



Texas Classroom
Teachers Association

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Testimony to the House Public Education Committee

Re: Interim Charge regarding uncertified teachers

Examine the causes for and the impact to student outcomes of the increasing number of newly hired Texas teachers who are not certified by the State Board for Educator Certification. Make recommendations to enhance opportunities for uncertified teachers to become certified and strengthen parental rights and notifications.

By Holly Eaton

Director of Professional Development and Advocacy

August 13, 2024

Thank you for this opportunity to testify about an issue that goes directly to the heart of the teaching profession. We would like to convey two important messages:

First, the proliferation of uncertified teachers in our schools is hurting our students by worsening the learning gaps precipitated by the COVID pandemic, compromising student safety, and hurting the teaching profession by increasing teacher attrition rates.

Second, the state needs to invest in the teaching profession, specifically by devoting resources to teacher retention.

Both of these issues must be addressed in concert with one another, using both short-term and long-term strategies.

Our comments include data, both quantitative and qualitative, which support our statement about the detrimental impact of the increased use of uncertified teachers to instruct our students, as well as our recommendations for addressing these concerns.

The qualitative data is in the form of survey results which we compiled from a survey of TCTA members to which 1460 responded. Please note that this is not a formal survey, but rather a series of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions emailed to our members to gather anecdotal information about their experiences with uncertified teachers. The results are attached to this testimony, and you will see them represented in several graphs along with a summary of responses to the open-ended questions.

By far, the most oft-expressed concern by our members was that the lack of quality instruction students are receiving from uncertified teachers is an immense disservice to the students and puts them at risk of falling further and further behind academically.



The proliferation of uncertified teachers in our schools is hurting our students by worsening the learning gaps precipitated by the COVID pandemic, compromising student safety, and hurting the teaching profession by increasing teacher attrition rates.

- **Detrimental impact on student learning**

A recent Texas study found that students with uncertified teachers who had no prior classroom experience experienced learning losses equivalent to approximately 4 months in reading and 3 months in math compared to those with certified teachers during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years.¹ This is particularly alarming given the struggles that students already face in closing the learning gaps precipitated by the COVID pandemic.

This issue of students falling further behind is one that is also reflected in our members' responses to our survey. When asked to identify any areas of need for uncertified teachers in their experience, the list was long and sobering, and is included in the summary attached to this testimony. For example, our members listed basic content knowledge as an area of need, along with foundational skills to teach literacy and mathematics, appropriate professional behavior, pedagogical knowledge, lesson planning and delivery, classroom management, teaching strategies, student development, and communicating with parents, to name a few. As one member put it "*The knowledge gap is astounding.*"

As stated earlier, the number one concern expressed by our members in survey results was about students falling further behind. One member said, "*It's a disservice to our students....We are giving them an education provided by people who are not properly educated themselves on how to administer the curriculum provided.*"

Another said, "*This isn't a learn as you go type of career. You need as much foundational knowledge as you can get before stepping into a classroom. It isn't fair to the students or the current (professionally trained and certified) staff.*"

Lastly, one member responded, "*Parents and the community deserve to know who they are and what they are teaching. It isn't fair to let the public assume their students have qualified teachers when they really don't.*"

- **Compromised student safety**

Certified educators are subject to the disciplinary and ethics rules of the Texas State Board for Educator Certification. As such, their certificates can be sanctioned for conduct including inappropriate relationships with students, violation of state student assessment security, or abandoning contracts without good cause. Uncertified educators are not subject to such state oversight and as a result, student safety can be compromised. Concerns about the lack of state sanction authority over uncertified teachers was reflected in our survey results. For example, one member expressed concern about "*A huge risk in safety, accountability, and learning progress for our students.*"



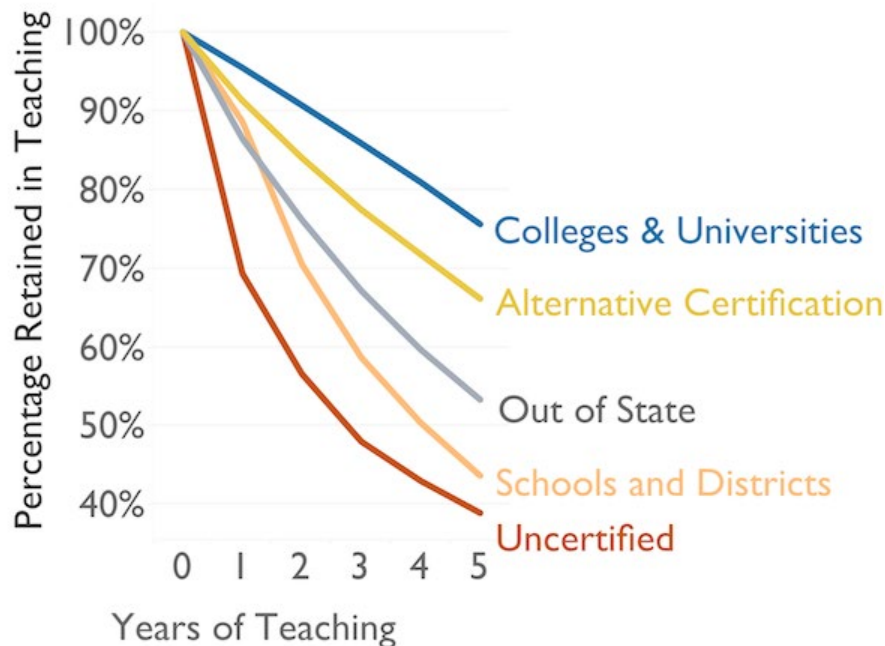
Another noted, *“Many quit before the end of the school year, and those who do finish the year don’t return.”*

Another said, *“I worry they will do something inappropriate or illegal without realizing it.”*

- **Worsening teacher attrition**

High attrition rates among teachers who are inadequately prepared for the classroom are well-documented. Therefore, it stands to reason that uncertified teachers who have received no formal training or preparation for the classroom are unlikely to stay in the profession for long. But the magnitude of the difference in attrition rates for this group compared to traditionally prepared teachers is astonishing, as illustrated by the graphic below from a July 2024 report by the UTeach Institute at the University of Texas.ⁱⁱ

The timeframe covered by this graphic is from 2014-2015 to 2020-2021, which is prior to the rapid increase in the number of uncertified teachers in schools in the last couple of years.



This increase in teacher attrition rates creates more “churn” in the teacher workforce. This in turn negatively impacts student learning. Several studies have provided empirical evidence for a direct effect of teacher turnover on student achievement, with teacher turnover having a significant and negative impact on student achievement in both math and ELA. Moreover, teacher turnover is particularly harmful to the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and black students.ⁱⁱⁱ

This churn created by high attrition rates of uncertified teachers is also something observed by our members. As one member put it, *“My biggest concern is that they often do not keep teaching for*



very long. It adds to the problem of a high turnover rate. They often after a year or two find it too difficult and move on to something else.”

Another wrote, “When they decide teaching isn’t for them they leave and never get certified thus restarting the cycle all over again with another new uncertified teacher.”

“Without having spent time working in a school environment before, many uncertified teachers get overwhelmed or disillusioned quickly and leave, sometimes mid-year. Without any training in classroom management or discipline, many uncertified teachers lose control of their classrooms early on and cannot recover to create an environment where learning occurs.”

In addition, teacher turnover is costly. A recent study in Texas found that the cost for replacing each teacher who leaves exceeds \$10,800 in a rural district, \$13,200 in a suburban district, and \$25,200 in an urban district.^{iv}

- **Increased workload and stress on other teachers and staff.**

State student assessment administration: One of the recurring survey responses to the question about ramifications for other teachers and staff when uncertified teachers are hired was about the additional strain that is put on certified teachers when it comes to administering the state assessment to students. This is due to the fact that anyone administering the state assessment who is not certified is required to be supervised by certified personnel. This results in certified teachers doing double duty to administer tests themselves as well as supervise any uncertified personnel administering tests. As noted earlier, unlike certified personnel, uncertified personnel are not subject to certificate sanctions due to conduct compromising test security or confidentiality.

Help with basics of teaching: Additionally, other teachers and staff experience increased demand to provide uncertified teachers with lesson materials, modeling instruction, assistance with grading, assistance with classroom management, and contacting parents, often without reduction of other duties or extra compensation. This extra stress and burden on other teachers was poignantly articulated by our members in numerous survey responses:

“Other teachers are asked repeatedly to provide instructional support, curriculum, and other materials. They have also been asked to provide lesson plans. This is unfortunate as those certified teachers are carrying their load and the uncertified teacher loads without acknowledgment or compensation. It undermines the idea of team and support and causes a rift in relationships throughout the teaching staff.”

“Although I don’t mind helping these teachers, I am also responsible for teaching multiple state tested subjects, and teaching uncertified teachers takes time and energy away from what I could be giving to my students.”

“It adds stress to teachers who are already at a breaking point and wanting to leave the profession.”



“It places a much heavier load on the certified teachers to make sure everything is at the level it needs to be for students in the uncertified teachers’ classrooms. All of the pressure is placed on the certified teachers, which has led to that number decreasing at the end of every school year.”

- **Decline in morale**

A number of survey responses focused on the school-wide impact occurring as a result of the presence of uncertified teachers, including lowering of standards and feelings of resentment:

“The expected standards of quality at our school have fallen. As a result, the expectations of the students are already lowered.”

“When expectations are lowered for some, there’s an unintentional lowering of expectations for all. Further, placing untrained and inadequately prepared people into classrooms often results in increased student academic and behavioral challenges across campus that impact all staff.”

“The profession of teaching is more than a body in the classroom and a payday. It requires dedication to keep learning and growing as a professional.”

“They don’t have the background/knowledge that certified teachers have yet their pay is the same.”

“We are expected to take up the slack and ignore their inadequacy. It has been detrimental to overall moral.”

The state needs to invest in the teaching profession, specifically by devoting resources to teacher retention.

- **Teacher shortages are driven primarily by attrition:** More than 9 in 10 vacancies nationally in any given year are a result of teachers who left the year before. The large majority of those who leave teaching are not retiring, but are dissatisfied with the conditions of teaching or with aspects of their current position.^v In Texas, the proportion of annual teacher demand due to prior year attrition from the state workforce is now even higher than the national average; in 2021–22, 99.7% of statewide hires were to replace teachers who had left teaching in Texas public schools the year before.^{vi}
- **Reasons for teacher attrition:** The reasons for teacher attrition have been well-documented, consistent, and are namely due to poor compensation and working conditions.
 - **Inadequate compensation.** Inadequate compensation is directly connected to teachers both leaving the profession and moving to other districts. Both the absolute level of compensation, adjusted for costs of living, and the gap between pay in teaching



- and other professions can drive attrition. The overall mean teacher salary in Texas, averaged across years of experience, was \$57,641 as of 2021–22, ranking 28th in the nation. Texas also ranks 28th nationally in teacher wage competitiveness, with teachers earning only 78.5% of what their college-educated counterparts earn. Meanwhile, according to the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Advancement of Teacher Education at the University of Houston, the state average teacher wage premium for experience (i.e., the additional marginal pay for each year of teaching) has fallen by 44% over the past decade.^{vii}
- **Working conditions.** A large body of evidence shows there is a strong link between teacher working conditions and teacher turnover and attrition.^{viii} There is also a significant link between teaching and learning conditions and school performance.^{ix} The six facets of working conditions that appear to be the driving factors behind teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession are: support for new teachers, generous salary schedules, fewer student discipline problems, adequate resources and classroom supplies, effective school leadership, and enhanced faculty input into school decision-making.^x Research from Texas mirrors this national research, specifically finding that common reasons that teachers leave the profession prior to retirement include accountability pressures, lack of administrative support, and dissatisfaction with working conditions and opportunities for advancement.^{xi}
 - **Texas response to teacher shortages.** A major and long-standing state policy response to teacher shortages in Texas has been to create more avenues into the profession, many of which involve lowering entry standards or bypassing them completely. (See attached TEA Certification Flexibility chart. <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/covid/21-22-cert-assignment-flexibility.pdf>) Although certification waivers and school district teaching permits have been in existence for decades, the more recent explosion of uncertified teachers teaching in Texas schools can be attributed to legislation passed in 2015 authorizing school districts to exempt themselves from a majority of the Education Code via the district of innovation process. Other than reporting to TEA that a district intends to vote on a DOI plan containing exemptions from statutory requirements, there is no state oversight of these districts, nor is there any systematic data collection regarding these exemptions or their impact on schools and students.^{xii} TEA is required to report annually to the legislature each provision from which districts enrolling a majority of students in this state are exempt. From the information available to TCTA starting in 2016, we know that TEA has reported exemption from certification as one of the topmost exemptions that DOI districts seek every year. The number has grown exponentially. Data from May 2024 show that 946 districts enrolling approximately 4.6 million students are exempting themselves from teacher certification requirements. Additionally, certification exemptions are described broadly in most DOI plans, making it extremely difficult to ascertain exactly which subjects and grade levels are affected.

This is deeply concerning, given that educator certification is essentially a stamp of approval by the state that the educator is competent to perform the job. In Texas, this means the individual has undergone state-prescribed training via an approved educator



preparation program and has demonstrated competency both in content and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Such a certificate, or license, is one of the key hallmarks of a profession, which, by definition, is predominantly intellectual, requires the acquisition of a distinct body of knowledge and skills through extensive preparation, and involves the exercise of discretion and judgment.

Additionally, licensure exam scores and certification in the taught subject are generally correlated with enhanced student learning.^{xiii}

As of May 2024, 411 districts, enrolling 1.3 million students, had exempted themselves from parent notice of uncertified teachers which is normally required under TEC Section 21.057. Again, this is deeply concerning. Parents should be notified if their child is being taught by an uncertified teacher.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the premise that the issues we have outlined in our testimony must be addressed via a combination of short-term and long-term initiatives. Short-term efforts to invest in increasing the certification rates of uncertified teachers will be largely ineffective without long-term state investment in teacher retention, because the issues that drive teacher attrition will not have been addressed.

- **Invest in increasing certification rates of uncertified teachers**

Establish state-level incentives for uncertified teachers to become certified, along with a state-level timeline by which an uncertified teacher must become certified in order to remain in the classroom. A potential strategy is a funded state-level grant program that awards districts funding to pay for uncertified teachers to become certified, as well as to pay certified teachers more than uncertified teachers. A number of Texas districts are doing this already, including Aldine, Alief, Ft. Bend, Spring, and Pasadena ISDs (see attachment for details). In order to address potential counterproductive market forces that are at play, a regional approach to awarding grants and funding could be taken so that neighboring districts adopt the same practices and policies regarding uncertified teachers. Other states have taken similar approaches with significant success. For example, Connecticut's Education Enhancement Act allocated funds on an equalizing basis tied to district wealth and the number of fully certified teachers, creating incentives for districts to recruit those who met new certification standards and for individuals to meet those standards. With these incentives, plus service scholarships to underwrite preparation for high-need candidates and a new mentoring program for all beginning teachers, the state eliminated emergency credentials and attracted a surplus of high-ability teacher candidates within three years.^{xiv}



- **Prohibit DOI exemptions from educator certification requirements and parent notification requirements.**
- **Authorize and require state data collection regarding school district use of uncertified teachers**, including information about the district and campus location of these teachers, the length of time they serve, and impact on student learning.
- **Invest in teacher retention**

- **Compensation**

Generally, although there has been an increase in funding invested in public education over the last decade, teacher salaries are not keeping pace. **For this reason, state law should include a provision that directly increases teacher salaries as funding for schools is increased.**

TCTA requests the committee recommend funding that is dedicated to across-the-board salary increases for teachers and other non-administrative education professionals that at least brings salaries to the national average and accounts for inflation in future years.

Additionally, school employees are facing a crisis of health insurance unaffordability that must be recognized as a factor in low morale. An employee participating in the TRS-administered ActiveCare insurance plan who needs family coverage will pay a median premium of \$1,554/month in regional-based premiums for the LOWEST level of coverage. The state's \$75 monthly per-member contribution has not changed since the inception of the program more than two decades ago. **Increasing the state's contribution to active employee health insurance must be part of the teacher compensation discussion.**

- **Working Conditions**

Although many facets of teacher working conditions may be under the control of local school districts and administrators, the state still has a significant role to play.

First, the state should engage in comprehensive and systematic data collection regarding teacher working conditions. This step is foundational to enabling state policymakers as well as local school district leadership to develop an understanding of the particular facets of teacher working conditions that impact teacher job satisfaction and retention. Many states engage in this kind of data collection via a routinely administered survey of teachers.^{xv} In fact, Texas law (TEC Section 7.065) currently provides for the Commissioner of Education to develop and administer an online survey to be administered statewide at least biennially to superintendents, principals, supervisors, classroom teachers, counselors, and other appropriate full-time professional employees who are required to hold a certificate. The survey was initially funded via a budget rider, and TEA contracted with the New Teacher Center, a national organization that has conducted similar



surveys in other states, to help develop and administer the survey in 2014. However, the survey has not been administered since that time. **TCTA strongly encourages that funding for this survey be reinstated and ongoing.**

In addition to data collection by the state, we know based on recent survey data of teachers in Texas and four other states by the RAND Corporation, that, for example, teachers who had access to school administrators who support their decisions about managing student behavior and who feel that they belong in their schools were less likely – by a difference of more than 20 percentage points – to report that they experienced burnout, constant job-related stress, and difficulty coping with their job-related stress than teachers who did not report access to such working conditions. In addition, how teachers spend their time appears to make a difference in well-being. Teachers who reported spending more time interacting with students, spending less time on administrative tasks, and having some control over their teaching schedule or course assignments also reported better well-being. **Accordingly, the legislature should act upon this information by enacting legislation to support teachers’ authority and autonomy in these areas, including student behavior management, protection of teacher time, and influence in local decision-making.**^{xvi}

Last, the state should increase funding for the Mentor Program Allotment, especially given the increased number of certified teachers who are being asked to mentor uncertified teachers.^{xvii}

TCTA greatly appreciates this opportunity to testify and looks forward to working with the committee to restore the health of the teaching profession in order to best serve our students.

ⁱ Kirksey, J. (2024). *Amid rising number of uncertified teachers, previous classroom experience proves vital in Texas.* <https://hdl.handle.net/2346/98166>

ⁱⁱ *Beyond the Tipping Point: The Emerging Landscape of Texas Teacher Preparation and Student Opportunity* <https://uteachinstitute.medium.com/beyond-the-tipping-point-the-emerging-landscape-of-texas-teacher-preparation-and-student-d204ffb32e79> Jul 9, 2024

ⁱⁱⁱ Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). *How teacher turnover harms student achievement.* *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 4-36; Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2020). *The hidden costs of teacher turnover.* *AERA Open*, 6(1), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2332858420905812>

^{iv} Bland, J. A., Wojcikiewicz, S. K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Wei, W. (2023). *Strengthening pathways into the teaching profession in Texas: Challenges and opportunities.* Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/957.902>

^v Id.

^{vi} Id. Specifically, Texas districts hired 42,973 teachers in 2021–22. Of those, 42,839 (99.7%) were hired to replace teachers who had left teaching in Texas public schools the year before. Meanwhile, statewide teacher retirements ranged from 7,423 in 2018 to 8,611 in 2021, representing 19 to 20% of the next year’s incoming workforce. This means that 80 to 81% of teacher departures in Texas in each of the past 4 years have been for reasons other than retirement. Source for new hire and attrition data: Texas Education Agency. (2022). Employed teacher attrition and new hires 2007–08 through 2021–22.

<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/employed-teacher-attrition-and-new-hires-jbl220825.pdf> (accessed 12/06/22); Source for retirement data: Personal communication with Texas Education Agency educator data, research, and strategy staff (2022, September 29).

^{vii} Id., citing Texas Education Agency. (n.d.). 2022–2023 minimum salary schedule. <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/salary-and-service-record/minimum-salary-schedule/2022-2023-minimum-salary-schedule> (accessed 12/06/22); National Education Association. (2022). Educator pay and student spending: How does your state rank? <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/educator-pay-and-student-spending-how-does-your-state-rank> (accessed 12/06/22); Allegretto, S. (2022). The teacher pay penalty has hit a new high: Trends in teacher wages and compensation through 2021. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-penalty-2022/>; 2022 update to Horn, C., Burnett, C., Lowery, S., & White, C. (2021). Texas teacher workforce report. University of Houston College of Education. Draft of 2022 update provided via personal correspondence on October 5, 2022.

^{viii} Geiger, T., & Pivovarova, M. (2018). The effects of working conditions on teacher retention. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(6), 604–625, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13540602.2018.1457524?scroll=top&needAccess=true>; Scheinert-Reichl, K.A., Kitil, J.J., & Hanson-Peterson, J. (2017). To reach the students, teach the teachers: A national scan of teacher preparation and social and emotional learning. Report prepared for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional learning. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED582029.pdf>, citing Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership*, 60, 30–33; Simon, N. S., & Johnson, S. M. (2015). Teacher turnover in high-poverty schools: What we know and can do. *Teachers College Record*, 117(3), 1–36. <https://www.tcrecord.org/library/content.asp?contentid=17810>; Marinell, W. H., & Coca, V. M. (2013). Who stays and who leaves? Findings from a three part study of teacher turnover in NYC middle schools. New York, NY: Research Alliance for NYC Schools https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-01/TTPSynthesis_Report_March2013.pdf; Why do Teachers Quit?, *The Atlantic*, October, 2013 <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/why-do-teachers-quit/280699/>; Moore CM, The Role of School Environment in Teacher Dissatisfaction Among U.S. Public School Teachers. *SAGE Open*. January 2012. doi:10.1177/2158244012438888; Ladd, H. F. (2011). Teachers’ perceptions of their working conditions. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 33(2), 235–261; <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0162373711398128>; Ingersoll, R. M., & May, H. (2011). Recruitment, retention and the minority teacher shortage. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

https://www.cpre.org/sites/default/files/researchreport/1221_minorityteachersshortagereportrr69septfinal.pdf; Allensworth, E., Ponisciak, S., & Mazzeo, C. (2009). The schools teachers leave: Teacher mobility in Chicago Public Schools. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research—University of Chicago https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/CCSR_Teacher_Mobility.pdf; Johnson, S. M., Berg, J. H., & Donaldson, M. L. (2005). Who stays in teaching and why? A review of the literature on teacher retention. Washington, DC: National Retired Teachers Association, https://projectngt.gse.harvard.edu/files/gse-projectngt/files/harvard_report.pdf; Guarino, Cassandra M., Lucrecia Santibanez, Glenn A. Daley, and Dominic J. Brewer, A Review of the Research Literature on Teacher Recruitment and Retention. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2004. https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR164.html.

^{ix} Berry, B., Bastian, K. C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Kini, T. (2021). The importance of teaching and learning conditions: Influences on teacher retention and school performance in North Carolina. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/leandro-teaching-and-learning-conditions-brief>

^x The Mathematics and Science Teacher Shortage: Fact and Myth, By Richard M. Ingersoll and David Perda, University of Pennsylvania, March, 2009, CPRE Research Report #RR-62

https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=cpre_researchreports

^{xi} Van Overschelde, J. P., & Wiggins, A. Y. (2017). *Planting seeds in fertile soil: Assessing teacher employment environments in Texas*. Texas Education Research Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED615453.pdf>;

Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Diversifying the teaching profession*: Charles Butt Foundation. (2022). The 2022 Texas teacher poll: Persistent problems and a path forward. <https://charlesbuttdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022-teacher-poll.pdf>

^{xii} To become a District of Innovation, the school board must adopt a resolution or a majority of the district-level committee must submit a petition to initiate the process. The board then holds a public hearing and appoints a committee to develop an innovation plan. Membership on the committee is not defined by law and districts have taken vastly different approaches to selecting their appointees. Any innovation plan must provide for a “comprehensive educational program” for the district, identifying those Education Code provisions that inhibit the goals of the plan. Once the plan is drafted, it is posted online for at least 30 days, notification is sent to the Commissioner of Education that the district intends to vote on the plan, and the district-level committee holds a public meeting to discuss and vote on the final version of the plan. After these steps are completed, the board must approve the plan by a two-thirds majority vote. Once adopted by the board, the district becomes a District of Innovation and begins operating in accordance with the innovation plan. The term of the plan is up to five years and it may be amended, rescinded, or renewed if the action is approved by the district-level committee and approved by a two-thirds vote of the school board. (see Tex. Educ. Code §12A.001-§12A.007).

^{xiii} Sorensen, L. C., & Ladd, H. F. (2020). *The hidden costs of teacher turnover*. AERA Open, 6(1), 2332858420905812

^{xiv} Bland, J. A., Wojcikiewicz, S. K., Darling-Hammond, L., & Wei, W. (2023). *Strengthening pathways into the teaching profession in Texas: Challenges and opportunities*. Learning Policy Institute.

<https://doi.org/10.54300/957.902>. See also, Connecticut introducing a new program offering educator preparation providers (EPPs) funds to help defray the cost of licensure tests. These funds can be used for licensure test fees as well as background checks and fingerprinting costs. The money will be allocated among EPPs based on their enrollment, and EPPs will set the criteria for how they distribute the funds.

<https://news.southernct.edu/2022/06/03/new-grants-will-offset-test-costs-for-aspiring-teachers/>

^{xv} ON THE PATH TO EQUITY: IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BEGINNING TEACHERS, Alliance for Excellent Education, July, 2014 (pg 10) <https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PathToEquity.pdf>;
Ohio: <https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Teaching/Educator-Equity/TELL-Ohio/TELL-main-survey.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US> Tennessee: <http://tn.gov/education/topic/educator-survey>

^{xvi} Redding, C. et al., 2023. *Working Conditions Related to Positive Teacher Well-Being Vary Across States: Findings from the 2022 Learn Together Survey*, RAND Corporation. United States. [RAND_RRA827-15.pdf](https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/202307/RAND_RRA827-15.pdf)

^{xvii} <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/educator-initiatives-and-performance/mentor-program-allotment>

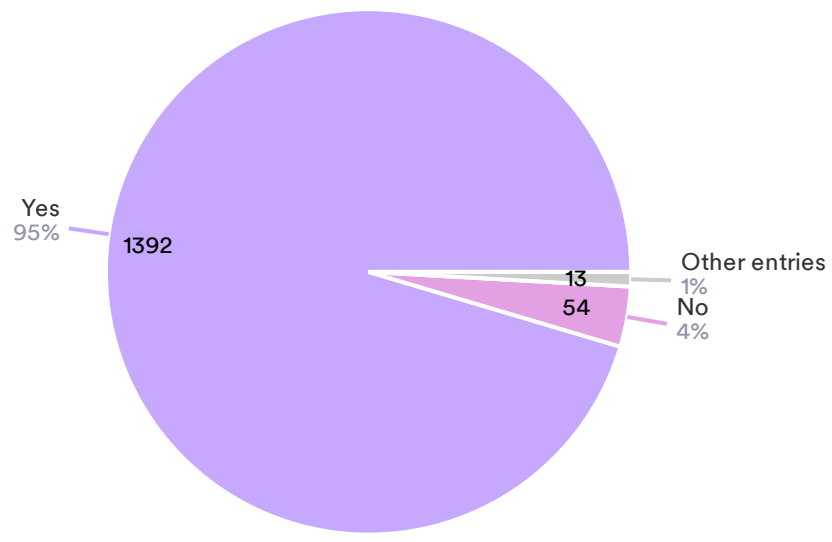
TCTA Survey on Uncertified Teachers

Survey conducted July 25-Aug. 5, 2024 | 1,460 unique submissions

TCTA Survey on Uncertified Teachers

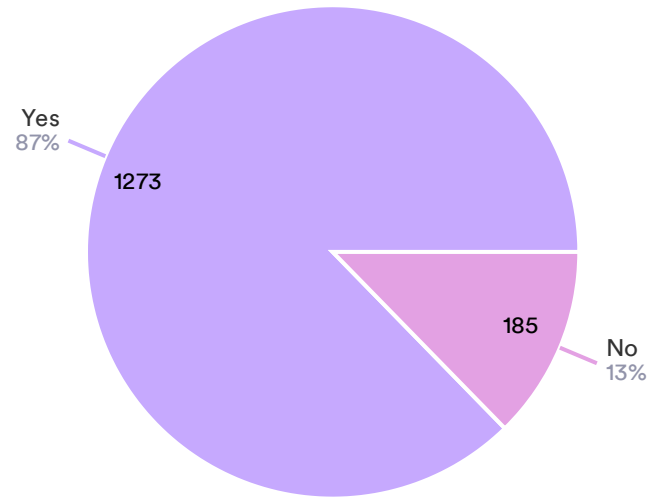
Are you a certified teacher in Texas?

1459 Responses- 1 Empty



Do you have experience working with one or more uncertified teachers?

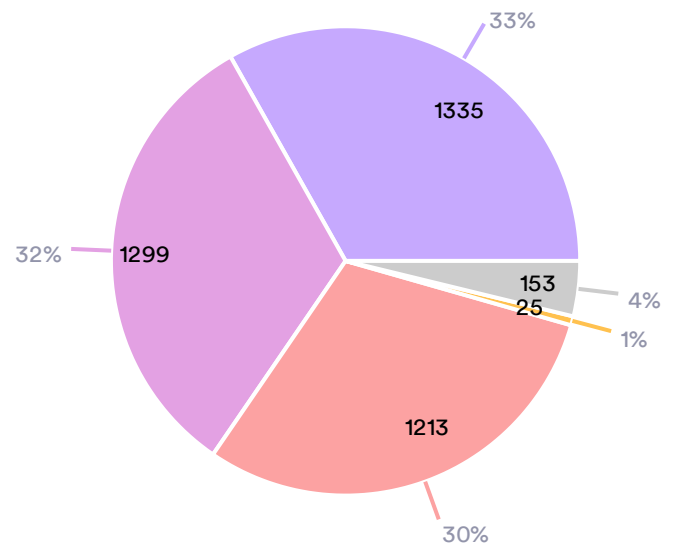
1458 Responses- 2 Empty



TCTA Survey on Uncertified Teachers

If districts continue to hire uncertified teachers, what types of support should be provided to them? (Select all that apply.)

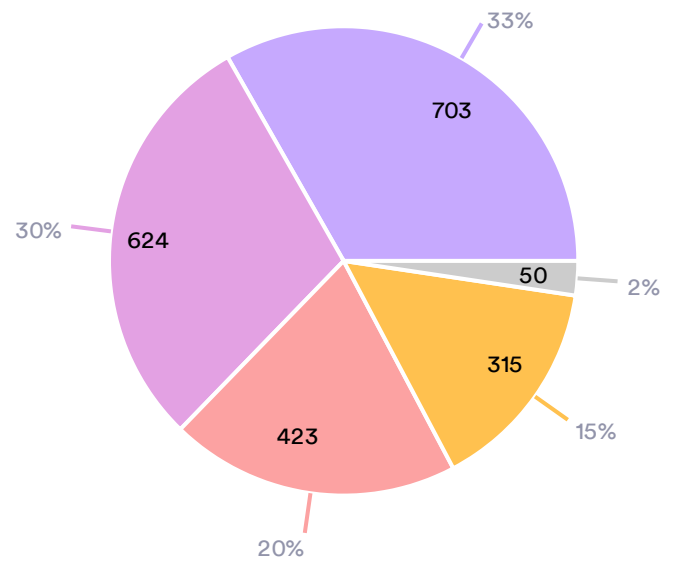
4025 Responses- 6 Empty



● Mentoring
 ● Targeted professional development
 ● Coaching
 ● None of these/Don't know
 ● Other entries

Is your district providing any of the following types of support to uncertified teachers? (Select all that apply.)

2115 Responses- 10 Empty

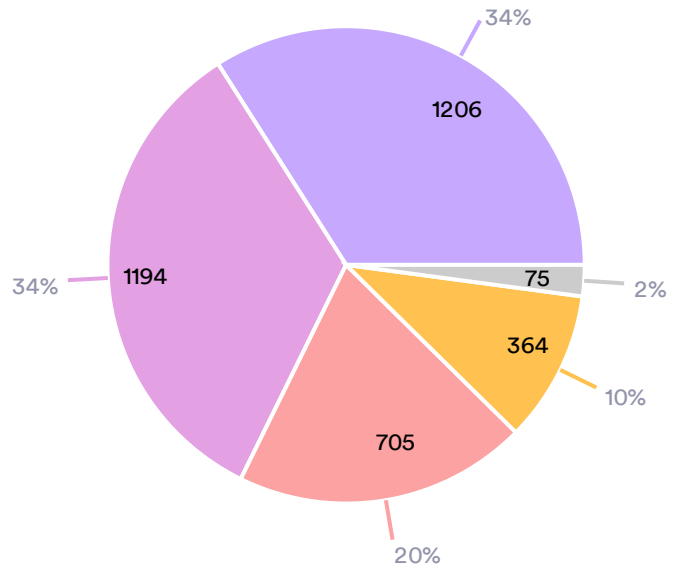


● Mentoring
 ● None of these/Don't know
 ● Coaching
 ● Targeted professional development
 ● Other entries

TCTA Survey on Uncertified Teachers

Which of the following do you think districts should do regarding uncertified teachers? (Select all that apply.)

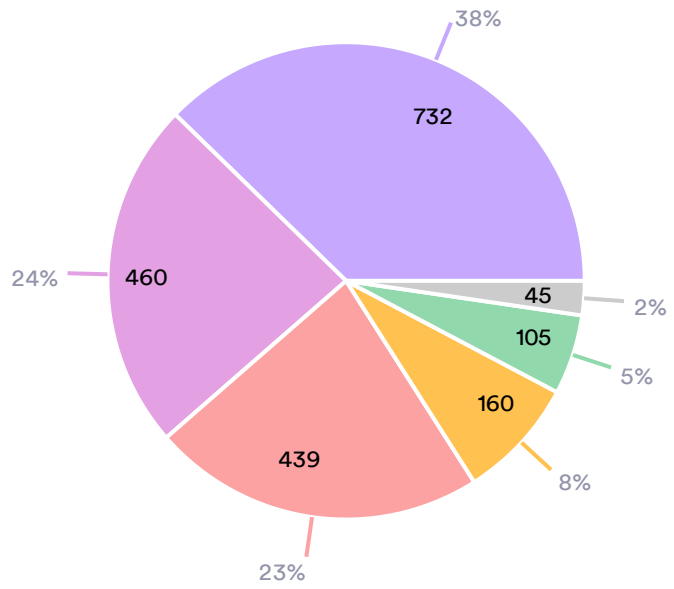
3544 Responses- 3 Empty



- Provide a deadline by which the teacher must become certified
- Require them to enroll in an educator preparation program
- Provide financial incentives to become certified (e.g., differentiated salaries between certified and uncertified teachers)
- Provide financial assistance for becoming certified (e.g., pay for the educator preparation program)
- Other entries

Does your district do any of the following regarding uncertified teachers? (Select all that apply.)

1941 Responses- 12 Empty

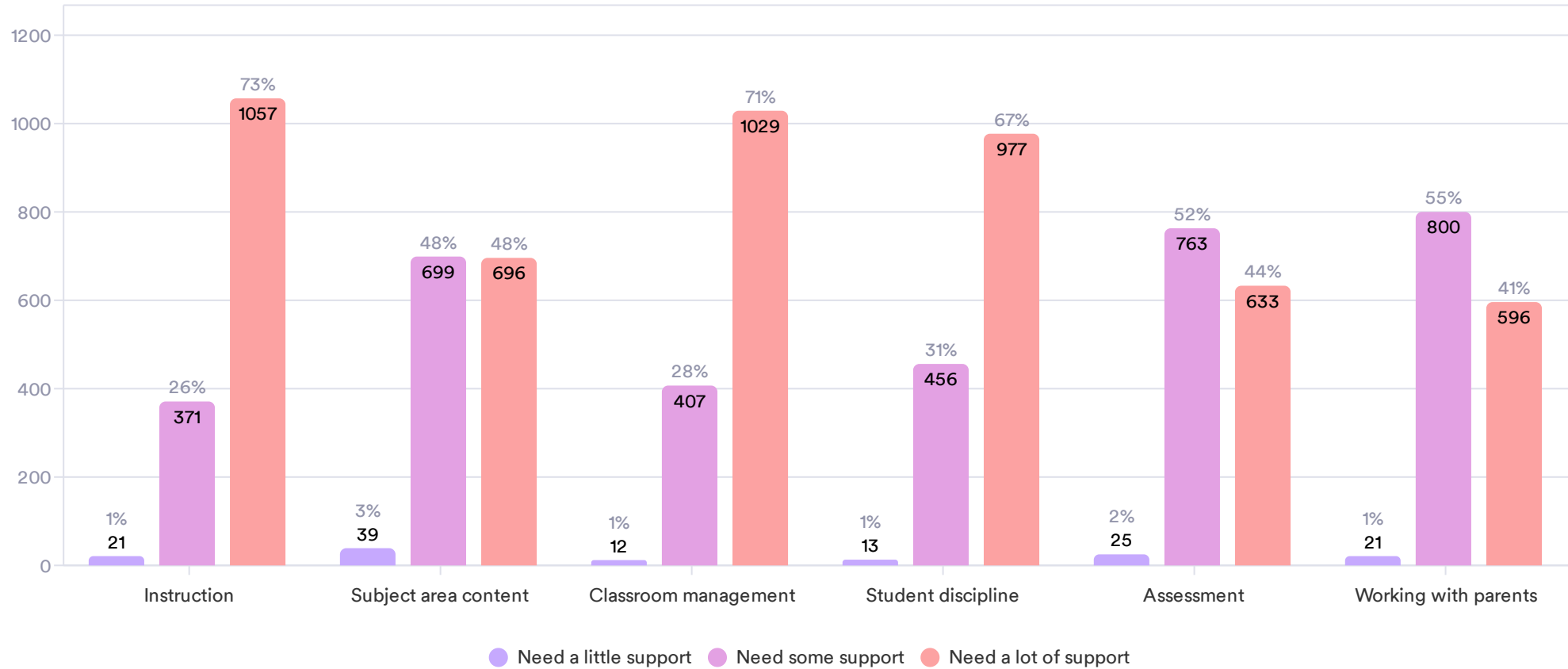


- None of these/Don't know
- Provide a deadline by which the teacher must become certified
- Require them to enroll in an educator preparation program
- Provide financial incentives to become certified (e.g., differentiated salaries between certified and uncertified teachers)
- Provide financial assistance for becoming certified (e.g., pay for the educator preparation program)
- Other entries

TCTA Survey on Uncertified Teachers

To the extent you have worked with uncertified teachers, in which of the following areas do they need the most support?

1454 Responses- 6 Empty





Summary of TCTA member open-ended survey results

What are areas of need by uncertified teachers?

- Classroom management
- Discipline
- Curriculum
- Teaching strategies
- Student development
- Communicating with parents
- Content knowledge
- Foundational skills to teach literacy and mathematics
- Appropriate professional and ethical behavior
- Personal social media management and appropriate interaction with students, including understanding of FERPA.
- Lesson planning
- Lesson delivery
- Organizing classrooms
- Understanding school and district systems
- Pacing
- Age specific expectations for academics and behavior
- Pedagogy practices
- Differentiating instruction
- Unfamiliarity with legal requirements for special education (IDEA and 504)
- Lack of knowledge of how to make modifications and provide accommodations for special education students.
- Unfamiliarity with instructional strategies for various types of students (SPED, ELL's, At risk, 504, BIPs, GT, Type I) including accommodation tracking
- Lack of knowledge of data assessment.
- Lack of knowledge regarding progress monitoring and intervention.
- Lack of skills to close instructional gaps.
- Lack of commitment and work ethic.
- Time management.
- Grading
- "The knowledge gap is astounding"



Ramifications of uncertified teachers on students and teaching profession

Students are not receiving high quality instruction.

“Students had several uncertified substitutes and/or uncertified individuals, resulting in students not knowing how to learn, how to behave, and expecting all answers to be handed to them without mastering any TEKS. “

“It’s a disservice to our students who we serve. We are giving them an education provided by people who are not properly educated themselves on how to administer the curriculum provided.”

“I worry about them covering the standards and giving students their accommodations.”

“Mostly though some are so unprepared they get overwhelmed, struggle to get the student prepared for next grade, or worse take it out on the kids/parents and ruin a student's year.”

“There have been huge learning gaps at crucial grade levels where foundational skills are of the utmost importance. Ramifications have also shown up in state and local testing. It's a huge disservice to the students! “

“The lack of success that our students often achieve in uncertified teachers’ classrooms versus the success they are able to attain in a certified teacher’s classroom is very disconcerting to me. While an uncertified teacher is gaining their own experience and struggling to figure out a new job for which they are not sufficiently trained, our students suffer.”

“Other content teachers usually end up having to tutor their students or even switch classes to catch those students up before testing.”

“While other staff are asked to provide instructional support/mentoring to uncertified teachers, I believe the biggest impact on other staff is actually more subtle. I have seen many discipline problems spill-over from one class period to the next, because the initial teacher did not address or report it correctly. More than once, I have had to start class by addressing an issue that actually occurred in the previous class. While all teachers make mistakes sometimes, uncertified teachers don't have the same level of training and are more likely to struggle to address behavior issues. They are also more likely to struggle to hold students to appropriately high academic standards, which also makes life more difficult on the student's other teachers.”

“How are we supposed to produce students who meet and surpass the expected academic standards if they are being taught by "teachers" who can't meet expected standards?”

“These children are our future, and they are falling behind every year and not meeting their growth to become self- sufficient adults.”



“The children under their care are not served properly by the individual who is not committed to education and all it takes is one year for a student to fall behind.”

“The greatest ramification is minimized student learning due to lack of explicit and systematic, high- quality learning; uncertified teachers are not adequately supported.”

“Our educational system is struggling as it is; hiring people who aren't certified and don't have the credentials to be a teacher in Texas is not going to improve matters. Academic gaps are widening rather than closing - we need certified teachers who understand the multifaceted demands of this job so they can effectively educate our students.”

“My biggest concern is students not being taught correctly by an uncertified teacher who is not using acceptable teaching techniques/practices.”

Compromised student safety

“By definition, they are not certified to do their job. There are professional standards, content gaps, and campus security questions I have. I do not trust a noncertified teacher to ensure student well- being in a classroom. And I believe that our state already has far too little trust in our profession for us to open the doors to anyone who is willing to work on campus with children.”

“Parents need to know who is certified and who is not. They need to know who has been entrusted to educate their child.”

“I worry they will do something inappropriate or illegal without realizing it.”

Lowered expectations for students.

“The expected standards of quality at our school have fallen. As a result, the expectations of the students is already lowered.”

“Students experience a two-tiered system wherein the focus shifts away from them.”

“Parents and the community deserve to know who they are and what they are teaching. It isn't fair to let the public assume their students have qualified teachers when they really don't.”

Lowered standards across the board

“Watering down of educational standards, expectations, and professional aspect of job.”

“When expectations are lowered for some, there's an unintentional lowering of expectations for all. Further, placing untrained and inadequately prepared people into classrooms often results in increased student academic and behavioral challenges across campus that impact all staff.”



Texas Classroom
Teachers Association

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“The profession of teaching is more than a body in the classroom and a payday. It requires dedication to keep learning and growing as a professional. Our future depends on well trained and educated professionals.”

“It is also incredibly unfair to those teachers who have the training and the degrees and are not respected or compensated for staying loyal to the profession that they pour their heart and soul into.”

“There is a reason teachers must be certified in order to instruct students.... Mastery of content, skills to close instructional gaps, experience in the classroom, classroom management. The list goes on! Uncertified teachers without those necessary skills ... are simply not qualified to do the job, and I feel the kids are paying the ultimate price and sacrificing valuable instructional opportunities and gains required to be successful in the next classroom setting.”

“When we fill a position with an uncertified teacher, then they have to resign at the end of the year, we’re wasting time and resources when we could’ve waited to hire a certified teacher who would stay in the position for longer. High turnover impacts student success.”

“Certified teachers are required to have a certain number of professional development hours in order to keep our certification. We are also required to have GT, Dyslexia and mental health training. Noncertified teachers do not have these same requirements.”

“I believe educators need high standards to be held to, and when we start hiring untrained, uncertified teachers we are not serving our students and families as we advertise. I do not think uncertified teachers should be paid the same.”

“When uncertified teachers are hired and not held to the certification deadlines, it makes me feel undervalued for my certification and expertise.”

“Lowering the standards for teachers may help fill teaching job openings, but that does not serve the students and our community well.”

“They get lost in social/emotional issues, the overwhelming responsibilities, and often lack the accountability for what happens in their classes and within their school. A huge risk in safety, accountability, and learning progress for our students.”

“The students suffer the most and we lose more teachers because the teachers don't get what they need to become exceptional teachers. The uncertified teachers are doing this job because they want to make a difference in the lives of children. Help them get certified, get them classroom management training and help them to flourish as teachers. If the teachers are willing to stick it out and not leave, then help them get certified.”

“It is also about professional pride, levels of achievement, growth, ethics, and serving our students with the best foundation possible. That is why certified teachers continue to take professional development courses, renew their certifications every five years, obtain Masters Degrees, PhDs, Principal Certifications.”



“This isn’t a learn as you go type of career. You need as much foundational knowledge as you can get before stepping into a classroom. It isn’t fair to the students or the current (professionally trained and certified) staff.”

“Teaching is a skill. It isn’t for everyone. We are professionals for a reason. We will spend a lifetime honing that ability, but certification sets the baseline. It says this is the minimum we will accept. We will grow from here, but this is the starting line. Uncertified teachers are left to fate. If they get into a good program or district, they get the guidance needed. If not, then our students suffer...”

Ramifications of uncertified teachers on existing school staff and teachers

Several respondents commented on the additional strain on certified teachers in areas like state testing because any uncertified personnel administering the state test have to be supervised by certified personnel (see 2023-24 STAAR Test Administration Manual).

High rates of turnover with uncertified teachers.

“Uncertified teachers leaving mid-year, leaving remaining teachers to have to cover their classes.”

“My biggest concern is that they often do not keep teaching for very long. It adds to the problem of a high turnover rate. They often leave after a year or two – they find it too difficult and move on to something else.”

“When they decide teaching isn’t for them they leave and never get certified thus restarting the cycle all over again with another new uncertified teacher.”

“Without having spent time working in a school environment before, many uncertified teachers get overwhelmed or disillusioned quickly and leave, sometimes mid-year. Without any training in classroom management or discipline, many uncertified teachers lose control of their classrooms early on and cannot recover to create an environment where learning occurs.”

Drains resources and support that had formerly been available to existing teachers (instructional support, coaching).

“The impact cuts in two ways: needing to provide support to the uncertified teacher and then not having access to a certified teacher partner to “lighten the load” of planning and prep work. Essentially, the certified educator receives more work with fewer resources for managing the load.”

“Mentors co-teaching with uncertified teachers, resulting in the mentor spending 85% of the time teaching the class.”



“Uncertified staff require a lot of support and coaching. Instructional coaches dedicate a lot of time to them, taking away time from other certified teachers who want/need coaching.”

“Team leaders spend a lot of time teaching content and modeling lessons to uncertified teachers.”

Increased demands on existing teachers, often not accompanied by reduction of other duties or extra compensation.

“Other teachers are asked repeatedly to provide instructional support, curriculum, and other materials. They have also been asked to provide lesson plans. This is unfortunate as those certified teachers are carrying their load and the uncertified teacher loads without acknowledgment or compensation. It undermines the idea of team and support and causes a rift in relationships throughout the teaching staff.”

“Working and learning together is part of the job, but this extra time needs to be factored into planning time, meetings, stipends, etc.”

“As a 19-year veteran, I can firmly state that the bulk of my time is spent on email and phone communications, learning new systems, organizing, troubleshooting, lesson planning, grading, finding new resources, preparing new resources, housekeeping my class roster, housekeeping my virtual classroom (LMS to supplement in-person instruction), housekeeping my physical classroom, and coordinating with my content-area teaching partner(s). Teaching is just part of the job description. As a result, time is scarce during the school day; therefore, a lot of uncertified/new teachers don't get the support they need because all teachers involved (the mentor and the mentee) are classroom-teaching their students all day with no time to both catch up on all non-teaching tasks AND reflect collaboratively.”

“Although I don't mind helping these teachers, I am also responsible for teaching multiple state tested subjects, and teaching uncertified teachers takes time and energy away from what I could be giving to my students.”

“Time, as it is with all teachers, is their most valuable resource and more planning or assistance from senior teachers should be built into the workday, rather than piled on to after school and/or weekend responsibilities.”

Decreased morale among existing teachers due to extra stress and the fact that uncertified teachers are paid the same as certified teachers.

“We are expected to take up the slack and ignore their inadequacy. It has been detrimental to overall morale.”

“I am starting my 9th year and my neighboring teacher is starting year 2 of NOT YET being certified. She makes only \$200 less than me. I realize that there is a shortage of teachers, but our annual raises go for them as well, so I will never be paid for my experience of years compared to hers.”



“They don't have the background/knowledge that certified teachers have yet their pay is the same.”

Extra demands and no additional compensation driving existing teachers out of the profession.

“It adds stress to teachers who are already at a breaking point and wanting to leave the profession.”

“It places a much heavier load on the certified teachers to make sure everything is at the level it needs to be for students in the uncertified teachers' classrooms. All of the pressure is placed on the certified teachers, which has led to that number decreasing at the end of every school year.”

“Staff members have been asked to switch students and take on other teachers' students in tutorial period as well as in before and after school tutorials. The uncertified teachers are assigned fewer classes, so the number of students in the certified teacher's room is high.”

“They get the same pay ... and increase the workload of certified teachers trying to help them survive in the classroom.”

“Uncertified staff require more assistance and support, which generally falls to a certified teacher. With fewer certified staff on campus, certified staff are tasked with more responsibilities, often unpaid. The demands on time can lead to burnout for experienced staff and frustration for the uncertified staff.”

“If highly qualified teachers were valued, respected, and compensated in order to prevent leaving, there wouldn't be a need to hire uncertified teachers to fill in the gaps.”

The chart below outlines educator certification assignment flexibility options available for districts to address some of the most common certification assignment challenges and scenarios. For additional support navigating these options, please submit a [TEA Help Desk Ticket](#) to Educator Certification and use the subject line: Certification Assignment Flexibility Options.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- These flexibilities are not applicable for special education, bilingual, or ESL assignments due to federal requirements and state statutes.
- If certification flexibility options are applied to educators actively enrolled in an educator preparation program (EPP), these options do not supersede EPP requirements found in the Texas Administrative Code. Educator candidates must complete certification exam and preparation program requirements for issuance of the aligned SBEC-issued certificate.

Opportunity	Possible Uses and Considerations
Districts of Innovation Plan (DOI)	<p>Districts can consider DOI flexibilities when there are vacancies in hard-to-fill assignments, or when urgent campus needs can be best met by having a certified teacher teach outside their area of certification. Other considerations include . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibilities must be documented in their locally created and approved DOI plans. • Districts can also complete a process to revise their DOI plan and establish increased flexibility to meet future needs. • Districts should work with their legal counsel and in collaboration with their local school board regarding the application and revision process.
Teacher Certification Waiver	<p>Districts can consider Teacher Certification Waivers when a DOI plan is not in place and/or when the DOI plan does not include the necessary flexibility to meet the situational needs of a campus. Other considerations include . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The educator qualifications to teach must be vetted and approved by the board of trustees and commissioner of education (<i>COE has 30 days to review</i>) • This waiver could be utilized for a candidate who is enrolled in an educator preparation program and has been issued an SBEC certificate (i.e., Intern or Probationary), but the campus needs the aspiring educator to teach in an area outside of those approved by the EPP. • The waiver is valid for a maximum of three years (approval requested each school year).
School District Teaching Permits	<p>Districts can consider a School District Teaching Permit (SDTP) in very specific situations when the DOI and Teacher Certification Waivers are not an option and a more long-term, district-specific solution is needed. Other considerations include . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDTPs are valid for life (unless revoked for cause by the district) and cannot be issued to certified teachers • The candidate must have a bachelor’s degree unless teaching non-core academic career and technical education courses which must be approved by district board of trustees. • Individuals teaching courses for foundation credits must be approved by district board of trustees and commissioner of education (<i>COE has 30 days to review</i>) • An application is required, which can be found here: School District Teaching Permit.

The below information was obtained through conversation, not official district publications, and as such, is subject to change.

	Aldine	Alief	Fort Bend	Spring	Houston	Brazosport
What do you call uncertified teachers?	Associate Teachers	Associate Teachers	Instructional Apprentices ☒	Aspiring Teachers	Waiver or DOI☒	Instructional Facilitators
How are uncertified teachers' salaries currently determined?	The district froze starting teacher pay for the 2022-2023 SY for Associate Teachers.	\$50,000	Instructional Apprentice Daily Rate \$271.96 x Calendar Days	Aspiring DOI - \$55,500 Emerging DOI - \$60,500	Using the HISD Compensation Manual	\$40,000/year
Do they receive incentives when benchmarks are met?	Yes, upon obtaining their Statement of Eligibility (SOE).	Pay is increased when certified	Pay is increased when certified	Testing Vouchers ACP Financial Stipends	Pay is increased when certified	Pay is increased when certified
Are you providing financial assistance for educator preparation and certification?	In-District Test Preparation Sessions; Reimbursement for BTLPT and ESL exam.	No, not at this time.☒	Not currently	Yes	Not at this time	