



Streamlining Certification and Licensure

Certification has long been a barrier to diversifying the educator workforce. Without addressing the barriers that keep racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educators from receiving certification, the system will fail to make progress on increasing the diversity of the workforce. Most states require the passing of teaching licensure exams as part of their certification requirements. These exams have historically revealed persistent achievement gaps between White candidates and candidates of color. In many ways, producing these achievement gaps are one of the purposes of the exams themselves. Frequently, the move to require the passing of teaching licensure exams for certification stemmed from a desire to keep candidates of color out of the teaching force (LPI, p.13). These requirements persist despite evidence that the exams are poor predictors of teacher effectiveness and that they are culturally and racially biased measures (REL Northwest).

Despite these barriers, states and policymakers are investing in maintaining rigorous expectations for certification while removing barriers for racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educators. They are doing this by realigning certification requirements to requirements that ensure those who meet them are skilled educators with the tools needed to meet the needs of students in the schools and classrooms of their states.

Promising practices

- [Illinois says goodbye to the basic skills test, long a barrier for teacher candidates of color](#): A story from Chalkbeat Chicago that describes the rationale for eliminating a teacher skills test that largely impacted minority candidates.
- [Diversifying the Educator Workforce: Learning What Works from Washington State](#). A blog post summarizing a statewide gathering of key stakeholders that showcases several promising strategies, including key lessons from successful grow your own preparation programs in Washington state.

Strategies to consider

The strategies listed here are applicable to all stakeholders. For role or system-specific recommendations, please turn to page 20.

1. Shift away from Praxis—the series of written examinations that govern licensure for teaching in American K-12 schools—toward alternative ways for candidates to demonstrate skills and competencies. Examples include portfolios, demonstrations, or expanded waivers.
2. Implement full certification reciprocity across the region.
3. Streamline and make the navigation of obtaining a license and endorsements easy and clear.
4. Create opportunities for groups of educators who may be displaced (from other countries) to become certified.