

NORTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR WORKFORCE AND PIPELINE

North Dakota Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force



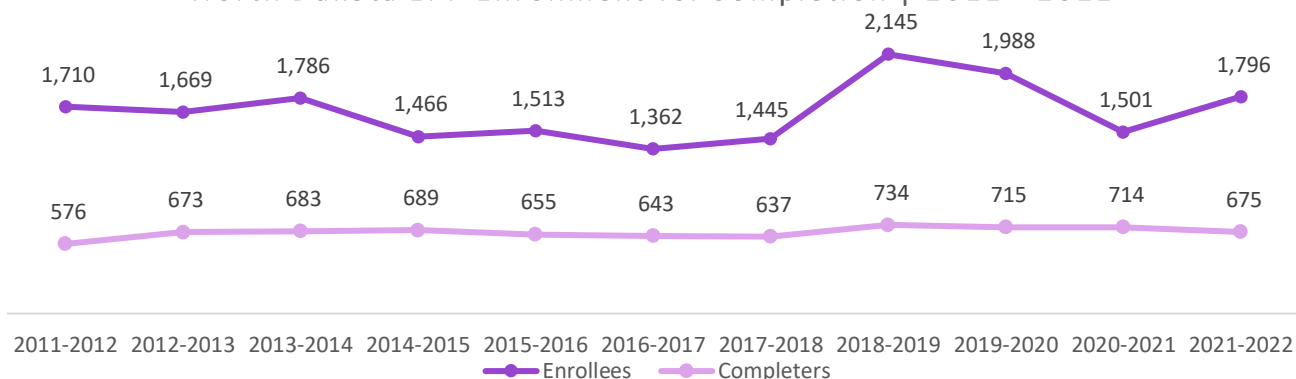
INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that teachers are the most important school-based factor for student growth and achievement. However, districts and school leaders across the country struggle to retain educators and fill vacant classrooms. In 2022, approximately 55,000 teacher vacancies remained unfilled across the country and 270,000 positions were filled by underqualified or uncertified educators. In many states, the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified educator attrition, leading states to examine not only how to fill vacancies, but also how to strengthen and diversify the shrinking educator pipeline.

Educators in the Peace Garden State

North Dakota, like other states, struggles to recruit and retain educators. Approximately 9,100 licensed teachers are currently employed by North Dakota public school systems; however, 10,300 individuals with K-12 teaching licenses reside in the state and do not teach. North Dakota is considered one of the most attractive states for teaching in the country due to higher than average starting salaries, strong leadership support, and time for professional development, but the challenges with teacher retention and recruitment attest to larger discussions on the declining attractiveness of the profession. Enrollment in traditional educator preparation programs has fluctuated in recent years with completion rates hovering around 38 percent. A 2022 national poll found 62 percent of parents would not want their children to become teachers, citing poor pay and benefits (29 percent), the demanding and stressful nature of the profession (26 percent), and lack of respect (23 percent).

North Dakota EPP Enrollment vs. Completion | 2011 - 2022



[Source](#)

SHORTAGE AREAS

Limited enrollment and stagnant completion rates in educator preparation programs (EPPs) have created areas of critical need for teachers in the state. As of September 2022, 61 percent of schools reported difficulty or inability to fill teacher vacancies. North Dakota records areas of need that are unfilled or filled by irregular or underqualified candidates (e.g., candidates who lack required credentials). Critical need and shortage areas identified for the 2022-2023 school year include:

North Dakota Critical Need and Shortage Areas | 2022-2023

Subject Matter	Grades	Percent Unfilled or Irregular
Critical Need Area		
Counselor	K – 12	12.0%
Fine & Performing Arts	K – 12	8.8%
Career & Technical Education	9 – 12	8.8%
Special Education	K – 12	8.3%
Science	9 – 12	7.1%

NORTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR WORKFORCE AND PIPELINE

North Dakota Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force

Subject Matter	Grades	Percent Unfilled or Irregular
Shortage Area		
Library Media Specialist	K – 12	8.2%
English Language Arts	K – 12	6.1%
Mathematics	9 – 12	5.4%
Gen. Ed. Teacher	7 – 8	4.0%
Gen. Ed. Teacher	1 – 6	2.4%

[Source](#)

Special Education

Challenges recruiting and retaining special education educators are a national concern; in the 2021-2022 school year, [45 percent](#) of schools reported a vacancy in special education, making this the highest area of need for educators nationally. One major contributing factor is the [legal requirements](#) that prohibit states from waiving certification or license requirements for special education teachers and related services personnel on an emergency, temporary, or provisional bases.

Rural Communities

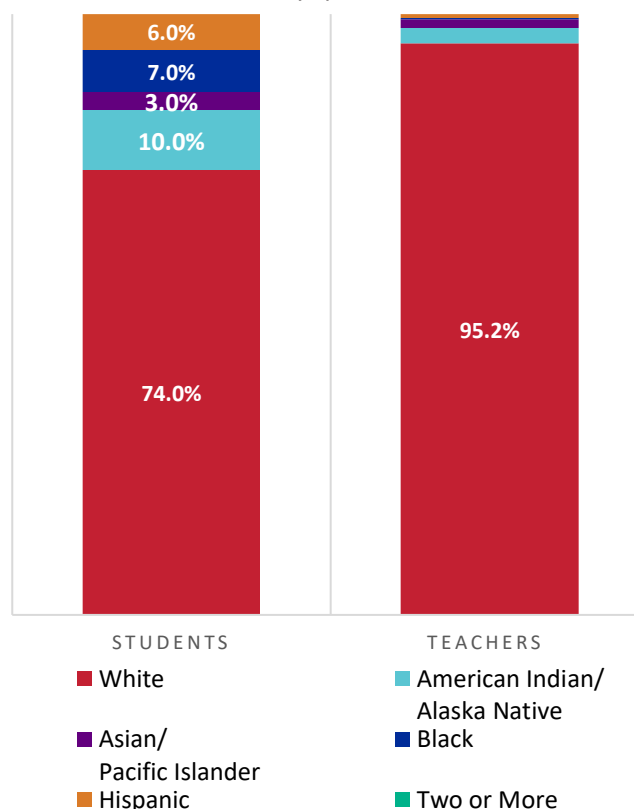
In addition to specific subject areas, rural communities also disproportionately encounter challenges recruiting teachers; research indicates low-income rural public schools experience a [28 percent](#) higher attrition rate than low-income urban districts. One contributing factor is that while rural areas tend to have lower living costs, teacher salaries remain less competitive in rural areas compared to other regions. High transportation costs and limited housing options further exacerbate this problem.

EDUCATOR DIVERSITY

Students taught by highly effective educators are [more likely](#) to graduate from high school, pursue higher education, secure employment, and earn higher wages. Moreover, [extensive research](#) has also found that a diverse educator workforce is beneficial to all students, especially students of color. When students are taught by an educator who reflects their racial identity, their [test scores improve](#) in both math and reading in early grades, and they are less likely to face exclusionary discipline practices and more likely to attain a postsecondary credential or degree. Thus, as access to excellent and diverse teachers are crucial for the academic achievement and success of all students, it is essential for policymakers to ensure that teacher preparation, compensation, and evaluation policies and practices support the recruitment and retention of a diverse, high-quality educator workforce.

Currently, [95 percent](#) of North Dakota teachers are white despite [26 percent](#) of students identifying as people of color. This is particularly [important](#) for Native American students to access cultural history and knowledge. North Dakota currently offers the [North Dakota Native American Essential](#)

North Dakota Student v. Teacher Diversity | 2022-2023



[Source](#)

NORTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR WORKFORCE AND PIPELINE

North Dakota Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force



Understandings to ensure programs for Indigenous students are reflective of Indian culture and community. The North Dakota Native American Needs Assessment Action Plan identifies areas of growth for improving Native American student outcomes such as:

- Providing Culturally Responsive Curriculum & Instruction
- Promoting Social Emotional Learning
- Using Equitable Instruction Practices
- Engaging with the Native American Community

BARRIERS TO ENTRY

The obstacles faced by people of color begin well before they enter college or any educator training programs, resulting in lower enrollment and graduation rates for students of color in postsecondary institutions. This, in turn, makes the recruitment of diverse educators challenging. Growing up, students of color are more likely to attend schools where the majority of students are low-income or are students of color, which tend to be underfunded and have fewer qualified educators and educational resources. Consequently, these students are less likely to enroll in college. Even those from low-income backgrounds or students of color who do attend college are more likely to require remedial courses, leading to delays in graduation and increased educational costs.

Additionally, educators of color, particularly Black educators, are more likely to finance their college education through student loans, resulting in higher levels of debt. As a result, students of color and those from low-income backgrounds, who often lack generational wealth or may have additional family responsibilities, face increased financial risks when pursuing higher education, often opting for careers with higher financial rewards.

Pathways to Licensure

North Dakota currently offers 122 teacher preparation programs through 14 providers: 13 traditional providers and one alternative program through a non-higher education institution provider. Four providers are members of the North Dakota Tribal College System. These providers support candidates through receiving their teaching license. A complete list of North Dakota teaching licenses can be found in the Appendix.

- **Traditional Educator Preparation Program:** Traditional EPPs are offered through higher education institutions (IHEs) and provide undergraduate programs, attracting college students aspirations of becoming a teacher.
- **Alternative Educator Preparation Program, with IHE affiliation:** Alternative EPPs support candidates who hold bachelor's degrees and may already be teachers of record. These candidates often changing careers. Requirements for alternative pathways vary by state.
- **Alternative Educator Preparation Program, with no IHE affiliation:** Alternative EPPs support candidates who hold bachelor's degrees and may already be teachers of record. Alternative, not IHE-based providers offer pathways to the profession through state departments, nonprofits, for-profit organizations, districts, and other partnerships.

NORTH DAKOTA LICENSURE MODELS

The Educator Pathway

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Office of Specially Designed Services utilized Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding to partner with five universities offering dual credit courses to high school students interested in pursuing education as a career through the Educator Pathway program. The program offers five courses, two of which are specifically designed to support student interest in special education specialties. The program aims to promote the recruitment of students into the profession in hopes of strengthening local pipelines for the educator workforce. Funding for the program is scheduled through 2024 per ESSER funding availability.

Paraprofessional-to-Teacher Pathway

In April 2023, North Dakota provided three million dollars in ESSER funding to higher education institutions to provide paraprofessionals with scholarships to pursue teaching degrees. Since 2020, more than 220 education professionals have completed the program.

NORTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR WORKFORCE AND PIPELINE

North Dakota Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force



Emergency Rule for Student Teachers

In October of 2023, the North Dakota Educator Standards and Preparation Board passed an [emergency rule](#) to enable student teachers to serve “in a limited capacity as a teacher of record for a single semester.” The rule states this experience cannot be used as a waiver for student teaching with limited exceptions, and students may receive a stipend from the school where they are teaching. The rule will become ineffective on June 30, 2025. This rule aimed to provide short term relief to educator shortage challenges in the state.

Alternate Access Licenses

North Dakota’s [Alternate Access License](#) allows individuals with a bachelor's degree to teach in schools that are unable to fill educator vacancies with fully licensed teachers. Candidates must have a degree aligned with the specific content area of the shortage and are expected to be actively pursuing completion of an approved teacher education program.

Promising Recruitment Practices

GROW YOUR OWN PROGRAMS

Grow Your Own (GYO) programs are a model of educator preparation that involve recruiting prospective educators from the local community, such as non-education college graduates, paraprofessionals, community activists, and other key community stakeholders, or by creating a pathway for middle and high school students to enter the education workforce. These programs focus on returning educators to their local communities and therefore look different depending on local contexts. GYO programs are often [cited](#) as a strategy to improve educator diversity. Additional research suggests GYO programs also [promote teacher retention](#) over time.

Residencies and Apprenticeships

A form of GYO, teacher residencies provide teaching candidates with the opportunity to work alongside a mentor teacher for at least one year before becoming the teacher of record, while teacher apprenticeships combine coursework and on the job experience to reduce the cost of earning a teaching degree while providing candidates with crucial time in the classroom during their preparation.

Each teacher residency program is unique; however, high quality programs often have common characteristics such as:

- Strong local partnerships with universities and EPP programs,
- One year of clinical practice teaching with an expert mentor,
- Ongoing support and mentoring for program graduates,
- Financial support for residents in exchange for a time-based teaching commitment, and
- Recruitment of high-quality candidates for targeted district needs

Teacher residency programs often attract more diverse candidates. In 2022-2023, [69 percent](#) of National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR) residents identified as people of color, compared to 21 percent of new teachers nationally. Residents are also more likely to support high-need schools or subject areas, such as mathematics, science, students with special needs, or English Language Learners. Despite teaching in schools with higher attrition rates on average, graduates of teacher residency programs demonstrate higher levels of retention, between [80 to 90 percent](#) within the first three years and [70 to 80 percent](#) after five years.

In January 2022, Tennessee launched the [Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship](#) and became the first state to establish a teacher apprenticeship program approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. Being recognized as a Registered Apprenticeship Program with the Department of Labor opens the Teacher Occupation Apprenticeship to federal funding opportunities, allowing the program to leverage both state and federal dollars to create a sustainable funding stream.

Policy Considerations

- What data would help stakeholders better understand teacher workforce trends? What partners would be helpful in collecting this data?
- What can North Dakota do to retain and recruit a more diverse educator workforce?
- Are there policies or incentives that the state can implement to alleviate barriers to obtaining a teaching license, particularly in critical areas?

NORTH DAKOTA EDUCATOR WORKFORCE AND PIPELINE

North Dakota Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force



APPENDIX

North Dakota Teaching Licenses

Certificate Type	Valid For	Issued to...
Initial In-State License	2 years	Individuals applying for the first time and fulfilling all necessary ND criteria
Two Year Renewal	2 years	- Individuals with fewer than eighteen months of contracted teaching experience in North Dakota, and; - Individuals who have met all requirements of a Probationary License or an Out of State Reciprocal License
First Five Year License	5 years	- Individuals who have completed the requirements for a ND Educator's Professional License, and; - Individuals who have taught 18 months in North Dakota
Five Year Renewal License	5 years	- Individuals holding a 5-year license, and; - Individuals who complete 6 hours of continued education
30-Year Life License	Life	- Individuals who have held ND teacher licenses for 30 years, and; - Individuals who complete 6 hours of continued education
Alternate Access License	1 year	- Individuals in a teacher shortage area, and; - Individuals with no teaching degree, but a bachelor's degree in the content of the shortage area, and; - Individuals who enroll in a college of education teaching degree program and expect to complete their coursework over 3 years
Interim Substitute License	2 years	Individuals with at least 48 semester hours of college coursework
Initial Alternate Pathway License - American Board	2 years	Individuals who met the requirements of American Board for North Dakota licensure
Out-of-State Reciprocal License	2 years	- Individuals who graduated from an out-of-state university, and; - Individuals who do not hold a teaching license from a different state
Other State Educator License (OSEL)	2 or 5 years	Individuals with a valid teaching license from an approved teacher education program from a different state
Re-Entry License	2 years	Individuals with a ND teaching license that expired over 5 years ago
Probationary License	2 years	Individuals that have not completed the five year or re-entry license reeducation requirements
40-Day Provisional License	40 days	- Individuals who have been offered a job (either substitute or teaching), and; - Individuals who have completed the entire application process except the background investigation

Native American Language and Cultural License

Under [North Dakota Century Code 15.1-13-22](#), indigenous language boards created by tribal governments may recommend an individual for licensure as an instructor of North Dakota American Indian languages and culture. The individual must be knowledgeable and experienced in North Dakota American Indian languages and culture, complete a three semester hour course in classroom instruction at a higher education institution, and hold a bachelor's degree.