



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: L

Date: January 27, 2022

Title: Written Report: Virginia Teacher Licensure Policy: Biases and Barriers to Diversifying the Workforce (SJR 15)

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Purpose of Presentation:

For information only. No action required.

Executive Summary

In 2017, the Task Force on Diversifying Virginia’s Educator Pipeline noted the growing shortage of effective educators entering and remaining in the profession as well as particular barriers to entry for teachers of color. Local school divisions throughout the Commonwealth continue to struggle to recruit and retain diverse, high-quality teachers. The teacher workforce is becoming more racially homogeneous over time, whereas public elementary and secondary school populations continue to grow in both size and racial diversity.

This growth demands careful consideration of policy changes to address teacher shortages and the lack of teacher diversity in order to best serve the needs of all public school students, especially in light of recent supportive findings such as a study published by the Institute of Labor Economics that concludes that low-income black students who have at least one black teacher in elementary school are significantly more likely to graduate high school and consider attending college.

In response to this data and the growing challenges in Virginia, the 2020 General Assembly passed [Senate Joint Resolution 15](#), requiring the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to study the teacher licensure process and the assessment requirements for any inherent biases that may prevent minority teacher candidates from entering the profession. A Request for Proposals

was disseminated December 2, 2020, yielding two submissions from institutions of higher education to conduct the study. After careful consideration, a review panel determined the two submitted proposals would not result in actionable recommendations to remove inherent bias barriers in licensure. A request to extend the report submission deadline and the appropriation was approved. To continue with the study, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was drafted instead. The MOA was entered in May 2021, and the work of the study was completed in October 2021.

VDOE partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education and the Wilder School to perform a research study and produce a report in response to this legislation. The report indicates barriers exist at the recruitment and/or entry stage, which includes multiple pathways into the profession, and critical retention stage. A multi-pronged approach across the General Assembly, VDOE, and school divisions is needed to reduce bias in Virginia's teacher licensure policy and, ultimately, diversify the teacher workforce.

Action Requested:

No action requested.

Previous Review or Action:

No previous review or action.

Background Information and Statutory Authority:

The 2020 Virginia General Assembly approved [Senate Joint Resolution 15](#) (SJR15) that requested the VDOE to study the teacher licensure process and the assessment requirements for any inherent biases that may prevent minority teacher candidates from entering the teaching profession. SJR15 stated that it is imperative to identify and eliminate any barriers to a sufficient and diverse teacher workforce in the Commonwealth. The General Assembly requested the study report with its findings and recommendation be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

No further action or review is anticipated.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

The 2020 General Assembly appropriated \$100,000 to fund the study.



Virginia Teacher Licensure Policy: Biases and Barriers to Diversifying the Workforce (SJR 15)

December 2021

Prepared by the:

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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School of Education



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Government and Public Affairs

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I. Executive Summary

In 2017, the Task Force on Diversifying Virginia’s Educator Pipeline noted the growing shortage of effective educators entering and remaining in the profession as well as particular barriers to entry for teachers of color. In 2018, Virginia Workforce data shared at the Teacher Retention Summit indicated significantly higher attrition rates of teachers of color than white teachers. These trends are of particular concern in Virginia, where the population has, and will continue to, become increasingly diverse. As a follow up to this prior work, the current study examined barriers preventing teachers of color from entering the profession. Specifically, through an examination of teacher licensure policies and regulations in Virginia, we asked: what might yield higher attrition rates of teachers of color when moving from probationary to continuing contract status, as well as provisional to full/professional licensure? In other words, we sought to explore biases and barriers in the teacher pipeline, interrogating these challenges through new policy lenses.

We found barriers that exist at both the recruitment or entry stage and critical retention stage, such as years three to five, when teachers move from probationary to continuing contract status or provisional to professional licensure status. A multi-pronged approach across the General Assembly, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), and school divisions is needed to reduce bias in Virginia’s teacher licensure policy and, ultimately, diversify the teacher workforce. We recommend the following policy and process actions to reduce six identified barriers to entering and remaining in the profession:

Barrier 1: Potential Bias in Teacher Evaluations

- **Invest in a statewide technical support center** that assists local education agencies (LEAs) to conduct analyses of school- and LEA-based minority teacher recruitment and retention and anti-bias training.
- **Pursue transparent policy language** to avoid unclear language in teacher evaluation guidelines that lead to multiple interpretations and inconsistencies in how teachers are evaluated by school or district-level supervisors.

Barrier 2: Potential Bias in Supervision Requirements

- **Fully fund the Standards of Quality (SOQs)** to include the establishment of a unit within the VDOE to develop guidelines for teacher leadership and mentorship programs, as well as a statewide principal mentoring program.
- As noted in Barrier 1, **pursue transparent policy language** to avoid unclear language in teacher evaluation guidelines that lead to multiple interpretations and inconsistencies in how teachers are evaluated by school or district-level supervisors.

Barrier 3: Use of Subjective Language

- **Reevaluate and revise subjective policy language** in specific regulations like *The Licensure Regulations for School Personnel* or *The Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs*, which contain language such as “moral character” or “professionalism” that can potentially impact marginalized populations.
- **Develop a task force to combat bias and subjectivity** and to address reported incidents manifested through biased evaluative policies

Barrier 4: Disparities in Opportunities

- **Expand financial benefits:**
 - Eliminate the gap between the average Virginia worker’s salary and teachers’ salaries by increasing teacher salaries over the next three years.
 - Expand Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program (VTSLP) and support other service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs to cover or reimburse a portion of tuition costs in exchange for teaching commitment (5 years)
 - Establish a Teacher of Color Education Scholarship of Virginia (TCES-VA) program to increase the number of minority teachers in Virginia to better reflect the state’s diverse population
 - Connect National Board Certification to Schools Serving Students of Color: Teachers who work in historically underserved schools are more likely to be teachers of color. To recruit and retain them, the state should designate funds for additional annual bonuses for those teachers who hold [National Board Certification](#) and work in these buildings.
- **Expand the line item in the General Assembly to fund teacher residency programs:** Providing stipends and tuition support to prospective teachers creates opportunities for teachers of color to receive stronger teacher preparation while reducing the financial burden, creating greater teacher retention and effectiveness once they complete their programs.
- **Create guidelines for a statewide comprehensive teacher induction model** for all teachers in years one through three. Teacher induction models should be jointly funded by the state and LEAs.
- **Create sustainable working conditions:** To better retain all teachers, but particularly teachers of color who serve in schools with greater student and staffing needs, a long-term strategy to improve working conditions is necessary. These recommendations include:
 - Examine educational environments or school working conditions, the unique work demands, work responsibilities (formal and informal), and workload manageability of teachers of color
 - Establish an average teaching time of 60% of the total contract hours;
 - Establish average teaching percentage targets that correspond to the career ladder/teaching experience;
 - Reduce the student-to-teacher ratio;

- Eliminate the support staff cap to provide greater instructional and behavioral support to teachers of record; and
- Provide racial justice-oriented professional development to support teachers of color

Barrier 5: Bias in Licensure Assessments

- **The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) should evaluate the existing assessment requirements for licensure, and act to eliminate those that are not absolutely essential, align assessment requirements with skills and competencies of high-quality teaching, and provide candidates multiple types of assessment opportunities to demonstrate their skills** (Recommended by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortages, 2017).
 - In addition, the VBOE should reevaluate assessment passing scores recently raised and disproportionately impacting Black and Hispanic candidates (such as the VCLA).
 - Given that the VDOE may grant exceptions to recommended teachers who failed to pass licensure exams, we recommend that the VBOE consider alternate options to assess teacher performance, specifically, classroom-based teaching assessments as alternative options to current licensure assessments as a singular approach.
 - Expand funding to pay for licensure exam costs currently paid by teacher candidates of color enrolled in teacher preparation programs and by provisionally licensed teachers of color
 - Expand programs like the "Competitive Grant for Praxis and Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment Assistance to Support Diversity Among Provisionally Licensed Teachers Seeking Full Licensure in Virginia" program to cover testing costs for all teachers of color.

Barrier 6: Challenges in Communication and Processing

- **Create a clear and streamlined licensure website** that clarifies what requirements are needed based on the route to licensure and endorsement(s) sought. This reduces the disproportionate impact of inaccessible information on prospective teachers of color who may not have a personal or professional network able to provide this information.
- **Create an online licensure application portal** that integrates all forms and payment information, reducing the possibility of delayed mail, user error, and submission of outdated documents.
 - Within this portal, teachers should be able to track professional development points earned and additional credentialing/endorsement options.
 - The portal should have sharing/sending options for EPP or division leadership to review and approve documents before the VDOE review process.
- **Improve language around "comparable" requirements and what specific endorsements are required when out of state teachers apply for positions in Virginia**, but hold endorsements that are not comparable at the subject area or grade level. Virginia offers a number of comparable

endorsements, but all may not translate when out-of-state candidates apply for positions in Virginia.

- **Invest in implementation capacity** to provide technical support to local divisions, provide clear guidance, ongoing training, and oversight to ensure divisions follow consistent processing guidelines and are adequately supported:
 - Increase VDOE Licensure Office staffing to reduce the amount of time between submission and notification of licensure application status.
 - Invest in a statewide technical support center that strengthens and supports a diverse teacher pipeline and career ladder (e.g. - minority teacher leadership preparation, mentoring, coaching, and advanced/ leadership credentialing supports). This support should also assist LEAs develop innovative grow-your-own programs, EPP-LEA-VDOE partnerships, and analysis of school- and LEA-based minority teacher recruitment and retention.
- **Develop specific policy guidance to support recruitment and retention of teachers of color:**
 - Create an adaptive data system to track teachers' licensure status; and
 - Develop performance metrics to achieve workforce diversity goals, as well as accountability for LEAs.

II. Overview of the Study on Teacher Licensure Policy

The 2020 Virginia General Assembly approved Senate Joint Resolution No. 15 that requests the Department of Education to study the teacher licensure process and the assessment requirements for any inherent biases that may prevent teachers of color candidates from entering the profession. Local school divisions throughout the Commonwealth are struggling to recruit and retain high quality teachers of color. The teacher workforce is largely racially homogeneous as white teacher comprise approximately 80% of the workforce, while public elementary and secondary school populations continue to grow in both size and racial/ethnic diversity.

This growth demands careful consideration of policy changes to address teacher shortages and the lack of teacher diversity in order to best serve the needs of all public-school students. In light of recent supportive findings such as a study published by the [Institute of Labor Economics](#) that concludes low-income black students who have at least one black teacher in elementary school are significantly more likely to graduate high school and consider attending college, it is more important than ever to identify potential inherent biases within policies and work to eliminate barriers to teacher licensure to ensure student success.

The General Assembly requested the Department of Education to complete a study and submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations. The Resolution states it is imperative to identify and eliminate any barriers to a sufficient and diverse teacher workforce in the Commonwealth. The Resolution additionally requests that the Department of Education study the teacher licensure process and the assessment requirements therein for any inherent biases that may prevent teachers of color candidates from entering the profession, and to review all relevant statutes, regulations, and data.

Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education and L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs conducted a comprehensive review of policy, process, and assessments associated with teacher licensure and the impact on teachers of color. We began by conducting a close read of the Code of Virginia, then conducted a comparative analysis of teacher licensure policy across Virginia, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, and facilitated interviews and focus groups to triangulate findings and inform our recommendations.

The study team interviewed current and former teachers who self-identified as Black, Latinx, Asian, or multiracial as well as focus groups of licensure officers who work in school divisions and university-based teacher preparation programs. Participants were recruited from the DC, Richmond, Roanoke, Charlottesville, and Tidewater metro areas, as well as rural areas spanning southwest to northeastern regions. An initial questionnaire captured important demographic information as well as the school/division context and work experience of teachers. We used this information to recruit broadly and strategically across contexts. Semi-structured interviews allowed the study team to ask pre-determined questions to all participants, while following their conversational leads. All questions were open-ended, providing the participants opportunities to share their varied experiences with obtaining or

facilitating Virginia teacher licensure processes. For example, we asked teachers about division support and their licensure experience and how they gathered information when initiating or renewing licensure. The open-ended questions revealed not only the purely demographic data captured on a survey (e.g.- provisionally licensed, professional licensed, race/ ethnicity, etc.), but the nuanced ways teachers of color experienced their route to licensure and experience in the profession. The participants represented multiple pathways to licensure and careers spanning those currently completing student teaching requirements to those with over 20 years of experience in the field.

The semi-structured interview protocol for EPP and school division licensure officers revealed examples of administrative burden within the process, as well as particular areas in which teacher candidates of color and those whose first language is not English experienced bias within licensure and assessment policies. Licensure officers who participated in the interviews represented some of the largest and smallest school divisions in Virginia, as well as urban, suburban, and rural communities. Focus groups of EPP licensure officers were comprised of participants from two Minority Serving Institutions (HBCUs & HSIs), private and public institutions, as well as small liberal arts, regional, and research I designated institutions.

III. The Challenge of Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color in Virginia

Virginia created and implemented legislation, policies, and programs to focus their efforts specifically on teachers of color in the US, reflecting the growing population of students of color (See Appendix A). In the following sections, we report specifically on Virginia's workforce/ student demographics, attrition and retention rates, and barriers to licensure among teachers of color.

Teacher Diversity Index

The Teacher Diversity Index is a way to rank states on the percentage-point difference between teachers of color and students of color. The table below shows the racial/ethnic composition of teachers in Virginia and five comparison states: Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

| Racial/Ethnic Demographic of Teachers | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| | Asian | Black | Latino | Multiracial | Native American | Pacific Islander | White |
| Georgia | 1.3% | 25.6% | 2.5% | 1.7% | 0.2% | 0.0% | 68.8% |
| Maryland | 3.6% | 17.3% | 3.0% | 1.0% | 0.2% | 0.5% | 74.4% |
| North Carolina | 0.4% | 14.7% | 3.9% | 2.5% | 1.5% | + | 77.0% |
| South Carolina | 2.1% | 12.7% | 3.4% | 2.4% | * | + | 79.3% |
| Tennessee | 0.4% | 11.5% | 1.3% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 83.9% |
| Virginia | 1.5% | 11.3% | 2.2% | 2.0% | * | + | 82.4% |

*- Reporting standards not met

+ Rounds to zero

Source: Education Trust. Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/educator-diversity/#US>

Next, we consider the racial/ethnic composition of students in each of these states. This is presented in the table below.

| Racial/Ethnic Demographic of Students | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | Asian | Black | Latino | Multiracial | Native American | Pacific Islander | White |
| Georgia | 4.3% | 36.5% | 16.2% | 3.8% | 0.2% | 0.1% | 38.9% |
| Maryland | 6.5% | 34.0% | 16.5% | 4.5% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 38.2% |
| North Carolina | 3.3% | 25.3% | 17.5% | 4.3% | 1.2% | 0.1% | 48.3% |
| South Carolina | 1.6% | 33.6% | 9.5% | 4.1% | 0.3% | 0.1% | 50.8% |
| Tennessee | 2.4% | 23.7% | 10.9% | + | 0.4% | 0.2% | 62.4% |
| Virginia | 7.0% | 22.4% | 15.7% | 5.5% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 48.9% |

*- Reporting standards not met

+ Rounds to zero

Source: Education Trust. Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/educator-diversity/#US>

We used the information in each of the above tables to compare the percentage-point difference between teachers of color and students of color. This information is presented in the table below.

Percentage-Point Differences

| | Percent of Teachers of Color | Percent of Students of Color | Difference (% Teachers - % Students) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Georgia | 31.2% | 61.1% | -29.9% |
| Maryland | 25.6% | 61.8% | -36.2% |
| North Carolina | 23.0% | 51.7% | -28.7% |
| South Carolina | 20.7% | 49.2% | -28.5% |
| Tennessee | 16.1% | 37.6% | -21.5% |
| Virginia | 17.6% | 51.4% | -33.8% |

Source: Education Trust. Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/educator-diversity/#US>

By looking at the percentage-point difference between the percent of teachers of color and the percent of students of color, there are clear disparities. Neither Virginia nor any of the comparison states have percentages that are relatively aligned, though disparities are greater in some states than others. Among these six states, the ranking from lowest disparity to highest disparity is as follows:

1. Tennessee (-21.5%)
2. South Carolina (-28.5%)
3. North Carolina (-28.7%)
4. Georgia (-29.9%)
5. Virginia (-33.8%)
6. Maryland (-36.2%)

Virginia ranks in the lower half of these six states, indicating that improvements are needed. We can also take a look at which races/ethnicities in Virginia are most impacted by disparities. This information is shown in the table below.

Percentage-Point Comparison of Virginia's Teachers and Students

| | Asian | Black | Latino | Multiracial | Native American | Pacific Islander | White |
|---|-------|-------|--------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| Teachers | 1.5% | 11.3% | 2.2% | 2.0% | * | + | 82.4% |
| Students | 7.0% | 22.4% | 15.7% | 5.5% | 0.3% | 0.2% | 48.9% |
| Difference (Teacher % - Student %) | -5.5 | -11.1 | -13.5 | -3.5 | * | -0.2% | 33.5% |

* - Reporting standards not met

+ Rounds to zero

Source: Education Trust. Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/educator-diversity/#US>

White students are the only group in which there is a positive difference (i.e. there is a higher percentage of white teachers than white students). Students of color do not see themselves reflected in the teachers that serve them to the extent that white students do, with Black and Hispanic students being the least represented. In the case of Native Americans, we are not able to know if a disparity exists as reporting standards were not met when collecting teacher data. As decisions are made and policies are considered, prioritization should be given to demographic groups of teachers who experience the most disparities.

Attrition and Retention Rates Among Teachers of Color

Teacher turnover refers to full time teachers who transfer to other schools or exit the field altogether (See Appendices B and C). This also accounts for school closings and layoffs around the state and teachers who work in more than one school division. Teachers in Virginia exit at higher rates than they are transferring to other school divisions. Over a decade (2008-2018), new teachers of color in Virginia represented 30% of all new teachers; however, by their third year of teaching, only 67% of Virginia's Black and Hispanic teachers remained in the profession, whereas 72% of white teachers remained (Miller, 2018) (see Appendix D). Prior efforts to diversify Virginia's teacher workforce focused on alternate routes to licensure, though Virginia's provisionally licensed teachers left the profession at 18% in year three and 14% in year five, compared to 11% for traditionally prepared teachers at both years (Miller, 2018). Recruiting teachers of color through the provisional licensure process may exacerbate disparities by yielding greater attrition rates.

Barriers to Licensure: What We Already Know

A 2017 report from the [Task Force on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline](#) identified three primary barriers that prevent people of color from becoming teachers:

- **Barrier 1:** The length and cost of the traditional teacher preparation pathway is disproportionate to salary, which is particularly burdensome for first-generation college students and low-income students – who are often teachers of color.
- **Barrier 2:** Students are not exposed to or made aware of pathways into the profession early enough, nor are non-teaching majors aware of potential pathways into the profession.
- **Barrier 3:** The provisional licensing route is underutilized, and teachers of color who are provisionally licensed in Virginia obtain full licensure at lower rates than their peers.

We can also consider what barriers may prevent teachers of color from moving from a provisional to a professional license or renewing their Virginia teaching license. This is particularly important given the aforementioned findings that Virginia teachers who identify as Black or Hispanic exit the teaching profession at significantly higher rates than those who identify as white (Miller, 2018). The points at which they exit mark the years (3 and 5) when Virginia teachers move from provisional to professional licensure and/or to continuing contract status.

IV. Comparative State Analysis: Review of Statutes, Regulations and Data

Licensure Reciprocity

Requirements to become a teacher vary from state to state, therefore, teacher license reciprocity agreements are formal agreements made between states to recognize teaching credentials issued by another state. The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) is a professional membership organization representing state departments of education and professional standards boards/commissions that are responsible for the preparation, licensure, and discipline of K-12 educational personnel. Lynch (2019) reports that, as of September 2017, forty-six states and the District of Columbia have signed the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement. Reciprocity agreements allow states to work through differences in licensing systems to manage license transfers and staff vacant teaching positions with qualified applicants, as long as teachers meet the state's requirements (Evans et al., 2020; Lynch, 2021).

Virginia is a participant in the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement on licensure reciprocity. Key components of Virginia's reciprocity [regulation](#) include:

Part . An individual coming into Virginia from any state may qualify for a Virginia teaching license with comparable endorsement areas if the individual (i) has completed a state-approved teacher preparation program through a regionally accredited four-year college or university or (ii) holds a valid out-of-state teaching license (full credential without deficiencies) that shall be in force at the time the application for a Virginia license is made. An individual shall meet licensure requirements set forth in the Code of Virginia. An individual seeking licensure shall establish a file in the Virginia Department of Education by submitting a complete application packet that includes official student transcripts. Unless exempted by the criteria in this chapter, professional teacher's assessment requirements prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education shall be satisfied.

Part B. An individual coming into Virginia will qualify for a Virginia teaching license with comparable endorsement areas if the individual holds an active national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) or a nationally recognized certification program approved by the Virginia Board of Education.

Part C. Licensure by reciprocity is provided for any spouse of an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States or the Commonwealth who has obtained a valid out-of-state license, with full credentials and without deficiencies, that is in force at the time the application for a Virginia license is received by the Virginia Department of Education. Each such individual shall establish a file in the Virginia Department of Education by submitting a complete application packet, which shall include official student transcripts. No service requirements or licensing assessments shall be required for any such individual.

Part D: Licensure by reciprocity is provided for individuals who have obtained a valid out-of-state license, with full credentials and without deficiencies, that is in force at the time the application for a Virginia license is received by the Virginia Department of Education. Each such individual shall establish a file in the Virginia Department of Education by submitting a complete application packet, which shall include official student transcripts. No service requirements or licensing assessments shall be required for any such individual.

Reciprocity agreements improve Virginia’s ability to recruit more teachers of color by attracting out-of-state candidates by lessening some of the challenges associated with moving across state lines. However, our analysis suggests that improved clarity in the regulation regarding “comparable endorsement areas” (Part A) and eliminating verbiage on “full credential without deficiencies” can add greater transparency in the code, particularly for teachers of color who possess provisional or temporary licenses.

The following table illustrates key requirements across comparable states:

Comparative Analysis: Requirements for Licensure Reciprocity for Out-of-State Teachers

| Licensure Reciprocity Component | State | | | | | |
|--|-------|----|----|----|----|----|
| | GA | MD | NC | SC | TN | VA |
| Undergraduate degree obtained from an accredited university and approved teacher education or preparation program | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Passing score on comparable content assessments taken in another state (e.g., Praxis Subject Exams); and/or meet state requirements for state-based tests (e.g., Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Candidates are exempt from testing required for a Continuing Professional License if they: 1) are fully licensed in another state, have three or more years of experience, and have met comparable or identical testing requirements in another state; or 2) hold National Board Certification | | | √ | | | √ |
| Teachers with temporary or provisional licenses must take an approved content assessment | √ | | | | | |
| Teaching license must be professional or comparable | √ | | √ | | | |
| Initial or conditional certificate first for out-of-state candidates; Applicant receives a conditional certificate if they received an offer for hire from a Maryland school. | | √ | | | √ | |
| Applicant must request credential evaluation before applying for reciprocal teacher certification. | | √ | | | | |
| Child abuse intervention and emergency first aid training are needed. | | | | | | √ |

Licensure Process: Teacher Licensure Across States

Our policy examination included a comparative analysis of the licensure process across several states—Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee—states identified by the VDOE that border Virginia or share similarities in student enrollment and/or size (See Appendix F). To leverage opportunities for a shared common base of knowledge, our findings highlight key aspects of each state’s licensure process, documenting components of initial certification to advanced certification. States offering support for high standards, multi-tiered systems of support for the licensure and certification process and offering clear guidelines and processes typically have greater potential to reduce the high attrition rate among teachers of color with initial, provisional, or induction-based certificates. For instance, of the comparable states, Georgia maintains the highest percentage of teachers of color (31%), which could be attributed to the state’s tiered certification approach. The table below displays best practices and unique features of each state’s licensure system.

Best Practices Across States

| Licensure Components | State | Policy Outcomes for Teachers of Color | |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|---|
| | | Licensure Details | Affordances |
| Four-level career ladder | Maryland | A four-level career ladder must be implemented by each county board of education by July 1, 2023. Level one is a State-certified teacher. Level two is a teacher pursuing a Master’s Degree, 30 credits of a State board approved program of study, or National Board Certification (NBC). Level three is a teacher who has an NBC, if NBC or a comparable assessment is not available in the teacher’s content area, a master’s degree in that area; level three includes an assistant principal. Level four is a teacher on the teacher leadership track or administrative track of the career ladder, each of which are further divided into tiers (p. 5). | The bill establishes an average teaching time of 60% as a percentage of total working time for all teachers to be phased in over eight years beginning in fiscal 2026 as well as additional average teaching percentage targets as teachers ascend the career ladder. It also expresses the General Assembly’s intent that as the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future is implemented and teachers are provided with additional collaborative time, the student-to-teacher ratio in public schools will be reduced. (p. 6) |

| Licensure Components | State | Policy Outcomes for Teachers of Color | |
|---|----------------|---|---|
| | | Licensure Details | Affordances |
| Tiered Certification Approach | Georgia | Georgia participates in a tiered teacher certification system, which creates career advancement opportunities for teachers aspiring to assume leadership responsibilities and contribute to school improvement efforts while remaining in the classroom. The tiered certification structure consists of the following: 1. Pre-Service certificate; 2. Provisional certificate; 3. Induction certificate; 4. Professional certificate; 5. Advanced professional certificate; and 6. Lead professional certificate. | Tiered teacher certification is envisioned as a means of improving student learning by recognizing the unique developmental needs of teachers at every career stage and by encouraging and supporting continuous teacher growth. For teachers of color, it enables a fair and equitable environment for growth for practicing teachers, limiting potential for racial bias. |
| National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification | North Carolina | The State shall support the efforts of teachers to achieve national certification by providing approved paid leave time for teachers participating in the process, lending teachers the participation fee, and paying a significant salary differential to teachers who attain national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) (§ 115C-296.2.) | Reduces the cost for advancement certification and provides teachers with school-based supports to pursue NBPTS. Additionally, Maryland’s strategic focus on encouraging and supporting teachers from historically underrepresented groups ensures that more teachers of color gain advanced certification. |
| | Maryland | The bill establishes a program within MSDE to encourage and support teachers to obtain and maintain NBC, including teachers from groups historically underrepresented in the teaching profession and develop a culture of collaborative support for accomplished teaching. | |

| Licensure Components | State | Policy Outcomes for Teachers of Color | |
|--|----------------|--|--|
| | | Licensure Details | Affordances |
| Student Services License | North Carolina | The Student Services license entitles the holder to provide specialized assistance to the learner, the teacher, the administrator and the education program in general. Student services licenses shall include school counseling, school social work, school psychology, audiology, speech-language pathology, and media. | A student services license, along with establishing pathways for grow-your-own programs, can increase the representation of teachers of color, particularly for racially/ethnically diverse educators who are overrepresented in student services support positions. |
| Teaching Experience Acceptable for Credit | South Carolina | To receive experience credit, the applicant must provide an official description of the professional duties for which he or she wishes to receive the credit. These duties must have been connected to the primary educational program through teaching, education administration, curriculum development, or teacher training. With the exception of trade and industry experience credit (see R. 43-63), employment must meet additional requirements for full-time or half-time employment. | Affords teachers, particularly those with other forms of educational experience or teachers without a license, an opportunity to transfer their experience to receive credit for professional duties connected to the primary educational program through teaching, education administration, curriculum development, or teacher training. |
| Teacher Quality and Diversity Program | Maryland | Teacher Quality and Diversity Program MHEC must administer this program to take advantage of national foundation efforts and aid students from historically underrepresented groups in the teaching profession. In awarding grants (up to \$500,000), MHEC must give priority to HBCUs and Hispanic-Serving Institutions with a track record of preparing diverse and | Provides financial supports to historically underrepresented institutions (i.e., HBCUS and HSIs) to help prepare and support educator diversity and other educators from historically underrepresented groups. |

| Licensure Components | State | Policy Outcomes for Teachers of Color | |
|---|-----------|---|---|
| | | Licensure Details | Affordances |
| | | high-quality teachers. Grants may also be awarded to institutions to assist students from groups historically underrepresented in the teaching profession in achieving teacher preparation and certification requirements. The Governor must provide at least \$1 million in the annual State budget for the program. MHEC must assist relevant institutions with the application process. | |
| TN Educator Diversity Policy (adopted Feb 21) | Tennessee | The State Board of Education (SBE) recently adopted a policy to promote educator diversity. Overall, this policy outlines the requirements for LEAs to set goal(s) related to educator diversity that take into consideration the diversity of students the LEA serves; providing strategies for LEAs to use in the recruitment and retention of minority educators; and outlining a plan to monitor educator diversity throughout the state. | Policies that establish goals and targets for recruiting and attracting, supporting, and retaining teachers of color ensures that divisions prioritize educator diversity as a key aspect of supporting student learning. |

V. Inherent Bias and Proposed Solutions

The study team found six key areas in which inherent bias and barriers to licensure exist:

Barrier 1: Potential Bias in Teacher Evaluations

Conducting evaluations are, of course, a standard part of many licensing processes. Teachers undergo evaluation in educator preparation programs to showcase their skills, abilities, and readiness for the workforce as well in schools to demonstrate their in-service experiences and performance for annual evaluations. As the evaluation process is conducted, however, care must be taken to ensure that there is no bias or discrimination in the process, whether it is intentional or not. The ***Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*** (amended 2021) policy identifies several instances in which those seeking a teaching license will face an evaluation. Evaluations are currently guided by the ***Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*** (approved in 2011 and adopted in 2012). For example, the division superintendent must provide “*satisfactory performance evaluations for such teacher for each year of the original three-year provisional license*” for those seeking an extension of their provisional license. In addition, the Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia policy lists “*a proficient or exemplary evaluation rating*” as an indicator of effectiveness in the classroom.

Teachers of color are more likely than whites to be negatively evaluated in the workplace, even if the behaviors among both groups are the same (Campbell, 2020; Grissom & Keiser, 2011). Negative evaluations can certainly diminish a person’s chances of success as a teacher, particularly when seeing advanced or professional licenses such as National Board Certification, but this is not to say that evaluations should be removed. Rather, division leaders must ensure that school-level leaders have the tools and insights to identify racial biases and conduct evaluations in a non-biased way.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Invest in a statewide technical support center** that assists LEAs to conduct analyses of school- and LEA-based minority teacher recruitment and retention and anti-bias training; and
- **Pursue transparent policy language** to avoid unclear language in teacher evaluation guidelines that lead to multiple interpretations and inconsistencies in how teachers are evaluated by school or district-level supervisors.

Barrier 2: Potential Bias in Supervision Requirements

Virginia licensure policy affords supervisors or mentors a significant role in the candidate’s licensing process. For example, in the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*, requirements for multiple endorsements include:

“...a minimum of 10 weeks of successful full-time student teaching under the supervision of a cooperating teacher with demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom...”

In addition, those pursuing an alternate route to licensure have “*a trained mentor [who] shall be assigned to assist the candidate during first year of employment.*” Responsibilities of this mentor include:

- Helping the teacher create a professional development plan,
- Observing, coaching, and providing feedback,
- Sharing resources and materials,
- Sharing strategies and best practices, and
- Providing general support.

As was the case with the evaluation requirements discussed above, it is possible for bias and/or discrimination to occur (intentionally or unintentionally) when working with supervisors and mentors given the forms of feedback and formal and informal assessments involved in these processes. All of these responsibilities are crucial for success. Because of the importance of the role of the supervisor, ensuring that the supervisor can be fair in their work is also crucial.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Fully fund the Standards of Quality (SOQs)** to include the establishment of a unit within the Virginia Department of Education to develop guidelines for teacher leadership and mentorship programs, as well as a statewide principal mentoring program; and
- As noted in Barrier 1, **pursue transparent policy language** to avoid unclear language in teacher evaluation guidelines that lead to multiple interpretations and inconsistencies in how teachers are evaluated by school or district-level supervisors.

Barrier 3: Use of Subjective Language

We identified several instances of subjective language used in policies, potentially creating opportunities for candidates to be evaluated in different ways. As the typical workplace culture privileges whites, teachers of color must oftentimes meet higher standards than their white peers. When guidelines for evaluations are not written in an objective way, this problem can be exacerbated. As an example, the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel* policy states that a condition for licensure is to “*Possess good moral character...*”. However, there is no further explanation of what constitutes “good,” or who decides what is “good” and what may not be good.

Similarly, the same policy notes an alternate route to licensure as “*at least three years of successful full-time work experience or its equivalent.*” In the *Assessment Requirements for Virginia Licensure* policy, “*successful teaching experience*” is listed as part of the exemption criteria for licensure. In the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* policy, “*success*” is used multiple times as an evaluation criterion. In these instances, the same question arises: what is “*success*,” and who decides if a person is successful or not?

Subjective language is also present in the *Licensure Regulations for School Personnel’s* section of revocation and potential reinstatement of licenses. The policy states:

“A license that has been revoked may be reinstated by the Virginia Board of Education after five years if the board is satisfied that reinstatement is in the best interest of the public schools of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A question arises regarding the standards for deciding what is in the “best interest” of the schools. While in this case it is clear who makes the decision (the Virginia Board of Education), there still appears to be subjectivity.

In addition, the idea of “professionalism” is mentioned several times throughout the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* policy. It lists “*professionalism and ethical standards, as well as personal integrity shall be addressed*” as a foundation of education and the teaching profession, and “*understanding the standards of professionalism*” is listed as a requirement. As is the case with the above examples of “success” and “good moral character,” the idea of professionalism may be different to different people and, thus, judging candidates based on these factors may lead to biased outcomes.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Reevaluate and revise subjective policy language** such as moral character, professionalism, and other areas where bias impacts marginalized populations; and
- **Develop a task force to combat bias and subjectivity** and to address reported incidents manifested through biased evaluative policies.

Barrier 4: Disparities in Opportunities

Finally, there are several instances throughout the policies in which not all candidates are likely to have equal access to opportunities, thus diminishing their chances of successfully obtaining a professional license. The Licensure Regulations for School Personnel policy, for instance, requires that candidates “*pay the appropriate fees as determined by the Virginia Board of Education and complete the application process.*” Paying a fee, regardless of the amount, may present greater challenges for some than for others. Disparities in opportunities can also arise due to the area in which one lives. The Licensure Regulations for School Personnel policy requires that candidates fulfill online instructional procedures, yet access to broadband is not available in all areas. Those living in places without this access may face challenges in meeting online teaching standards. The “career switcher” program contains differences in degree requirements. For example, only vocational teachers do not require college degrees. While this certainly opens up opportunities for those seeking to be vocational teachers, those facing barriers to obtaining a degree (e.g. a lack of financial resources or family commitments) would face greater difficulties becoming licensed to teach in other areas. While the requirement for a degree seems reasonable, perhaps steps could be taken to help reduce barriers to college education.

The Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program is one example of a step to reducing education barriers, though policy also raises some questions regarding disparities in opportunities. This scholarship requires a nomination, though it is not clear if self-nominations are allowed. In order to ensure equal opportunities, allowing anyone interested in the scholarship to self-nominate would ensure that bias from external nominators does not limit potential applicants. This policy also states that:

“The Board of Education and the State Council of Higher Education shall make available to parents, students, teachers, high school counselors, and academic advisors and financial aid administrators at public and private institutions of higher education information concerning the Virginia Teacher Scholarship Loan Program...”

While it would certainly be beneficial for all students to know of this opportunity, it is also important to recognize that not all students may have the same access to this information. Questions arise regarding how this information is shared, and how one can be sure that all students are provided with this information.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Expand financial benefits:**
 - Eliminate the gap between the average Virginia worker’s salary and teachers’ salaries by increasing teacher salaries over the next three years;
 - Expand Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program (VTSLP) and support other service scholarship and loan forgiveness programs to cover or reimburse a portion of tuition costs in exchange for teaching commitment (5 years);
 - Establish a Teacher of Color Education Scholarship of Virginia (TCES-VA) program to increase the number of minority teachers in Virginia to better reflect the state’s diverse population; and
 - Connect National Board Certification to Schools Serving Students of Color: Teachers who work in historically underserved schools are more likely to be teachers of color. To recruit and retain them, the state should designate funds for additional annual bonuses for those teachers who hold [National Board Certification](#) and work in these buildings.
- **Expand the line item in the General Assembly to fund Teacher Residency programs:** Providing stipends and tuition support to prospective teachers creates opportunities for teachers of color to receive stronger teacher preparation while reducing the financial burden, creating greater teacher retention and effectiveness once they complete their programs.
- **Create guidelines for a statewide comprehensive teacher induction model** for all teachers in years one through three. Teacher induction models should be jointly funded by the state and LEAs

Barrier 5: Bias in Licensure Assessments

Teacher licensure examinations or assessments are critical junctures on the pathway to becoming a licensed, professional teacher. Before becoming a teacher-of-record, states require that teachers demonstrate subject-area knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and professional teaching ability by passing specific assessments. Teachers usually take these assessments after successfully completing an accredited educator preparation program with specific courses and hours of fieldwork. Teacher candidates also must pass a combination of “basic skills” (i.e., literacy and mathematics), subject area,

and pedagogical knowledge tests. In Virginia, the basic skills test is Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA), a measure of academic skills that is required for teachers in all subject areas. It is composed of two area subtests – a Reading Subtest (091) and a Writing Subtest (092), which “measures the communication and literacy skills necessary to teach and communicate effectively with parents and others in the education community” (Pearson Education, 2020a). There is limited empirical evidence on VCLA specifically, which highlights the need for future validation studies and evidenced-based findings to support, modify, or limit particular aspects of this licensing exam. However, research on other state licensure exams and assessments offer key implications for VCLA and other assessments that function as gatekeepers, presenting barriers for teachers of color. Specifically, research is needed in Virginia to determine whether or not teacher licensure tests are effective at measuring teacher effectiveness, identify which, if any, licensure tests are most appropriate for evaluation, and examine racial disparities visible in the scores on these tests.

Test Validity

First, studies emphasize the importance of test alignment and validity, especially when used for high-stakes for certification (Greenblatt, 2016; Henning, 2014; Meuwissen, 2014; Sato, 2014; Wilkerson, 2015). In an examination of The Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT), a teacher licensure assessment used in California, Wilkerson (2015) states: “Alignment is one of the key processes used to establish evidence of content validity. It is the basis for creating test blueprints. Good alignment includes not only an analysis of construct coverage but also an alignment of student instructions to rater scoring” (p. 186). Another study examining the validity of PACT found evidence to support its use as a summative assessment; however, findings did not support its use for formative purposes (Duckor et al., 2014).

Financial Barriers and Costs

A second consideration is cost and financial burdens of licensure assessments and texts.

A study from James and colleagues (2020) outlined the various costs associated with teacher licensure in Virginia: The initial application fee for teacher licensure for in-state candidates is \$100 with an additional \$50 to add an endorsement. In addition to the application fees, the licensure requirements can cost up to \$400 and includes the 93 Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) which costs \$130 (\$50 nonrefundable fee and \$80 for two subtests), the Praxis Subject Assessment (\$120 - \$146) and the Praxis Series Reading for Virginia Educators (\$130) for individuals seeking elementary or special education licenses. Although fee waivers are offered for low-income candidates, these options are limited and division or statewide efforts offering financial support are not consistent. The total costs of obtaining a teacher license can pose significant challenges for candidates, especially if candidates seek to complete multiple endorsements areas or are required to retake assessments. Studies conclude that the cost of licensure assessments affect teacher equity and diversity, discouraging prospective teachers, many of whom already struggle with sizable educational debt, from entering the workforce (James et al., 2020).

Teacher candidates of color mentioned the need to take and retake licensure exams as a reason for choosing to leave a teacher preparation program and choose another major, “because I don’t have to take as many tests to do that.” Financial supports, such as fee waivers and Title III funding, are inconsistently made available to teacher candidates. Prospective teachers of color are often unaware of financial support, such as fee waivers from the testing companies. A Latina, first generation college student currently completing student teaching told us that she paid for all of her licensure exams out of pocket.

EPP licensure staff shared an additional challenge for those whose first language is not English, explaining that accommodations are often not needed in other academic settings, but timed, standardized tests in English pose challenges. However, the time it takes to request and receive accommodations is beyond the reasonable timetable needed to move forward in programs. This leaves many multilingual teacher candidates postponing their student teaching and graduation by one or more semesters as policy requires waiting a month to retake a test.

When candidates need to retake exams, they must find funding elsewhere, as the fee waiver can only be used once. Requiring official transcripts from all community colleges and universities attended adds additional costs as well. The lack of available testing sites across Virginia then adds travel time and costs for prospective teachers. There are few free resources to prepare for tests. Successful candidates described purchasing preparation materials and tutoring subscription services. We must then ask if we are assessing teacher knowledge and skill or financial means. Additionally, many considered additional assessment and documentation requirements while completing a traditional teacher preparation program causes a great deal of stress. As one candidate explained, “it’s just another stress added on top of coursework added on top of student teaching and practicum. I can’t work because I’m doing x, y, and z, or if I am working, when do I have time to study?”

Racial Disparities

Racial disparities in state teacher licensure exams is an important consideration of Virginia’s teacher licensure policy. Licensure tests have been identified as “a key gatekeeper to the field and directly shapes the racial diversity of the profession” (Petchauer, 2016, p. 1). Although most states require these forms of assessments, prior research identify racial discrepancies indicating that Black/African American teacher candidates disproportionately fail teacher licensure examinations or assessments, such as the Praxis exam, compared to their white counterparts. In one study of Praxis assessment across 28 states between 2005 and 2009, Black/African American test takers scored lower, on average, even when controlling for variables such as undergraduate grade point average, selectivity of institution, and parent’s education level (Nettles et al., 2011).

To explain differences in passing scores, there are two general conclusions. First, differences in academic preparation and skills of the test taker that indicate deficiencies in skills and knowledge. Students’ prior experiences with standardized testing can also affect their efficacy on teacher licensure exams (Petchauer, 2016). However, differential outcomes are largely attributed to variation in teacher

preparation. Studies show that teachers with traditional teacher education and preparation from a college or university degree program tend to perform slightly better than alternatively certified teachers in terms of value-added teacher quality metrics (Castro & Edwards, 2021; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2010; Goldhaber, Liddle, & Theobald, 2013). Variation in program quality can also influence teacher turnover or attrition—factors that contribute to overall shortages of teachers of color. Studies examining the relationship of certification or licensure pathway and retention show that teachers from alternative pathways have higher rates of attrition, especially for teachers from fast-track programs or “boot-camp-style” routes to teacher certification requiring minimal training or a learn-on-the-job approach (Redding & Smith, 2016). Overall, teachers from alternate routes tend to have less student teaching experience or other pre-service training that may affect performance on licensure exams (Castro & Edwards, 2021).

A second conclusion locates structural inequalities, stemming from lower quality K-12 schooling experiences that accumulate over time to impact overall performance. This explanation also accounts for test bias and the “the subjective and social psychological ways test takers actually experience exams” (Petchauer, 2014, p. 4). That is, viewing licensure exams as a testing event that includes interactions with proctors, site administrators, and other test takers before and during exams as well as the cognitive and affective processes beyond the specific skills the test is designed to measure may explain differences in scores and outcomes for Black teachers (Petchauer, 2014).

Proposed Solutions:

- **The Virginia Board of Education should evaluate the existing assessment requirements for licensure, and act to eliminate those that are not absolutely essential, align assessment requirements with skills and competencies of high-quality teaching, and provide candidates multiple types of assessment opportunities to demonstrate their skills** (Recommended by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortages, 2017).
 - In addition, the VBOE should reevaluate assessment passing scores recently raised and disproportionately impacting Black and Hispanic candidates (such as the VCLA);
 - Given that the VDOE may grant exceptions to recommended teachers who failed to pass licensure exams, we recommend that the VBOE consider alternate options to assess teacher performance, specifically, classroom-based teaching assessments as alternative options to current licensure assessments as a singular approach;
 - Expand funding to pay for licensure exam costs currently paid by teacher candidates of color enrolled in teacher preparation programs and by provisionally licensed teachers of color; and
 - Expand programs like the "Competitive Grant for Praxis and Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment Assistance to Support Diversity Among Provisionally Licensed Teachers Seeking Full Licensure in Virginia (PDF)" program to cover testing costs for all teachers of color.

Barrier 6: Challenges in Communication and Processing

In order to obtain or renew a teaching license in Virginia, an individual must locate accurate information, enter a teacher preparation program or accept employment by a school/ division, complete a series of requirements that differ by the route to licensure, complete licensure exams, demonstrate effective practice, and have their licensure documents reviewed by a knowledgeable staff person in the VDOE. Each of these steps presents potential obstacles. Analyses of interviews and focus groups highlighted three key communication challenges for all prospective and current teachers, as well as the particular ways these challenges are exacerbated by being a member of an underrepresented minority group. These key challenges are:

- 1) Availability of accurate information
- 2) Incoherent policy and implementation
- 3) VDOE licensure processing systems

Availability of Accurate Information

Expressing frustration as a multiracial educator now in a school division leadership role, one participant described VDOE communication approaches as, “withholding the information,” and described her advocacy stance with prospective teachers of color saying, “that information is public and there should be no reason or barricades that can keep us from that knowledge.” In order to recruit and retain teachers of color, the administrative burden falls on school division leadership to create tutorials, websites, and other communication tools to help prospective teachers gain the licensure policy information that is inaccessible on the VDOE website. Many provisionally licensed teachers of color described gathering information from their colleagues “to beat the system,” as they received different information from their school division licensure offices, universities, and the VDOE licensure staff. When teacher candidates and provisionally licensed teachers have a professional network of peers in the field, they can more readily obtain the information needed and navigate potential hurdles. Teacher candidates and provisionally licensed teachers of color are less likely to have that professional network. As one school division HR director told us, “They are just not in the know.”

Incoherent Policy and Implementation

The website is not easily navigable for the layperson without a background in educator licensure. Not only is it challenging to navigate, but the vast array of professional entry points and pathways to provisional and professional licensure lead to conflicting understandings among teacher candidates, school division staff, and VDOE staff.

For out-of-state candidates, varied endorsement terminology within and outside of Virginia outlined in the *Conditions for Licensure for Out-Of-State Candidates by Reciprocity* may cause individuals seeking to transfer from other states to either complete additional coursework or find employment in another sector. Teacher Preparation Program licensure officers and leaders mentioned the lack of easily navigable and publicly available information as well. They instead relied on biannual meetings with

VDOE leadership to walk them through changes and details, as well as email communications, to prepare teacher candidates' licensure packets. Teachers of color described completing a university program aimed to provide all coursework requirements for professional licensure only to be told by a human resources staff member that they needed to take additional coursework. Although this is likely attributed to the various entry points for licensure and institutional program requirements, access to easily navigable information on the VDOE website could provide greater clarity for teachers when gathering information about differences that may exist for institutional program requirements versus licensure and endorsement requirements. School division HR staff explained that principals often want to hire a teacher to meet their staffing needs, but the teacher isn't endorsed in the areas needed. This is particularly true for the staffing needs and licensure regulations in special education.

Teacher candidates and teachers of color described multiple experiences being denied their application and requiring additional fees to be paid, coursework to be taken, or forms completed in a different manner.

A university licensure officer described the licensure requirements and process as “a guessing game.”

EPP licensure staff and leadership noted changes from year to year in the licensure packet details. For example, multiple participants described confusion around transfer credits on official transcripts; applicants must now obtain official transcripts from all institutions. Other sources of confusion included whether an EPP could verify that a student completed all program requirements except student teaching and meet that requirement through one year of teaching on a provisional license, whether a course could meet requirements in two licensure areas (even if specified within approved program matrices), and course review (regardless of approved program status). Without written guidance or training, licensure officers inconsistently implemented policy interpretations and licensure staff in EPPs and school divisions relied on word of mouth to make sense of the ever-changing policies and practices.

VDOE Licensure Processing Systems

EPP leadership described the need to communicate **all licensure information to candidates** as it was difficult for prospective teachers to locate. HR officers described the same problem, often developing their own webpages, tutorials, and communication tools. All EPP participants mentioned the need to help each individual candidate with all their licensure paperwork and review, but often faced challenges with limited capacity. Both teacher candidates and EPP leadership agreed that individual appointments were effective for addressing teachers' unique needs, whether they were early career teachers or experienced, veteran teachers seeking license renewal (see Challenges in License Renewal).

“Not only did they get this letter almost two months after we submitted it, but because it had been so long, they now had to refill out the applications because of the legal questions on the front, since it had been over 90 days since they signed the document.”

At the conclusion of an often years-long process, teachers and teacher candidates must mail a license application with printed copies of all required components to the VDOE. Pending review of a packet and receipt of the payment, the VDOE then mails the license to the teacher. We found three barriers at this point in the licensure process: 1) VDOE staff either didn't receive all of the materials mailed or were not knowledgeable about what met the requirements, 2) requirements and application forms change frequently and 3) it often takes multiple months to receive a license after submitting the application and required materials. Another participant described the process saying, “hopefully by the time the Virginia Department of Education receives them in the postal mail it's still the document that they're still accepting and using.” New teachers and school division leaders described multiple instances where the teacher didn't receive their license until multiple months after being hired. If anything on the application required correction, that could add financial costs and additional administrative burden for the teacher. A licensure officer described this scenario to us, “Not only did they get this letter almost two months after we submitted it, but because it had been so long, they now had to refill out the applications because of the legal questions on the front, since it had been over 90 days since they signed the document.” The administrative burden required of school division and teacher preparation program staff to review and facilitate licensure applications and that required of teachers and teacher candidates to resubmit paperwork is daunting.

Overall, the lack of accessible and navigable information sources, **frequent change of VDOE licensure documents and requirements, inconsistent policy implementation, financial constraints, and challenges inherent in a paper-based system of documentation become even greater barriers for teachers of color and for multilingual candidates whose first language might not be English.**

Licensure renewal requirements and moving from a provisional to professional licensure entail the same administrative burdens and processes as obtaining initial teaching licensure in Virginia. In addition, teachers wishing to renew professional licenses need to complete professional development activities based on a point system. School divisions have the flexibility and autonomy to award differing point values to the same activities (e.g., mentoring, professional development workshops) and the autonomy to offer varied professional development activities or financial resources to support external offerings, such as leadership credentialing or National Board Certification. For example, some school divisions pay for national board certification costs up front, others reimburse teachers who successfully earn certification, while others do not have the resources to cover any of the costs associated with advancement. Similarly, some school divisions offer high quality professional development

opportunities, while others offer workshops that meet the requirements, though teachers describe them as ineffective (“just checking the box”).

Challenges in License Renewal

| Renewal Requirement Type | What Stakeholders Are Saying |
|---|--|
| National Board Certification (NBC) | <p>“It just seemed like there was a lot of secrecy around it [NBC]... and you have to pay upfront and get reimbursed.”</p> <p>“I’m curious, but I don’t even know what it is.”</p> <p>“I’m just not sure that they’re [teachers of color) receiving the information.”</p> <p>“With regard to nationally board-certified teachers, we do provide a stipend for them to carry on and we do provide the in-house mentoring that is needed to get that renewed as well.”</p> |
| Continuing Education/Professional Development | <p>“We work with our director of professional learning and we have a database system that monitors and keeps professional learning points, and we would just embed a link to that in a reminder that that's where you need to go to better understand how many points you've already acquired and then we'll send them a reminder about renewal.”</p> <p>“In my first division, I was given required components for professional development and which would count towards re-licensure. But when I moved divisions to Suffolk, there was a separate professional development from what is eligible for licensure. There are just inconsistencies between districts on what counts towards licensure.”</p> |

Proposed Solutions:

- **Create a clear and streamlined licensure website** that clarifies what requirements are needed based on the route to licensure and endorsement(s) sought. This reduces the disproportionate impact of inaccessible information on prospective teachers of color who often do not have a personal or professional network able to provide this information.
- **Create an online licensure application portal** that integrates all forms and payment, reducing the possibility of delayed mail, user error, and submission of outdated documents.
 - Within this portal, teachers should be able to track professional development points earned and additional credentialing/ endorsement options; and
 - The portal should have sharing/sending options for EPP or division leadership to review and approve documents before the VDOE review process.
- **Create sustainable working conditions:** To better retain all teachers, but particularly teachers of color who serve in schools with greater student and staffing needs, a long-term strategy to improve working conditions is necessary. These recommendations include:
 - Examine educational environments or school working conditions, the unique work demands, work responsibilities (formal and informal), and workload manageability of teachers of color;
 - Establish an average teaching time of 60% of the total contract hours;
 - Establish average teaching percentage targets that correspond to the career ladder/ teaching experience;
 - Reduce the student-to-teacher ratio;
 - Eliminate the support staff cap to provide greater instructional and behavioral support to teachers of record; and
 - Provide racial justice-oriented professional development to support teachers of color.
- **Virginia should offer “full” reciprocity for an individual who holds an out-of-state, District of Columbia, or territory of the United States renewable teaching license** (with no deficiencies) with 15 comparable endorsements that is in force at the time the application for a Virginia license is received by the Department of Education. With “full” reciprocity, such individuals would not be required to meet prescribed Board of Education initial licensure assessments. (Recommended by VDOE Reciprocity workgroup)
- **Invest in implementation capacity** to provide technical support to local divisions, provide clear guidance, ongoing training, and oversight to ensure divisions follow consistent processing guidelines and are adequately supported:
 - Increase VDOE Licensure Office staffing to reduce the amount of time between submission and notification of licensure application status; and
 - Invest in a statewide technical support center that strengthens and supports a diverse teacher pipeline and career ladder (e.g.- minority teacher leadership preparation, mentoring, coaching, and advanced/ leadership credentialing supports) and assists LEAs to develop innovative grow-your-own programs, EPP-LEA-VDOE

partnerships, and analysis of school- and LEA-based minority teacher recruitment and retention.

- **Develop specific policy guidance to support recruitment and retention of teachers of color:**
 - Create an adaptive data system to track teachers' licensure status; and
 - Develop performance metrics to achieve workforce diversity goals, as well as accountability for LEAs.

VI. Conclusion

Research indicates that attracting teachers of color is imperative to long-term student success, especially in closing the education gap between students of color and their white peers (Chung & Zou, 2021; Gershenson et al., 2021; Scherer et al., 2021). Therefore, a teacher's race and/or ethnicity should be factored as an asset in teacher quality and should be incorporated into the policies and regulations reviewed (Hansen & Quintero, 2021). Although our analysis suggests there is incoherent policy implementation of licensure code that may contribute to teacher bias, it is important to note that there are various entry points and pathways to licensure and endorsement for teachers in Virginia, which inherently adds to teachers' overall sense of incoherence.

In an effort to promote an equity-based research agenda focused on preventing biases in teacher licensure processes, VDOE should expand its ongoing data transparency and monitoring efforts to proactively identify barriers for teachers of color in the teacher licensure process and beyond. VDOE's current data availability and monitoring approach does not allow us to answer the following questions as it pertains to additional barriers and potential biases for teachers of color:

1. What percent/number of teachers get their license terminated (non-renewals)? How do these outcomes vary by teacher racial/ethnic groups and across school divisions?
2. What is the rate of teachers of color licensed under the various types of license as outlined in Virginia code (i.e., Collegiate Professional License, Technical Professional License, Online Teacher License)?
3. What data exist/ how many or percentage of teachers on provisional licenses are exempted from passing licensure exams to move to professional licensure? How do these outcomes vary by teacher racial/ethnic groups and across school divisions?
4. What data exist on the rate of provisionally licensed ToC who obtain a license via special conditions for licensure (see below)? What data exist on those who are not recommended vs. those who are?
 - a. holds a provisional license that will expire within three months or, at the discretion of the school board and division superintendent, within six months if the individual has received a satisfactory mid-year performance review in the current school year;
 - b. is employed by a school board;
 - c. is recommended for licensure by the division superintendent;
 - d. has attempted, unsuccessfully, to obtain a qualifying score on the professional assessments as prescribed by the Board;
 - e. has received an evaluation rating of proficient or above on the performance standards for each year of the provisional license, and such evaluation was conducted in a manner consistent with the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents; and

- f. meets all other requirements for initial licensure.
5. Which divisions disproportionately rely on a high proportion of provisionally licensed teachers to staff positions?
 6. How does VDOE and/or divisions gather evidence about the general quality of renewal requirements such as continuing education courses or professional development supports? Which professional development activities used to renew an expiring teaching license drive improvement in practice?
 7. What are the pass rates for provisionally-licensed teachers of color on licensure assessments? Are there some school divisions whose pass rates outpace others?
-

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Appendix

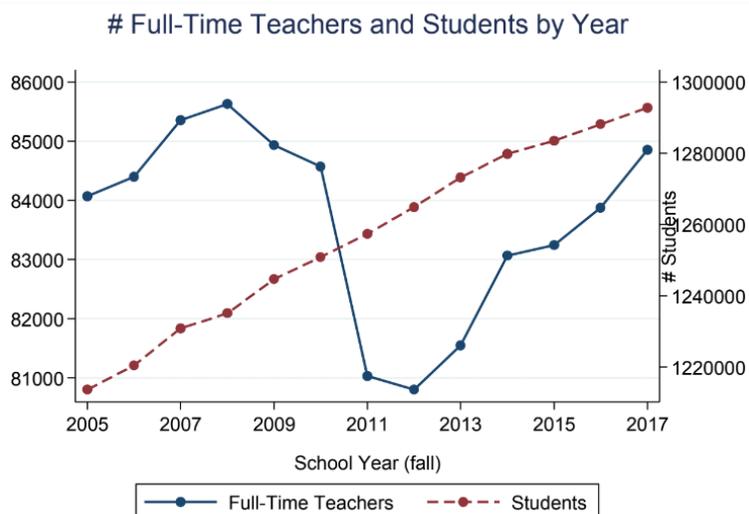
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|-------------------|---|
| Appendix A | Size of Virginia Teacher Workforce and Student Population |
| Appendix B | Reasons for Turnover |
| Appendix C | Teacher Migration and Attrition in the US |
| Appendix D | Race and Ethnicity Exit Rates in Virginia |
| Appendix E | Critical Teacher Shortage in Virginia |
| Appendix F | State by State Licensure Comparison |

Appendix A: Size of Virginia Teacher Workforce and Student Population

Size of Teacher Workforce & Student Population

Teacher Workforce

- Grew by 788 (0.9%) teachers over the period
- Lost 4,830 (5.6%) teachers during Great Recession (2008-2012)



Student Population

- Grew by 79,210 (6.5%) students over the period
- Increased every year



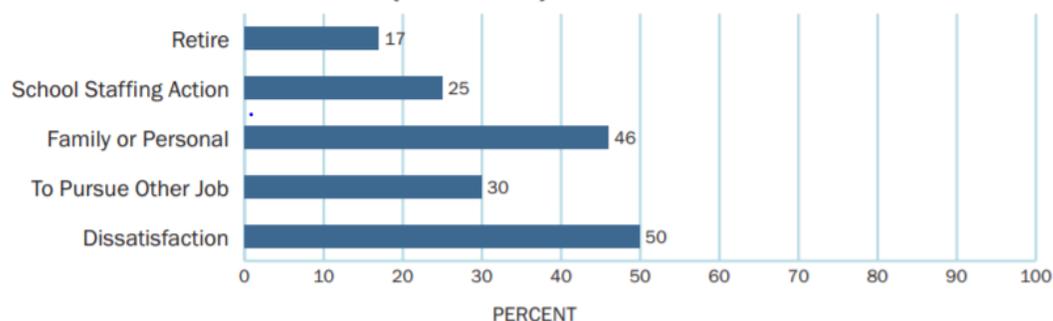
CURRY SCHOOL and
BATTEN SCHOOL
EdPolicyWorks

Miller (2018)

Appendix B: Reasons for Turnover

Figure 5

Percent of Minority Public School Teachers Reporting General Types of Reasons for Their Turnover (2012–13)

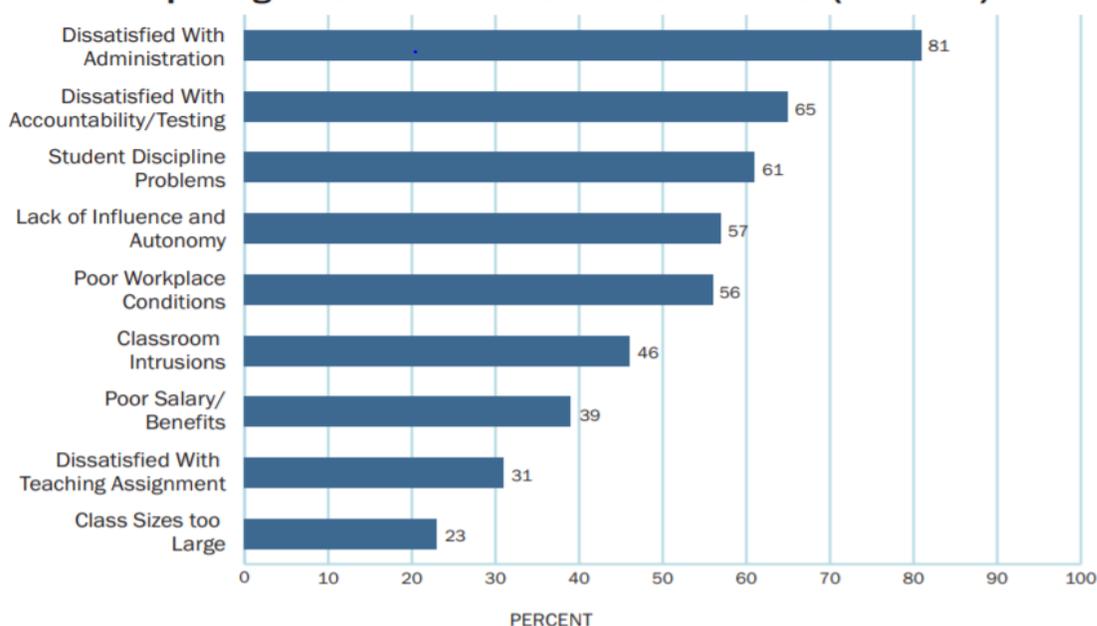


(Ingersoll, May, Collins, 2017)

Out of the teachers who identified dissatisfaction as their reason for leaving the profession, student discipline, accountability, and administration were the top three factors in teacher turnover. The lack of influence and autonomy is a common theme as well, manifesting in other findings on teacher turnover as well. “The data (not shown here) also show that nonteachers of color report similar reasons behind their turnover, and that, in general, similar kinds of dissatisfactions underlie both teacher migration and teacher attrition.”

Figure 6

Of Those Minority Public School Teachers Reporting Dissatisfaction, Percent Reporting Particular Reasons for Their Turnover (2012–13)



(Ingersoll, May, Collins, 2017)

Appendix C: Teacher Migration and Attrition in US

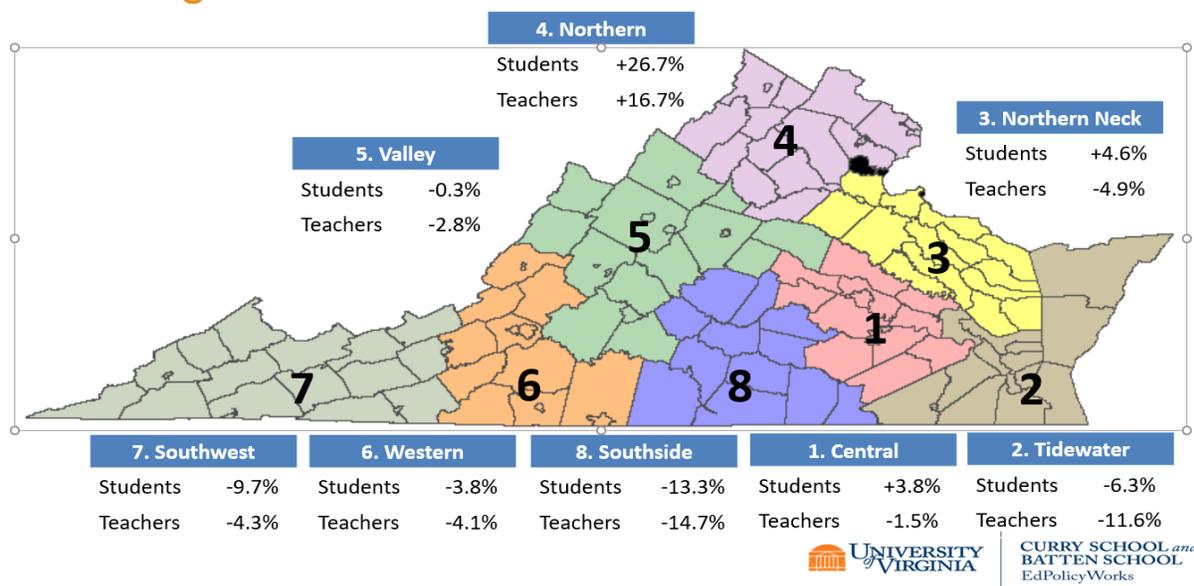
Table 4
Public and Private Teacher Migration and Attrition by Race/Ethnicity of Teachers, by Year

| Year | Minority Teachers (Percent) | | | Nonminority Teachers (Percent) | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | Moves | Leaves | Total | Moves | Leaves | Total |
| 1988-89 | 9.2 | 5.9 | 15.1 | 7.9 | 6.5 | 14.4 |
| 1991-92 | 7.0 | 6.1 | 13.1 | 7.2 | 6.0 | 13.2 |
| 1994-95 | 9.2 | 7.6 | 16.8 | 6.7 | 7.2 | 13.9 |
| 2000-01 | 8.4 | 7.5 | 15.9 | 7.7 | 8.2 | 15.9 |
| 2004-05 | 9.0 | 10.4 | 19.4 | 7.6 | 8.8 | 16.4 |
| 2008-09 | 10.1 | 9.2 | 19.3 | 6.7 | 8.9 | 15.6 |
| 2012-13 (public only) | 10.6 | 8.3 | 18.9 | 7.5 | 7.6 | 15.1 |

(Ingersoll, May, Collins, 2017)

In Virginia teacher turnover is reflected in full time teachers transferring to other schools, possibly in other districts (132 school division in Virginia) or states and/ or exiting the field altogether. This also accounts for school closings and layoffs around the state and teachers who work in more than one school division. Teachers in Virginia are exiting schools at higher rates than they are transferring to other school divisions.

Most Regions Shrank between 2005-05 and 2017-18

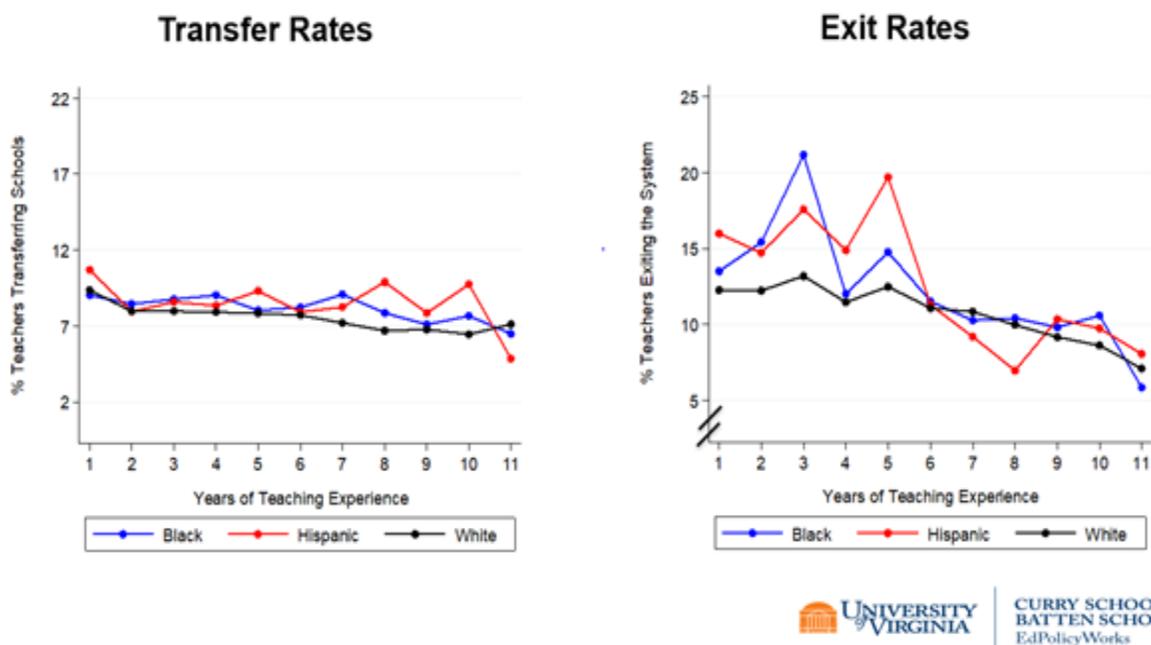


Miller, Lane (2018)

Appendix D: Race/ Ethnicity Exit Rates in Virginia

In Virginia, more teachers of color are transferring and exiting the teaching profession than their white counterparts. There is however a significant variation in teacher turnover across the state. Rates of teacher attrition are also associated with student poverty and academic performance.

Teacher Race/Ethnicity



(Miller, 2018)

Appendix E: Critical Teaching Shortage in Virginia

In Virginia, “critical shortage” may be defined in two ways: (1) shortages by subject matter as designated from the top ten academic disciplines identified in an annual survey of school divisions; or (2) a school personnel vacancy for which a school division receives three or fewer qualified candidates for a position.

2021-2022 Ten Critical Shortage Teaching Endorsement Areas in Virginia

1. Special Education
2. Elementary Education PreK-6
3. Middle Education Grades 6-8
4. Career and Technical Education
5. Mathematics Grades 6-12 (including Algebra 1)
6. Science (Secondary)
7. Foreign Language PreK-12
8. English (Secondary)
9. Library Media PreK-12
10. Health and physical education

VDOE (2021)

Appendix F: State by State Licensure Comparison¹

Georgia

Georgia's tiered system of certification includes six tiers that “recognizes the unique developmental needs of teachers at every career stage and by encouraging and supporting continuous teacher growth.” It includes the following certificate types: 1) Pre-service teaching certificate, 2) Provisional certificate, 3) Induction certificate, 4) Professional certificate, 5) Advanced professional certificate, and 6) Lead professional certificate.

The Pre-Service Teaching certificate assists pre-service educators, once admitted to certain state-approved educator preparation programs, in understanding the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators. The Pre-Service certificate is valid for five (5) years and candidates cannot hold a valid Georgia certificate or Permit in a teaching field, or an expired Georgia renewable professional certificate in a teaching field.

For the pre-service teaching certificate, a candidate must:

- Be admitted to an educator preparation program in the state of Georgia, any other U.S. state or online, which meets requirements for approved programs
- Pass the Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment,
- Have a successful Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) criminal record check
- Must be requested by the educator preparation provider

The Provisional Certificate allows individuals meeting entry requirements to teach up to three years while completing requirements for professional certification. For the provisional certificate, a candidate must:

- Hold a bachelor's degree or higher from a GaPSC-accepted accredited institution, unless Georgia does not require a bachelor's degree for the specific field. Minimum degree requirements are defined in the applicable teaching or service rule.
- Applicants must meet the undergraduate GPA requirement of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale or hold a master's degree from a GaPSC-accepted institution.
- Attain a passing score on statewide assessments
- Have the certificate requested by the employing Georgia local unit of administration (LUA)

The Induction Certificate provides a statewide structure for the professional development of early career educators (defined as one who is new to the profession with fewer than three [3] years of experience); and educators new to the state of Georgia and assures the effectiveness of these educators.

For the induction certificate, a candidate must:

- Meet the minimum requirements for becoming an educator in Georgia

¹ The information presented in Appendix F is drawn from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) report, [50-State Comparison: Teacher License Reciprocity](#).

- Complete a GaPSC-approved educator preparation program at the appropriate degree level as defined in the applicable teaching or service rule and receive verification of program completion
- Attain a passing score on Georgia educator assessments

The Professional Certificate ensures that classroom teachers meet minimum requirements and satisfy state teacher effectiveness requirements as defined in the state teacher evaluation system. The Professional certificate is also issued in service and leadership fields to educators meeting professional requirements. Georgia issues two (2) types of renewable Professional certificates: Standard and Performance-Based.

The Standard Professional teaching certificate is intended for those individuals evaluated by a school, district, or agency-approved evaluation system and not evaluated by the statewide evaluation system. It is issued to individuals who do not meet the requirements for the Performance-Based Professional teaching certificate but do meet the following requirements:

- Hold a valid or expired out-of-state professional certificate at the bachelor's degree level or higher, with three (3) or more years of successful experience
- Pass or exempt the GACE content assessment.
- Satisfy the Special Education requirement with a grade of B or better.

The Advanced Professional Certificate provides a statewide structure to recognize expert classroom practice and professional growth resulting in higher levels of student learning. For the advanced professional certificate, a candidate must:

- Hold a valid Georgia professional teaching certificate
- Have earned a minimum of ten (10) years of successful educator experience (three of which must be in Georgia)
- Meet Georgia's Standards of Conduct
- Hold an advanced degree in any teaching field; or Valid professional certificate in Curriculum and Instruction or Instructional Technology; or Valid National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification;

The Lead Professional certificate provides a statewide structure to promote, support, and expand opportunities for teacher leadership in grades P-12 to improve effective classroom practice resulting in higher levels of student learning. For the lead professional certificate, a candidate must:

- Obtain at least five years of acceptable educator experience, at least three of which must have been earned on a Georgia certificate within the last five years.
- Obtain one of the following: 1) Teacher leadership certification, 2) an advanced degree in a teaching field and a Teacher Leader, Coaching, or Teacher Support & Coaching endorsement, 3) a Certificate in Curriculum & Instruction or Instructional Technology and a Teacher Leader, Coaching or Teacher Support and Coaching endorsement, OR 4) National Board certification and a Teacher Leader, Coaching, or Teacher Support and Coaching endorsement.
- Be employed with a Georgia school district.

Maryland

Conditional Certificate (COND)

- Valid for two years
- Issued only at the request of a local school system superintendent to an applicant employed in a local school system who does not meet all certification requirements.

Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC)

- Valid for two years
- Issued to an applicant who has been selected by a local school system to participate in an alternative teacher preparation program.

Professional Eligibility Certificate (PEC)

- valid for 5 years issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and is not currently employed in a MD local school system.

Standard Professional Certificate I (SPC I)

- valid for 5 years issued to an applicant who meets all certification requirements and is employed by a Maryland local school system or an accredited nonpublic school.

Standard Professional Certificate II (SPC II)

- Valid for 5 years; issued to an applicant who completes the SPC I, is employed by a Maryland local school system or an accredited nonpublic school, and submits the following:
 - 1) verification of 3 years of satisfactory professional experience; 6 semester hours of acceptable credit; and
 - 2) A professional development plan for the Advanced Professional Certificate (APC).

Advanced Professional Certificate (APC)

- Valid for 5 years; issued to an applicant who submits the following:
 - 1) verification of 3 years of full-time professional school-related experience; 6 semester hours of acceptable credit; and
 - 2) A master's degree, or a minimum of 36 semester hours of post-baccalaureate coursework which must include at least 21 semester hours of graduate credit (The remaining 15 semester hours may include graduate or undergraduate course work and/or Maryland State Department of Education Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits, or obtained National Board Certification and earned a minimum of 12 semester hours of approved graduate course work earned after the conferral of the bachelor's or higher degree.

North Carolina

The Residency License

The Residency License is a new alternate pathway to becoming a professional educator. This route allows qualified individuals to obtain a teaching position and begin teaching right away as a Resident while obtaining a clear professional educator's license. The NC Dept of Public Instruction authorizes a one-year Residency License that may be renewed twice for up to a 3-year licensure cycle. Residency licensure is issued on a provisional basis in the teaching area that corresponds to the individual's qualifications. An approved educator preparation program (EPP) must determine the applicant for the license to be qualified and enroll the individual, while a North Carolina school system or charter school employs the Resident to teach. Both EPP enrollment and public-school system employment as a teacher are required to qualify for and continue teaching on a Residency License.

Student Services license

A student services license shall entitle the holder to provide specialized assistance to the learner, the teacher, the administrator and the education program in general. Student services licenses shall include school counseling, school social work, school psychology, audiology, speech-language pathology, and media. Student services personnel who have completed an approved preparation program but not satisfied NCSBE-required tests are issued an Initial Professional License.

Provisional License

Provisional licenses are issued only at the request of the employing LEA. This license is issued with the requirement that course work for full licensure be satisfied at the rate of six semester hours per year. Credits must be completed prior to the beginning of each new school year and must conform to the conditions set by the Licensure Section of the Department of Public Instruction to clear provisional status.

Initial Professional License

The Initial Professional License (IPL) is issued for a three-year period and allows the educator to begin practicing the profession on an independent basis in North Carolina. For the Initial Professional License, an individual must either complete an approved educator preparation program, or qualify for an initial lateral entry license, or qualify for an initial CTE license as outlined by the State Department of Public Instruction.

Continuing Professional License

This license is issued to individuals who have three or more years of successful public-school teaching experience. To convert an Initial Professional License to a Continuing Professional License, an educator must complete all required coursework and achieve a passing score on all North Carolina State Board of Education-approved exams required for the license area(s) within the established timeframe. The Continuing Professional License (CPL) is issued for a five-year period during which time teachers must complete renewal requirements.

South Carolina

Initial Educator Certificate

An Initial educator certificate is valid for three school years and is not renewable. It is typically issued to an early career educator or to an educator without recent work experience in a regionally accredited PK-12 education setting.

Limited Professional Certificate

The Limited Professional certificate provides a certificate advancement option for educators who hold South Carolina Initial teaching certificates and who are employed as educators in eligible, non-regulated educational entities in this state. In this context, “non-regulated” means that the entity is not required to comply with State Board of Education regulations and guidelines for evaluating educator performance and effectiveness. Limited Professional certificates are valid for a period of up to five years and are renewable. Limited professional certificates last up to seven-year time period and the educator must have:

- A valid South Carolina Initial teaching certificate;
- Be employed in a position and non-regulated educational entity which aligns (both in content and grade range) with a field in which the educator holds Initial certification;
- Successfully completed an annual performance evaluation process that is approved by the employing educational entity.

Professional Certificate

In order to advance from an Initial to a renewable Professional certificate that is valid for five school years, an educator must successfully complete additional requirements while employed in a South Carolina public school setting. For the standard Professional certificate, the educator must:

- Be employed in a South Carolina public school,
- Participate in the employing district’s induction program, and
- Successfully complete the summative evaluation of teaching performance at the Annual contract level as part of the state’s system for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT).

Tennessee

Practitioner License: The practitioner license is considered the initial or entry-level license. New or out-of-state teachers are first awarded this license. It is valid for three years and can be renewed once, for a total of six years, while working towards a professional license.

Professional License: This is the most advanced teaching license offered in Tennessee. Teachers advance to a professional teaching license after gaining at least three years of teaching experience, complete an approved educator preparation program, submit passing scores on required content and literacy assessments; and obtain the recommendation of the Director of Schools *or* earn 30 Professional Development Points (PDPs), which can be gained by completing continuing education credits.