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 **The Shortage of Special Education Teachers and Higher Education Faculty**

* Without significant intervention, by the 2025-26 school year, there is [projected to be a shortfall of roughly 200,000 public school](https://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/) teachers.
* In the 2021-22 school year, [44% of U.S. public schools indicated a full- or part-time teaching vacancy](https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/3_3_2022.asp). Of those vacancies, 45% were special education positions, and 61% were explicitly identified as resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
* [Nearly 1 in 4 teachers indicated that they were likely to leave their jobs](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-1.html) in the 2020-21 school year. Prior to the pandemic, the number was 1 in 6.
* The pipeline of teachers is insufficient with [340,000 fewer students enrolled](https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2019-12-03/sharp-nationwide-enrollment-drop-in-teacher-prep-programs-cause-for-alarm) in teacher preparation programs in 2019 than in 2010.
* Even prior to the pandemic, [special education was the field with the greatest shortage, with 48 states and DC](https://www.elumatherapy.com/special-education-teacher-shortage/) reporting such shortages. In fact, [concerns regarding the stability of the special education workforce](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20299163?seq=1) have existed since at least 1978.
* Between 2005 and 2012 there was a [17% decline in the number of special education](https://www.edweek.org/leadership/shortage-of-special-educators-adds-to-classroom-pressures/2018/12) teachers and a simultaneous increase in the number of students accessing special education services.
* From 2010 to 2020, the number of students who receive special education services [increased by approximately 800,000 students](https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=64).
* Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics projections, between 2020 and 2030, [37,600 new special education teachers](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/special-education-teachers.htm) are required to keep up with demand.
* In order to meet the demand, states have increasingly turned to the use of [long-term substitutes](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/19/us/pandemic-substitute-teacher-shortages.html) for special education teachers, some with only a high school diploma and most with no teacher training at all.
* In the 2020–21 school year, [16% of new teachers were individuals who were not fully prepared](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/teacher-shortages-take-center-stage)—a nearly 80% increase since 2014–15.
* [High poverty schools](https://curriculumsolutions.net/blog/2019/12/01/three-strikes-youre-out-teacher-shortages-and-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](https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-push-to-get-more-teachers-of-color-in-special-education-classrooms/2019/09) among special educators, just as there is among all educators.
* In 2018, there were [one-quarter fewer Black and Latinx teacher candidates](https://www.americanprogress.org/article/make-declining-enrollment-teacher-preparation-programs/) enrolled in teacher preparation programs than were enrolled in 2010.
* Those prepared through [alternate pathways that require less coursework and student teaching experiences are 25% more likely to leave their teaching positions](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-turnover-report) and the profession than those who are well prepared. [Teacher turnover has significant negative effects](https://www.winginstitute.org/teacher-retention-turnover#:~:text=High%20turnover%20impedes%20student%20performance,%2C%20hiring%2C%20and%20training%20budgets.), particularly for students with disabilities.
* 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.](https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables#group3)
* [Data from 2018](https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables#group3) 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 in 1998, with a [17% reduction between 2021 and 2017](https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf21308/data-tables#group3).