

How to Become a Teacher

Overcoming Barriers to Success



The Need

The quality of a student's teacher is the single most influential in-school factor in academic achievement and future life outcomes. Today, nearly 1 out of 4 public school students are Hispanic, yet **Hispanic teachers represent only 7.8% of the teaching workforce**. Additionally, **Hispanic male teachers represent only 2% of the teaching workforce**. By 2050, Hispanics will represent 60% of the population growth. Given this anticipated increase, it is important to have a teaching workforce that reflects and meets the demands of our increasingly diverse nation. In order to elevate the critical need for a more diverse teaching workforce, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics created #LatinosTeach, an online national campaign that recognizes the contributions of Hispanic teachers across the country. In addition, the Initiative partnered with the Office of the Under Secretary and the Office of Post-Secondary Education's Hispanic Serving Institutions Division to further examine the challenges and opportunities in expanding and improving our teacher pipelines.

Often many qualified candidates stray away from the field of education for fear of the unknown. The three barriers to entry that are most discussed by possible candidates are often the lack of education, lack of time and the lack of money. This fact sheet seeks to explore these common barriers and shed light on the various supports that exist for those who wish to enter into the field of education.

“I Don't Have the Education”

In order to be a fully certified teacher you must first have a bachelor's degree. A bachelor's takes approximately 4 years to complete with a course load usually equivalent to 120 credit hours or 40 courses. An accelerated bachelor's degree requires non-stop schooling and could be completed in 3 years or less.

If you already have your bachelor's degree, you can pursue your teacher certification. Some post-secondary institutions offer candidates the opportunity to obtain their certificate while simultaneously completing their bachelor's degree. If your institution does not offer simultaneous option, you can enroll in a teacher certification program, a master's program with a teacher certification component, or an alternative certification program (through a university or education institution offering this type of certification recognized by your state education agency) following your undergraduate degree.

It is important to identify a path that works best with your current situation and to speak with professionals in your area about the specific supports that are offered in your region of the country. Be aware that there are various programs that will allow you to take advantage of the experience you already have as you pursue your certification.

Three Common Routes

Traditional

High School Diploma/GED → B.A. / B.S. + Certification Program = Fully Certified Teacher

Masters

High School Diploma/GED → B.A. / B.S. → M.S.Ed. + Certification Program = Fully Certified Teacher

Alternative

High School Diploma/GED → B.A. / B.S. → Certification Program = Fully Certified Teacher

“I Don't Have the Time”

The decision to pursue a career in education may seem intimidating but looks can be deceiving. There are various ways to enter the teaching field, each requiring different time commitments. Pathways include becoming a paraprofessional, substitute teacher, or obtaining an emergency certified or internship certified teaching role at your local school.

Paraprofessionals

Education	Some College, No Degree
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On the Job Training	None
Licensure or Certification	Not Required
Salary (2015)	\$24,440 (Median Wage)

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/teacher-assistants.htm>

Substitute Teacher

Education	High school diploma minimum; bachelor's degree recommended and may be required
Degree Field	Education, various B.A. or B.S. degrees
Experience	Previous teaching experience optional
Licensure or Certification	Districts may require substitute licenses or certification
Salary (2015)	\$20,687 (Annual median salary for a substitute teacher)

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, ONET Online, Moore County Schools, Baldwin County Board of Education, PayScale; http://study.com/how_to_become_a_substitute_teacher.html

Alternative Route Program

Education	Bachelors Degree Required
Degree Field	Education, Various Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science Degrees
Experience	Entry Level
Licensure or Certification	Not Required
Salary (2015)	\$60,440 (Annual mean wage of Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education)

“I Don’t Have the Money”

Teacher certification programs add to the high cost of attending an undergraduate institution. Although the cost of certification seems overwhelming there are different ways to reduce the cost of becoming a teacher.

- **Scholarships:** There are scholarships available for prospective teachers to cover the cost of your teaching education. To view a listing of scholarship opportunities go to Teach.org/teaching-scholarships.
- **Teach Grants:** These grants help pay for some of your college education and can provide up to \$4,000 per year in grant assistance. To qualify, you must agree to serve as a full time teacher in low-income and high needs field for 4 years. You will not have to repay this money unless you do not fulfill the requirements.
- **Teacher Loan Forgiveness:** Under this program, if you teach full-time for five complete and consecutive academic years in certain elementary and secondary schools and educational service agencies that serve low-income families, and meet other qualifications, you may be eligible for loan forgiveness. Loan forgiveness is given up to \$5,000 for general subject elementary or secondary teachers, while math, special education, and science teachers can get up to \$17,500.
- **Pell Grants:** These grants are determined by your financial need, cost to attend your college, and if you are a full or part-time student. The amount of grant money varies from year to year. For the 2015-2016 year, the most Pell money you can receive is \$5,775. Not everyone gets the same amount of aid. To apply for this or other federal help, go to www.fafsa.gov to fill out the free application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) application.

- **The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FESEOG):** This grant is for undergraduates with exceptional financial need. The grant can be from \$100 to \$4,000 a year and is dispersed before a Pell grant. They take into consideration your financial need, the amount of other aid you are receiving, when you apply, and the availability of funds at your school. To apply for this or other federal help go to www.fafsa.gov to fill out the free application for FASFA.
- **Perkins Loans:** These loans are for undergraduates and graduate students with exceptional financial need. This loan has an interest rate of 5%. Your school is the lender and you will make payments to your school or school’s loan office. As an undergraduate student, you are eligible to earn up to \$5,500 a year. The most you can borrow is \$27,500 as an undergraduate. As a graduate student, you are eligible for up to \$8,000 a year and can borrow up to \$60,000.

Additional Resources

- **TEACH.org** is a resource to help prospective teachers in exploring the teaching profession. It provides information on teaching pathways and state certification information.
- **Teach for America** or **The New Teacher Project (TNT)** **Teaching Fellows** utilize the internship certification avenue as a means of certifying their candidates.
- **Hispanic Teacher Recruitment: Increasing the Number of Hispanic Teachers** fact sheet addresses the need for a more diverse teaching workforce in greater detail.
- The **¡Gradúate! Financial Aid Guide to Success** helps Hispanic students and families by providing helpful tips on filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and key financial aid resources.
- The **¡Gradúate! 2.0: A College Planning Guide to Success** provides the Hispanic community with information and resources to help students navigate the process of pursuing higher education at traditional colleges and universities, including how to apply and how to successfully enroll in a college or university.



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