

Effects of Certified vs. Uncertified Teachers on Central Texas Public School Students

In 2025, the debate over the impact of certified versus non-certified teachers on Texas public school students has intensified. The shortage of certified teachers has led to an increased reliance on non-certified educators, particularly in rural areas. This shift has implications for student outcomes and the overall quality of education.

Certified Teachers

Certified teachers in Texas undergo rigorous training, including completing an educator preparation program, passing required exams, and gaining classroom experience through student teaching.

This comprehensive preparation teachers with essential skills for effective teaching, such as classroom management, lesson planning, and addressing diverse student needs.

Approximately 92.7% of Central Texas teachers had certification for the 2022-23 school year.¹

Positive Impacts of Certification

Higher Student Achievement

Certified teachers are better prepared to deliver high-quality instruction and support student learning.

A Texas Tech University study found that students who received instruction from teachers with standard certification from an institution of higher education (as opposed to fully online program certification or a lack of certification) demonstrate greater student achievement outcomes in both math and reading².

Enhanced Classroom Management

Certified teachers are trained in effective classroom management techniques, creating a conducive learning environment.

Improved Retention Rates

Certified teachers are more likely to remain in the profession, providing stability and continuity for students.

Teachers certified through standard, alternative, or other pathways stayed in teaching at a rate of about 90%.³

Uncertified Teachers

Uncertified teachers often enter the classroom through alternative certification programs, which may lack the comprehensive training provided to certified teachers. These programs can be fully online and may not include student teaching or other hands-on experiences.

Approximately 7.3% of Central Texas teachers had no certification for the 2022-23 school year.⁴

¹ E3 Alliance. (2025). Analysis of Texas State Board for Educator Certification SBEC teacher certification data and Texas Education Agency enrollment data.

² Kirksey, Jacob and Jessica Gottlieb. (2024). "Teacher preparation in the wild west: The impact of fully online teacher preparation and uncertified teachers in Texas." Texas Tech University [White Paper] Center for Innovative Research in Change, Leadership, and Education.

³ E3 Alliance. (2025). "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Pandemic Shifts in Texas Teacher Retention Patterns." E3 Alliance.

⁴ E3 Alliance. (2025). Analysis of Texas State Board for Educator Certification SBEC teacher certification data and Texas Education Agency enrollment data.

Challenges

Lower Student Achievement

Research indicates that students with uncertified teachers may fall behind academically. Students with uncertified teachers (particularly those with no previous classroom experience) endured learning losses of approximately 3 and 4 months for math and reading respectively when compared to students with certified teachers⁵.

Inadequate Preparation

Uncertified teachers may struggle to deliver curriculum, manage classrooms, and address diverse learning needs. This can lead to gaps in student understanding, lower academic achievement, and decreased engagement. Uncertified teachers may also be less equipped to identify and support students with learning difficulties, hindering overall student success.

Higher Turnover Rates

Uncertified teachers are more likely to leave the profession within a few years, leading to instability and disruption for students. **Uncertified teachers are 70% less likely to stay in teaching compared to standard certified teachers⁶.**

Rural Districts

Rural districts in Texas are disproportionately affected by the teacher shortage, relying heavily on uncertified teachers with an average employment rate that is four times higher than non-rural school districts. In 40 rural Texas counties, over 80% of the teaching workforce is uncertified⁷. This reliance on uncertified teachers exacerbates educational disparities and challenges in these areas.

Policy Implications

Comprehensive Solutions

Policymakers must address the root causes of the teacher shortage and develop strategies to attract and retain certified teachers, particularly in rural areas.

In response to teacher retention and recruitment challenges in Texas, Governor Abbott established the Teacher Vacancy Task Force (TVTF) to comprehensively understand the variety of challenges

facing schools. In the TVTF Report, eight primary objectives emerged: increase overall compensation and support strategies; enhance teachers' total compensation package; provide incentives and support for hard-to-staff areas; improve the pipeline and pre-service preparation of new teachers; expand training and support for teacher mentorship and leadership; provide access and support for high-quality instructional materials; demonstrate respect and value for teacher time; and develop a schoolwide culture and discipline supports⁸.

Alternative Certification

Improving the quality of alternative certification programs can help ensure that uncertified teachers are better prepared for the classroom.

Teacher Residency Programs

Similar to medical doctor residency pathways, future teachers can opt to enroll in intensive paid residency programs in which future teachers are paired with a successful mentor teacher. Texas education officials have established an **Enhanced Standard Certificate** for teachers who complete the residency pathway to make their teaching credentials more competitive⁹. The TVTF Report found that the Texas teacher residency model increases teacher retention, successfully places teachers in 'hard-to-staff' subjects, and positively influences student outcomes¹⁰.

In conclusion, while uncertified teachers play a crucial role in addressing the teacher shortage, their impact on student outcomes highlights the need for comprehensive training and support. Ensuring that all teachers, regardless of certification status, are well-prepared is essential for the success of our students.

E3 Alliance

E3 Alliance is a nationally recognized, data-driven education collaborative based in Central Texas. We work across the state to transform education systems through data and collaboration so all students succeed. We also work to increase economic mobility and the overall quality of life for our community through education system alignment from pre-K to the workforce.

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⁵ Kirksey, Jacob. (2024). Amid Rising Number of Uncertified Teachers, Previous Classroom Experience Proves Vital in Texas. Texas Tech University College of Education.

⁶ E3 Alliance. (2025). "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Pandemic Shifts in Texas Teacher Retention Patterns." E3 Alliance.

⁷ Kirksey, Jacob. (2024). Amid Rising Number of Uncertified Teachers, Previous Classroom Experience Proves Vital in Texas. Texas Tech University College of Education.

⁸ Texas Education Agency. (2023). "Developing a Thriving Teacher Workforce in Texas." Teacher Vacancy Task Force Final Report.

⁹ Richman, Talia. (2024). "Texas to give extra credit to teachers who train like doctors in residency programs." Dallas Morning News.

¹⁰ Texas Education Agency. (2023). "Developing a Thriving Teacher Workforce in Texas." Teacher Vacancy Task Force Final Report.