our Effective Teaching policy work group. **Invest your dollars and expertise in this research and in our efforts to increase access to effective teachers for Texas students.**

Contact Becky Calahan to engage with this work: bcalahan@cftexas.org

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