

Pathways to Teaching Report

**House Resolution 190 of the 2023 Regular
Legislative Session
January 2024**



Pathways to Teaching Report

Overview of HR 190 of the 2023 Regular Legislative Session

House Resolution 190 of the 2023 Regular Legislative Session urged and requested the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), in consultation with the State Board of Elementary Education (BESE), to study all pathways for a graduate of a postsecondary education institution to enter into the teaching profession and to make recommendations for removing barriers to certification and promoting consistency in certification and permit requirements.

The resolution further requested the LDOE, in consultation with BESE, to pursue the following:

1. Research on national practices regarding statewide certification policies.
2. A review of each pathway to teacher certification or teacher of record and make recommendations to ensure consistency in statewide certification policies.
3. A review of financial barriers and implications to students in each pathway.
4. Consultation with deans and directors of teacher preparation programs, at both universities and private providers, to determine how candidates are impacted by the certification requirements implemented by the LDOE and promulgated by BESE.
5. Presentation of findings to the Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Recovery Taskforce.

Introduction to Pathways to Teaching

Louisiana state law, through *Bulletin 746 - Louisiana Standards for State Certification of School Personnel*, designed certification policies and statutes to identify and support high-quality teachers in all Louisiana classrooms, promote higher standards, and provide for the growth and development of the teaching profession. The state seeks to implement the most effective policies regarding teacher certification, removing barriers for those entering the profession while maintaining high standards for educator quality since these educators are responsible for the future of K-12 education in Louisiana.

Due to the national teacher shortage, the Louisiana state legislature urged and requested the LDOE, in consultation with BESE, to study all pathways for a graduate of a postsecondary education institution to enter into the teaching profession. After conducting this analysis, the LDOE has made recommendations at the conclusion of this report.

The State of Louisiana offers two pathways to teacher certification: the undergraduate pathway and the alternative certification pathway. Alternative certification includes Master of Arts in Teaching, certification-only, and practitioner-only programs.

The following definitions will be used throughout the report:

“Pathway” refers to the two options given within *Bulletin 996 - Standards for Approval of Teacher and/or Educational Leader Preparation Programs: Traditional or Alternative Certification*.

- *Traditional* - undergraduate
- *Alternative* - post-baccalaureate
 - Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)
 - Certification-Only (Cert-only)
 - Practitioner-Only

“Program” refers to the individual certification program offered within a pathway by a provider, and “Provider” refers to the overarching organization (e.g. Cajun College of Acadiana; Pelican Private Provider, LLC.).

The types of programs offered in Louisiana are shown in the table below.

Type of Pathway	Providers	Programs
Undergraduate	20	228 total programs
Post-Bacc: MAT	14	167 total programs
Post-Bacc: Practitioner-only	16	265 total programs
Post-Bacc: Cert-only	19	249 total programs

There are a total of 33 Teacher Preparation Providers in the state of Louisiana. Many of the Teacher Preparation Programs offer more than one pathway to earn a teaching certification.

National Practices Regarding Statewide Certification Policies

All states require teachers to earn an initial license in order to teach. However, the criteria for what counts can vary widely, not just across states, but even within them.

Entry Requirements

Many states have lowered (or removed entirely) academic requirements for entry into teacher preparation programs. Six states offer candidates alternative ways to demonstrate academic skills other than passing a test.

- Meeting a GPA requirement (Delaware, Maryland, Oklahoma)
- Having a bachelor’s degree (Hawaii, North Carolina, Texas)
- Having an associate’s degree (Texas)

- Being enrolled in an accredited institution (Hawaii)
- Being enrolled in a certification program (Texas)
- Serving in the armed forces (Texas)

GPA Requirements

While many states impose a minimum GPA, thirty-eight states currently set either no GPA standard to enter a teacher preparation program or set the minimum GPA at 2.75 or lower, well below the national mean GPA of 3.0 (39 states had a lower GPA requirement in 2015). Louisiana's GPA requirement is a 2.2 GPA or higher for entry into post-baccalaureate and undergraduate programs. Additionally, traditional undergraduate or university alternative teacher preparation programs have a program completion GPA requirement of 2.5 or higher as a condition of initial licensure. Act 392 of the 2023 Regular Legislative Session provided for the conditional acceptance of an applicant who does not meet the GPA entry requirement.

Induction and Mentoring Supports

Thirty-one states require induction and mentoring support for new teachers in statute or regulation. Thirty-five states set minimum qualifications for teachers serving as mentors. Sixteen states restrict who can mentor a student teacher to classroom teachers who meet some measure of effectiveness. Louisiana's Mentor Teacher program has minimum qualifications for mentor teachers that include completion of a state-approved training program and completing the Louisiana Mentor Teacher Assessment Series.

Licensure Requirements

In 2021, at least 62 bills regarding certification and licensure were enacted in 27 states. Reducing licensure requirements is one way policy makers attempt to reduce barriers to entry in the teaching profession. Licensure exams in particular can be costly for candidates, and the research on the predictive value of licensure exams for teacher quality and student achievement is mixed. [Evidence](#) suggests that teachers with stronger preparation are more likely to stay in teaching and to be effective in their roles.

Source: [National Council on Teacher Quality \(2021\)](#), [Education Commission of the States \(2022\)](#)

Louisiana's Teacher Preparation Quality Rating Score

The Teacher Preparation Quality Rating Score (TPQRS), produced annually for all providers, supplies information regarding the quality of the preparation offered by each provider, the extent to which the provider is meeting Louisiana's educator workforce needs, and the impact of program completers on K-12 student outcomes.

Three domains comprise the overall TPQRS: Preparation Program Experience (50%), Meeting Educator Workforce Needs (25%), and Teacher Quality (25%). The overall score and domain scores are each on a four-point scale according to the following ranges: Level 1: Ineffective - less than 1.5, Level 2: Needs Improvement - between 1.5 and 2.4, Level 3: Effective - between 2.5 and 3.4, Level 4: Highly Effective - greater than or equal to 3.5.

Information to calculate the scores is collected by conducting on-site reviews once every four years, collecting completer data yearly from Title II and Educational Testing Service (ETS), and gathering the value-added measure (VAM) of completers in their first three years in the profession. Programs do not have a score during their first year of implementation.

The following represents the TPQRS of each program in the state calculated for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Name of provider	Quality Rating 2020-2021	Quality Rating 2021-2022
Caddo Teaching Academy - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Centenary College of Louisiana - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Needs Improvement
Centenary College of Louisiana - Undergraduate *Did not have program completers for the 2021-2022 academic year	N/A	N/A
EMBARK Aspiring Educators - Post-baccalaureate *First cohort completed the program in 2022-2023	N/A	N/A
Grambling State University - Post-baccalaureate	N/A	Level 3: Effective
Grambling State University - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
iteachLOUISIANA - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
Louisiana Christian University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Louisiana Christian University - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	N/A
Louisiana Resource Center for Educators - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
Louisiana State University Alexandria - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective

Louisiana State University Alexandria - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Louisiana State University Baton Rouge - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Louisiana State University Baton Rouge - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Needs Improvement
Louisiana State University Shreveport - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 2: Needs Improvement
Louisiana State University Shreveport - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Needs Improvement
Louisiana Tech University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Louisiana Tech University - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
Loyola University New Orleans - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Loyola University New Orleans - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Needs Improvement
McNeese State University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
McNeese State University - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
Nicholls State University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Nicholls State University - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Northwestern State University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Northwestern State University - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Oxford Teachers Academy at Reach University - Undergraduate *First cohort completed the program in 2023-2024	N/A	N/A
Relay Graduate School of Education - Post-baccalaureate	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 4: Highly Effective
Southeastern Louisiana University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective

Southeastern Louisiana University - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
Southern University at New Orleans - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Needs Improvement
Southern University Baton Rouge - Post-baccalaureate	N/A	Level 4: Highly Effective
Southern University Baton Rouge - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 4: Highly Effective
Teach Ascension Academy - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
Teach St. Bernard - Post-baccalaureate	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 4: Highly Effective
Teach St. Tammany - Post-baccalaureate *First cohort completed the program in 2022-2023	N/A	N/A
Teach Tangi - Post-baccalaureate *First cohort completed the program in 2021-2022	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
The New Teacher Project - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 4: Highly Effective
Tulane University - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 2: Needs Improvement
University of Holy Cross - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
University of Holy Cross - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 4: Highly Effective
University of Louisiana at Lafayette - Post-baccalaureate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
University of Louisiana at Lafayette - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective
University of Louisiana at Monroe - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
University of Louisiana at Monroe - Undergraduate	Level 3: Effective	Level 2: Needs Improvement
University of New Orleans - Post-baccalaureate	Level 3: Effective	Level 3: Effective
University of New Orleans - Undergraduate	Level 2: Needs Improvement	Level 3: Effective

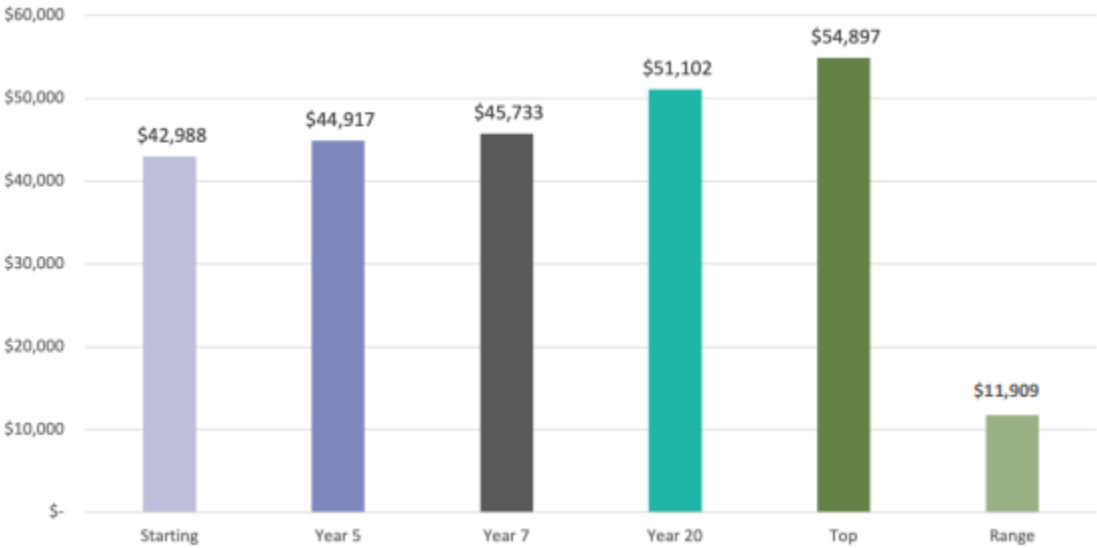
Xavier University of New Orleans - Post-baccalaureate	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 4: Highly Effective
Xavier University of New Orleans - Undergraduate	N/A	Level 3: Effective

Financial Barriers and Implications to Students in Each Pathway

Average Teacher Salaries in Louisiana

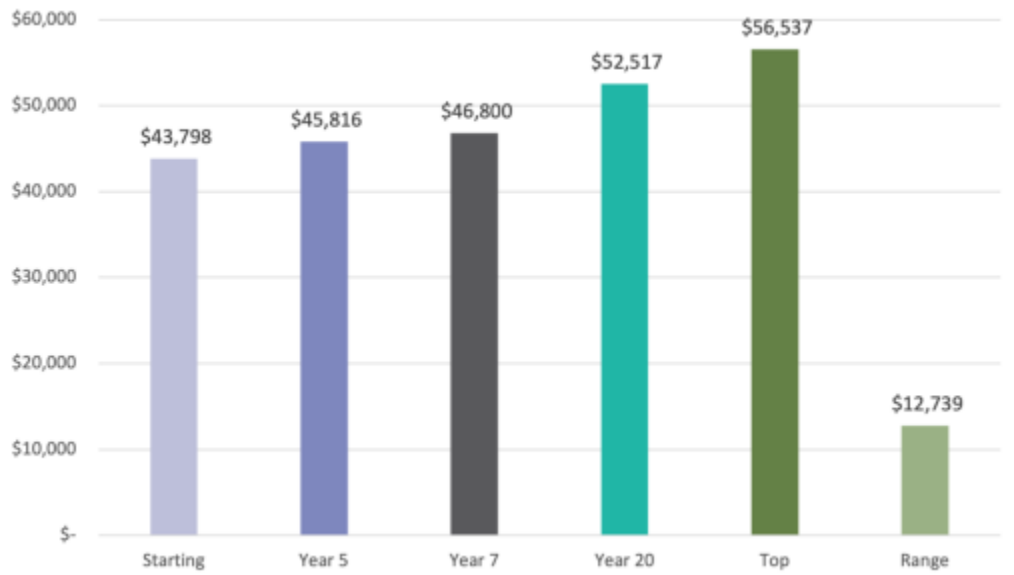
The following figures display average salaries for teachers in Louisiana who completed an undergraduate preparation program as well as a MAT preparation program. The average teacher salary for years one through twenty are listed below. The range is the difference between the year one/starting salary and the top-of-the average pay-scale for teachers in Louisiana. This data was collected as part of the [2023 Louisiana Teacher Recruitment and Retention Compensation Study](#).

Average Teacher Salary of Undergraduate Preparation Program Completers



This figure of the average salary for teachers who complete a traditional undergraduate teacher preparation program indicates an average year one/starting salary of approximately \$43,000 with an average top-of-the-scale pay of approximately \$55,000, yielding an average pay range (from year one/starting pay to top-of-the-scale pay) of approximately \$12,000.

Average Teacher Salary of MAT Pathway Preparation Program Completers



This figure of the average salary of teachers who complete a MAT pathway preparation program indicates an average year one starting salary of approximately \$44,000 with an average top-of-the-scale salary of approximately \$56,500, yielding an average pay range (from year one/starting pay to top-of-the-scale pay) of approximately \$12,500.

Average Salaries

The average salaries below include all Louisiana teachers regardless of years of experience.

Average Salary for all Teachers: \$52,472

Average Starting Salary for all Teachers with a Master's Degree: \$43,798

Average Starting Salary for all Teachers with a Bachelor's Degree: \$42,988

Teacher Preparation Program Costs

The average cost of an undergraduate teacher preparation program in the state of Louisiana is \$58,695, and the average salary of a teacher who enters the teaching profession after completing an undergraduate program is \$42,998 in the first year. The maximum average teacher salary in Louisiana is \$54,897, which is \$4,000 lower than the average cost of receiving an undergraduate degree.

Average Cost of Louisiana Teacher Preparation Programs	
Type of Program	Average Cost In State*
Cert-only	\$10,468.54

Practitioner-only	\$3,038.83
MAT	\$19,245.75
Undergraduate	\$58,695.12

*Due to the inclusion of fees in some provider’s tuition and gaps in reporting, numbers are subject to minor error.

Dean and Program Directors Focus Group and Survey Results

A focus group was convened, and a survey was sent out to deans and directors of Louisiana teacher preparation programs, including university, private, non-profit, and school system-based providers, to determine how candidates are impacted by the certification requirements implemented by LDOE and promulgated by BESE.

Focus Group

The focus group held on September 28, 2023, was composed of seven participants from five universities and two school system-based providers. During the focus group, topics such as financial barriers, certification requirements, and candidate enrollment were discussed. The results are reflective solely of those who participated in the focus group and are summarized below.

- **Does the program offer financial assistance to candidates?**
 - Universities are not offering more than what is provided through state and federal grants (TOPS, Geaux Teach).
 - School system-based providers offer free teacher preparation with a required commitment based on the number of years served in the classroom that varies between systems.
- **What processes or supports are in place for candidates taking the Praxis exams?**
 - All participants of the focus group offer Praxis exam support using programs such as 240 Tutoring and Exam Edge. Many also participate in a mentoring program for the Praxis exam to lend extra testing support.
- **How are candidates impacted by the certification requirements implemented by LDOE and promulgated by BESE in response to legislation?**
 - The number of changes in a short amount of time impacts candidates causing financial and mental stress. Graduation plans that are put in place in a candidate's freshman year are negatively affected by additions and changes of coursework through legislative action. The addition of requirements such as literacy and dyslexia hours take away from other needed courses such as classroom

management and child development due to the cap of 120 hours on undergraduate coursework.

- Mentor requirements cause a lower-than-needed pool of mentors for the teacher candidates' residency year. Mentors are becoming fatigued and not all mentors certified by the state are the best fit for the candidates.
- **Has enrollment increased due to some barriers being lifted during the last two legislative sessions?**
 - Programs have seen an increase in enrollment due to removal of Praxis core.
 - Flexible GPA has helped candidates; however, many candidates still struggle to pass Praxis content and pedagogy exams.
- **Do you believe there is an inconsistency in the different pathway types, certification, and permits offered in the state of Louisiana?**
 - The bar is raised for traditional programs and lowered for alternative route programs; this is negatively affecting the enrollment in traditional programs. Candidates in alternative pathways are not always required to pass Praxis exams, or complete literacy and numeracy training, which in turn leads candidates to receive less-than-adequate instruction prior to educating Louisiana students.
- **What are your recommendations for creating consistency?**
 - School system-based providers, universities, private and non-profit providers would like to be included in future legislative meetings regarding teaching certification to ensure consistency in pathways. The number of pathways available make teaching more accessible; however, not all programs offer the same amount of support during residency or during the first few years of teaching, which will cause a decline in retention rates.

Survey Results

A survey was released to preparation providers via the monthly call and newsletter to collect additional information on topics such as financial barriers for candidates, certification requirements, and the consistency between each pathway to certification. The survey opened on October 25 and closed November 24 with 13 total participants from 10 universities, two school system-based providers, and one private non-profit provider. The total participants represent 39% of the total number of Louisiana preparation providers.

Financial Assistance

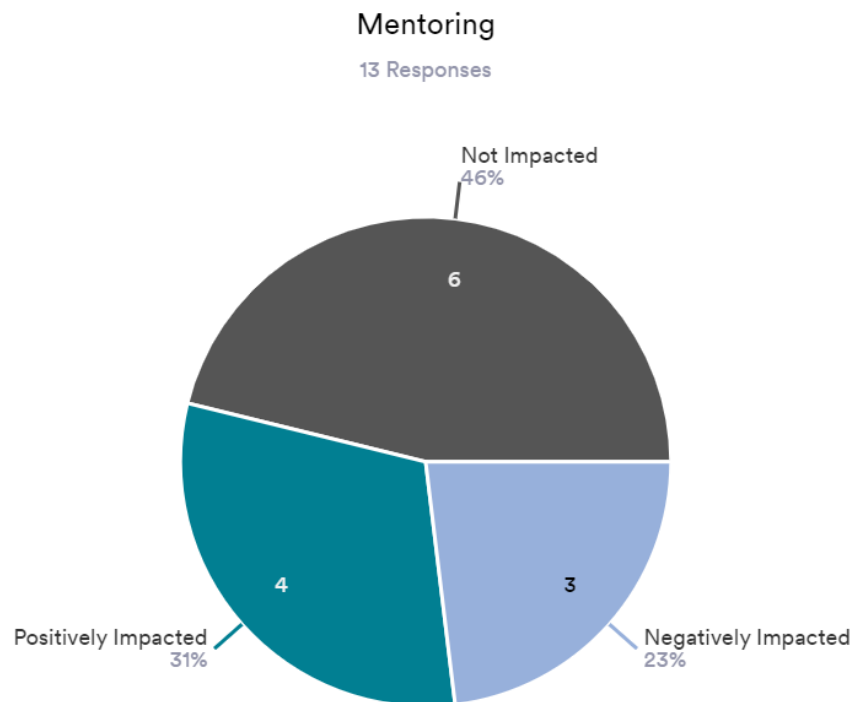
- 46% of participants offer financial assistance for alternative certification pathways (not including federal or state grants)
- 23% of traditional pathway participants offer financial assistance for undergraduate certification pathways (not including federal or state grants)
- 8% offer financial assistance to pay for Praxis exams.

Praxis Support

- 77% have processes or supports in place for enrolled candidates who do not pass Praxis tests on their first attempt.
- 77% provide Praxis support for prospective candidates of alternative certification pathways.

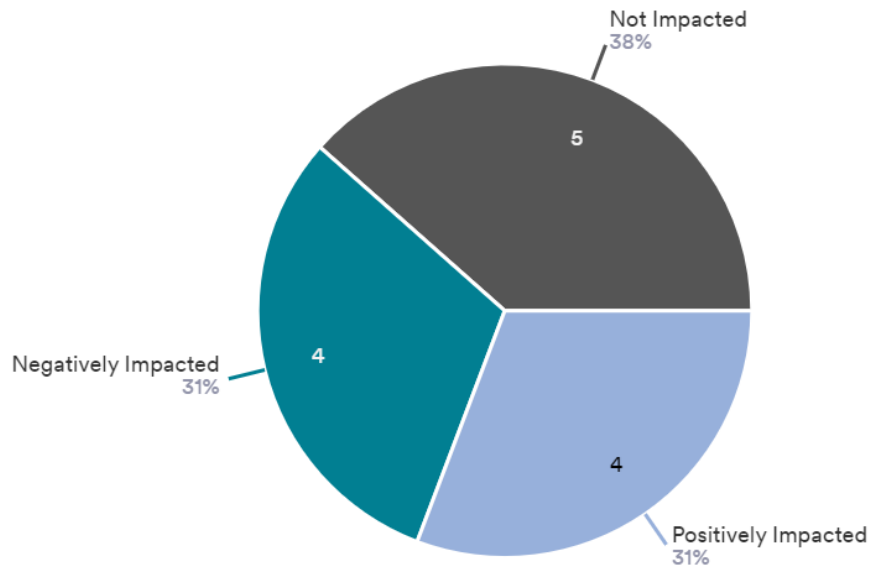
How are candidates impacted by the following certification requirements implemented by LDOE and promulgated by BESE?

- The majority of respondents stated that the literacy exam (54%), GPA entry requirements (92%), GPA completion requirement (85%), 120-Hour course requirement (54%) and the addition of the Associate Teacher Pathway (77%) have no impact on candidates.
- 38% of participants stated literacy instruction hours have positively impacted candidates.
- 77% of responses stated removal of Praxis core has positively impacted candidates.
- Respondents had varied opinions on how mentoring, content and pedagogy exams, yearlong residency, dyslexia instruction, and the upcoming numeracy policy affects candidates; the charts below show the varied responses.



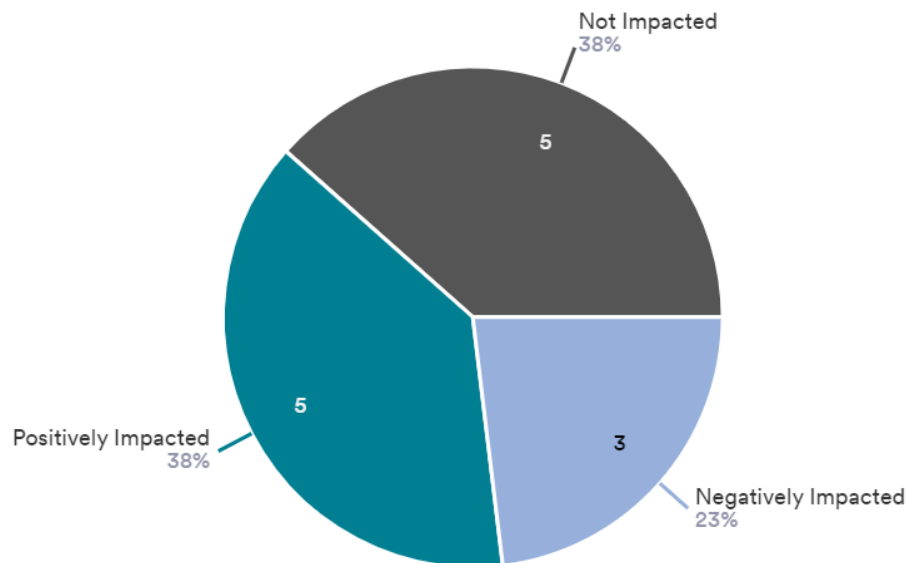
Content and Pedagogy Exams

13 Responses



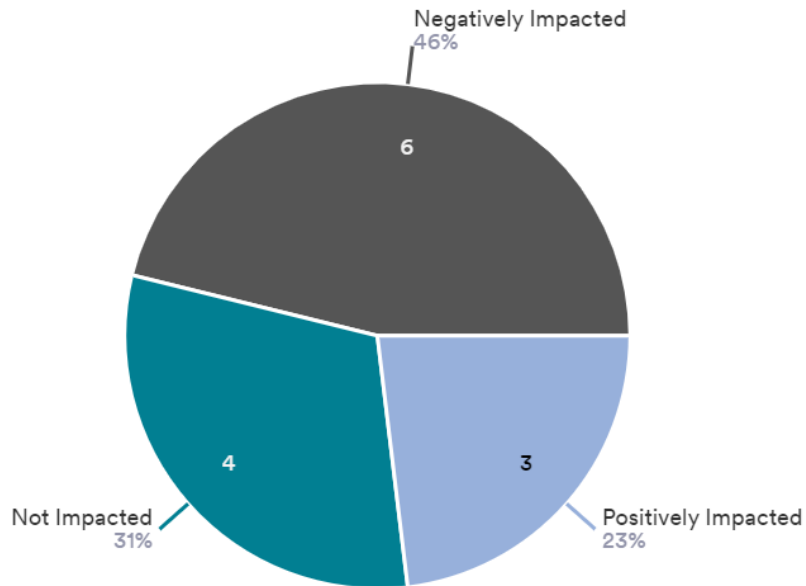
Year-long residency

13 Responses



Dyslexia instruction

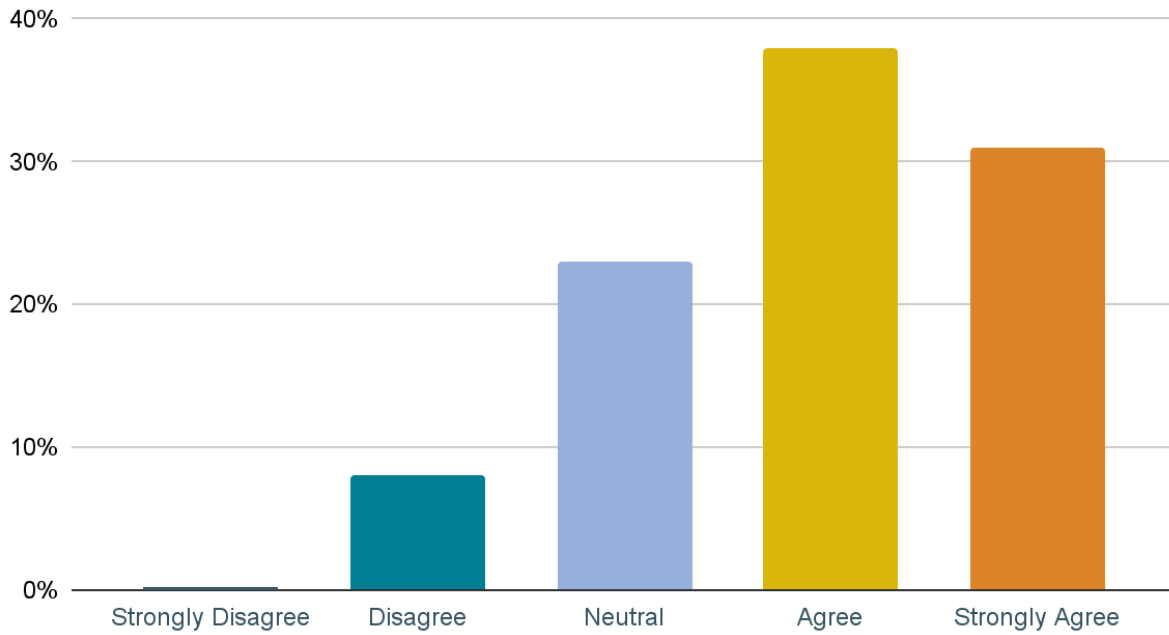
13 Responses



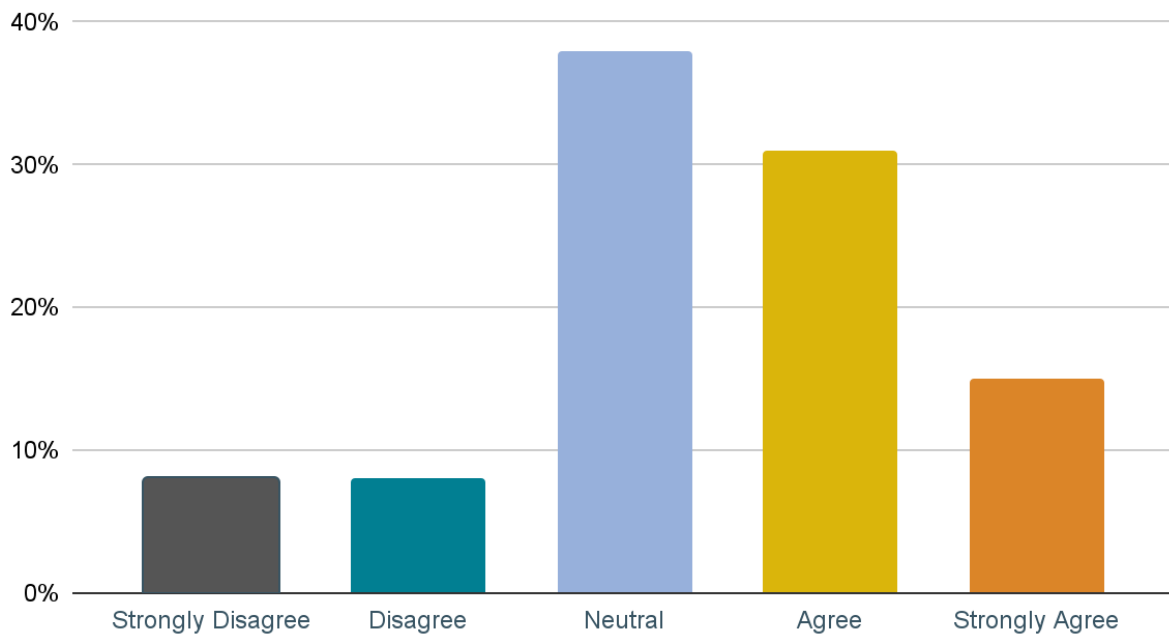
Respondents stated that enrollment has increased or will increase due to the following barriers being lifted for entry into educator preparation programs in the last two legislative sessions:

- Removal of Praxis Core (69% agree or strongly agree)
- GPA flexibility for entry into a program (46% agree or strongly agree)

Removal of Praxis Core

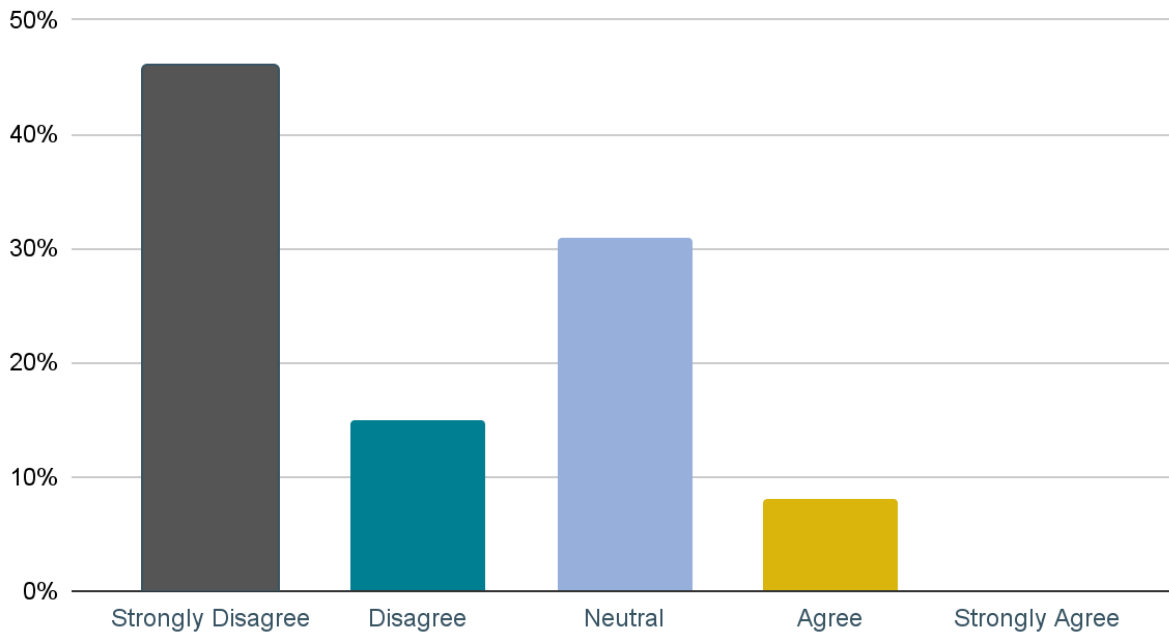


GPA Flexibility for Entry into a Program



61% of respondents stated that they do not believe enrollment will increase due to the addition of the Associate Teacher Pathway.

Addition of the Associate Teacher Pathway



Pathway Requirements Summary

The survey asked respondents about the various teacher preparation pathways offered in Louisiana and whether each pathway should be strengthened, stay the same, or lessened. They were asked about the Undergraduate, Post-Baccalaureate, Teacher Employment Permit (TEP) Pathways, and the Associate Teacher Pathway.

The majority of participants stated Undergraduate, Post-Baccalaureate, and TEP Option 4: Lack of GPA should stay the same, while TEP Option 2: Master’s Degree and TEP Option 3: Bachelor’s Degree should be strengthened. There were two areas where respondents had varied opinions on whether the pathway should stay the same or be strengthened: the Associate Teacher program and TEP option 1: 10% of Exam Requirements.

Stay the same:

- Undergraduate (69%)
- Post-Baccalaureate (69%)
- Associate Teacher (46%) *
- TEP Option 1: 10% of Exam Requirements (46%)*
- TEP Option 4: Lack of GPA (54%)

Strengthened:

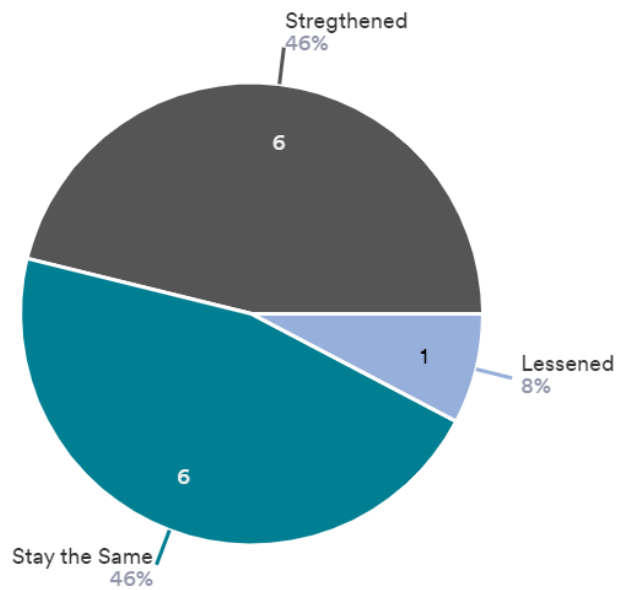
- Associate Teacher (46%) *
- TEP Option 1: 10% of Exam Requirements (46%) *
- TEP Option 2: Master’s Degree (62%)
- TEP Option 3: Bachelor’s Degree (69%)

* Participants had varied opinions on whether the Associate Teacher pathway and TEP: Option 1 should stay the same or be strengthened. The charts below show the varied responses.

Associate Teacher Pathway

Does this pathway need to be strengthened, stay the same, or lessened?

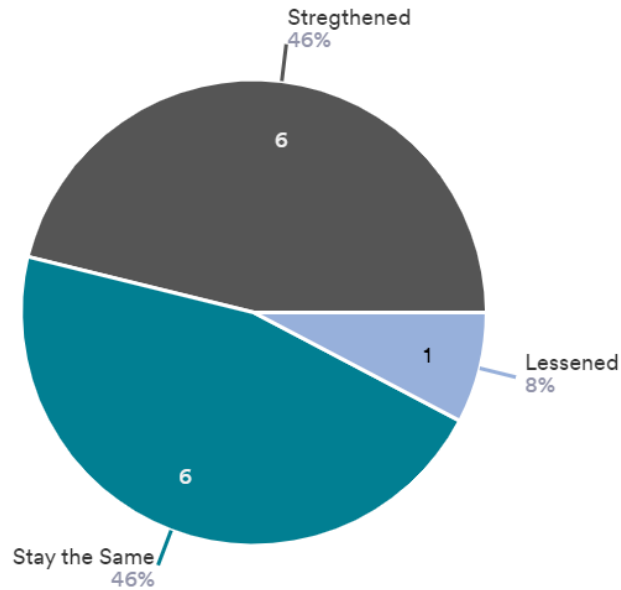
13 Responses



TEP Option 1: 10% of Exam Requirement

Does this pathway need to be strengthened, stay the same, or lessened?

13 Responses

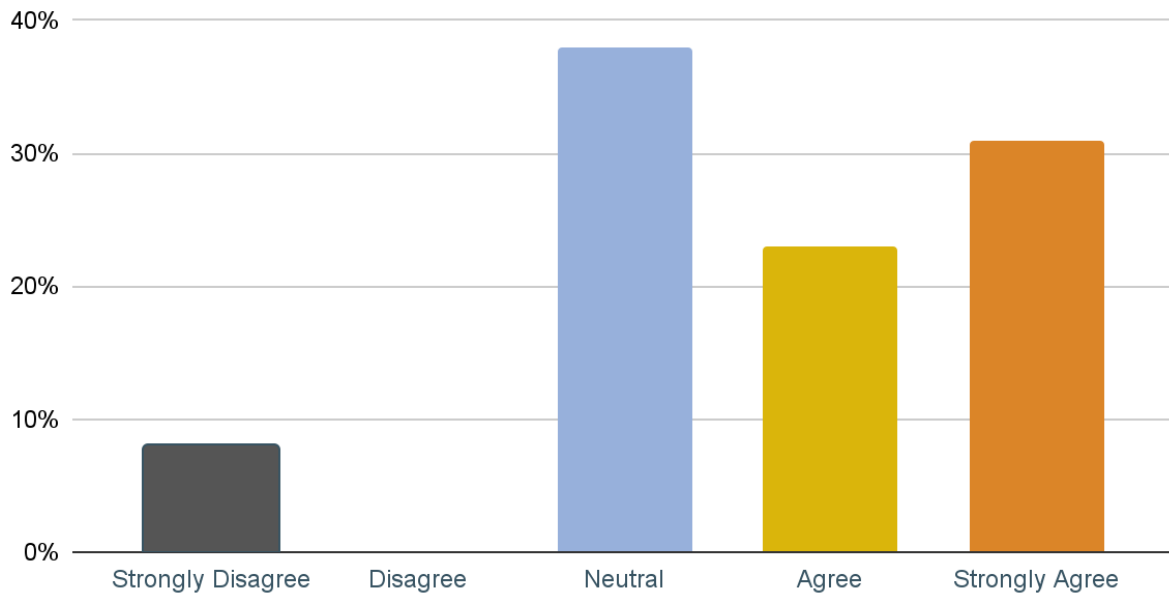


Respondents were also asked if each pathway fully prepares candidates for their first year of teaching. The majority of participants felt the Temporary Employment Permit (TEP) options do not fully prepare candidates for their first year of teaching.

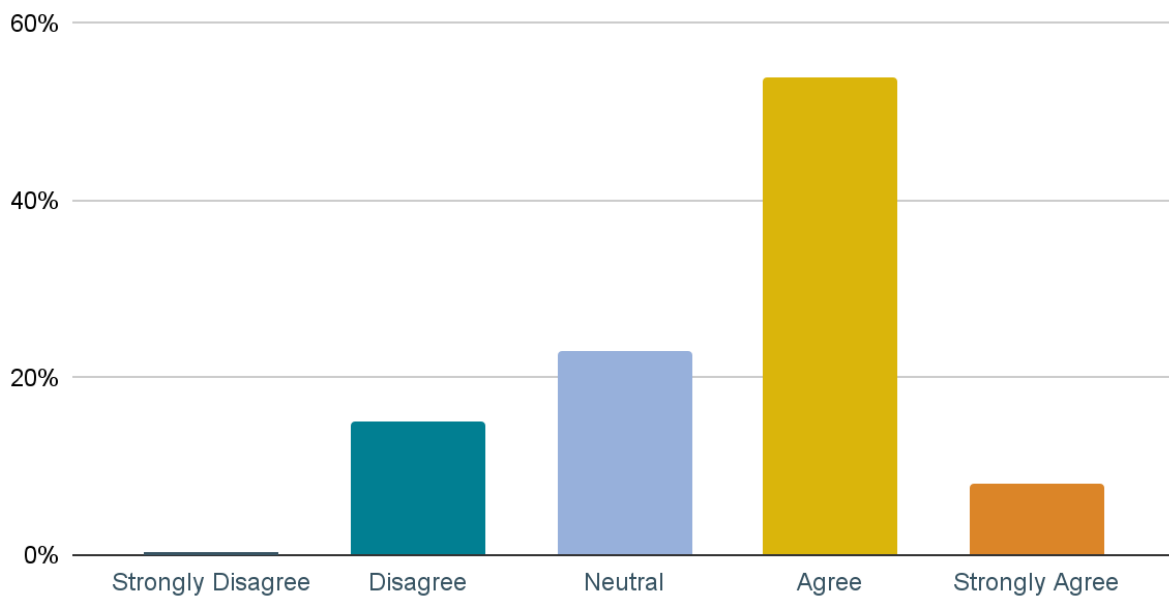
Fully Prepares students for the first year of teaching:

- Undergraduate (54% agree or strongly agree)
- Post-Baccalaureate (62% agree or strongly agree)

The Undergraduate Pathway fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.



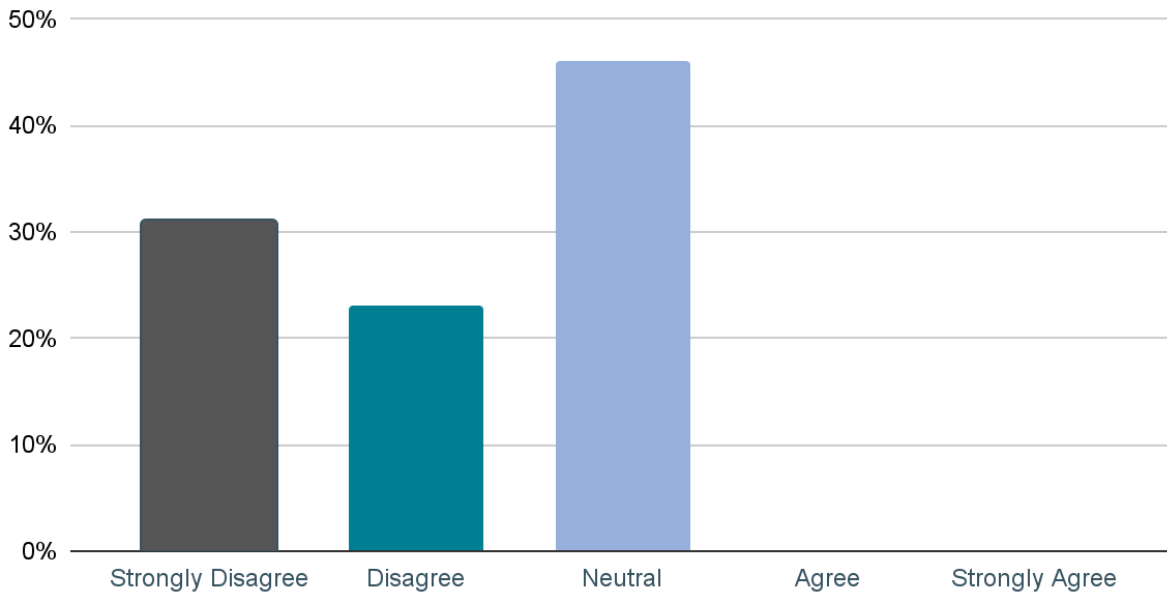
The Post-Baccalaureate/ Alt-Cert Pathway fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.



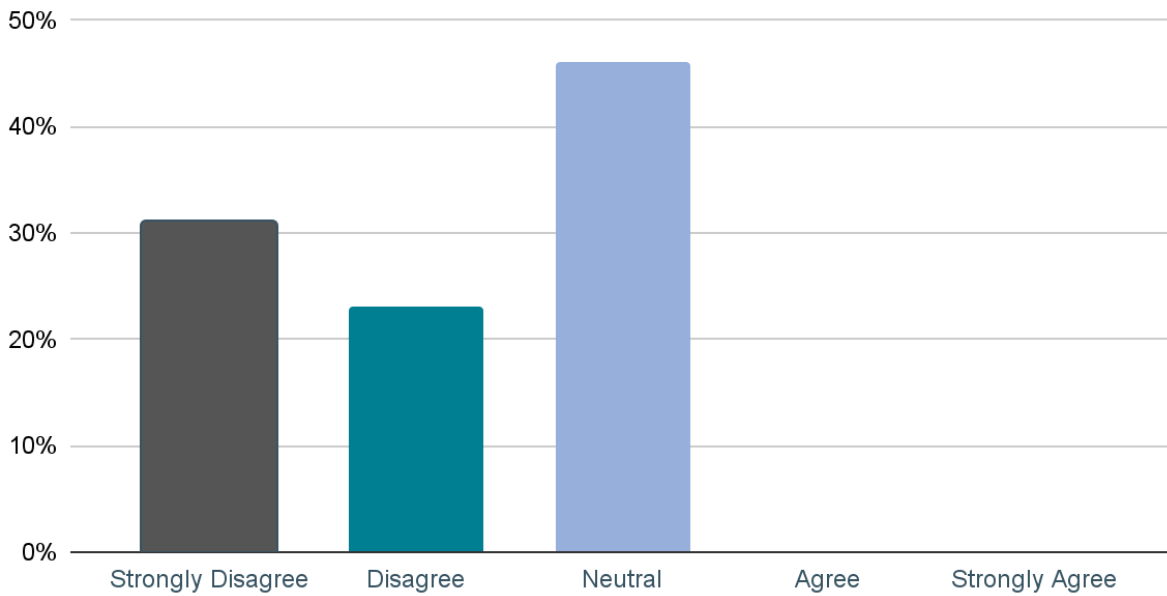
Does not fully prepare students for the first year of teaching:

- TEP Option 2: Master's Degree (54%)
- TEP Option 3: Bachelor's Degree (54%)

The Temporary Employment Permit (Option 2: Master's Degree) fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.

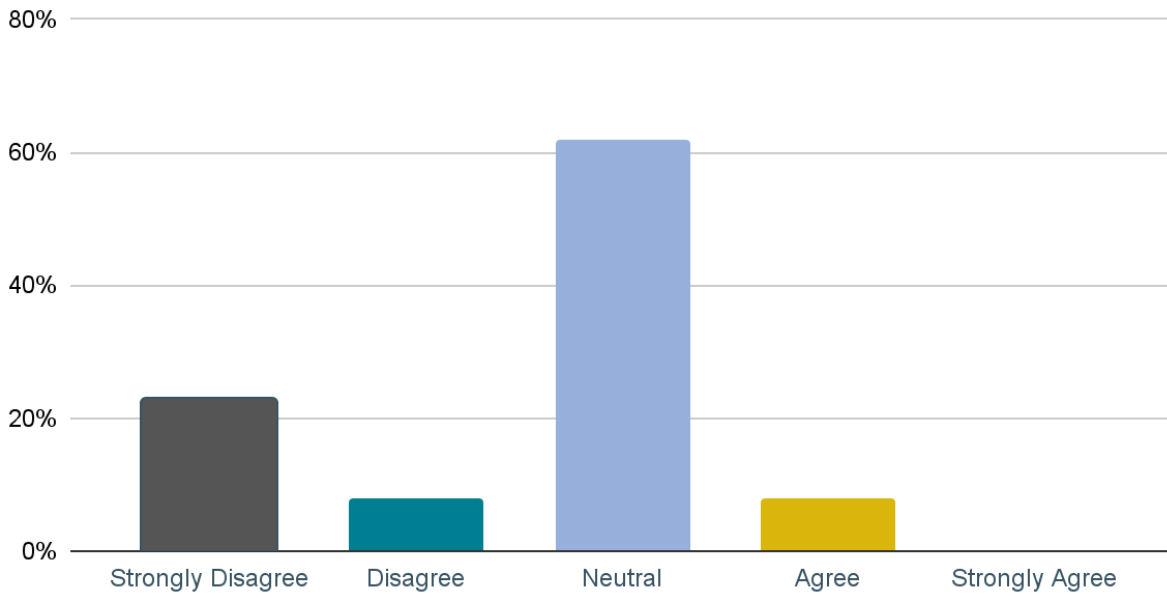


The Temporary Employment Permit (Option 3: Bachelor's Degree) fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.

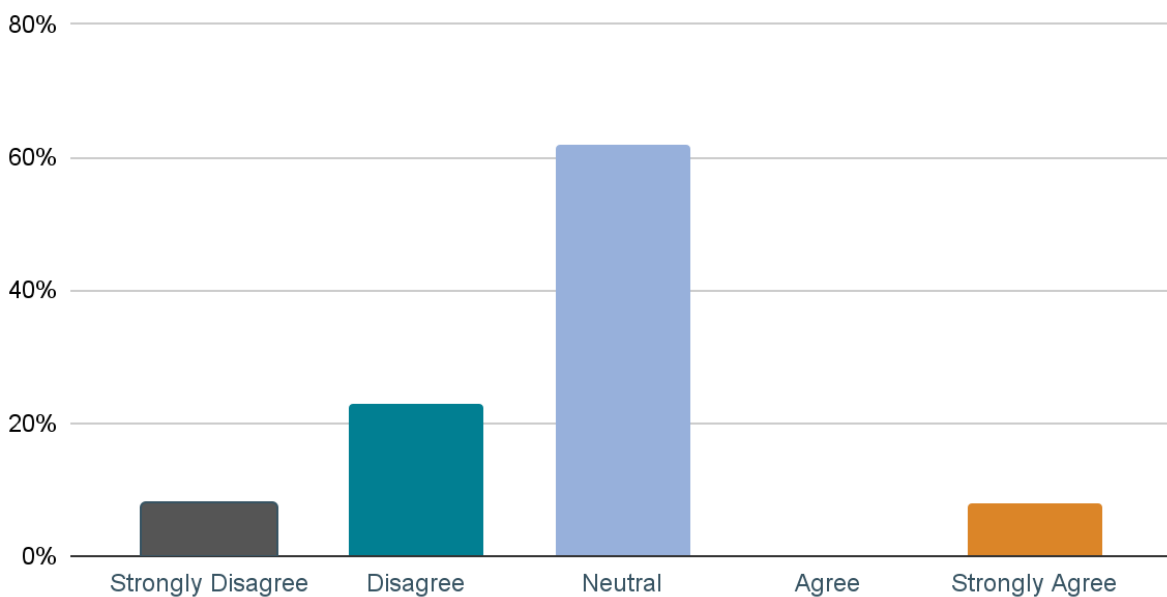


The majority of participants were neutral on whether or not Associate Teacher (62%), TEP Option 1: 10% of Exam Requirements (62%), and TEP Option 4: GPA Requirement (77%) pathways prepare students adequately for their first year of teaching.

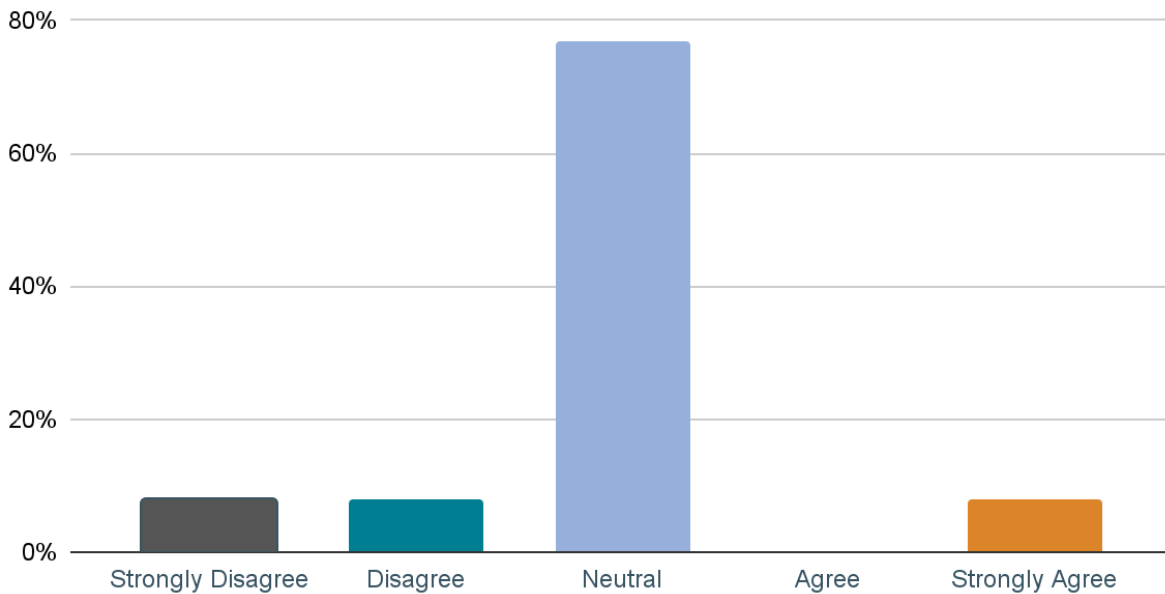
The Associate Teacher program fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.



The Temporary Employment Permit (Option 1: 10% of Exam) fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.



The Temporary Employment Permit (Option 4: GPA) fully prepares students for their first year of teaching.



62% of participants stated that the various pathways to teaching do not have consistency regarding statewide certification requirements. Participants recommended the following for creating consistency in educator pathways, certifications, and permits offered to potential educators in the State of Louisiana.

- All pathways should require the same amount of literacy hours, dyslexia instruction, numeracy, and Praxis licensure exam requirements.
- Pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, residency, and student teaching should be required in all pathways.

When asked to share thoughts on the certification pathways that were not addressed in this survey, participants responded:

- Courses required by legislation are hindering students' ability to take courses that are required by their plan of study. The continuous update of graduation requirements causes stress on universities and teacher candidates; changes must be made to graduation plans within the legislative deadlines.
- School system-based programs face challenges with policies written for traditional programs and non-district based alternative certification programs. There should be flexibility in when and how a teacher meets legislative requirements for completion of the teacher preparation program.

- Removal of assessments and requirements for various teaching pathways is leading to an increase in the number of teachers in need of remediation and intervention.

Conclusion

While all states require teachers to earn initial licensure in order to teach, there are numerous pathways teacher candidates can take in order to gain initial licensure in the state of Louisiana. Certification policies vary based on the pathway a candidate chooses. Reducing licensure requirements in the various pathways is one way policy makers attempt to reduce barriers to entry into the teaching profession. However, reducing licensure requirements does not ensure candidates will be effective and prepared to educate in their first year of teaching without proper support. The results of the focus group and survey conducted with deans and program directors of Louisiana teacher preparation programs display a need for consistency in the various teacher preparation pathways offered in Louisiana.

While reducing licensure requirements will not guarantee an effective teacher workforce, providing cost-effective measures of licensure exams and tuition for the various pathways could benefit the overall teacher workforce in Louisiana. Tuition and licensure exams are required in the majority of pathways offered and can be costly for candidates seeking teacher licensure.

Based on national research, reviews of the pathways and financial barriers, and consultation with deans and directors, the LDOE recommends allocating funds to pay the mentors for those on the TEP and the associate pathway in all years.

In order to implement these changes, internal and external work groups will be created to engage stakeholders to make further changes regarding these recommendations.

For additional information, please contact believeandprepare@la.gov.