

PATHWAYS TO TEACHING

Teacher diversity and testing in Washington state

Teachers of color can contribute to improved outcomes for all students, including higher test scores for students of color and improved problem-solving and critical thinking for White students.^{1,2} However, the K–12 educator workforce in the United States does not yet mirror the growing racial and ethnic diversity of students. In 2017/18, 53 percent of K–12 public school students identified as students of color,³ compared to 21 percent of teachers of color.⁴

This pattern holds true in Washington state: In 2017/18, 46 percent of K–12 public school students identified as students of color, compared to 11 percent of teachers of color.⁵

To increase the diversity of the state’s teacher workforce, the Washington Professional Educator Standards Board and the Teacher Testing Barriers Workgroup are creating practices and policies to support and retain candidates of color along the teacher preparation and career pathway. These stakeholders asked the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest to study where teacher candidates, especially candidates of color, are most likely to drop out or leave the pathway. This infographic highlights findings from the **REL Northwest study**, which examined the percentage of candidates who continued at each step among all candidates who attempted any step on the pathway between 2010 and 2019.

Washington state has already made substantial changes to teacher testing policies in response to earlier research. Changes made after the study time period are described on the next page.



Diversity along the Washington state teacher preparation and career pathway, 2010–2019

The diagram below highlights six steps on the teacher preparation and career pathway in Washington state. The steps include three teacher preparation tests, certification, employment, and retention. At each step, demographic data describe the percentage of teacher candidates who continued on the pathway. Most, but not all, candidates take the steps in the order shown.

Basic skills test

Candidates were required to take and pass the Washington basic skills test or its equivalent (for example, the SAT) before admission into a teacher preparation program from 2010 to 2019.

Passed and continued

Overall 58% | 49% H 52% C 61% W

Hispanic teacher candidates and non-Hispanic teacher candidates of color **were less likely** than White teacher candidates to pass the basic skills test.

Passed and continued
Overall 58%
59% H
58% C
60% W

There were **no meaningful differences** by race/ethnicity in the percentage of candidates who passed a content knowledge test and continued on the pathway.

Legend

- H Hispanic teacher candidates
- C Non-Hispanic teacher candidates of color (includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Multiracial, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander)
- W White teacher candidates

Content knowledge test

Candidates had to pass one or more content knowledge tests (such as elementary education, special education, or English language arts) before earning certification from 2010 to 2019.

Passed and continued
Overall 79% | 73% H 85% C 80% W

Performance assessment

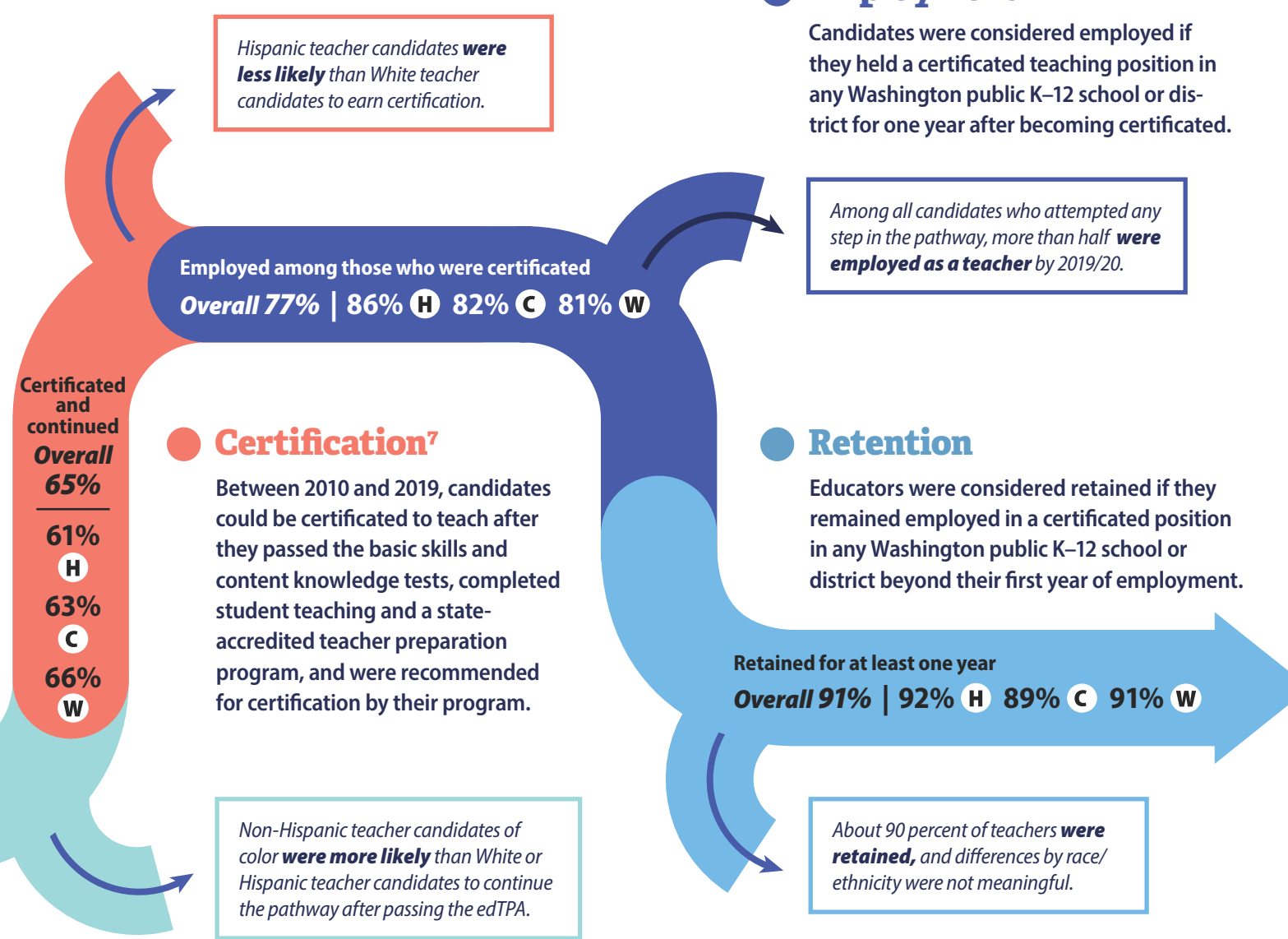
From 2014 to 2019, candidates enrolled in in-state teacher preparation programs had to pass the edTPA.⁶ The edTPA was not required before 2014.

How has Washington changed assessments to support diverse teacher candidates?

Modified basic skills test requirements. As of July 2019, candidates do not need to pass the basic skills test for state certification—they only need to attempt it.⁹

Content knowledge test exceptions. In December 2020, Washington established a case-by-case exception process for candidates who did not pass the content knowledge test.¹⁰

Eliminating performance assessment requirements. In 2021, Washington passed a law removing the requirement that teacher candidates take or pass the edTPA for state certification.¹¹



Employment⁸

Candidates were considered employed if they held a certificated teaching position in any Washington public K–12 school or district for one year after becoming certificated.

Retention

Educators were considered retained if they remained employed in a certificated position in any Washington public K–12 school or district beyond their first year of employment.

Lessons learned and next steps

This study reviewed data from Washington and actions that stakeholders in the state have taken to diversify their teacher workforce. While more research is needed to understand the implications of these actions, the study's findings do suggest next steps for stakeholders in Washington and other states who are invested in keeping teacher candidates of color on a pathway to employment and certification:

Policymakers in other states could consider taking the same steps as Washington:

- Explore whether teacher preparation tests have disproportionate effects on teacher candidates of color
- Modify testing requirements to reduce any identified disproportionate effects
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of any changes to requirements

Teacher preparation programs could support teacher candidates of color to pass teacher preparation tests by:

- Offering test preparation classes and using exam results to identify and train candidates who may have gaps in their academic skills^{12,13}
- Communicating with candidates about the exams and celebrating other students' successes¹⁴
- Providing accommodations and studying the impact of changing the minimum requirements to pass the exams for all candidates¹⁵

Endnotes

¹ Dee, T. S. (2004). Teachers, race, and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 195–210.

² Page, S. E. (2007). *The difference: How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, and societies*. Princeton University Press.

³ U.S. Department of Education. (2019). Table 203.50. Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2028. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics* (2019 ed.). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_203.50.asp

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (2019). Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987-88 through 2017-18. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics* (2019 ed.). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_209.10.asp

⁵ Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2021). *Washington School Report Card*. Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Retrieved June 16, 2021, from <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>

⁶ From 2014 to 2019, candidates enrolled in in-state teacher preparation programs had to pass Washington's performance assessment, the edTPA.

⁷ The analysis of certification and employment rates looks at a sample of candidates whose first record along the pathway was during 2010–2016. This allows candidates four or more years to become certificated and employed—a year and a half longer than the state average.

⁸ See endnote 7.

⁹ Professional Educator Standards Board. (2019). *Governor Inslee signs bill increasing access to teacher preparation programs*. Retrieved December 22, 2020, from <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAOSPI/bulletins/240aeda>

¹⁰ Professional Educator Standards Board. (2020). *Case-by-case exceptions now available for content knowledge assessment*. Retrieved December 22, 2020, from <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAOSPI/bulletins/2ab33cb>

¹¹ 2.S.H.B. 1028, 67th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2021). Retrieved April, 26, 2021, from <http://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/House%20Passed%20Legislature/1028-52.PL.pdf#page=1>

¹² Petchauer, E. (2012). Teacher licensure exams and Black teacher candidates: Toward new theory and promising practice. *Journal of Negro Education*, 81(3), 252–267. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ998549>

¹³ Gitomer, D. H., Brown, T. L., & Bonett, J. (2011). Useful signal or unnecessary obstacle? The role of basic skills tests in teacher preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(5), 431–445. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ946052>

¹⁴ See endnote 12.

¹⁵ See endnote 13.

This infographic was prepared under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0009 by Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, administered by Education Northwest. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.