



STANDOUT STATE

Massachusetts

Putting everything to the test

Massachusetts has leveraged its strong data system to ask hard questions about what's working in the state and to pinpoint opportunities to strengthen its teacher pipeline.

Building a strong data system

Massachusetts has a strong data system, assigning candidates a unique identifier when they enroll in teacher preparation, which follows candidates through their preparation program and test taking and into the classroom. This system allows the state to track diversity at each stage of the teacher pipeline, augmenting policymakers' efforts to identify where to direct resources to support more teachers of color in entering and staying in the classroom.¹ Using this data system, Massachusetts is one of the few states able to track pass rate data at the program level and to identify which test takers are enrolled in prep programs and which are not.

Publicly reported pass rate data is available to evaluate the teacher pipeline

Massachusetts is one of only a few states to invite evaluation of its licensure tests, allowing it to build onto what is working and to make necessary changes to what is not. [One question that is frequently raised about licensure tests is whether they predict teachers' effectiveness, and most of the time they do.](#) To explore this question in their own state context, Massachusetts recently engaged with researchers to examine the relationship between licensure tests of teachers' basic skills and content knowledge and teachers' effectiveness.² This study found that teachers' licensure test scores are correlated with teachers' value-added ratings and their summative performance measures; the correlation for value added was similar across racial groups and was stronger for performance ratings for teachers of color.

Massachusetts makes pass rate data publicly available, [publishing both the pass rates](#) reported through Title II and additional [pass rate data broken out by race and ethnicity](#). The state also [offers a system](#) through which organizations can see their own MTEL pass rates and retake rates by program area and candidate demographic variables, although this is not available to the general public.

The state is extending this exploration to alternative measures of teachers' content knowledge, launching a three-year pilot study to determine whether alternative assessments to the communication and literacy skills and subject-specific Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTELs) could serve as a reliable measure of a candidate's future effectiveness.³ In addition, the state is making use of the unfortunate circumstances of the pandemic to evaluate how student learning is affected when the state issues more emergency certifications.⁴

ENDNOTES

1. Rucinski, M., & Goodman, J. (2019). Racial diversity in the teacher pipeline: Evidence from Massachusetts. *Policy Brief. Harvard Kennedy School: Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston*. Cambridge, MA. https://www.hks.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/centers/rappaport/files/teacher_diversity%20v6.pdf.
2. Cowan, J., Goldhaber, D., Jin, Z., & Theobald, R. (2020). *Teacher Licensure Tests: Barrier or Predictive Tool?* Working Paper No. 245-1020. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER).
3. Massachusetts' bid solicitation is available at <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-21-1026-DOE02-DOE01-56600&external=true&parentUrl=bid>. More information about the plans to pilot test alternatives to the MTEL licensure tests are available in an [October 15, 2020 board document](#).
4. Jung, C. (2021). An Accidental Experiment: An Emergency Teacher License Gives An Unexpected Boost To Teacher Diversity. WBUR. Retrieved from <https://www.wbur.org/edify/2021/03/25/emergency-teaching-licenses-diversity>.