

NEW DATA IDENTIFIES STATES LEADING THE WAY ON INCREASING TEACHER DIVERSITY, BUT SOME UNNECESSARILY LOWER THE BAR ON TEACHER QUALITY

A diverse teacher workforce benefits all students, but how states achieve this goal matters

Washington, D.C. – A new report from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) finds that California, Texas, and Washington D.C., all stand out for high rates of teacher diversity, but in some cases, states are relying on shortcuts that unnecessarily lower standards for entry, putting student learning at risk.

The report, [*What can California, Texas, and Washington, D.C. teach us about how to diversify the teacher workforce?*](#), examines possible factors contributing to the success of these three places, and evaluates potential unintended consequences.

Key findings

Texas: high teacher diversity, but high turnover too

- Since 2014, Texas has consistently had a higher percentage of teachers from historically disadvantaged groups than the percentage of college graduates from these groups.
- **Alternative certification programs** likely play a major role:
 - 51% of Texas teacher prep graduates come from these programs, compared to 19% nationally.
 - These programs bring in more racially diverse candidates but lead to higher teacher turnover than traditional routes.
- **Uncertified teachers** are a growing concern:
 - A record 34% of new Texas teachers in 2024 entered the classroom without certification.
 - Uncertified teachers leave at even higher rates, weakening long-term workforce stability.
- Uncertified teachers and high rates of teacher turnover ultimately harm student learning outcomes.

California: a model for prioritizing diversity, but loosening standards

- California's teacher diversity is not only high, but appears to be accelerating compared to the diversity of college educated adults. State prioritization, including fiscal investments, likely contribute to their success.
- **State-level commitment:** The California Department of Education actively promotes teacher diversity with funding, resources, and strategic initiatives.
- **Major investments:** The state has allocated over \$1 billion to strengthening the teacher workforce, including grants aimed at increasing teacher diversity.
- **A concern—Lowering certification requirements threatens teacher quality:** California now allows candidates to bypass basic skills and subject-matter licensure tests, weakening critical checks on teacher knowledge.

Washington D.C.: high diversity, strong retention

- D.C.'s teacher workforce is **dramatically more diverse** than its college-educated population: 69.1% of teachers come from historically disadvantaged groups, compared to 34.9% of college-educated adults in D.C..
- **Student-teacher diversity gap is one of the smallest among peer cities:** 13 percentage-point gap in D.C. vs. 45 percentage-point gap in Boston and 35 percentage-point gap in Baltimore between

student and teacher diversity.

- **Strong retention rates:** Black and Hispanic teachers in D.C. stay in the classroom at higher rates than white teachers—unlike most other districts.
- **Economic incentives help:** Competitive pay, affordable housing programs, and high lifetime earnings make D.C. an attractive option for teachers.

Why teacher diversity matters

[Research shows](#) that teachers of color produce additional positive academic, social-emotional, and behavioral outcomes for all students, regardless of race. And teachers of color have a pronounced influence on students of color:

- They are more likely to hold high expectations for students of color, create classrooms where students feel like they belong, and serve as role models for students of color.
- Black students who had at least one Black elementary teacher are nearly [40% less likely](#) to drop out of high school than Black students who have never been taught by a Black teacher between the third and 5th grade.

While increasing teacher diversity is critical, doing so by lowering preparation and certification standards risks placing underprepared teachers in classrooms—especially in high-need schools.

“Teacher diversity and high standards go hand in hand,” says NCTQ President Heather Peske. “States serious about improving student outcomes must start with strong teacher data and then enact policies that better recruit and prepare teachers of color for the classroom and actively retain them in the profession. It’s what is best for students”

This report builds on NCTQ’s [Teacher Diversity Dashboard](#), released in December 2024, which shows that nationally, teacher diversity is growing at a slower pace than the diversity of college-educated adults.

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About the National Council on Teacher Quality: *NCTQ is a nonpartisan research and policy organization on a mission to ensure every child has access to an effective teacher and every teacher has the opportunity to be effective. We believe a strong, diverse teacher workforce is critical for providing all students with equitable educational opportunities. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org.*