

Minority Teacher Recruitment Recent Legislation

By: John D. Moran, Principal Analyst
December 21, 2023 | 2023-R-0307

Issue

Summarize legislation enacted from 2016 to 2023 intended to attract more teachers who are racial or ethnic minorities into the teaching ranks of Connecticut public schools. (This report updates OLR Report [2022-R-0055](#).)

Summary

Of Connecticut's approximately 54,000 professional public educators (teachers, administrators, school social workers, counselors, and other certified school employees) in the 2022-2023 school year 11.2% were racial and ethnic minorities, according to the State Department of Education's (SDE) data [website](#). This contrasts with the approximately 52.5% of public school students who are racial or ethnic minorities, based on SDE 2022-2023 enrollment figures.

Research shows minority students perform better when they have teachers who are 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/Diverse Educator

Up to this year, under the minority teacher recruitment law "minority" meant individuals whose race is defined as other than white, or whose ethnicity is defined as Hispanic or Latino by the federal Bureau of Census (CGS § 10-156bb).

This year a new law kept the same definition but changed the term "minority" to "diverse" and changed "teacher" to "educator" (PA 23-167, § 12). Although in some related laws, "minority" remains unchanged.

The public acts in this report include those crafted by legislators with the goal of (1) recruiting and retaining minority teachers and (2) more broadly reducing barriers to teacher certification and preparation (certification is the Connecticut credential necessary to teach in a public school). 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](#));
3. An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention ([PA 19-74](#));
4. An Act Concerning Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items to Implement the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023 ([PA 21-2, June Special Session \(JSS\)](#), §§ 378 & 379, codified at [CGS §§ 10-156gg](#) and [10-262u\(c\)](#), 2022 CGS Supplement); and
5. An Act Concerning Transparency in Education ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 8-14, 18 & 41).

These acts have many provisions, some of which affect all candidates for teacher certification, regardless of their race or ethnicity. We included selected provisions that are generally aimed at helping more people enter the teaching profession, including those regarding teacher certification and preparation and the teacher shortage.

Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Alliance District Minority Teacher Candidate Certification or Residency Program

A 2021 law created the teacher certification, retention, or residency program for minority teacher certification candidates and requires each alliance district to (1) partner with a residency program operator and (2) place the candidates in the district for a 10-month residency. To fund this program, SDE withholds from each alliance district a percentage of its Education Cost Sharing (ECS) aid.

Under a new law, the education commissioner in FY 25 must withhold 10% of any increase in the ECS grant the alliance district received in FY 21 over the amount of funds it received in FY 20. Prior law would have required the department to instead withhold 10% of any increase the district received starting in FY 23 that exceeds the amount received in FY 20 ([PA 23-167](#), § 41, as amended by [PA 23-208](#), § 5).

Enrolled minority candidates must complete a 10-month residency in the participating school district. “Minority candidate” means a person who is a racial or ethnic minority, as defined in law,

and employed as a school paraprofessional or an associate instructor with a local or regional board of education ([CGS §§ 10-156gg](#) and [10-262u\(c\)](#)).

Alliance districts are the 33 school districts in the state with the lowest state accountability scores as determined by SDE. For FYs 18-22, the alliance districts are: Ansonia, Bloomfield, Bridgeport, Bristol, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, East Haven, East Windsor, Groton, Hamden, Hartford, Killingly, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Naugatuck, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Norwich, Putnam, Stamford, Thompson, Torrington, Vernon, Waterbury, West Haven, Winchester, Windham, Windsor, and Windsor Locks.

Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program

In 2021, the legislature passed a law requiring the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA) to establish an Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program. This program must subsidize interest rates on CHESLA loans to teachers employed in alliance districts, subject to available funding ([CGS §§ 10a-247 and -247a](#)).

This year the legislature expanded the Alliance District Teacher Loan Subsidy Program to include paraeducators and school counselors and renamed the program the Alliance District Educator and Counselor Loan Subsidy Program ([PA 23-70](#), §§ 4-5).

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 diverse educator recruitment ([CGS §§ 10-4\(c\)](#), [10-156ee](#) as amended by [PA 23-167](#), § 13).

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 ([CGS § 10-220](#)).

Minority Teacher/Aspiring Educators Diversity Scholarship Program

This year the legislature made changes to the minority teacher candidate scholarship program that was created in 2022. Under this program, SDE must provide an annual grant to diverse students who graduated from a priority school district and are enrolled in a teacher preparation program at any four-year higher education institution.

This year's act changed the program's name to the aspiring educators diversity scholarship program. The new law (1) reduces the maximum annual grant amount from \$20,000 to \$10,000, (2) requires the program provide high school students with the opportunity to apply for the scholarship before graduation if the student will be enrolled in a teacher preparation during the following fall, and (3) requires SDE to report annually on the program, beginning by January 1, 2024, to the Education Committee. Additionally, it requires SDE to hire four staff members to administer the program.

The law replaces references to "minority" students with "diverse students." The terms have the same meaning under prior law and the act ([CGS § 10-156ii](#), as amended by [PA 23-167](#), §§ 11 & 18).

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 ([CGS §§ 10a-168b, 10a-168a](#)).

Diverse Educator/Minority Teacher Hiring Goal

A 2019 law requires SDE's Minority Teacher Recruitment Policy Oversight Council (now known as the Increasing Educator Diversity 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 ([CGS § 10-156ff](#)). [PA 23-167](#), § 14, changes the term from minority teacher to diverse educator.

Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight/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 including on ways to encourage minority students and professionals from other fields to pursue teaching careers ([CGS § 10-156bb](#)).

In 2023, a new law renamed the council the Increasing Educator Diversity Policy Oversight Council ([PA 23-167](#), § 12).

Task Force to Diversify the Educator Workforce/Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force Changes

A new law renames the Minority Teacher Recruitment Task Force as the Task Force to Diversify the Educator Workforce and requires it to study existing recruitment and retention programs and submit the study findings to the Education Committee by January 1, 2023 ([PA 22-80](#), §§ 16-17).

In 2016, the legislature (1) expanded the mission of the 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 ([CGS § 10-156aa](#)).

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 ([CGS § 8-265pp](#)).

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 (i.e., a low-performing district) or (2) an HBCU or historically HSI as those terms are defined in federal law ([CGS § 10-183v\(b\)](#)).

Review of Local Increasing Educator Diversity Plans

This year the legislature passed a new law that requires each school board to (1) submit its increasing educator diversity plan (referred to in prior law as the minority educator recruitment plan) to the education commissioner by March 15, 2024, for review and approval and (2) implement its approved plan beginning with the 2024-25 school year ([PA 23-167](#), §§ 9 & 10).

Survey and Report on Minority Teacher Recruitment Programs

A 2016 law requires SDE to conduct an annual survey of students on the effectiveness of minority teacher recruitment programs offered by regional educational service centers (RESCs) and at Connecticut public higher education institutions and annually report the survey findings to the Education Committee ([CGS § 10-156dd](#)).

Effectiveness Report on Minority Teacher Recruitment Programs

A 2016 law requires SDE to report annually, using results based accountability methods, on the effectiveness of minority teacher recruitment programs offered by RESCs and the Office of Higher Education (OHE). The report must be submitted to Appropriations and Education committees by July 1 of each year ([CGS § 10-156cc](#)).

Teacher Certification

ARC Program Expansion

A new law requires OHE to expand its alternate route to certification (ARC) program attended by minority teacher incentive program grant recipients. It also requires the office to hire one full-time, permanent employee to administer the expanded ARC program ([PA 23-159](#), § 14).

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 ([CGS § 10-145b\(h\)\(3\)](#)).

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 ([CGS § 10-145f\(c\)](#)).

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 satisfied with a substitution deemed to be 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 ([CGS § 10-145d\(a\)](#)).

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 previous experience teaching 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 ([CGS § 10-146c\(c\)](#)).

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 ([CGS § 10-146c\(b\)](#)).

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 ([CGS § 10-145w](#)).

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 ([CGS § 10-145t](#)).

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 ([CGS §§ 10-145b\(a\)](#), [10-145f](#)).

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 ([CGS § 10-145b\(a\)](#)).

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 ([CGS § 10-145f\(e\) & \(f\)](#)).

Subject Shortage Areas

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 ([CGS § 10-145l](#)).

Teacher Preparation

Educator Apprenticeship Initiative

A 2023 law requires SDE to establish, beginning with FY 24, an educator apprenticeship initiative to enable students in teacher preparation programs to gain paid classroom teaching experience. The law applies to students enrolled in educator preparation programs, teacher residency programs, or ARC programs. SDE must seek certification of the program with the Department of Labor ([PA 23-167](#), § 8).

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 ([CGS § 10-145x](#)).

Limiting Use of edTPA

Retroactive to July 1, 2022, a new law requires that the state's teacher preservice performance assessment, edTPA, only be used as an accountability measure for teacher preparation programs and bars SBE from using edTPA assessment results to deny an application for an initial educator certificate. In 2016, SBE approved a resolution that required all teacher preparation programs in the state to require satisfactory completion of edTPA by all teacher candidates in order to complete a teacher preparation program ([PA 23-159](#), § 1).

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 ([CGS § 10-145f](#)).

Teacher Shortage

Promotion of Teaching Profession to High School Students

In 2021, the legislature passed a law that requires the education commissioner, the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities president, and the UConn Neag School of Education dean to jointly develop a plan to assist school boards in promoting teaching as a career option to high school students. The plan must include, at a minimum, a means for boards of education to develop partnerships with educator preparation programs, and the creation of counseling programs directed to high school students to inform them about and recruit them to the teaching profession. The law requires SDE to distribute information that promotes the teaching profession, including educator preparation programs in Connecticut, to local boards of education by September 1, 2021 ([CGS § 10-155m](#)).

Teacher Shortage and Retention Task Force

Last year, the General Assembly created a teacher shortage and retention task force responsible for reporting on recommendations that, among other things, address (1) teacher attrition and retention, (2) teacher shortages across subject matter disciplines, (3) streamlining teacher certification without diminishing standards, and (4) issues relating to equity and diversity. The 17-member task force must submit its report to the Education and Children's committees by January 1, 2024 ([PA 22-80](#), § 29).

JM:kl