

Hiring and Keeping the Best Teachers in the Classroom

State standards for teaching are far too low and are disconnected from what matters to students.

In most states, teachers must pass a licensure test after graduating from a college of education to obtain a license.



Licensure tests are often a low bar and **passage rates are above 90%**, which makes them an ineffective filter to ensure quality classroom teaching.¹

Despite tests being too easy to pass, other bureaucratic hurdles make it tough for good people to enter the profession. Overspending on school bureaucracy keeps teacher pay artificially low, making it harder to attract new teachers. In many school districts, teachers are incentivized or even required to get graduate-level credits up to a master's degree although studies show such programs to be costly to teachers and school districts without benefitting students.

As is often the case in postsecondary education, when rigor is low, there is ample room for politics to seep in.



At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, coursework focuses heavily on left-wing political ideology but **often leaves out the basics**.



In Texas, **every college of education requires some sort of DEI course** as part of at least one of their degrees. While most require only one or two of these courses for each degree program, some programs require DEI courses as 25% of the program.²



While some DEI-related courses broadly touch on “diversity” or “special populations,” others **dive deep into hot-button issues**.



Nationally, **only one in four traditional programs cover the essentials** of the science of reading.³

States are struggling to attract and retain qualified teachers.

86% of school districts say they are struggling to find teachers.⁴

Teachers are far less satisfied with their jobs than they were before the pandemic, and only **20%** say they are “very satisfied” with their jobs.

More than a third of teachers say they are likely to find a non-teaching job in the next two years.⁵

THE SOLUTION

Recruit and Reward Teachers Based on Merit

HIRING

States should develop or adopt a more rigorous test for initial licensure.

This would ensure new teachers are adequately prepared to teach the essential tools necessary to serve students.

States should offer greater flexibility so excellent candidates with military or private sector experience, those who have taught in other states, completed an apprenticeship, or majored in something other than education can earn a license.

Anyone may earn a license if they can pass the more rigorous assessment of their knowledge, skills, and abilities. They would no longer be required to meet time-based, college credit, or other arbitrary requirements.

Local school principals would still be able to determine whether these licensed teachers have what it takes to teach.

PROMOTION

Principals would be given greater flexibility to reward and promote the best teachers based on objective evidence.

States would stop forcing teachers to spend time and money on ineffective graduate-level credits.

Instead, these resources would be repurposed to reward the teachers most effectively serving students based on whether they contribute to student outcomes.



WHY IT MATTERS

Students deserve teachers who are caring, capable, and knowledgeable in the subject matter that they are responsible for imparting to the next generation.

A teacher's background should not matter, only whether they can teach effectively. Setting a higher bar but expanding the eligibility of future teachers beyond traditional colleges of education will mean more teachers to fill shortages in critical areas and a more effective teaching force overall.

SOURCES:

1. <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/TitleIIReport23.pdf>
2. <https://catalog.tamusa.edu/graduate/education-human-development/curriculum-instruction/multicultural-education-ma/#requirements-text>
3. <https://www.nctq.org/publications/New-Data-Finds-Major-Gaps-in-Science-of-Reading-Education-for-Future-Elementary-Teachers>
4. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2023/10/17/teacher-shortage-2023-us-schools-struggle-hiring/71208579007/>
5. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teachers-are-stressed-and-disrespected-but-happier-than-last-year-7-takeaways-from-new-poll/2023/05>