

# Opening the Classroom Door:

## How LAUSD Teachers Are Hired and Assigned

### Introduction

Each year, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) hires over 2,000 new classroom teachers.<sup>1</sup> These new hires make up close to 10% of the total 24,000 K-12 teacher workforce in LAUSD.<sup>2</sup> This results in an immediate and direct impact on the learning experiences of more than 50,000 students annually.<sup>3</sup> Most of these newly-hired teachers will continue to teach for years to come, impacting generations of students. When schools have vacancies or are staffed with underprepared teachers, student learning suffers. Conversely, when schools are staffed with well-qualified, supported, and effective teachers, students thrive. Therefore, the choices LAUSD makes in how teachers are hired matter deeply. This brief explores how these teachers are hired—what requirements must they meet, how are they prepared, and how are they selected and matched to school-site positions. Understanding these systems is essential to improving outcomes for students.

### TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS 2022-2023 K-12 Classroom Teachers by Job and Years of Experience

Years of Experience by Pay Scale Level											
Job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+	Total
Elementary	796	466	314	244	261	242	235	172	228	7,684	10,642
Secondary	790	461	386	335	276	280	225	153	221	4,923	8,050
Special Ed	347	215	147	215	221	224	210	239	177	2,414	4,409
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,933</b>	<b>1,142</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>15,021</b>	<b>23,101</b>
	(8.4%)	(4.9%)	(3.7%)	(3.4%)	(3.3%)	(3.2%)	(2.9%)	(2.4%)	(2.7%)	(65.0%)	(100%)

Source: Los Angeles Unified School District, Human Resources Division, FAQ Notebook, K-12 Classroom Teachers and Certificated Administrators, 2022-23. This is the most recently published data that delineates teachers by years of experience, so the total numbers differ from the more recent overall numbers cited above.

<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles Unified School District, Human Resources Division, FAQ Notebook, K-12 Classroom Teachers and Certificated Administrators, 2022-23.

<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles Unified School District, Fingertip Facts, 2024-25.

<sup>3</sup> Based on average class size of 25 students per teacher. LAUSD 2025-2026 Class Size Table.

## Our approach

We reviewed all public California state and LAUSD documents on the credentialing and hiring process. We consulted the research literature, and utilized insights from leaders in the field. Lastly, we leveraged the experience of teachers who have recently been hired by LAUSD.

## What are the requirements to be hired as a teacher?

The essential requirement for LAUSD teachers is to hold a valid California teaching credential. California teaching credentials are issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), the state agency charged with overseeing teacher credentialing. Its voting members are appointed by the Governor. CTC regulations determine the specific requirements for earning a teaching credential. Currently the requirements include<sup>4</sup>:

- 1 College degree (baccalaureate or higher degree at an accredited college or university).
- 2 Subject matter competence: typically fulfilled based on college coursework or via the relevant California Subject Exam for Teachers (CSET).
- 3 U.S. Constitution: Complete a course in the provisions and principles of the U.S. Constitution or pass an examination given by a regionally-accredited college or university.
- 4 Participation in CTC-approved credential program, which includes formal recommendation upon completion of student teaching and teacher performance assessments.
- 5 Performance assessments:
  - A. Teaching performance assessment: This assessment of teaching performance is designed to measure the candidate's knowledge, skills, and ability with relation to California's [Teaching Performance Expectations](#) (TPEs). Each of the three approved teaching performance assessment models (CalTPA, edTPA, and FAST) requires a candidate to complete defined performance tasks relating to subject-specific pedagogy, designing and implementing instruction and student assessment, video-recording teaching, and reflecting on practice. Performance tasks must be completed within a site placement where the candidate is working with supervising teachers, master teachers, and actual students.
  - B. Literacy performance assessment (LPA): *(This requirement is for the multiple subject credential and the special education credential only.)* Before July 2025, candidates were assessed with the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) but 2021 legislation (SB-488) requires the CTC to replace RICA with a new LPA starting in July 2025.<sup>5</sup> This new performance-based assessment is currently being piloted.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Teaching Credentials Requirements," California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/req-teaching>, 2025.

<sup>5</sup> "Transition Plan for the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA)," California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Program Sponsor Alert, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> "CTC sets stage for transition from RICA," ACSA EDCAL, 2024.

## What are the pathways to earn a teaching credential?

Typically, candidates must take education coursework in a credential program and gain experience as a student teacher. More specifically, there are multiple pathways<sup>7</sup> to earn a teaching credential in California, which vary in their cost, timing, and emphasis on practical experience.

- 1 Traditional:** Traditional programs are the most common, well-established pathway. Candidates complete post-baccalaureate level teacher preparation coursework and student teaching in a 1-2 year program. Candidates in this pathway tend to complete their credentials in a timely way and stay in the profession. This pathway also may offer more choices regarding program location and format.
- 2 Residency:** Residency programs are for college graduates and are inspired by the medical school approach to training doctors. They offer post-baccalaureate coursework alongside extended mentoring and student teaching through almost the entire length of the 1-2 year program—and financial support to cover tuition expenses during the program. Candidates in this pathway tend to feel well-prepared and supported, and stay in the teaching profession. Residencies also tend to attract a diverse pool of teacher candidates.
- 3 Integrated Undergraduate:** Integrated undergraduate programs offer an accelerated pathway for those who know they want to be teachers prior to graduating from college. They allow candidates to complete teacher preparation coursework—focused on the specific subject the candidate wishes to teach—during their 4-5 years of undergraduate education. As with a traditional program, student teaching begins close to completion of the program. This pathway requires careful coordination and planning, but it may be more cost-effective than completing an undergraduate degree separately. Candidates in integrated undergraduate programs tend to complete their teacher preparation in a timely way and stay in the teaching profession.
- 4 Intern:** Intern programs offer the fastest path to a teaching career. Candidates can serve as a teacher of record and earn a salary after completing 120 hours of pre-service requirements—far less than other pathway types require. Candidates in this pathway must balance postgraduate-level coursework and being employed as a first-year teacher at the same time, and also have the opportunity to “try on” a teaching career prior to earning a preliminary credential. Intern programs also tend to attract a diverse pool of teacher candidates. LAUSD offers a District-intern program, in which LAUSD grants the credential. There are also university intern programs (where a university grants the credential) that have MOUs with LAUSD, including California State University and Loyola Marymount University.
- 5 Applications from others states:** Professional-level licensed teachers from other states can apply directly to the CTC for an initial California credential in a comparable subject without completing any additional testing or coursework.

<sup>7</sup> “Pathways to Credentialing,” California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/roadmap-to-teaching>, 2025.

LAUSD currently embraces each of these pathways because they meet the needs of different candidates entering the profession. We calculated rough estimates of the percentage of hires from each of these pathways, which shows that there is no single path that prepares most LAUSD teachers.

<b>Estimated LAUSD hires by pathway</b>	
Hires from residency programs	8%
Hires from career ladder / grow your own	15%
Hires from District-intern program	19%
Hires from university intern program	11%
Hires on temporary/provisional permits	18%
All other hires (includes traditional pathway and teachers from other districts)	29%
<b>Total annual hires</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*Estimates calculated based on LAUSD's publicly-reported data.<sup>8</sup>*

## Career ladder

Although not a separate pathway, many new teachers earn their credential while already serving as LAUSD employees in other roles. LAUSD's career ladder programs support paraeducators and other classified staff employed by the District to become teachers. Typically, candidates are District employees who are pursuing their college degree and teacher credential. Career ladder programs offer financial assistance, individualized mentorship, professional guidance, and test preparation for those in a teaching pathway program. In LAUSD, the [Career Ladder](#) is a bargaining agreement between the District and SEIU/Local 99 for union members in unit B (mostly campus aides) and unit F (teacher's assistants).

<sup>8</sup> Los Angeles Unified School District, Human Resources Division, FAQ Notebook, K-12 Classroom Teachers and Certificated Administrators, 2022-23.

# How do interested teachers apply for and earn employment to LAUSD?

LAUSD's application and selection process entails demonstrating valid qualifications (namely the credential) and then interviewing with school-sites for open positions.<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Complete application at <https://careers.lausd.org/hr/>
  - A. Provide documents demonstrating a valid teaching credential or internship eligibility letter.
  - B. Provide contact information for professional references.
- 2 Applicants who are deemed eligible by Human Resources will be placed on the appropriate eligibility list for a period of one calendar year.
- 3 Eligible candidates may apply to available positions for which they qualify.
- 4 Typically candidates interview with specific school-sites with open positions.
- 5 Candidates who receive an offer from a school-site or office will be contacted with onboarding instructions.

In the past, LAUSD had a more extensive central screening process, which included scored interviews, written assessments, references, sample lessons, and undergraduate GPA requirements. [Research from 2018](#) indicated that this process (known as the Multiple Measures Teacher Selection Process) screened out 83% of applicants before making them available for school-site interviews, and this improved hiring outcomes in LAUSD relative to other similar districts and schools. After the Covid-19 pandemic, amidst major hiring challenges, LAUSD moved away from this system and returned to a less extensive process whereby central screening focused only on verifying complete applications and minimum certification requirements, and then relying on school-sites to evaluate candidates' skills and cultural fit.

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<sup>9</sup> "K-12 Classroom Teacher/School Counselor Application Process," Los Angeles Unified School District, Human Resources Division, <https://www.lausd.org/page/4615>, 2025.

## How do schools and candidates get matched?

For teachers to get hired by a specific school, there has to be an open position that is approved and funded by the District. Most teacher positions are determined by enrollment. LAUSD has standard student to teacher ratios (known as [norm tables](#)) that determine how many teacher positions a school has. When a school's enrollment changes, the number of positions changes as well. Schools can also fund additional positions with any flexible funding they have (typically Title I, SENI, or carryover funding). Positions become vacant and eligible for hiring when a new position is created, or when an existing teacher resigns or transfers to a different position.

Every year schools develop their school-site budgets between February and April. Once positions have been approved and are officially vacant for the upcoming school year, positions become listed and open for hiring. Schools then recruit and interview eligible candidates, who are often referred to them by LAUSD Human Resources. This matching process is managed regionally, as LAUSD is divided into four regions.

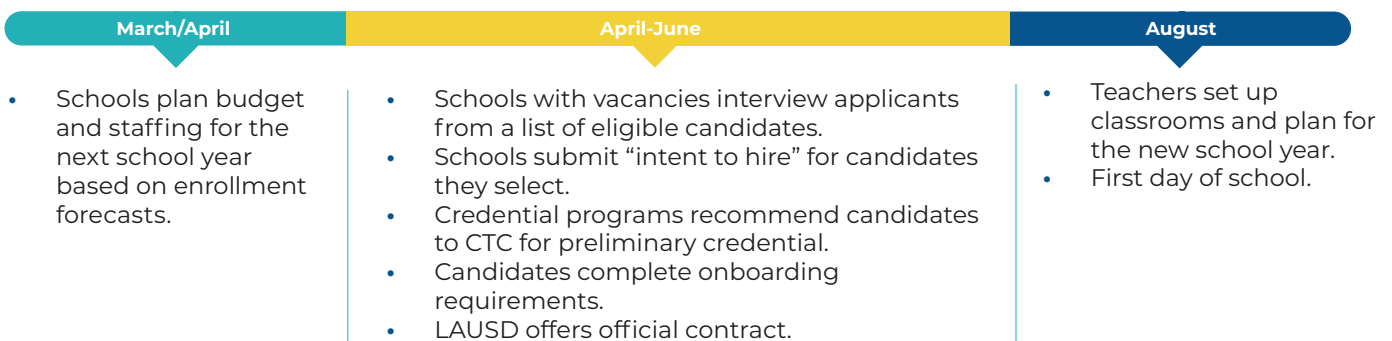
Schools have flexibility to design and manage their interview process. Some schools have an extensive process including panel interviews, demo lessons, and reference checks, while others are based on a single interview with the principal.

## How do existing LAUSD teachers transfer?

Current LAUSD teachers can apply for a teacher-initiated transfer to another school. They have to be selected by the receiving school for an open vacancy. The application requires the approval of the sending school principal, indicating that the transfer won't adversely affect instructional needs at the sending school. Transfer rules are governed by Article XI of the LAUSD-UTLA [contract](#).

## What is the timeline for teacher hiring?

LAUSD hiring takes place year-round, but the main cycle runs from March to August.



## Which subjects, grade levels, and schools have the most difficulty filling vacancies?

The most difficult subjects to fill are special education, math, science, and bilingual education. The District's highest-need schools face particular challenges with hiring.

## What happens when schools are unable to find teachers to fill vacancies?

When a school is not able to fill a vacancy through the normal process, the LAUSD HR may step in to help identify candidates. LAUSD hosts job fairs, expands recruitment out of state, and offers hiring bonuses for hard-to-staff positions (e.g., SPED, STEM, and bilingual subjects).

In cases where vacancies are still not filled by the start of the school year, the District will assign long-term substitutes, place intern teachers who are still completing their credentials, or reassign teachers from other sites or out-of-classroom positions. In the past, they have also force-placed teachers who had been displaced from other sites, though that practice has largely ended since 2018. Since 2022, LAUSD has [increased efforts](#) to ensure that every classroom is staffed with a credentialed teacher (not a long-term substitute or provisional teacher). LAUSD has limited the number of out-of-classroom teacher positions, and in some cases restricted the ability of teachers to leave their position until a credentialed replacement can be found.

## What patterns are there in the characteristics of teachers at different types of schools?

On average, teachers in the highest-need schools are less experienced and less likely to be fully credentialed for the subjects and students they are teaching.<sup>10</sup>

## How does LAUSD support hiring at high-need and priority schools?

Students in high-need and priority schools require and deserve great teachers, which underlines the importance of hiring at these schools. However, high-need and low-performing schools typically face greater challenges when it comes to hiring. Teachers typically face more challenging working conditions, leading to higher turnover rates. In LAUSD's high-need schools, 15% of newly-hired teachers do not continue teaching in LAUSD beyond two years.<sup>11</sup> Overall, the average teacher turnover for the District is 6%.<sup>12</sup> The increased turnover in high-need schools leads to a negative image of the school and more vacancies with fewer interested candidates, making hiring

<sup>10</sup> "Teacher Shortage Solutions Policy Brief", EdVoice Institute, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> "Strategic Plan Year Two Report," Los Angeles Unified School District, <https://sites.google.com/lausd.net/lausdstrategicplan/year-2-2023-24-report>, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> "A Conversation on Educator Diversity & Retention," Los Angeles Unified School District Board District 7, 2024.

experienced and effective staff more difficult. These challenges are interconnected and cyclical, and require intentional and differentiated support to overcome.<sup>13</sup>

In part to address this, LAUSD has identified 100 low-performing [priority schools](#) as the focal point for various District initiatives. When it comes to hiring, LAUSD provides differentiated support to priority schools. This support includes:

- Dedicated HR staffing to provide more hiring support to school leaders and to candidates considering teaching at a priority school.
- Dedicated hiring fairs focused on vacancies at priority schools.

From 2022-2024, LAUSD offered \$5,000 stipends to teachers hired at high-need schools. They also provided paid professional development programs for new teachers at high-need schools. These supports have since expired because of funding constraints.

Due in part to these supports, LAUSD has reduced the rate of vacant classroom teacher positions at high-need schools. In the 2021-22 school year, the vacancy rate stood at 4%. In the 2023-24 school year, the rate dropped to less than 2%.<sup>14</sup>

## Policy Considerations

Policymakers have to balance a number of factors when determining the requirements and the process for becoming a teacher. LAUSD has to ensure its classrooms are staffed with qualified, effective teachers. The requirements and process go a long way in determining the quality of teaching that students will experience, for years to come.

### **Financial incentives:**

- **Issue:** When individuals consider entering the teaching profession, financial factors often play a critical role in their decision-making process. While teachers are almost universally driven by a passion for education and a desire to make a difference, the reality of teacher pay, benefits, and job stability significantly shapes who ultimately enters—and stays in—the field. The cost of becoming a teacher—tuition, fees and, most importantly, foregone wages—is considerable. Similarly, districts compete for teachers based on salary and benefits. Housing costs make this particularly challenging for districts like LAUSD. Recognizing these challenges, California has provided financial incentives for future teachers and the programs that serve them (e.g. Golden State teacher grants and residency grants). Policymakers have also prioritized education funding in recent years, increasing California’s per-pupil spending to above the national average.<sup>15</sup> These investments are important but also costly, as budget constraints will put pressure on the state to make cuts in the future.
- **Considerations:** Policymakers should focus financial incentives where they can have the most impact (e.g. incentivizing candidates to teach hard-to-staff subject areas and in hard-to-staff

<sup>13</sup> “Closing the Equity Gap in School Staffing”, Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> “Strategic Plan Year Two Report,” Los Angeles Unified School District, <https://sites.google.com/lausd.net/lausdstrategicplan/year-2-2023-24-report>, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> “Financing California’s Public Schools,” Julien Lafortune and Brett Guinan, PPIC, <https://www.ppic.org/publication/financing-californias-public-schools>, 2024.

schools; also incentivizing teacher preparation programs to focus their programming on the most valuable learning experiences, like their student teaching process).

### ***Credential requirements:***

- **Issue:** State policymakers determine who can enter the teaching profession. There is growing concern about the pipeline for future teachers, as enrollment in teacher preparation programs declines.<sup>16</sup> In recent years, California has tried to address this by relaxing some of the requirements (e.g. RICA, CBEST). There is of course a balance that has to be struck between rigor and access. We should not set up barriers to the profession that are arbitrary or non-predictive of future success. But it is important that teachers are well-prepared and demonstrate the skills needed to be successful in the classroom.
- **Considerations:** State policymakers should ensure requirements are focused on the most important qualifications that best prepare teachers to serve students well.

### ***District screening:***

- **Issue:** District policymakers determine the selection criteria and process for teachers within LAUSD. They have to balance rigor and simplicity. The District needs to balance central vs. school-site decision-making and strive to build a system that is streamlined for schools and candidates and does an effective job identifying the most promising future teachers.
- **Considerations:** LAUSD should identify which screening criteria are most valuable for identifying successful future teachers and eliminate lower-value criteria. Central HR should focus on areas that are more difficult for schools to assess, like prior education and experience. Schools should focus on cultural fit. The full Multiple Measures Teacher Selection Process might have been too onerous, but a more focused version could provide increased support to schools and do a better job identifying effective teachers.

### ***Timeline:***

- **Issue:** Research shows that teachers hired earliest in the hiring season tend to be more effective, and that school districts that have long processing timelines often lose the strongest candidates.<sup>17</sup> When schools cannot fill vacancies until late Summer or during the school year, they often have to make compromises on candidate quality. Furthermore, the teachers hired have less time to prepare for their specific classroom context. This issue is particularly important for high-need schools, which are often more capacity-constrained and face challenges to quickly fill vacancies.
- **Considerations:** LAUSD should open hiring for high-need schools earlier in the Spring cycle than for other schools. To make this work, budget development for high-need schools needs to begin earlier, and deadlines for submitting plans to retire, resign, and transfer need to be moved up so principals know what vacancies they have to fill for the upcoming school year. LAUSD can offer “Early Contracts” to high-potential candidates who commit to teach at a high-need school, incentivizing teachers to choose high-need schools.

<sup>16</sup> Teacher Supply in California, 2023-24 A Report to the Legislature, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, <https://meetings.ctc.ca.gov/Details/218#5549>, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> “Missed Opportunities: How We Keep High-Quality Teachers Out of Urban Classrooms,” TNTP, 2003.