

Teacher Training to Meet Diverse Student Needs Before Entering the Classroom: Teacher Preparation in 2017-18

DATA POINT
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This Data Point looks at preservice coursework, or teacher preparation training, on meeting the needs of diverse student populations completed by U.S. private and public school teachers before the coronavirus pandemic. This Data Point uses data from the teacher survey of the 2017-18 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). The NTPS is a national sample survey of public and private K-12 schools, principals, and teachers. It can be used to make comparisons between the 50 states and the District of Columbia. State representative information is also available for public schools, principals, and teachers.

Preservice coursework, or courses completed before a teacher's first year teaching, is important for teacher preparation and training. It helps new teachers meet the needs of every student. One focus of teacher preparation reform over the last two decades has been about helping teachers meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations.^{1, 2}

The 2017-18 NTPS asked public and private school teachers about their preservice coursework on different education topics. The survey defined preservice coursework as graduate or undergraduate courses taken before a teacher's first year teaching. Three areas of study were about meeting diverse student needs in the classroom. The first was serving students from diverse economic backgrounds. The second was serving students with special needs. The third was teaching students who are limited English proficient (LEP) or English language learners (ELLs).

Do public and private school teachers take different amounts of pre-service coursework on diverse student needs?

Across the three topic areas, a higher percentage of public than private school teachers took preservice coursework (**FIGURE 1**).

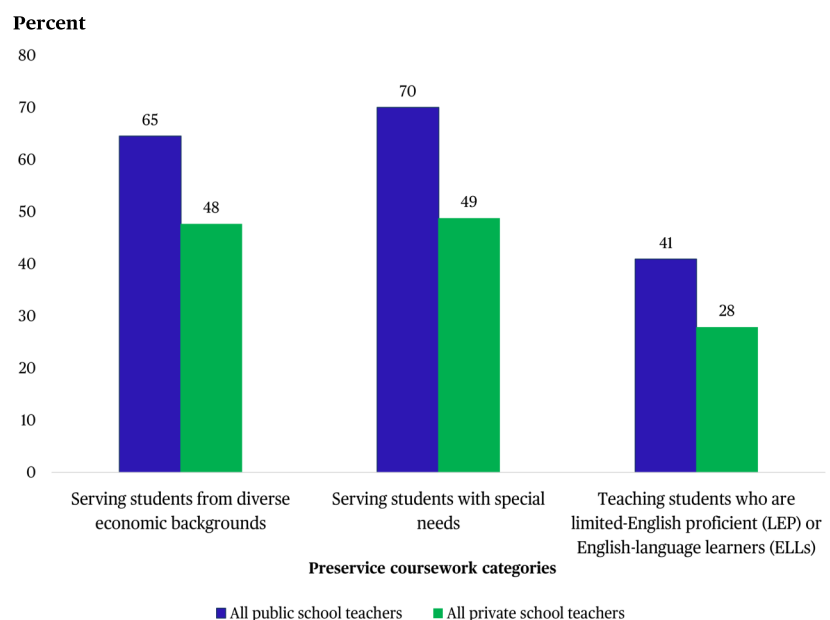
Sixty-five percent of public school teachers took coursework on serving students from diverse

economic backgrounds compared to 48 percent of private school teachers. Seventy percent of public school teachers reported having training serving students with special needs compared to 49 percent of private school teachers. Also, 41 percent of public school teachers took one or more courses on teaching students who are LEP or ELLs compared to 28 percent of private school teachers.

Does taking preservice coursework on diverse student needs vary by the year a teacher began teaching?

The 2017-18 NTPS asked public and private school teachers the year they began teaching in a K-12 school.³ On the NTPS, the newest teachers begun teaching in 2016-18 and the most experienced teachers started in or before 1980.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of teachers who took graduate or undergraduate courses before their first year of teaching in the following areas, by school type: 2017-18



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017-18.

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The newest teachers in both sectors reported taking such courses at higher rates than teachers who had been in the teaching field longer (FIGURE 2).

For example, among public school teachers, 74 percent of those who had begun in 2016-18 took courses on serving students from diverse economic backgrounds. Only 40 percent of public school teachers who started in classrooms before 1981 had that training. Perhaps in part reflecting changes in the student population, 60 percent of the newest teachers had taken courses on teaching students who are LEP or ELLs compared to 14 percent of teachers who had been teaching the longest. Similar differences existed for training to teach students with special needs (74 percent versus 56 percent).

Similar patterns were observed among private school teachers, though the most recent teachers reported taking courses about serving special needs students at lower rates than teachers who started between 2011-2015.

The percentages of newest and most experienced teachers who had taken pre-service coursework in these topics also varied by school type. Public school teachers who started in 2016-18 had more often taken courses on all three topics than private school teachers who started at the same time. For example, 74 percent of the newest public school teachers took coursework on serving students with special needs, compared to 47 percent of the newest private school teachers.

There were similar patterns among teachers who began teaching in or

before 1980, where public school teachers more frequently took pre-service courses on all three topics than private school teachers in their cohort. For example, 14 percent of public school teachers had taken courses on teaching students who are LEP or ELLs, compared to 5 percent of private school teachers.

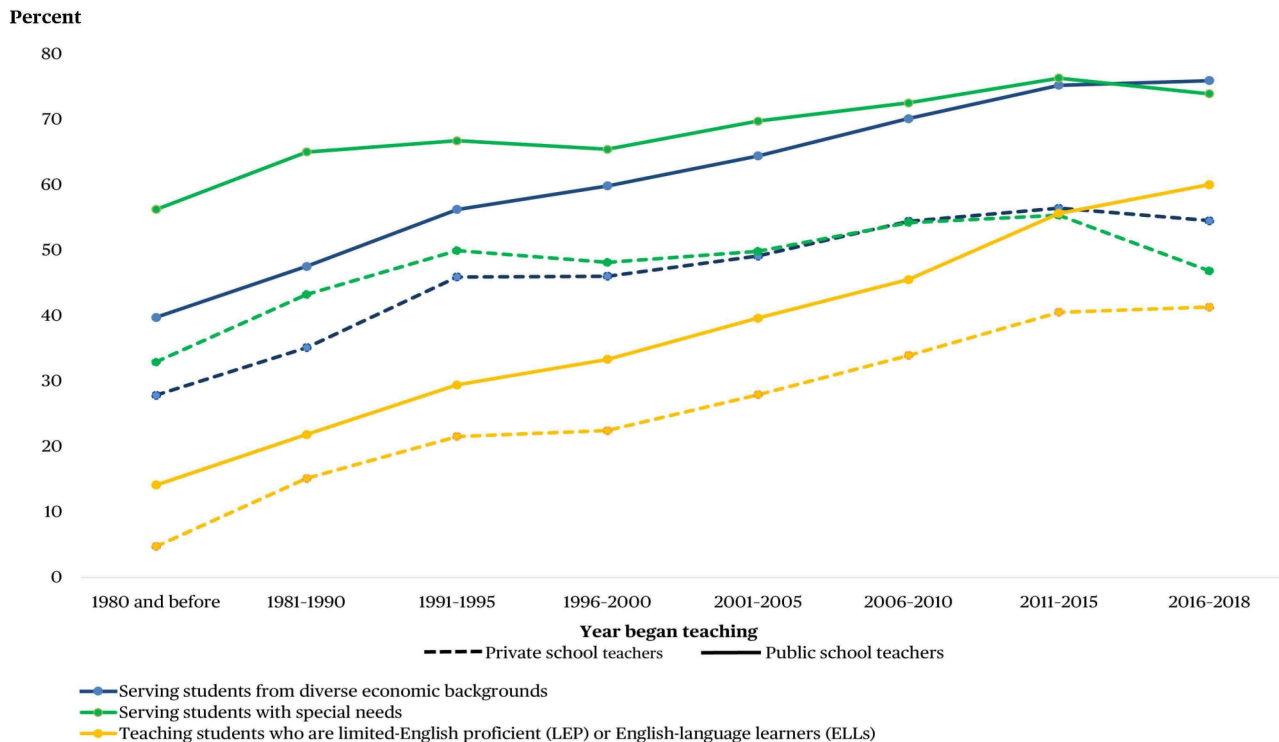
Endnotes

¹ Hollins, E.R. (2011). Teacher Preparation For Quality Teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(4), 395-407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487111409415>.

² Bonner, P.J., Warren, S.R., & Jiang, Y.H. (2018). Voices From Urban Classrooms: Teachers' Perceptions on Instructing Diverse Students and Using Culturally Responsive Teaching. *Education and Urban Society*, 50(8), 697-726. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517713820>.

³ Time spent student teaching (sometimes called practice teaching) was not included.

FIGURE 2. Percentage of teachers who took graduate or undergraduate courses before their first year of teaching in the following areas, by school type and the year they began teaching: 2017-18



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017-18.