

## Minority Teacher Recruitment Legislation

By: John D. Moran, Principal Analyst  
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### Issue

Summarize legislation enacted from 2016 to 2019 intended to attract more minority teachers into the teaching ranks of Connecticut public schools.

### Summary

Of Connecticut's approximately 50,000 professional public educators (teachers, administrators, school social workers, counselors, and other certified school employees) in the 2019-2020 school year 9.6% were racial and ethnic minorities, according to the State Department of Education's (SDE) data [website](#). This is in contrast to the approximately 48% of public school students who are racial or ethnic minorities. Research shows minority students perform better when they have teachers who are of the same race as they are (for example, see "[The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers](#)," National Bureau of Economic Research, 2018). Consequently, lawmakers have proposed and enacted legislation in recent years to attempt to recruit and retain more minority teachers in Connecticut's workforce.

#### *Minority Teacher*

*Under the minority teacher recruitment law "minority" means individuals whose race is defined as other than white, or whose ethnicity is defined as Hispanic or Latino by the federal Office of Management and Budget for use by the Bureau of Census (CGS § 10-155l).*

The public acts in this report include those crafted by legislators with the goal of (1) recruiting and retaining minority teachers and (2) reducing barriers to teacher certification and preparation. During this period, the significant public acts in this area were the following:

1. An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force ([PA 16-41](#)),
2. An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention ([PA 18-34](#)), and
3. An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention ([PA 19-74](#)).

These acts have many provisions, some of which affect all candidates for teacher certification, regardless of their race or ethnicity (certification is the Connecticut credential necessary to teach in a public school). We included those provisions in this report in order to more fully represent the efforts around minority teacher recruitment.

## **Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

### ***Diversity and SBE's Five-Year Education Plan***

A 2018 law requires the State Board of Education's (SBE) five-year education plan to include a statement that the state's teacher workforce should reflect the state's racial and ethnic diversity. It also requires SDE to utilize or support a number of practices and programs to boost minority teacher recruitment ([PA 18-34](#), §§ 1 & 6).

### ***Minority Staff Recruitment***

A law enacted in 2018 focuses the minority staff recruitment plan that local boards of education must create on educators, rather than all staff ([PA 18-34](#), § 7).

### ***Minority Teacher Grants***

The FY 20-21 budget act expanded the Connecticut minority educator incentive program to include a loan reimbursement grant for minority educators of up to 10% of their student loans, not to exceed \$5,000 a year. It also expanded an existing grant program for minority students in teacher preparation programs to include those in Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) programs administered through SDE ([PA 19-117](#), §§ 262 & 263).

### ***Minority Teacher Hiring Goal***

A 2019 law requires SDE's Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council to develop and implement strategies and use existing resources to ensure that local boards of education annually hire and employ at least 250 new minority teachers and administrators statewide ([PA 19-74](#), § 1).

## ***Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council***

In 2016, the legislature enacted a law that created the Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council within SDE and requires the council, at least quarterly, to meet and advise the education commissioner on a number of activities related to minority teacher recruitment ([PA 16-41](#), § 2).

## ***Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force Changes***

A 2016 law (1) expanded the mission of the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force to include studying the causes of the shortage of minority teachers, (2) added an additional member, and (3) extended the life of the task force until January 1, 2026 ([PA 16-41](#), § 1).

A 2018 law authorized (1) the task force chairpersons to appoint a new member to the task force to serve as a third chairperson and (2) the Commission on Equity and Opportunity executive director to appoint three new members to the task force, instead of the executive director, or his appointee, serving on the task force ([PA 18-34](#), § 5).

## ***Mortgage Assistance for Minority Teachers***

The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority administers a mortgage assistance program for, among others, certified teachers employed by a priority school district. A 2019 law expanded eligibility for the program to certified teachers who graduated from a (1) public high school in an educational reform district (i.e., the 10 districts in the state with the lowest District Performance Index (DPI) scores) or (2) historically black college or university (HBCU) or historically Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) as those terms are defined in federal law ([PA 19-74](#), § 4). The FY 20-21 bond act earmarked \$500,000 in state bonds in each fiscal year for the program ([PA 20-1](#), §§ 13(f) & 32(e)).

## ***Re-Employment of Retired Teachers***

In 2019, the legislature expanded school districts' authority to re-employ a retired teacher for up to a year without a pension penalty or salary limit to include teachers who graduated from (1) a public high school in an educational reform district or (2) an HBCU or historically HSI as those terms are defined in federal law ([PA 19-74](#), § 5).

## ***Survey and Report on Minority Teacher Recruitment Programs***

A 2016 law requires SDE to (1) conduct an annual survey of students on the effectiveness of minority teacher recruitment programs in the state and (2) report annually to the Appropriations and Education committees on the effectiveness of minority teacher recruitment programs using results-based accountability methods ([PA 16-41](#), §§ 3 & 6).

## **Teacher Certification**

### ***Certification for Out-of-State Teachers***

The legislature passed a 2016 law that modified the criteria for an out-of-state teacher to be awarded a professional educator certificate in Connecticut and made the certification awarded a provisional, rather than a professional, certification. (Provisional is the middle level certification in Connecticut's three-level system.) The law eliminated the requirement that the teacher be nationally board certified and hold a master's degree and replaced it with the requirements that the teacher has (1) received at least two satisfactory performance evaluations while teaching in another state, territory, U.S. possession, the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico and (2) fulfilled post-preparation assessments as approved by the commissioner ([PA 16-41](#), § 8).

### ***Extended Duration of Non-Renewable Certification***

The legislature enacted a law in 2018 that extended the temporary non-renewable teacher certification from one to three years ([PA 18-51](#), § 7).

### ***Flexibility Regarding Reading and History Requirements for Teacher Certification***

A 2018 law requires SBE to adopt teacher credential regulations that allow for certain coursework requirements to be substituted by their equivalent. The requirements that may be substituted as follows: (1) for an initial educator certificate with an elementary endorsement, completion of at least three semester hours of a U.S. history survey course and (2) for an initial educator with an early childhood through grade three or an elementary endorsement, completion of at least six semester hours of a comprehensive reading instruction course ([PA 18-51](#), § 8).

### ***Interstate Reciprocity***

*Teacher Certification Interstate Agreements.* In 2016, the legislature enacted a law that modified the requirements for interstate agreements that facilitate Connecticut certification of qualified teachers from another state. The law eliminated the requirement that teachers applying for certification under an agreement (1) have taught under an appropriate certificate issued by another state, territory, or possession of the U.S. and (2) meet all other conditions of the interstate agreement. The new law instead requires that the applicant successfully complete an approved educator preparation program ([PA 16-41](#), § 9).

*Teacher Reciprocity Agreements.* In 2019, the legislature passed a law that requires the education commissioner, or his designee, to enter into teacher certification reciprocity agreements

with the chief education officials for each state. If the commissioner is unable to establish a reciprocity agreement, the legislation authorizes him to establish or join an interstate agreement to facilitate certification of out-of-state teachers as outlined in existing law ([PA 19-74](#), § 2).

### ***New ARC Program for Alternate Professions***

In 2018 the legislature enacted a law that requires SDE to develop, or review and approve, a new ARC program for people in certain professions to be teachers, including paraeducators, charter school teachers, veterans, and others ([PA 18-34](#), § 2).

### ***School Support Staff ARC***

A 2016 law requires SDE to review and approve proposals to create ARC programs for board-certified behavior analysts and assistant behavior analysts, athletic coaches, and school paraprofessionals (i.e., school support staff) to become teachers and to award educator certificates to qualified applicants who successfully complete the programs ([PA 16-41](#), § 7).

### ***Teacher Certification and Cross Endorsement***

A 2018 law changed teacher certification rules regarding initial certifications, cross endorsements for those already holding a certification, and certain licensure exam exceptions for out-of-state teachers to make it easier, in certain areas, to obtain certification or cross endorsement ([PA 18-34](#), §§ 4 & 8).

### ***Teacher Certification Requirement Flexibility***

A 2019 law makes advanced degrees acceptable for initial teacher certification. It also allows an applicant to substitute either a satisfactory score on a subject area assessment or relevant advanced coursework in place of an appropriate subject area major, rather than having to have both in order to substitute for the subject area major ([PA 19-74](#), § 6).

### ***Teacher Recertification***

Under a law enacted in 2019, a teacher whose certification has expired does not have to retake and pass the appropriate subject-matter test for teacher certification if he or she meets certain experience requirements. The law also exempts anyone from having to retake a subject matter test if (1) he or she previously passed the test and (2) the education commissioner determines that the requirements of the test's previous version are at least equivalent to those of the current version ([PA 19-74](#), § 7).

## ***Teacher Shortages***

A 2019 law expands teacher certification eligibility in a designated subject shortage area to include individuals receiving a satisfactory score in an SBE-approved assessment for the subject shortage area. Under prior law, only those with an excellent score were eligible. The law makes the same satisfactory score provision apply to a teacher already certified in one area who wants to teach in a shortage area ([PA 19-74](#), § 3, and [PA 19-128](#), § 6).

## **Teacher Preparation**

### ***Free Retake of Teacher License Exam Agreement***

The legislature passed a 2018 law that requires SDE to enter into a memorandum of understanding with teacher licensure test vendors (e.g., Praxis) to allow some test takers to get a free retake of the exam under certain conditions ([PA 18-34](#), § 9).

### ***Teacher Preparation Programs and the Praxis Exam***

Under a law enacted in 2016, prospective teachers are no longer required to receive a satisfactory score on the Praxis competency exam for reading, writing, and math as an entrance requirement for teacher preparation programs. Scores on these exams are instead used to help diagnose the academic weaknesses of those entering the programs. For most types of teacher certification endorsements, an applicant is still required to pass a Praxis subject matter exam that matches his or her endorsement area ([PA 16-41](#), §§ 4 & 5).

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