

Limited certificated teachers in Washington: Barriers to becoming fully certificated and needed supports

Washington state faces a growing teacher shortage, especially in bilingual education, math, science, English language development, and special education.¹ And its teacher workforce is much less diverse than the student population.² To reduce these challenges, state education leaders want to encourage limited certificated teachers to become fully certificated. This study examines limited certificated teachers' interest in becoming fully certificated, the barriers they face to doing so, and the supports they report needing in order to pursue full certification. The study is based on responses to an online survey administered in 2017 by the State of Washington Professional Educator Standards Board to the state's 1,834 limited certificated teachers.

Key findings

- **More than two-thirds of limited certificated teachers expressed interest in becoming fully certificated.** About 68 percent of the limited certificated teachers who responded to the survey expressed interest in becoming fully certificated, 15 percent said they were not interested, 15 percent said maybe, and 2 percent said they did not know. A higher percentage of teachers of color (74 percent) than of White teachers (67 percent) expressed interest in becoming fully certificated.
- **A little over two-thirds of limited certificated teachers who expressed interest in becoming fully certificated wanted to teach a subject area in which there is a staffing shortage.** Among respondents who expressed interest in becoming fully certificated, substantial percentages wanted to teach special education (25 percent), some field of science (20 percent), math (19 percent), English language development (15 percent), and bilingual education (10 percent).
- **Limited certificated teachers who expressed interest in becoming fully certificated identified substantial barriers to doing so, including time and financial concerns.** About 70 percent of respondents who expressed interest in becoming fully certificated indicated that the need to continue working to support their family was a moderate or large barrier, and 66 percent indicated that affordability was a moderate or large barrier.
- **Among limited certificated teachers who expressed interest in becoming fully certificated, teachers of color identified a broader range of supports needed to pursue full certification than White teachers did.** At least 75 percent of respondents who expressed interest in becoming fully certificated rated 12 types of support—from student teaching experience to affordable tuition—as important or very important. Several supports were rated important or very important by a higher percentage of teachers of color than of White teachers: testing fee waivers, medical benefits, job security through the internship, scholarships, books and class materials supplied, student teaching experience, classes offered in the evening or on weekends, and classes offered at a site close to the workplace or school district.

1. Cross, F. (2017). *Teacher shortage areas nationwide listing 1990–1991 through 2017–2018*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education.
2. Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2016). *Washington State Report Card, 2015–16: Summary*. Olympia, WA: Author. Retrieved June 12, 2017, from <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx>.