

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION

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This report, published every two years, is intended to share specific data on alternative route program candidates and program outcomes, as required by RCW 28A.660.020.

INTRODUCTION

Washington State currently offers four alternative route options for future educators to earn their residency teaching certificate. Compared to a traditional route, where candidates complete their preparation program as part of a bachelor's or master's degree, alternative routes provide options for career changers and district employees to earn their residency teaching certificate through shorter, more flexible, and more affordable programs. Alternative routes are built on strong partnerships between school districts and programs to increase access to the teaching profession and address critical workforce shortages.

Washington has 24 approved alternative route program providers, offering candidates a high-quality teacher preparation experience that prioritizes a year-long residency with a qualified mentor, flexible course delivery, and individualized support and development. These programs prepare candidates to meet the same rigorous standards and requirements as traditional bachelor's or master's degree programs, leading to full residency certification.

The four routes

A candidate's educational background, learning preferences, and professional experience will determine which route is best for them.

- Route 1: For district staff (e.g., paraeducators) with an associate's degree
- Route 2: For district staff with a bachelor's degree
- Route 3: For "career changers" with a bachelor's degree
- Route 4: For district staff with a limited certificate and a bachelor's degree

PROGRAM DATA POLICY

In 2017, the Legislature passed HB 1741, requiring all Washington educator preparation programs, including alternative route programs, to begin submitting candidate data annually to the Education Research and Data Center (ERDC).

To help programs meet the new reporting requirements, ERDC worked closely with PESB to convene an educator preparation program data governance task force composed of preparation program representatives from across Washington. The task force is responsible for coordinating the new data collection and reporting activities, creating and updating reporting manuals and submission templates, and defining and improving data procedures.

The ERDC and data governance task force provided critical guidance on, and support for, successful implementation of the new reporting requirements. PESB will continue to work with these partners to respond to the legislatively mandated questions outlined in this report.

REPORTING CHALLENGES

As of fall 2019, all PESB-approved educator preparation programs have successfully transitioned their data collection policies and procedures to align with HB 1741. However, PESB and ERDC are currently facing two key challenges

to providing the data required for this report: time and capacity.

Time

COVID-19 pandemic

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, statewide shutdowns and subsequent transitions to remote work drastically impacted programs' abilities to access data systems and submit their reports by the November 30 deadline. Program providers required more time and technical assistance, and many submitted their final data reports in the spring of 2021. These submission delays impacted ERDC's ability to analyze and prepare the data, and PESB's ability to meet the legislative reporting requirements by December 1.

Data collection

Another challenge PESB must address is collecting enough data to reflect program outcomes over time accurately. For example, we cannot report three-year retention rates of certified teachers without having five years of program data to review.

When programs began submitting their data reports in 2019, PESB required them to also include candidate data for the preceding five years so that the state could understand program outcomes across multiple years. However, some programs' previous data systems were not designed to capture the specific information PESB was requesting. For these reasons, candidate data prior to 2019 is incomplete and cannot be used to describe program outcomes accurately.

Collecting sufficient candidate data to report program outcomes, particularly around hiring and retaining candidates as certificated teachers, requires data over multiple years. PESB is limited by the number of years they can report data for, given

how recently the state changed the reporting requirements. Programs will continue to submit data annually, improving PESB's and ERDC's ability to analyze and report program outcomes for alternative route candidates that have become certified and entered the teaching workforce.

Capacity

For PESB to accurately report on alternative route program outcomes, the program data must intersect with school district workforce data¹. These are two separate data collections with their own formats. The intersection of the relatively new program data and the district workforce data does not yet exist, and the work required to build that system requires capacity from ERDC and PESB. PESB and ERDC will continue to work together to prepare a system that allows for the intersection of program data with district workforce data.

DATA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this report is to provide specific data and outcomes of Washington's alternative route programs in response to five legislatively mandated questions:

1. What is the number and percentage of alternative route program candidates hired as certificated teachers?
2. What percentage of these candidates identify as members of underrepresented populations in Washington's educator workforce?

¹ School district workforce data is collected and stored annually according to the S-275 reporting process. The S-275 provides a record of certificated and classified employees of Washington school districts and educational service districts.

3. What are the three-year and five-year retention rates of candidates as certificated teachers?
4. What is the average time-to-hire for candidates who have completed an alternative route program?
5. What percentage of candidates are hired in the district where they completed their student teaching experience?

This section details the definitions and methods involved in responding to each question.

1. What is the number and percentage of alternative route program candidates hired as certificated teachers?

Definition

The number and percentage of alternative routes program candidates hired as certificated teachers by Washington P-12 public school districts.

Method

To complete this analysis, we compare the number of candidates hired within the previous three and five years with the total number of candidates enrolled in an alternative route program. The number of enrolled candidates includes those who did not complete² the program and those who did.

² For the purpose of this report, program completers are defined as candidates who the program recommends for teacher certification.

2. What percentage of these candidates identify with groups underrepresented in Washington's educator workforce?

Definition

The number and percentage of alternative routes program enrollees hired as certificated teachers by public school districts who identify with groups underrepresented in Washington's educator workforce. We will disaggregate those hired by the following demographics:

- Race and ethnicity
- Gender
- First-generation college student
- First language is English

Additional categories we may disaggregate by include:

- Age at the time of enrollment
- Alternative route (routes 1, 2, 3, and 4)
- Alternative Routes Block Grant (ARBG) participant³
- Endorsement received⁴
- First hired in a high poverty school, as defined by [WAC 392-140-973](#)

Method

To complete this analysis, we disaggregate the results of the preceding question by the listed demographics and additional categories.

³ [ARBG](#) is a state-funded grant available to alternative route programs. The grant provides candidate-centric funding for alternative route programs and their district partners to provide wraparound support to candidates.

⁴ Endorsement counts include a duplicated headcount for those with multiple endorsements.

3. What are the three-year and five-year retention rates of candidates as certificated teachers?

Definition

The three-year and five-year retention rates of alternative route program candidates hired as certificated teachers by Washington P-12 public school districts.

Method

We will calculate this by comparing the beginning teachers hired in year one to their status in year two, year three, and year five. Teachers in year one are not assumed to finish the entirety of their teaching that year and are tracked into year two. A teacher who returns to teach in year two is considered one year persistent. A teacher who is still teaching in year three is considered three years persistent. A teacher who is still teaching in year five is considered five years persistent. Three and five-year persisters are assumed to finish the entirety of their teaching that year.

It is important to note that school district workforce data from the S275 report has an annual reporting cutoff on October 1. Teachers hired after that date will not appear in that year's S275 data.

4. What is the average time-to-hire for candidates who have completed an alternative route program?

Definition

The time for candidates completing an alternative route program to be initially hired as a certificated

teacher by a Washington P-12 public school district after being recommended for certification.

Method

We will display the percentages of teachers hired by a public school district at the milestones of one, three, and five years after being recommended for certification. It is important to note that when using school district workforce data from the S275 report, the annual reporting cutoff is October 1. Teachers hired after that date will not appear in that year's S275 data.

5. What percentage of candidates are hired as certificated teachers in the district where they completed their student teaching experience?

Definition

The percentage of alternative route completers hired as certificated teachers by the school district where they completed their residency and student teaching.

Method

We will compare the school district where a candidate's student teaching took place to the school districts where the candidate has worked as a certificated teacher.

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