

## Pathways to Teaching: Teacher Diversity, Testing, Certification, and Employment in Washington State

Washington state, like many states, faces a shortage of teachers of color in its K–12 public schools. This means that fewer students of color than White (non-Hispanic) students have teachers who share their race or ethnicity, which could have consequences for student achievement and well-being. To better understand the state’s shortage of teachers of color, a group of Washington education stakeholders requested that the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest investigate the junctures at which teacher candidates attending state-approved teacher preparation programs in Washington, especially candidates of color, are likely to leave the teacher preparation and career pathway. The stakeholders also wanted to understand how long it takes for candidates to become certificated (certified). The study team identified and investigated six steps in the teacher preparation and career pathway at which candidates and teachers are likely to drop out or leave the profession: three teacher preparation tests (the basic skills test, a content knowledge test, and the performance assessment); certification; employment; and retention (teaching for at least one year following the first year employed). This study focused on all 63,497 individuals in Washington state who completed at least one of these steps between 2010 and 2019. The descriptive findings can help education policymakers create and revise policies and programs designed to increase the number of teachers of color.

### Key findings

- **Hispanic teacher candidates were more likely than White and non-Hispanic candidates of color to take the sequence of steps to certification described in Washington state policy for in-state candidates.** About 45 percent of Hispanic candidates followed the in-state sequence of steps compared with 38 percent of non-Hispanic candidates of color and 35 percent of White candidates. This suggests that Hispanic candidates were less likely than other candidates to attend out-of-state or online teacher preparation programs.
- **Teacher candidates were more likely to leave the teacher preparation and career pathway after passing a content knowledge test or performance assessment than after failing to pass it.** Nearly 5 percent of candidates who took a content knowledge test did not pass—and therefore were not certificated—compared with 37 percent of candidates who passed a content knowledge test but did not attempt any other pathway steps.
- **Hispanic teacher candidates were less likely than White candidates to pass the basic skills test and content knowledge tests, were less likely to be certificated, and took longer than White candidates did to earn certification.** Hispanic candidates were 6 percentage points less likely than White candidates to be certificated and took 118 days longer than White candidates did to earn certification. Non-Hispanic candidates of color were less likely to pass the basic skills test and took 45 days longer than White candidates did to earn certification. In response to earlier research on teacher testing, Washington state has since changed teacher testing requirements.
- **Regardless of race/ethnicity, more than half of teacher candidates who took a teacher preparation and career pathway step during 2010–16 were ever employed as a certificated educator in a Washington K–12 public school by 2019/20.** Among the 45,619 candidates who took a teacher preparation and career pathway step during 2010–16, 65 percent earned certification and 50 percent were employed as a certificated educator.