

Believe PREPARE



LOUISIANA'S NEXT GENERATION EDUCATORS

ACCESS TO FULL PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

It is well documented that rural communities face challenges accessing resources more available to urban and suburban environments. This report relates the striking lack of access teachers in rural Louisiana communities – less affluent rural communities in particular – have to training and preparation programs that fully prepare them for the classroom. This has a devastating effect on schools and students in rural parishes,¹ who in turn are remarkably less likely to have a fully prepared educator than their urban and suburban peers.

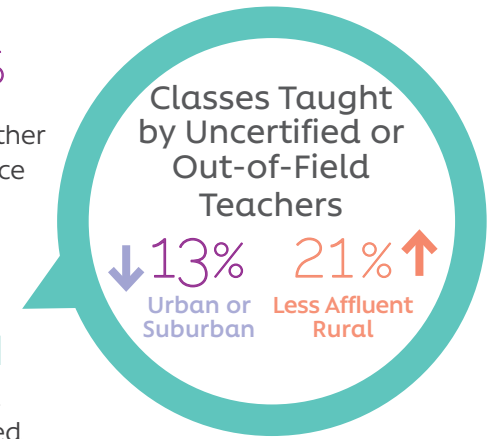
¹ [Educator Workforce Need Trends](#)
(Workforce Need, See Question 1)



UNDERSTANDING THE TEACHER WORKFORCE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

In Louisiana, teachers in rural communities are significantly less likely than are other teachers to have completed preparation programs that include extensive practice and fully prepare them for the challenges of the classrooms in which they teach.

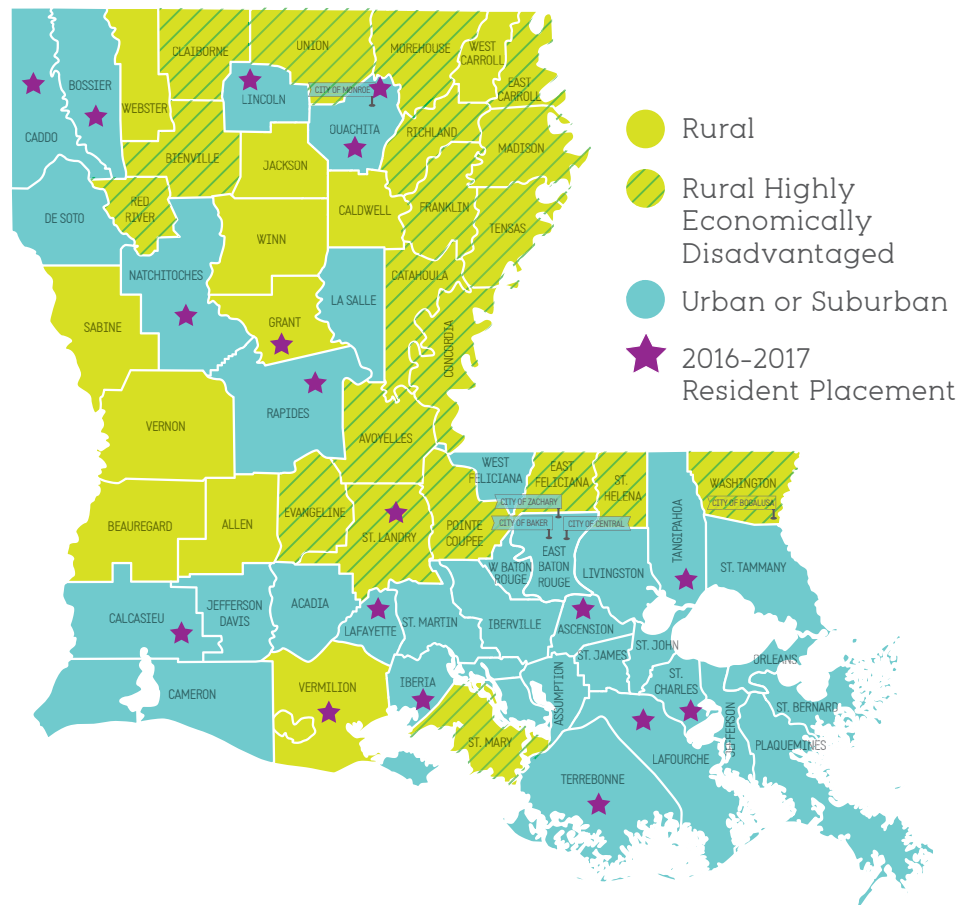
In urban or suburban communities, for example, **13 percent of classes are taught by uncertified or out-of-field teachers, while in less affluent rural communities, 21 percent of classes are taught by uncertified or out-of-field teachers.**² This means that students in rural parishes are nearly twice as likely to be taught by a teacher who has not passed a subject area examination or did not study the subject being taught.



Additionally, while international examples, such as Finland and Singapore, suggest that strong teacher preparation in colleges of education has a positive impact on student learning,³ rural school systems have more limited access to undergraduate teacher candidates, including those who are prepared through yearlong residencies under the mentorship of veteran educators. Through *Believe and Prepare*, Louisiana teacher preparation providers and their school system partners have piloted models of teacher preparation that incorporate a full year of practice under an expert mentor.

★ In 2016-2017, however, **only 9 percent of rural districts in the state hosted undergraduate teacher residents, compared to 39 percent in urban or suburban school systems.**⁴

These data demonstrate that aspiring teachers in rural areas have more limited access to high-quality preparation experiences that provide opportunities for extensive classroom practice before their first day of teaching. These educators are, therefore, less likely to be fully prepared for the challenges of teaching, a great challenge to their students' academic futures.



² [Educator Workforce Need Trends](#) (Workforce Need, See Question 2)

³ Auguste, B., Kihn, P., & Miller, M. (2010). Closing the talent gap: Attracting and retaining top-third graduates to careers in teaching. McKinsey. Retrieved from <http://mckinseysociety.com/closing-the-talent-gap/> and Darling-Hammond, L. & Rotham, R. (2011). Teacher and leader effectiveness in high-performing education systems. Alliance for Excellent Education and SCOPE. Retrieved from <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/publications/pubs/150>

⁴ [Educator Workforce Supply Trends](#) (Workforce Supply, See Question 7)

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

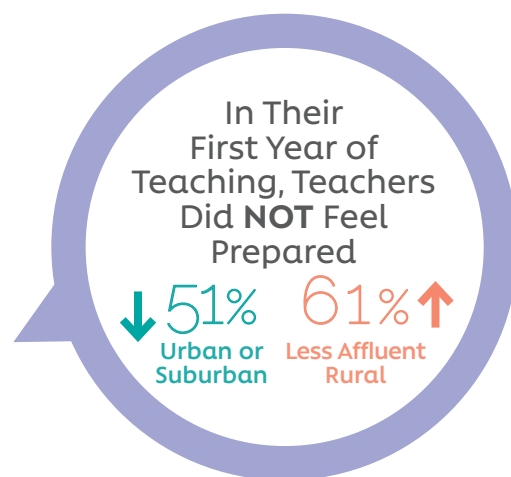
To better understand how teachers experience these conditions, the Louisiana Department of Education recently surveyed educators statewide. The survey, developed in partnership with and administered by the Louisiana State University's Public Policy Research Lab, included a series of questions about educators' professional backgrounds, perspectives on the teaching profession, and decisions to teach in their respective regions. More than 1,300 educators responded to this survey.

SURVEY RESULTS

The [survey results](#) provide insight into the unique challenges of preparing teachers to teach in rural communities and underscore the need for greater access to high-quality educator preparation pathways, including yearlong residencies, in rural communities.

Perhaps because teachers in less affluent rural communities are less likely to participate in yearlong residencies or programs with significant practice opportunities, teachers in these communities

reported feeling less prepared for their first teaching role. When asked how prepared they felt for the realities of the classroom in their first year of teaching, **61 percent of teachers in the most economically disadvantaged rural communities indicated that they did not feel prepared, as compared to 51 percent in urban or suburban systems.**⁵



MOVING FORWARD

In addition to conducting an educator survey in summer 2017, the Department also conducted a series of focus groups to better understand teachers' perspectives on the education profession and on their preparation experiences. One participant recommended that the Department

"bring the student teaching residencies to the rural communities."

Establishing undergraduate residencies in rural communities that may be more than an hour's drive from the nearest university poses significant challenges, both for the teacher candidate and for the university. This is why the majority of undergraduate residencies are based in urban and suburban school systems.

There are strong models of post-baccalaureate residencies, however, that enable rural school systems to identify and build local teaching talent.

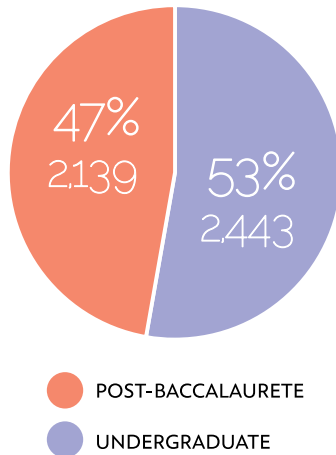
At Northwestern State University, for example, teacher preparation leaders are recruiting and preparing high-potential post-baccalaureate candidates in programs that include regular and intensive feedback from instructional coaches.

Another example is the [Public Education & Business Coalition's Boettcher Teacher Residency](#), a post-baccalaureate teacher residency program that serves both urban and rural school districts in Colorado. Participants in this program teach with the support of a mentor teacher and field coach for one year, some benefitting from a co-teaching model, while earning their initial teaching license. Participants' program fees are paid by a scholarship.

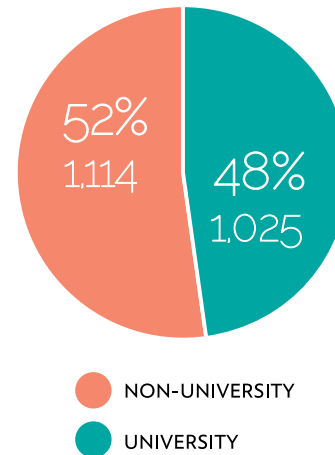
⁵ Louisiana Department of Education [Teacher Survey 2017](#) (Community Choice, See Question 19)

Building high-quality post-baccalaureate residencies will require ingenuity and a fresh perspective on how such programs are structured and financed. School systems and preparation providers have raised important questions about stipends for post-baccalaureate residents, travel for university staff, and approaches to managing multiple district partnerships. These questions deserve exploration.

2014-2016 Newly Hired Program Completers by Pathway – Statewide



2014-2016 Newly Hired Post-Baccalaureate Program Completers by Institution Type – Statewide



Source: 2016-2017 Educator Workforce Report, [Regional Newly Hired Teachers Appendix](#)

* Includes teachers who graduated from a teacher preparation program in 2013-2014, 2014-2015, or 2015-2016, and who were hired in 2014-2015, 2015-2016, or 2016-2017

Moving forward, the Department will engage in ongoing discussions with school and school system leaders, and preparation providers this fall to continue identifying supports for rural school systems that increase access to high-quality, residency-based preparation, particularly through post-baccalaureate teacher preparation pathways.

Through discussion and study of exemplars, the Department will identify models to explore and potentially pilot.

Roughly 132,110 students attend schools in rural districts.⁶ These students deserve access to teachers who are confident and prepared for their first days in the classroom. Likewise, aspiring teachers in all parts of the state deserve access to high-quality preparation experiences that provide ample time to practice and lead to success in the classroom.

Establishing strong models of preparation in rural communities will strengthen Louisiana's teacher workforce and provide opportunity for aspiring teachers to prepare under the tutelage of an expert mentor teacher.

6 Louisiana Department of Education [October 2016 Total Enrollment Count](#)