

# TEXAS TEACHER PREPARATION

## Pathways to Entering the Classroom



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## EDUCATE TEXAS

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# TEACHER PREPARATION IN TEXAS: PATHWAYS TO ENTERING THE CLASSROOM

## Overview

Decades of research confirm that well-prepared teachers are essential for student success. Teacher quality greatly affects student outcomes in reading and math.<sup>1</sup> In fact, teacher quality affects student learning two to three times more than any other school factor, including facilities, class size, school choice, and leadership.<sup>2</sup> Disadvantaged students especially benefit greatly from well-prepared teachers.<sup>3</sup> More than half of the students in Texas come from this group.

Every student in Texas needs access to well-prepared teachers in an effective school system. High-performing school systems

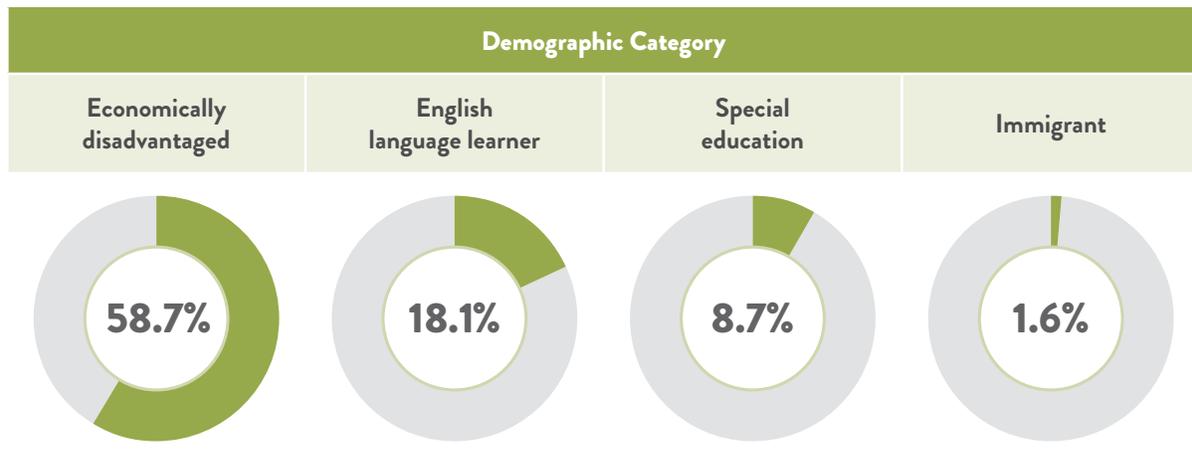
- recruit the most qualified staff,
- ensure that professional development helps teachers become highly effective, and
- create an environment that helps all teachers teach all students effectively.<sup>4</sup>

This paper presents an overview of the current teacher preparation system in Texas. The state's teacher preparation providers enroll the third highest number of teacher candidates in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Providers prepare all types of educators, including administrators and other specialists who are not considered teachers. This paper focuses solely on the preparation of classroom teachers. It also explains the role that providers play in ensuring that students in Texas have access to well-prepared teachers.

## Preparing teachers for diverse classrooms

The landscape of teaching in Texas is challenging for teachers. Texas serves an increasingly diverse student population in rural, suburban, and urban settings. During the 2014–2015 school year, 342,192 teachers served 5.23 million students in 1,219 Texas school districts and charters. Of the 5.23 million students, 58.7% were economically disadvantaged and needed a well-prepared teacher to help ensure that these students can change their odds. Compared with the national average, students in Texas are more likely to be identified as economically disadvantaged (Table 1). Nearly 30,000 teachers were in the classroom for the first time and had 231 different teacher preparation programs to select from to become a certified teacher.<sup>6,7</sup> Between 2002 and 2012, student enrollment in Texas increased 19.2 percent. This is almost six times greater than the national average of 3.3 percent. A one-size-fits-all approach to teacher preparation will not meet the educator demands in Texas.

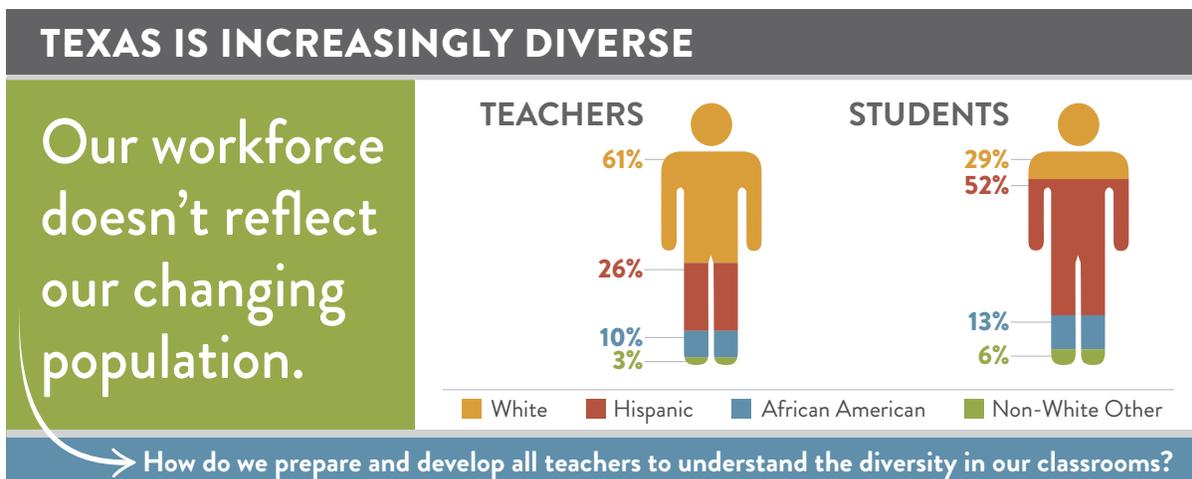
Table 1. Student Demographics in Texas, 2014–2015<sup>8</sup>



Increasing the diversity of teachers is important for Texas. The diversity of the teacher workforce in the state is an inverse of the student population (Figure 1). Sixty-one percent of teachers identify as White, but only 29 percent of the students identify as White. Since 2000, the percentage of Hispanic teachers has increased slowly, and the percentage of African American teachers has remained steady.<sup>9</sup>

A diverse teacher workforce benefits all students. It also leads to increased school engagement and academic outcomes for students of diverse backgrounds. Teachers with diverse backgrounds are more aware of the cultural and community needs of students. Further, teachers with diverse backgrounds who work in teacher-diverse schools are more likely to stay in the teaching profession.<sup>10</sup>

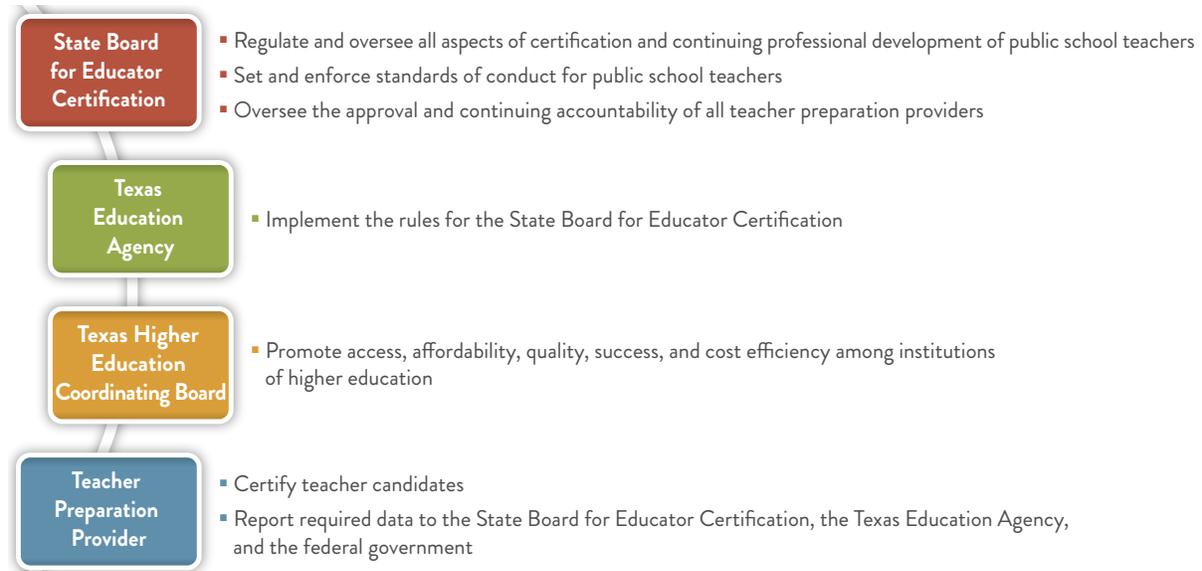
Figure 1. Demographics of Teachers vs. Students, 2014–2015<sup>11</sup>



## Collaboration among stakeholders

Many organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders are involved in the preparation of effective teachers. Figure 2 shows the four main entities involved in developing policies and implementing programs geared toward teacher preparation.

**Figure 2. Collaboration Among Entities Involved in Teacher Preparation**



## Holding teacher preparation providers accountable

Texas established the Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP) in 1995. In 1998, the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) released its first annual accreditation ratings. New accountability factors were added in 2009 and 2015. ASEP's ratings are based on five quality performance measures:<sup>12</sup>

1. results of certification exams;
2. results of principal appraisal survey on beginning teachers;
3. achievement of students taught by beginning teachers during their first 3 years of being certified, to the extent possible;
4. compliance with SBEC requirements on the frequency, duration, and quality of structural guidance and ongoing support provided by field supervisors to candidates completing student teaching, clinical teaching, or an internship; and
5. results from a teacher satisfaction survey of new teachers, developed by SBEC with stakeholder input, conducted at the end of the teacher's first year of teaching.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) reports data about the performance of providers on its website. State law requires TEA to help providers that are not meeting ASEP performance standards. SBEC can revoke the accreditation from providers that are underperforming. TEA updates the accreditation statuses of providers every year. Starting in 2014–2015, TEA began to identify providers that are on action plans and have received notice. During this same academic year, 133 teacher preparation providers (93 percent of all providers) in Texas received the status of accredited. Five providers received the status of accredited–not rated; four received accredited–warned; and one received accredited–probation. No provider received the status of accredited–revoked.<sup>13</sup>

## Requirements to teach in Texas

Teachers must hold one of the more than 90 certificates to teach in Texas.<sup>14</sup> To obtain a state certification, teacher candidates must have:

1. earned at least a baccalaureate degree<sup>15</sup> from an accredited university or college,
2. completed a state-approved preparation program,
3. passed a pedagogy and content certification exam,
4. submitted a state application, and
5. been fingerprinted as part of a background check.<sup>16</sup>

Teacher candidates must have an overall grade point average of 2.50 (on a 4-point scale) on any coursework or their last 60 credits to be admitted to a program.<sup>17</sup> Providers must also ensure that cohorts of students have an average admission grade point average of 3.00.<sup>18</sup>

Teacher educators must supervise and support teacher candidates during clinical teaching or an internship. At minimum, teacher educators must conduct three, 45-minute, in-person observations of teacher candidates. Providers must also train cooperating teachers and mentors. This training should be based on scientific research. Providers may allow school districts to provide the training if it is accurately documented.<sup>19</sup>

## Everything is larger in Texas—including the variety in teacher preparation

SBEC approves all teacher preparation providers in Texas. Currently, Texas has 136 providers. Eighty-one are public and private colleges and universities, or traditional providers. Fifty-five are alternative providers that include four school districts/charter schools, one county district, 28 for-profit and non-profit private organizations, eight community colleges, and 14 Regional Education Service Centers.<sup>20</sup>

These 136 traditional and alternative providers currently offer a total of 231 teacher preparation programs. The 81 colleges and universities offer some combination of undergraduate and/or postbaccalaureate degree programs for a total of 151 traditional programs. Twenty-five of the colleges and universities also offer an alternative program that, when combined with the programs of the alternative providers, total 80 alternative programs for individuals who already hold a degree.<sup>21</sup>

SBEC requires all providers to deliver 30 hours of field-based experience and at least 300 hours of coursework to teacher candidates. Field-based work should be in a school setting, under supervision, where the candidate is actively engaged in instructional or educational activities.<sup>22</sup>

Teacher candidates in programs at traditional providers receive some type of supervised clinical experience while in the program but generally do not become teachers of record while training.<sup>23</sup> Candidates from alternative programs generally become teachers of record while they are completing training.<sup>24</sup> Some programs specialize in preparing teacher candidates for hard-to-fill positions in specific fields.<sup>25</sup> Table 2 summarizes each pathway.

**Table 2. Pathways to Teacher Certification in Texas<sup>26</sup>**

Type of Program	Type of Candidate Enrolled	Provider Offering Program	Clinical Teaching/ Internship Requirements	30 Hours of Field-Based Experiences*	80 Hours of Coursework/ Training**
<b>Traditional Undergraduate</b>	Undergraduate students	Colleges and universities (offered as part of a traditional undergraduate degree program)	Candidates must complete at least 12 weeks of full-time clinical teaching.	Yes	Yes
<b>Traditional Postbaccalaureate</b>	Those with bachelor's degrees or higher who are seeking initial teacher certification	Colleges and universities	Candidates must either (a) complete an internship as a teacher of record for one full school year (180 days) or (b) complete clinical teaching as part of an undergraduate program.	Yes	Yes
<b>Alternative Certification</b>	Those with bachelor's degrees or higher who are seeking initial teacher certification	Education service centers, school districts, and nonprofit and for-profit entities, including universities and colleges	Candidates must either (a) complete an internship as a teacher of record for one full school year (180 days) or (b) complete clinical teaching as part of an undergraduate program.	Yes	Yes***

\* Up to 15 hours can be through technology.

\*\* Before clinical teaching/internship.

\*\*\* Must complete within 90 school days of becoming a teacher of record if the intern is considered a late hire.<sup>27</sup>

Texas produces 48 percent of the nation’s alternative-certified teachers from private, non-university-based programs. This is more than four times the next top-producing state (New Jersey, 11 percent). At 16 percent, Texas produces the highest percentage of university-based, alternative-certified teachers in the nation. California and Florida are second at 9 percent each.<sup>28</sup>

From 2011–2012 to 2014–2015, the percentage of initially certified teachers through an alternative pathway increased each school year (Figure 3). This was not the case with initially certified teachers from traditional pathways, where percentages either declined or remained stable. Evidence suggests that recent economic downturns and job cuts in education have reduced the confidence of teacher candidates in teaching being a viable profession.<sup>29</sup> Data from TEA suggest that alternative certification programs, more than traditional programs, prepare more men and racially/ ethnically diverse individuals for the teacher workforce.<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 3. Percentage of Initially Certified Teachers by Pathway, 2011–2014<sup>31</sup>**

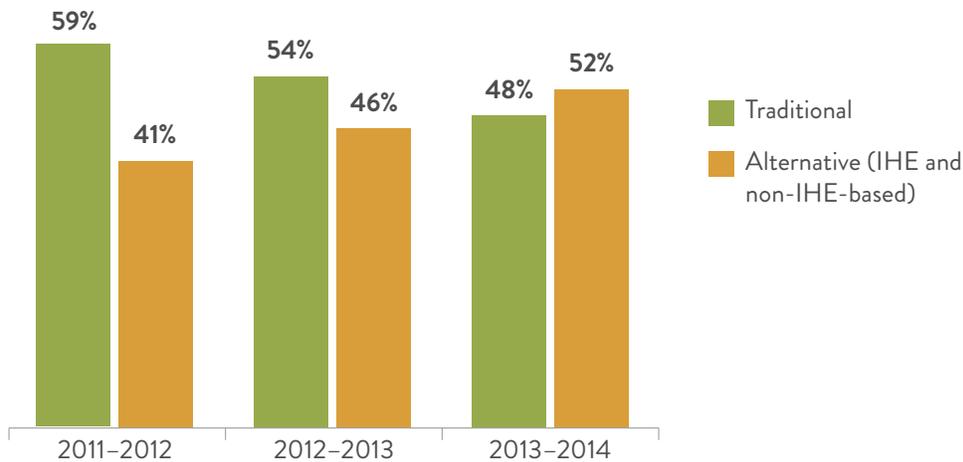


Table 3 shows the university providers that prepared the largest number of individuals issued at least one initial teaching certificate.

**Table 3. Largest University Providers in 2014–2015<sup>32</sup>**

Provider	Number of Initially Certified Teachers*
Texas State University	660 
Texas A&M University	559 
University of North Texas	548 
Sam Houston State University	486 
Texas A&M University–Commerce	458 

 = approximately 150 completers

\* Includes teachers initially certified through all program types (i.e., undergraduate, postbaccalaureate, and alternative).

Table 4 shows the non-university alternative providers that prepared the largest number of individuals issued at least one initial teaching certificate.

**Table 4. Largest Non-University Alternative Providers in 2014–2015<sup>33</sup>**

Provider	Number of Initially Certified Teachers	
A+ Texas Teachers	4,678	
iTeach Texas	1,154	
Web-Centric Alternative Certification Program	524	
Region 4 Education Service Center	502	
Education Career Alternatives Program	389	

 = approximately 150 completers

## Effectiveness of the pathways

Alternative providers produce the greatest number of certified teachers, but are these teachers more effective than those trained via traditional routes? Findings are mixed. Some studies indicate that traditionally prepared teachers produce greater academic gains among students than alternatively prepared teachers.<sup>34</sup> Other studies have found that the effects of these pathways are more similar than different.<sup>35</sup> Such factors as the extent to which candidates receive pedagogical training may predict effectiveness more accurately.<sup>36</sup> Overall, outcome data are inconsistent.

## Teacher retention

Retaining effective teachers is an important goal for schools in Texas. According to TEA, retention rates over a 5-year period are higher among teachers prepared by traditional undergraduate programs (75.4%) compared to those prepared by alternative (63.5%) and traditional postbaccalaureate (63.2%)<sup>37</sup> (Table 5).

**Table 5. Providers With the Highest and Lowest 5-Year Teacher Retention Rates (2010–2011 to 2014–2015), by Type<sup>38</sup>**

Name of Provider*	Type of Provider	Number of Teachers Employed (2010–2011)	Number of Teachers Retained (2014–2015)	5-Year Retention Rate (%)***
<b>HIGHEST RATES</b>				
Intern Teacher ACP	Alternative	9	9	100%
Texas Alternative Center For Teachers**	Alternative	41	39	95.1%
Steps To Teaching - ACP**	Alternative	56	53	94.6%
Texas Southern University	Traditional	14	13	92.9%
Richland College**	Alternative	13	12	92.3%
Concordia University	Traditional	13	12	92.3%
<b>LOWEST RATES</b>				
Harris County Department of Education	Alternative	12	6	50%
College of the Mainland Compact	Alternative	14	7	50%
Region 2 Education Service Center	Alternative	26	12	46.2%
Texas Teaching Fellows (Dallas)**	Alternative	92	39	42.4%
Texas Teaching Fellows (Austin)**	Alternative	75	31	41.3%
Rice University	Traditional	5	2	40%

\*Includes only sites with a minimum of 5 employed teachers in 2010–2011.

\*\*No longer preparing teachers.

\*\*\*Five-year retention results are for teachers who obtained an initial, Standard certificate in a teaching certification area in AY 2009–2010 and were employed as regular classroom teachers in AY 2010–2011. Only regular classroom teachers who were employed in the Texas public school system are counted as employed or as retained; permanently employed substitute teachers are not. Completers who were employed as teachers in private schools out of state or out of the country are not included. Only certificates obtained through an educator preparation program are included.

## Teacher shortages

The number of first-time certified teachers has increased in Texas. But teacher preparation providers do not produce enough teachers to address the demand for teachers across the state. In 2015, SBEC issued only 21,349 teacher certifications. This fell far short of their goal of 44,700 teacher certifications, which was intended to meet the workforce projections of the Texas Workforce Commission.<sup>39</sup>

A total of 2,156 math and science certifications were issued in 2000, and only 2,880<sup>40</sup> were issued in 2015 when the goal had been 6,500. This is only a 1.9-percent average increase per year. A much larger number of math and science majors will be needed to support the growing career paths of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (or STEM) fields and other technical careers.<sup>41</sup>

Texas also has teacher shortages in other areas. Secondary Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers had the highest out-of-field teacher credentials from 2010 to 2012.<sup>42</sup> Teacher shortages often exist in specific subject areas or in specific regions of the state. This issue has grown gradually and now can leave students without the qualified teachers they need to learn and excel. The U.S. Department of Education approved for 2016–2017 the following teacher shortage areas for Texas: elementary and secondary Bilingual/ESL, Career and Technical Education, Computer Science, Mathematics, Science, and elementary and secondary Special Education.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusions: Overview and Strategies

To serve the increasing numbers of diverse students in Texas, the state must prepare and attract the best teachers. Teacher preparation providers sit at the heart of these efforts. As this brief has highlighted, teacher preparation is bigger in size and complexity in Texas. Overall, Texas

- leads the nation in the number of pathways available for teachers to enter the classroom,
- established an accountability system for teacher preparation programs before many states,
- has a workforce that does not reflect its student population,
- prepares more teachers through alternative certification programs than traditional preparation programs, and
- has not been able to identify effectiveness among the different methods of teacher preparation.

This brief gives an overview of the current landscape of teacher preparation in Texas. Teacher preparation has the potential to evolve and improve even as we struggle at the national and state levels to recruit teachers, to prepare them with the various skills and knowledge they need to succeed, and to retain them. Multiple factors impact the teaching profession, and focusing on teacher preparation will not fix everything. However, there is an opportunity to ensure that the preparation of teachers creates foundations for successful careers. As Texas continues its commitment to improving teacher preparation, various strategies can help ensure that teachers have the tools and

support they need to enter the classroom. Texas can address challenges in teacher preparation by considering such strategies as

- evaluating and updating teacher preparation standards and curriculum so they address the greatest needs of teachers and students;<sup>44</sup>
- developing policies and designing supports to recruit the most qualified teachers;
- supporting efforts that increase teacher diversity and target teachers for shortage areas;<sup>45</sup>
- ensuring that providers prepare all candidates to deliver content through culturally responsive pedagogy that aligns with the needs of students;
- building the capacity of providers to use accountability data to continually improve;<sup>46</sup>
- creating partnerships between teacher preparation programs and districts to ensure feedback and productive improvement and connections between the preparer and the schools;<sup>47</sup> and
- providing support aimed at increasing the effectiveness and retention of initially certified teachers, especially those in front of students for the first time and serving as teachers of record.

Not one strategy or initiative will address the teacher preparation needs in Texas. All stakeholders—school districts, TEA, SBEC, policymakers, and others—must continue to collaborate. This will increase the ability of teacher preparation providers in the state to attract, prepare, and retain greater numbers of high-quality teachers. Improving teacher preparation is critical in any state’s commitment to ensuring students are thriving with teachers that know their craft, connect with their students, inspire learning, and provide the foundations for tomorrow’s future.

## Endnotes

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## Vision

Strengthen the public and higher education system so that every Texas student is prepared for educational and workforce success.

## Mission

Increase postsecondary readiness, access, and success for all students by building partnerships, leading innovation, and scaling practices and policies.



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