

Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification

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STATE OF WASHINGTON
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR
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This report details the background, purposes, and methods by which the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) reports every two years on Washington's Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification, as required by Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.660.020.

Introduction

What are alternative routes to teacher certification?

Washington's Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification are preparation programs that feature a residency model, built upon intentional partnerships between districts and teacher preparation programs. The Washington State Legislature created these programs in 2001 to address a shortage of certified teachers and to prioritize particular program design elements, such as yearlong residency-based mentored internships, job-embedded learning, and flexible course delivery.

Washington has four alternative routes that cater to specific populations. All four routes lead to full residency certification.

- 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 bachelor's degree and a limited certificate

The four alternative routes are intended to provide certification pathways for district staff and career changers. Depending on the route, candidates are required to have an associate's or bachelor's degrees and varied levels of educator-based experience, and they may serve in their current district role.

Legislative background

Prior to April 2017, RCW 28A.660.040 governed alternative routes. Through passage of HB 1654, the Legislature transitioned the specific program requirements to expectations for program outcomes, seen in the Purpose section. PESB subsequently reestablished the four routes within Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 181-80. This change has created greater flexibility to improve program definitions and designs based on feedback from candidates, stakeholders, and through an ongoing review of processes and performance data.

In 2018, two advisory groups began work to support and inform these changes. PESB convened an alternative routes steering committee that reviewed and made recommendations for revisions to alternative routes policy. These changes included the addition of a definitions section and created consistency across program design elements and ongoing program review.

The Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) collaborated with PESB to convene an Educator Preparation Program Data Governance Task Force in response to the legislative action HB 1741. This act requires all preparation programs to submit data about their candidates to ERDC, rather than directly to PESB. The task force coordinates preparation programs' data collection and reporting activities to support this process, and continues to define and refine new data procedures. This requires extensive changes to the ways in which preparation program providers gather, use, and report data about their candidates, including candidates in alternative routes programs.

Data collection

Preparation program providers submitted annual data about their candidates and programming directly to PESB prior to HB 1741. Educator preparation programs submitted these data at the program unit, which means PESB received information about the numbers and percentages of, for example, candidates of color, candidates' assessment data, graduates' hiring rates, and rates of retention in Washington P-12. HB 1741 mandated changes to this process that would result in program providers submitting data at the candidate unit directly to ERDC, who would then aggregate the data and provide them to PESB. This change required new data collection and reporting manuals, data submission templates, and individualized technical assistance to providers.

As of fall 2019, all preparation programs approved by PESB have changed their data collection policies and procedures in alignment with HB 1741 and the requirements of this alternative routes report. However, with those changes, not all programs have finished this work, which has challenged PESB to compile a complete report of all alternative routes candidates for this reporting cycle. Preparation program providers have experienced three types of challenges in collecting and reporting the data. Specifically, program leaders describe challenges related to 1) capacity, 2) change management, and 3) data systems integration.

Capacity

All preparation programs employ data stewards or administrators who carry the responsibility for data governance and reporting; however, the data science backgrounds and allocated full time equivalency of these staff members varies greatly among programs. While some programs have full time support of institutional research

departments and data scientists, other programs have part-time data stewards who have less background in data governance and may have additional responsibilities beyond data governance. Some of these preparation programs require additional time and technical assistance, particularly those that are smaller and newer.

Change management

The changes to these data collection and reporting are far-reaching and challenging but will ultimately lead to more accurate, reliable, and responsive data sets for program review and policy analysis. The change management processes needed to overhaul data collection and reporting procedures are demanding. All programs are engaged in this process, though not all programs have completed it. Variability in managing this change involves not only program capacity, but also differences in providers' data systems and the process of integrating these data systems with the ERDC data system.

Data systems integration

Program providers use varied data systems to collect and report program information. Again, smaller and newer programs tend to have less developed data infrastructures, resulting in a need for additional time and technical assistance to prepare valid and reliable program data during the transition. Data administrators at all programs continue to cooperate with ERDC and PESB staff to address these challenges. With this ongoing technical assistance from PESB and ERDC staff, program leaders will complete these changes by spring 2020. This will enable PESB and ERDC to compile and validate the complete dataset needed to respond to each of the five key questions in this report in fall 2020 and beyond.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Legislature, and the public, with details on alternative routes programs by responding to five key questions:

1. What are the number and percentage of alternative routes program completers hired in Washington P-12 public schools?
2. What percentage of these completers identify as members of candidate groups historically underrepresented in Washington's educator workforce?
3. What are the three-year and five-year retention rates of these candidates in Washington P-12 public schools?
4. What is the average time-to-hire for these candidates who have completed an alternative route program?
5. What percentage of program completers are hired within the districts in which they completed student teaching experiences?

Responses to these questions would not have been possible prior to transitioning data practices to the candidate unit and without the support of ERDC and the Educator Preparation Program Data Governance Task Force. As the work of this group continues to support all preparation programs' capacity, change management, and data systems integration, PESB will continue to respond to these key questions annually and report responses to the Legislature every odd year.

Methods

This section details the definitions, data elements, and methods involved in responding to each of these questions.

What are the number and percentage of alternative routes program completers hired in Washington P-12 public schools?

Definition

The number and percentage of alternative routes program completers hired as certificated teachers.

Data elements

This analysis requires the number of program completers, by program; the number of these completers hired by school districts; and the total number of candidates enrolled in alternative route programs across the state.

Method

To complete this analysis annually, we compare the number of candidates hired within the previous three years and five years respectively with the total number of alternative routes program completers, including those who were not hired. This count will include the number of candidates ever recommended for certification from a given enrollment year.

What percentage of these completers identify as members of candidate groups historically underrepresented in Washington's educator workforce?

Definition

The percentages of alternative routes program completers who identified as members of candidate groups historically underrepresented in the Washington teacher workforce. We may disaggregate those hired by the following candidate group identifiers:

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

- Alternative route (Routes 1, 2, 3, and 4)
- Alternative Routes Block Grant participant
- Endorsement received (duplicated headcount for those with multiple endorsements)
- Hired in "challenging schools," as defined by WAC 392-140-973

Method

To complete this analysis, we disaggregate the results of question one by the candidate group identifiers listed above.

What are the three-year and five-year retention rates of these candidates in Washington P-12 public schools?

Definition

The three-year and five-year retention rates of alternative routes program completers who were subsequently hired by 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 in year one and so 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 when using S275 data as the "hired" source, the reporting cutoff is October 1; teachers hired after that date will not appear in that year's S275 data.

What is the average time-to-hire for these candidates who have completed an alternative routes program?

Definition

The time taken by each candidate completing a program to be initially hired as a P-12 public school teacher after being recommended for certification.

Method

We will display the percentages of teachers hired by a P-12 public school at the milestones of one, three, and five years after being recommended for certification. It is important to note that when using S275 as the "hired" source, the reporting cutoff is October 1; teachers hired after that date will not appear in that year's S275. These percentages will be placed in context of candidates completing any approved preparation program.

What percentage of program completers are hired within the districts in which they completed student teaching experiences?

Definition

The percentage of alternative routes completers that were hired by the district in which they completed their alternative routes program residency.

Method

Using certificate numbers of mentor teachers of alternative routes completers, we will identify the districts in which a candidate's field experiences took place during the year the program recommended the candidate for certification. The districts the mentor teacher was employed in will be compared to the districts the recommended alternative routes completer has ever worked in as a certificated teacher.

Professional Educator Standards Board

Mission

Leveraging educator voice through policy innovation, removing barriers, creating equitable access to opportunities, and fostering professional standards that prioritize advancement for each and every student.

Vision

Foster reflective educators who intentionally respond to the unique needs of each and every student and empower them to be engaged community members.

Contact us

Please contact us at pathways@k12.wa.us for questions about this report.