

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Published December 2025

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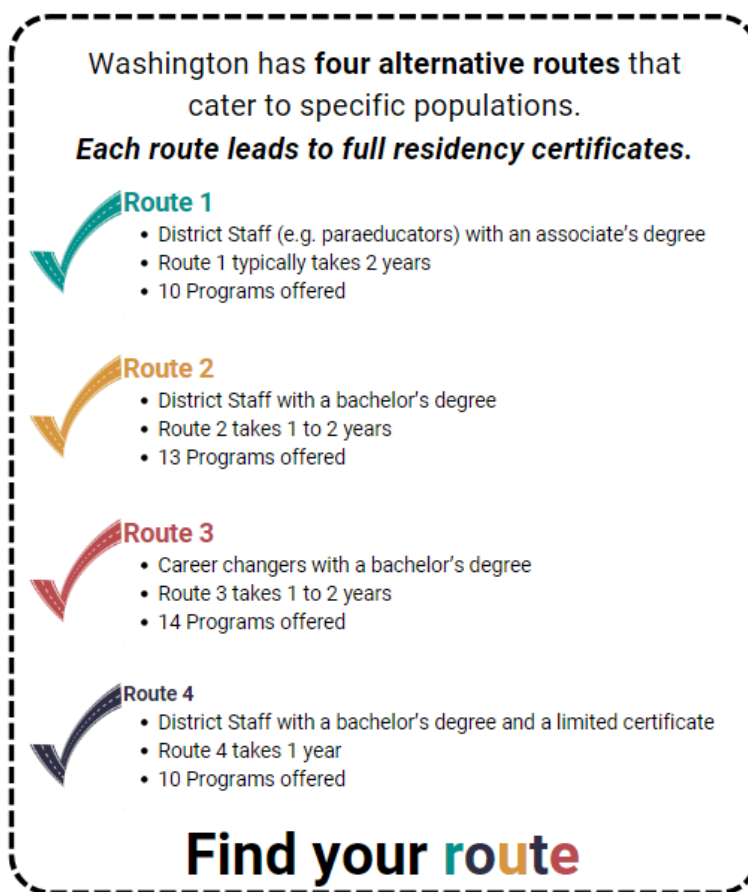
This report details the background, purposes, and methods by which the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) reports every two years on Washington’s Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification, as required by the Revised Code of Washington ([RCW](#)) [28A.660.020](#).

Introduction

What are alternative routes to teacher certification?

Washington’s Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification are preparation programs built upon intentional partnerships between districts and teacher preparation programs. The Washington State Legislature created these programs in 2001 to address a shortage of certified teachers and to prioritize particular program design elements, such as yearlong mentored internships, job-embedded learning, and flexible course delivery.

Washington has four alternative routes that cater to specific populations. All four routes lead to full residency certification.

An infographic titled "Washington has four alternative routes that cater to specific populations. Each route leads to full residency certificates." It lists four routes with their respective requirements, durations, and program counts. Each route is preceded by a checkmark icon in a color matching the route's title. At the bottom, it says "Find your route" in a colorful font.

Washington has **four alternative routes** that cater to specific populations.
Each route leads to full residency certificates.

- Route 1**
 - District Staff (e.g. paraeducators) with an associate’s degree
 - Route 1 typically takes 2 years
 - 10 Programs offered
- Route 2**
 - District Staff with a bachelor’s degree
 - Route 2 takes 1 to 2 years
 - 13 Programs offered
- Route 3**
 - Career changers with a bachelor’s degree
 - Route 3 takes 1 to 2 years
 - 14 Programs offered
- Route 4**
 - District Staff with a bachelor’s degree and a limited certificate
 - Route 4 takes 1 year
 - 10 Programs offered

Find your route

The four alternative routes are intended to provide certification pathways for district staff and career changers. Depending on the route, candidates are required to have an associate’s or bachelor’s degree and varied levels of educator-based experience, and they may serve in their current district role.



Alternative routes candidates must seek certification in a geographic or content [shortage area](#), complete a one-year mentored internship, and 540 hours of student teaching. District-employed Routes 1, 2, and 4 candidates are required to have district or building validation of qualifications, including one year of student interaction and leadership. Route 3 “career changers” need to provide external validation of qualifications, such as reference letters and letters of support from previous employers, which includes demonstrated experience with students or children. All alternative routes candidates must meet age, good moral character, and personal fitness requirements, including [fingerprinting, a background check, and character references](#).

Legislative background

Prior to April 2017, RCW 28A.660.040 governed alternative routes. Through passage of EHB 1654 (2017), the Legislature transitioned the specific program requirements to expectations for program outcomes, seen in the *Introduction* section. PESB subsequently reestablished the four routes within Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 181-80. This change has created greater flexibility to improve program definitions and designs based on feedback from candidates, stakeholders, and through an ongoing review of processes and performance data.

In 2018, two advisory groups began work to support and inform these changes. PESB convened an alternative routes steering committee that reviewed and made recommendations for revisions to alternative routes policy. These changes included the addition of a definitions section and created consistency across program design elements and ongoing program review.

The Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) collaborated with PESB to convene an Educator Preparation Program Data Governance Task Force in response to the legislative action SHB 1741 (2017). This act requires all preparation programs to submit data about their candidates to ERDC, rather than directly to PESB. The task force coordinates preparation programs’ data collection and reporting activities to support this process, and continues to define and refine new data procedures. This requires extensive changes to how preparation program providers gather, use, and report data about their candidates, including candidates in alternative route programs.



DATA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this report is to provide the Legislature and the public with details on alternative routes programs by responding to five key questions:

1. What are the number and percentage of alternative routes program completers hired in Washington P-12 public schools?
2. What percentage of these completers identify as members of candidate groups historically underrepresented in Washington's educator workforce?
3. What are the three-year and five-year retention rates of these candidates in Washington P-12 public schools?
4. What is the average time-to-hire for those candidates who completed an alternative route program?
5. What percentage of alternative route program completers are hired within the districts in which they completed student teaching experiences?

Responses to questions are produced in collaboration with the ERDC and PESB and reported to the Legislature every odd year.

Historical account of data analysis by ERDC

The Alternative Route report uses data from the relatively new Education Preparation Program (EPP) data collection and data from multiple OSPI data systems: the S275 report (employment information) and the E-cert system (endorsement and certification information).

Data collection

Per SHB 1741, all preparation program providers submit data at the candidate unit directly to ERDC, who matches data at the individual level to OSPI data, aggregates the data according to the specified questions, and then provides the data to PESB.

Methods

This section details the definitions, data elements, and methods involved in responding to each of these questions.

Question 1: What are the number and percentage of alternative routes program completers hired in Washington P-12 public schools?

Definition

The number and percentage of alternative routes program completers hired as certificated teachers.

Data elements

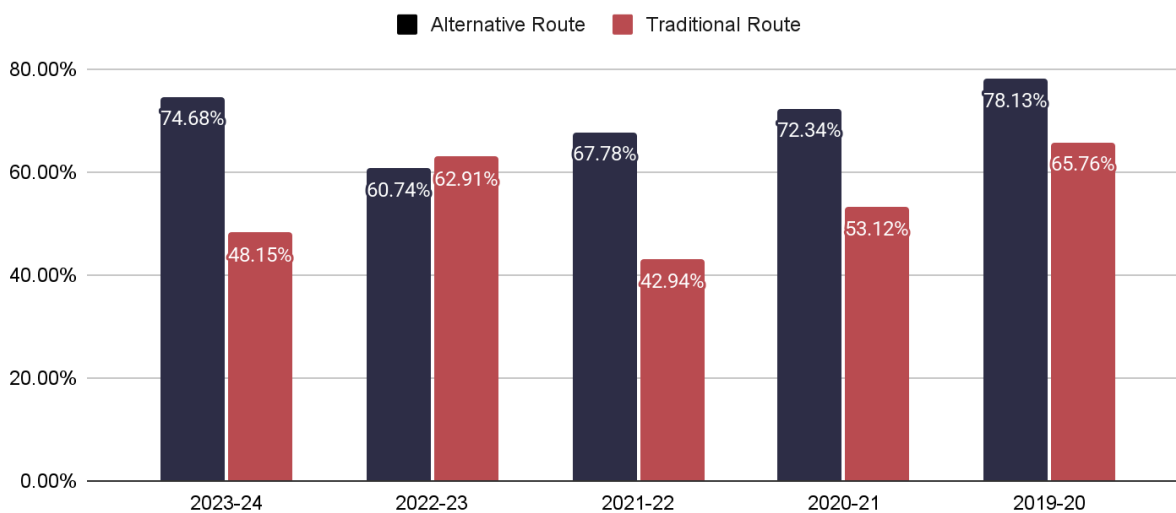
This analysis requires the number of program completers, by program; the number of these completers hired by school districts; and the total number of candidates enrolled in alternative route programs across the state.

Method

To complete this analysis annually, we compare the number of candidates hired within the previous three years and five years with the total number of alternative routes program completers, including the not-hired individuals. This count includes the number of candidates recommended for certification from a given enrollment year.

Results

Hiring Rates of Alternative Route & Traditional Teacher Preparation Programs



Analysis

Data presents that over the last five years (2019-2024), alternative routes program completers were largely hired at a higher rate than their peers who completed traditional teacher preparation programs.

Question 2: What percentage of these completers identify as members of candidate groups historically underrepresented in Washington’s educator workforce?

Definition

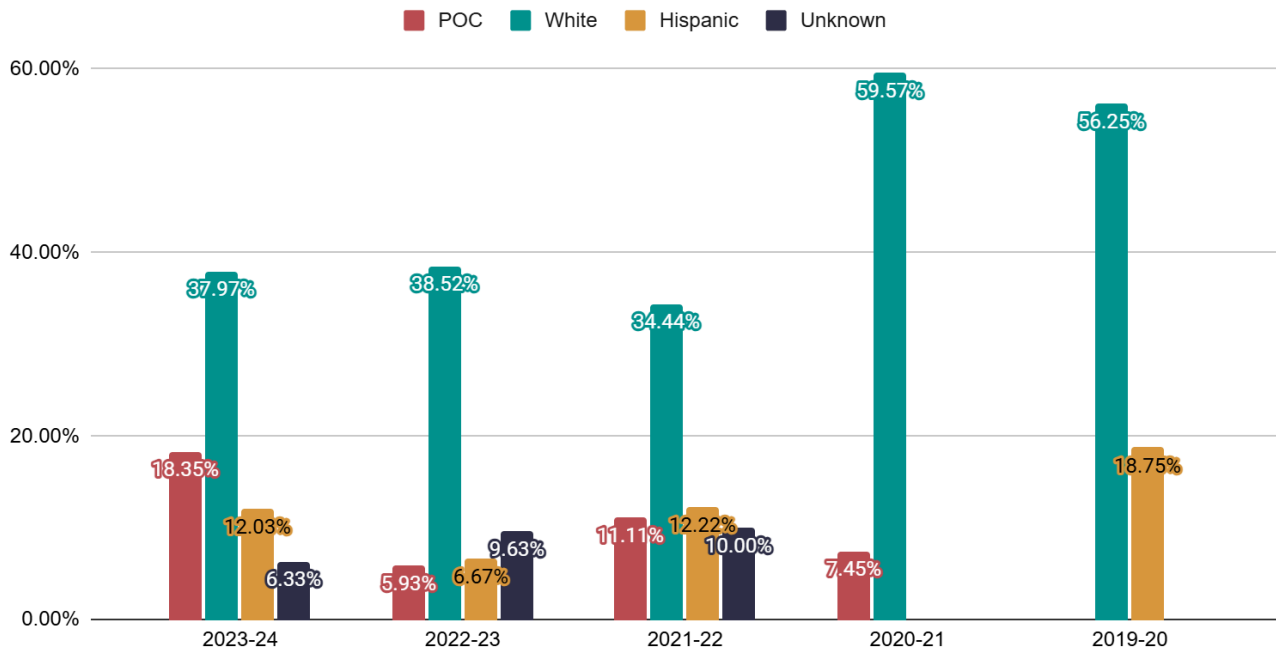
The percentages of alternative routes program completers who identified as members of candidate groups historically underrepresented in the Washington teacher workforce. In 2025, we disaggregated those hired by race and ethnicity.

Method

To complete this analysis, we disaggregated the results of question one by the candidate group identifiers listed above. Suppressed categories had fewer than five individuals.

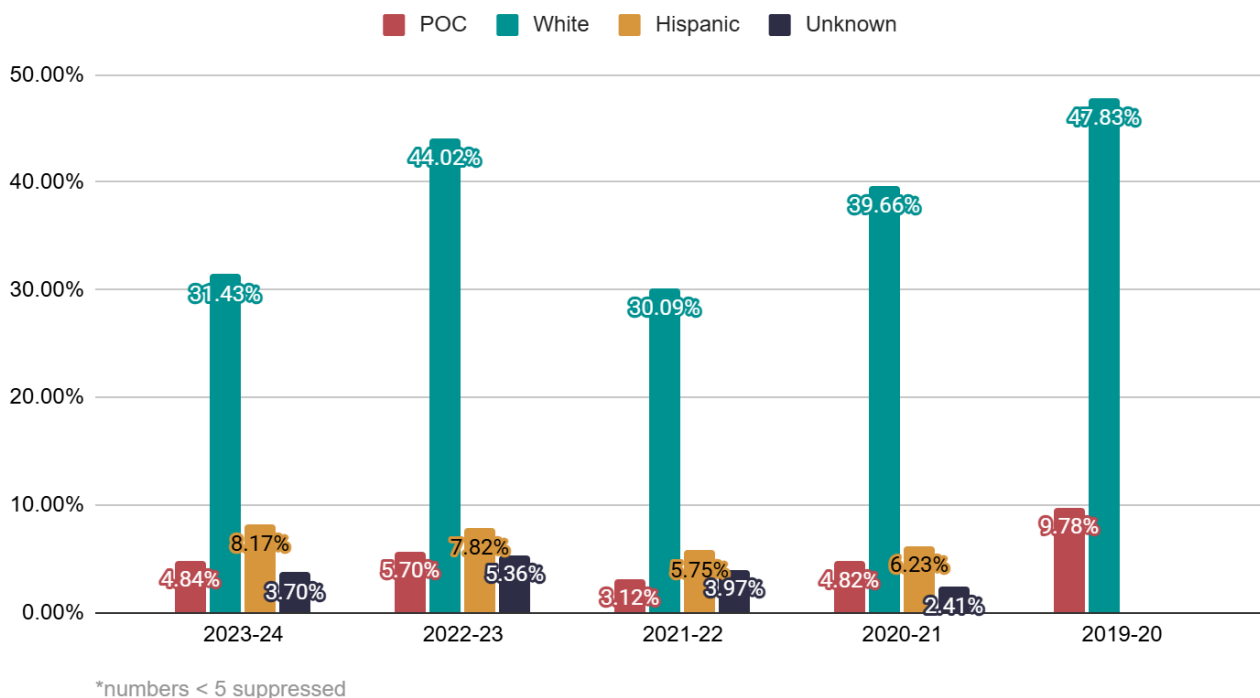
Results

Alternative Route Completer Hiring Rates by Race/Ethnicity



*numbers < 5 suppressed

Traditional Route Completer Hiring Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Analysis

Data presents that over the last five years (2019-2024), a higher percentage of alternative routes program completers identified as Hispanic and people of color (POC) than their peers who were completers of traditional teacher preparation programs.

Question 3: What are the three-year and five-year retention rates of these candidates in Washington P-12 public schools?

Definition

The three-year and five-year retention rates of alternative routes program completers who were subsequently hired by school districts.

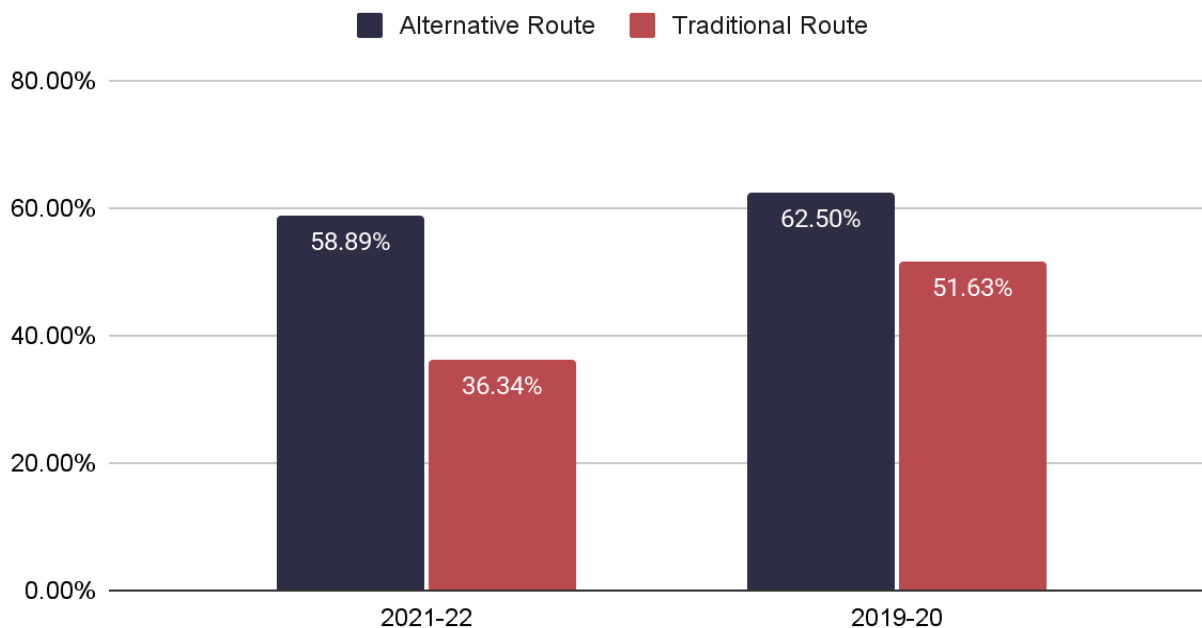
Method

We calculated this by comparing the beginning teachers hired in year one to their employment status in year three and year five. Teachers in year one will not be assumed to finish the entirety of their teaching in year one. If this is the case, then they are tracked into year two. A teacher who returns to teach in year two is considered one year persistent. A teacher who still teaches in year three is considered three years persistent. A teacher who still teaches in year five is considered five years persistent. Three-year and five-year persistent teachers are assumed to finish the entirety of their teaching that year.

It is important to note that when using S275 data as the “hired” source, the reporting cutoff is July 1; teachers hired after that date will not appear in that year’s S275 data.

Results

Three-year and Five-year Retention Rates



Analysis

Data presents that alternative routes program completers have higher three and five-year retention rates than their peers who have completed traditional teacher preparation programs.

Question 4: What is the average time-to-hire for these candidates who have completed an alternative routes program?

Definition

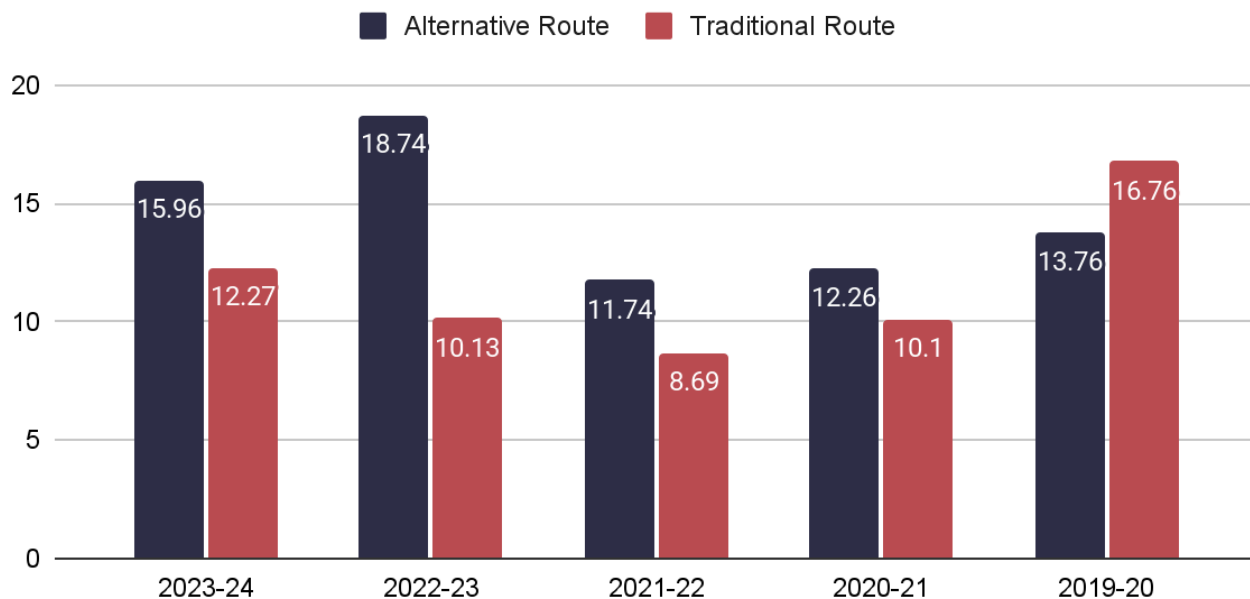
The time taken by each candidate completing a program to be initially hired as a P-12 public school teacher after being recommended for certification.

Method

We calculated the average number of months candidates took to be hired by a P-12 public school after being recommended for certification. It is important to note that the e-cert data system does not have a date of certification field, so we estimated the month of certification using the last month of the term in which their preparation program recommended them. Additionally, when using S275 as the “hired” source, the reporting is calculated from July 1 of the first year they appear on that report.

Results

Average Number of Months from Completion to Hire



* time to hire is estimated using program graduation month and July 1 of the relevant S-275 year.

Analysis

Data presents that over the last five years (2019-2024), that alternative routes program completers take a longer time-to-hire on average than do traditional teacher preparation program completers. The exception to this is in the 2019-2020 academic year, when alternative routes program completers tended to have a shorter time-to-hire than did their peer traditional route completers.

Question 5: What percentage of program completers are hired within the districts in which they completed student teaching experiences?

Definition

The percentage of alternative routes completers that were hired by the district in which they completed their alternative routes student teaching.

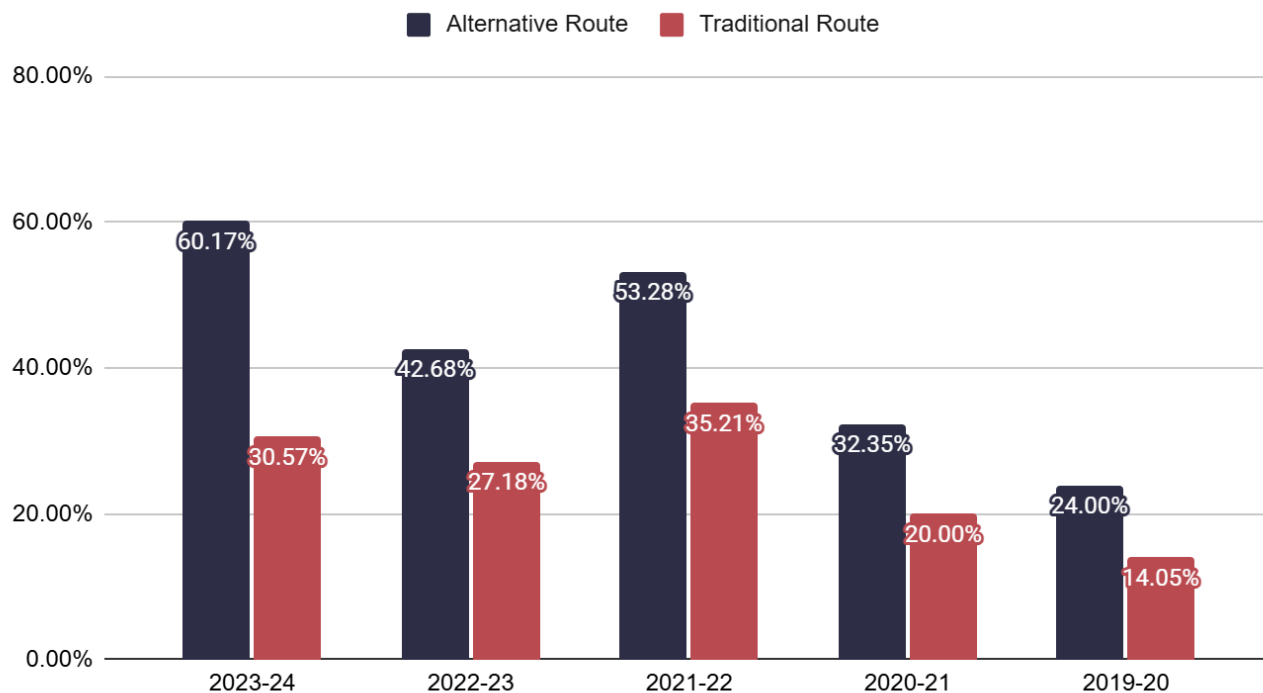
Method

Using certificate numbers of mentor teachers of alternative routes completers, we will identify the districts in which a candidate's field experiences took place during the year the program recommended the candidate for certification. The districts in which mentor teachers were employed will be compared to the districts that the recommended alternative routes completer has worked in as a certificated

teacher. In the cases where an alternative route completer had student teaching experiences in multiple school districts, we used the most recent school district to complete the analysis.

Results

Program Completers Hired in their Student Teaching District



Analysis

Data presents that over the last five years (2019-2024), a higher percentage of alternative routes program completers are hired where they completed student teaching than their peers who have completed traditional teacher preparation programs.

Professional Educator Standards Board

Mission

Leveraging educator voice through policy innovation, removing barriers, creating equitable access to opportunities, and fostering professional standards that prioritize advancement for each and every student.

Vision

Foster reflective educators who intentionally respond to the unique needs of each and every student and empower them to be engaged community members.

Contact us

Please contact us at pesb@k12.wa.us for questions about this report.