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The Shortage of Special Education Teachers and Higher Education Faculty

- Approximately [1 million education jobs have been lost](#) due to the pandemic (as of November 2020).
- Half of K-12 public education jobs lost between March and April 2020 were among [special education teachers, tutors and teaching assistants](#).
- [About 27% of teachers](#) are considering leaving their jobs, retiring early, or taking a leave of absence due to the pandemic.
- Even prior to the pandemic, [special education was the field with the greatest shortage, with 48 states and DC](#) reporting such shortages.
- Between 2005 and 2012 there was a [17% decline in the number of special education](#) teachers and a simultaneous increase (by 400,000 students) in the number of students receiving special education services.
- Due to the shortage, states have increasingly turned to the use of [long term substitutes](#) for special education teachers, some with only a high school diploma and most with no teacher training at all.
- [High poverty schools](#) are more likely than well-resourced schools to have teacher shortages, as well as unqualified and inexperienced teachers.
- There is a significant [lack of diversity](#) among special educators, just as there is among all educators.
- Between 2010 and 2017, enrollment in educator preparation programs at institutions of higher education [declined by 39%](#), resulting in more than 277,000 fewer professionals working their way toward the classroom.
- Those prepared through [alternate pathways that require less coursework and student teaching experiences are 25% more likely to leave their teaching positions](#) and the profession than those who are well prepared.
- A shortage of special education faculty in higher education contributes to the special education teacher shortage and further limits the capacity of higher education to address this significant problem.
- Between 2009 and 2018, there was a [19% reduction in the number of special education doctoral programs](#).
- [Data from 2018](#) showed that the number of special education doctoral programs, 79 nationwide, dropped to the lowest level in decades.
- With this decline, the number of doctoral graduates available to assume special education faculty and other leadership positions has also dropped to a level lower than 1998, with a [17% reduction between 2021 and 2017](#).