

# Staying in the Field: Teacher Retention Patterns in Texas

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# Staying in the Field: Teacher Retention Patterns in Texas

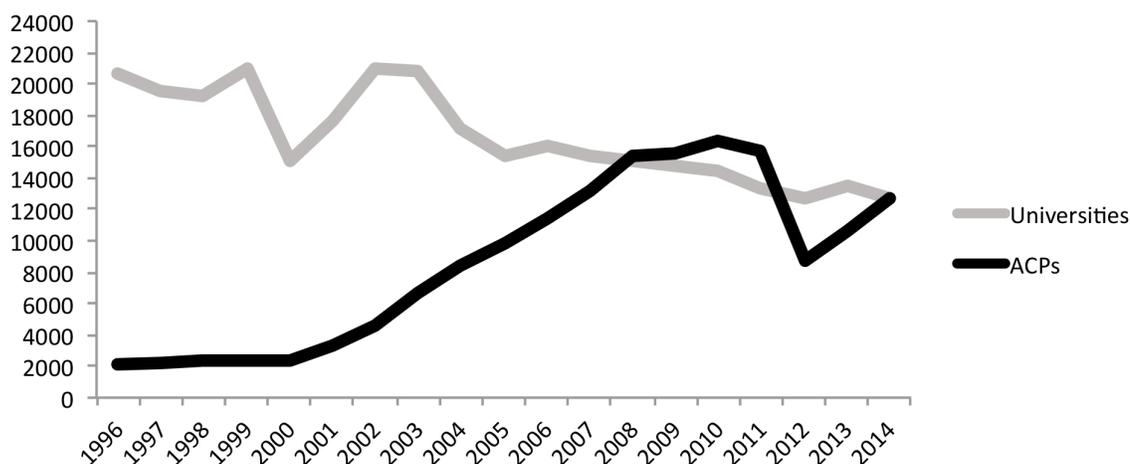
Much has been written about the influences on a novice teacher's decision to remain or withdraw from the profession<sup>i, ii, iii, iv, v</sup>. As Guarino, Santibañez, and Daley<sup>vi</sup> note in a review of the related empirical literature, "the entry, mobility, and attrition patterns...indicate that teachers exhibit preferences for higher salaries, better working conditions, and greater intrinsic rewards and tend to move to other teaching positions or to jobs or activities outside teaching that offer those characteristics when possible." One consistent conclusion reached across studies that connect teacher effectiveness and student outcomes is that preparing and, critically, retaining a strong supply of highly effective teachers is one of most serious public workforce issues facing many states, including Texas. In laying groundwork toward the development of relevant policy and practice, this brief describes the retention patterns of Texas teachers.

The Center for Research, Evaluation, and Advancement of Teacher Education (CREATE) maintains a unique longitudinal dataset that follows the employment patterns of teachers as they enter, leave or move around schools and districts in the state. Cohorts are derived from Texas Education Agency (TEA) data and represent all educators who received state certification and are employed in one of the 1000+ districts in the state. For each year of employment, the educator's role, district, campus and subjects taught can be identified and followed. The descriptive findings presented in this brief focus on the cohort of teachers (N=24,450) entering the classroom for the first time in the 2009-2010 academic year.

*Who are Texas teachers and how long do they stay in the classroom?*

Figure 1 identifies the teacher certification trends for Texas from 1996 to 2014. As can be seen, while the number of teachers certified by university-based education preparation providers (EPPs) has decreased, those certified through alternative certification providers (ACPs) has been largely on a steady increase.

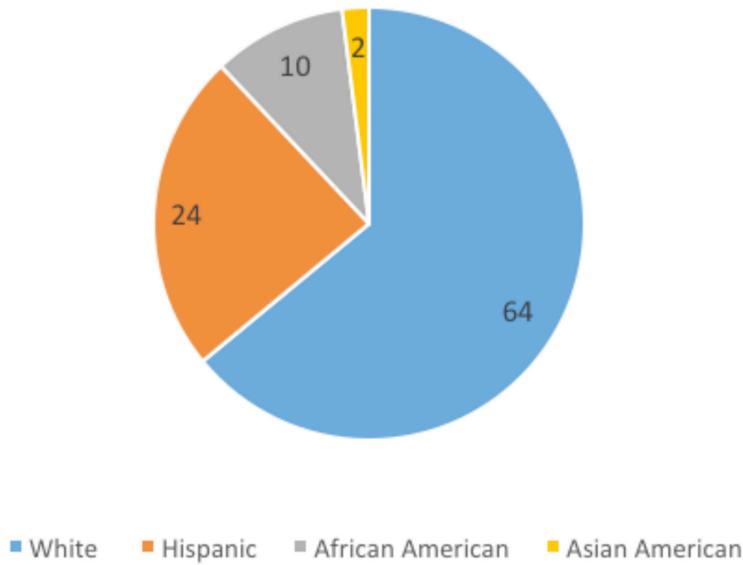
Figure 1: Texas Teacher Certificates Recommended: Universities and Alternative Certification Programs, 1996-2014



Data Source: TEA (Public Education Information Management System), 2015

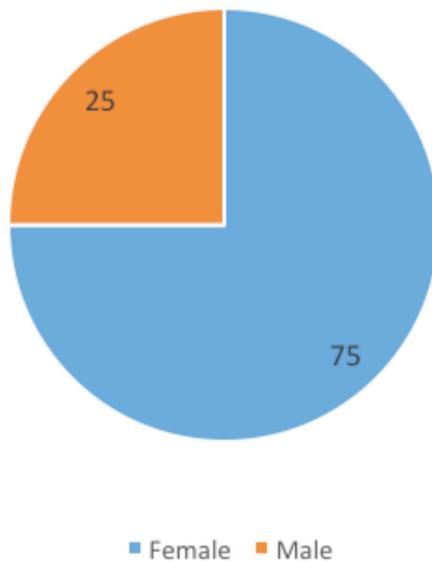
Looking specifically at those who entered classrooms for the first time in 2009-2010, Figures 2 and 3 describe the demographic makeup of the more than 24,000 teachers included in this cohort. A majority of entering teachers (64%) are white, and roughly an additional quarter (24%) self-identify as Latino. The vast majority (75%) of new teachers are women.

Figure 2: 2009-2010 Cohort of Teachers, by Race and Ethnicity (in %)



Data Source: TEA (Public Education Information Management System), 2015

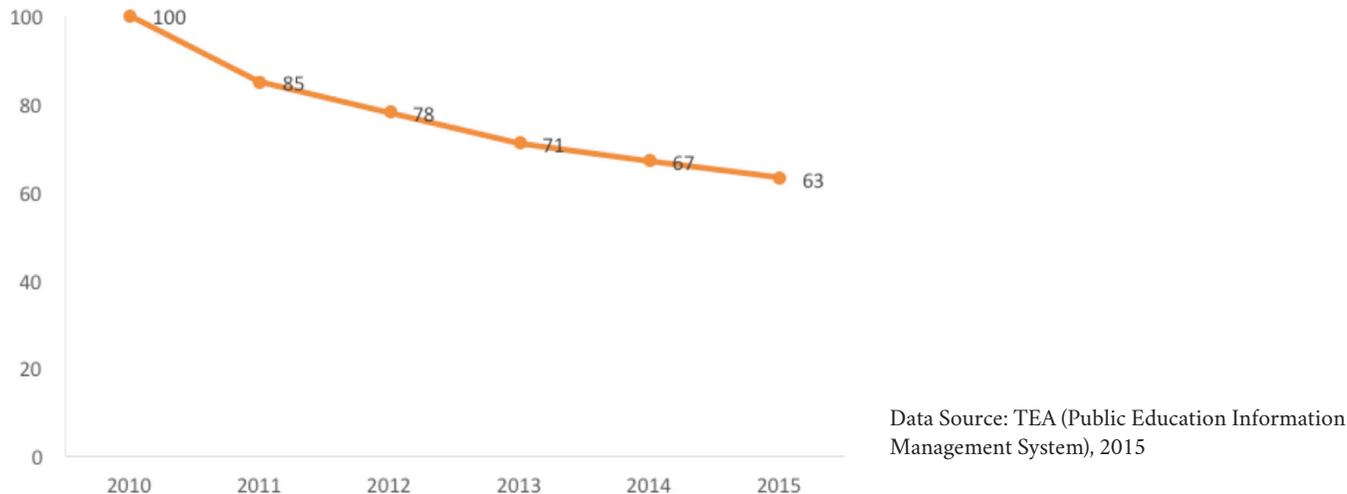
Figure 3: 2009-2010 Cohort of Teachers, by Gender (in %)



Data Source: TEA (Public Education Information Management System), 2015

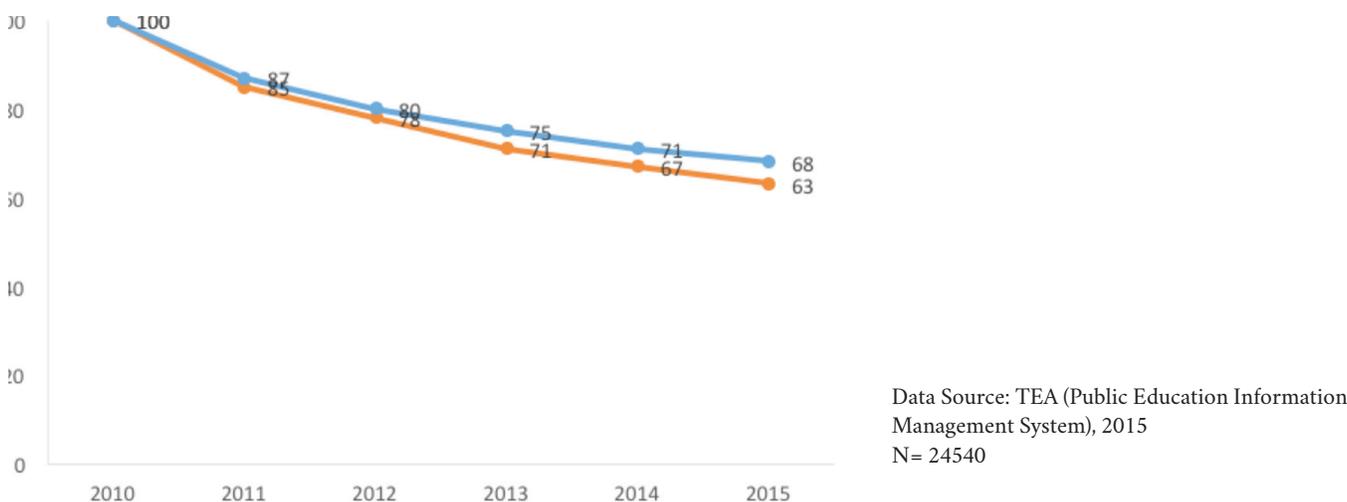
Figure 4 presents retention trends for the 2009-2010 cohort. The steady attrition culminates in 62.5% of the 24,500 teachers remaining in the role of classroom teacher 5 years later.

**Figure 4: Retention in Teaching, 2009-2010 Cohort (in %), 2010-2015**



In considering teacher attrition, it may be the case that some are leaving the classroom for other education-related responsibilities. In this broader definition of retention, Figure 5 identifies that in fact there is a small but slightly greater and statistically significant proportion<sup>vii</sup> of teachers who remain in the field of education after five years. They leave the classroom but remain in the field of education in other roles (68.4% in comparison to 62.5%). The most typical new responsibilities for these educators include a leadership (e.g., assistant principal, teaching facilitator) or support specialist (e.g., counselor, speech pathologist) function. Interestingly, the demographics of group that remains in the field of education include 57%, 29%, and 11% white, Latino, and African American educators, respectively and predominantly (76%) women.

**Figure 5: Retention of Teachers in Education, 2009-2010 Cohort (in %), 2010-2015**



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### *What Can Be Done?*

In considering the best ways in which all who are interested in Texas education can work to increase the number of teachers retained in the profession, several potential strategies exist.

- Several recent studies have empirically identified the role of the pre-service teaching experiences on the likelihood of staying in the profession<sup>viii, ix</sup>. EPPs, ACPs, and districts ought to consider working collaboratively to better ensure that both the preparation received prior to full-time teaching responsibilities and the professional development provided with in-service align well with each other and fundamentally with what is needed for teacher success.
- Policymakers and district leaders may find financial and organizational benefit in creating incentives for the best teachers to remain in the profession even as they may consider leaving the classroom. Such opportunities might include, among other ideas, human resource support to teachers for additional degree attainment or certification and active partnership with EPPs to enhance the utility of professional development toward longer term career interests<sup>x</sup>.
- School and district factors impact teacher recruitment, assignment, development, and retention<sup>xi, xii</sup>. Careful research needs to be undertaken to more clearly understand the influence of the school and district contexts on teachers' career development and their decisions to stay in the classroom, both in the first years of teaching and mid-career.
- An important focus of human resource development is the link between individuals' developmental career goals and the needs of employers<sup>xiii</sup>. Consideration of career trajectories that maximize professional growth and satisfaction among teachers while cultivating an effective teacher work-force is a critical area for future policy research.

Thoughtful investment in keeping the best teachers in education is worthwhile and an opportunity that Texas needs to leverage. CREATE stands ready to provide data and research expertise to policymakers, preparation providers, and school administrators who want to understand the local, regional and statewide retention patterns of teachers.

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  - vii  $Z=11.64, p<.001$ .
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