

EDUCATIONAL AIDES IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



AN ISSUE BRIEF FROM LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD STAFF

ID: 3090

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OBJECTIVE

Educational aides perform a variety of tasks in preschools, elementary and secondary school classrooms and in special education. They provide management support for teachers and students.

KEY FACTS

- ◆ Educational Aide Certificates are based on levels (Educational Aide I, II, and III) with each level having minimum education and work experience requirements.
- ◆ Educational aides are not required to obtain continuing professional education hours to renew their certificates every five years.
- ◆ As of November 2015, approximately 267,000 educational aide certificates were issued, and 64,000 aides were employed in public and charter school systems.

BUDGETARY IMPACT

During school year 2014–15, public and charter school systems paid \$1.2 billion in salaries to educational aides.

STATUTORY REFERENCES

The Texas Education Code, Section 21.003

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Section 1005

Educational aides in public schools provide general assistance to teachers in the classroom or specialized assistance to students in kindergarten to grade 12. An aide's duties and responsibilities range from instructional and clerical support to classroom and student management support. Aide positions may include classroom aides, special education aides, library aides, and tutors. During school year 2014–15, approximately 64,000 aides were employed in Texas' public and charter school systems with total salaries of \$1.2 billion. Figure 1 shows the number of aides in the state, grouped by geographic region, based on the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions and student enrollment during school year 2014–15.

FIGURE 1
AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER EDUCATIONAL AIDE RANKED BY REGION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

REGION	STUDENT ENROLLMENT	EDUCATIONAL AIDE FTE COUNT	AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER EDUCATIONAL AIDE
West Regions 14–19	545,719	7,687	71.0
South Regions 1–3, 13, 20	1,417,598	18,595	76.2
North Regions 8–12	1,643,919	19,780	83.1
East Regions 4–7	1,608,106	18,473	87.1
State	5,215,342	64,535	80.8

NOTE: FTE=full-time-equivalent positions.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), November 2015.

CERTIFICATION

The Texas Education Code (TEC) states that a person may not be employed as an educational aide by a school district unless the person holds an appropriate certificate as authorized by the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Chapter 230. This requirement includes the current standard certificate, and the provisional (professional lifetime) certificates issued before September 1, 1999, which are no longer available. Standard and provisional aide certificates are issued by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) based on levels (Educational Aide I, II, and III). No requirements are stated regarding educational aide certification in charter schools, unless specified in the charter application as approved by the State Board of Education. All aides employed in Texas must have a Texas certificate, even if they are certified in another state.

An individual must be employed by a school district before being eligible to apply for an Educational Aide certificate, because the school district officials provide the recommendation for the certificate.

Certification requirements to obtain a standard Educational Aide Certificate (I, II, or III) differ, but all three require a high school diploma or general education development (GED) certificate and experience working with students or parents as approved by the employing superintendent. Educational Aide II employees must have two creditable years of experience as an Educational Aide I, or have a minimum of 15 semester hours of college credit with some emphasis on child growth development, or demonstrate proficiency in a specialized skill area as determined by the school district. Educational Aide III employees must have three creditable years of experience as an Educational Aide I or II, or have 30 semester hours of college credit with some emphasis on child growth development. As of November 2015, the number of standard and provisional certificates that SBEC had issued to aides (Educational Aide I, II, and III), irrespective of their employment status, was approximately 267,000.

In 2015, the U.S. Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Section 1005, which reauthorized the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act. ESSA establishes programs that enable paraprofessionals (assisting teachers employed by a local educational agency receiving assistance pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, Part A) to obtain the education necessary to become certified and licensed teachers. Additionally, ESSA contains assurances that the state educational agency will ensure that all teachers and paraprofessionals working in a program supported with funds pursuant to Title I, Part A, meet applicable state certification and licensure requirements. These requirements include those for certification obtained through alternative routes to certification, and those regarding the state's professional standards for paraprofessionals working in a program supported with this federal funding, including qualifications that were in place before ESSA was enacted.

TRAINING AND CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Since 1980, SBEC has issued a multilevel certification designation for aides. Unlike professional employees of the district (e.g., superintendent, principal, teacher, counselor, and nurse), aides are not required to obtain continuing professional education hours to renew their certificates every five years. However, they are encouraged to take advantage of training offered by the district and the Regional Education Service Centers. Institutions of higher education, such as local community colleges, also offer preparatory courses. For example, Austin Community College offers a 21-hour course on learning styles and instructional process, along with reading, writing, and math. Participants who complete and pass all the requirements can earn a highly qualified certificate, and participants who are not highly qualified earn a professional development certificate. The college also offers a seven-hour course that covers special education topics, such as the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including Free Appropriate Public Education and Least Restrictive Environment; physically impaired students; and crisis intervention.

PROVISIONAL EDUCATOR CERTIFICATES

TAC, Title 19, Chapter 230, states that all provisional educator certificates, including those issued to aides before September 1, 1999, are valid for the life of the individual unless suspended, surrendered in lieu of revocation, or revoked by a lawful authority. As a result, educators, including aides, who possess a lifetime certificate, are not required to pay a renewal fee, unlike those who have to renew their certificates every five years. TEA has few opportunities to communicate with educators who possess lifetime certificates. Furthermore, TEA is not required to be notified, nor does it work with any other agency to confirm the death of an educator. Thus, educators remain on the certified rolls for an indefinite period, as records are retained.

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