

## Maine Principals' Views on Emergency-Certified Teachers



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## Overview of the Study

**Why was this study conducted?** This report presents findings from a research study conducted the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) at the request of the Maine State Legislature’s Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. This study featured a statewide survey of Maine school principals to explore their perceptions about the performance, retention and support needs for emergency-certified teachers. These findings contribute to the on-going research conducted by MEPRI in recent years focusing on educator workforce challenges and needs in Maine.

**What do you need to know to put this study into context?** Both Maine and other US states have experienced increased challenges in recent years with PK-12 educator retention and staffing shortages (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Emerging research suggests that educator turnover and school staffing shortages became even more severe during the pandemic (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2022; Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Lieberman, 2021). Maine and other states have enacted policies to address teacher shortages by providing fast-tracked pathways for teacher certification to fill vacancies (Blad, 2022). Maine adopted the emergency teacher certificate option in June 2021, which allows an individual with minimal or no college education and no student teaching experience to become emergency-certified teachers (MRSA 20-A, Chpt. 502, §13012-B). Even before the pandemic, a MEPRI survey study of Maine school principals in 2019 revealed that they were already hiring teachers from non-traditional pathways (Fairman et al., 2020).

Some of the other states enacting emergency-teacher certification laws include Michigan, Arizona and Oklahoma. While there is relatively little research on emergency-certified teachers to date, the data available indicate that states are increasingly relying on uncertified or emergency-certified teachers to meet staffing needs (Heubeck, 2022). However, these teachers appear to have a lower retention rate than traditionally certified teachers (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2022; Heubeck, 2022), and the lack of teacher certification has been correlated with lower student achievement outcomes (Hattie, 2009; Johnson, 1999; Ladd & Sorensen, 2016). Similarly, there is scant research on what specific supports are needed and for which groups of uncertified or emergency-certified teachers. A study in Texas indicated time for professional learning, mentoring, and clear guidelines are helpful for less prepared educators (Justice et al., 2003).

**What did we learn from the study?** This study included three sources of information: 1) published research literature on emergency-certified or non-traditionally prepared teachers without full certification, 2) staffing data provided by the Maine Department of Education, and 3) a survey of Maine public school principals in spring 2023 disseminated by the Maine Principals’ Association. We summarize highlights from our findings here. Only principals working in public schools who had supervised emergency-certified teachers met the criteria for this survey.

### ***Findings from the Literature***

- Maine and other US states have continued to experience severe PK-12 teacher shortages in recent years that worsened during the pandemic.
- States have adopted various strategies to fill teaching vacancies with educators from non-traditional education pathways. These strategies allow individuals with less education and teaching preparation to work in classrooms as a teacher of record, while they are continuing to pursue coursework or training to obtain conditional or full certification.
- Research on emergency-certified teachers is fairly sparse, but the data available indicate their numbers are rising in the US, that they may have significantly lower retention rates, and that the lack of certification is negatively correlated with student achievement outcomes.
- Time for professional learning and mentoring have been found particularly helpful for some emergency-certified teachers to stay in the profession.

### ***Findings from State Reported Data***

- Based on staffing data provided by the Maine Department of Education to MEPRI in early 2023, about 43% of Maine’s public school districts had hired at least one emergency-certified teacher. Just over a third (36%) of public schools had hired at least one emergency-certified teacher. (This calculation was based on a district total that includes some districts without schools or attending students, so the actual percentage of districts with an emergency-certified teacher is likely higher.)
- 404 emergency teacher certificates had been issued by Feb. 2023, in the second school year since the option became available.
- Most of the emergency-certified teachers were working in public schools at the elementary grade level, with just over half (55%) in special education and fewer (42%) in general education. The majority of these teachers (63%) had a bachelor’s degree. Larger, urban districts in Maine employed higher numbers of emergency-certified teachers, consistent with their higher student enrollment.

### ***Findings from the Principal Survey***

The survey covered many topics which are summarized in this section, along with a brief overview of the demographic characteristics of schools participating in the survey.

#### **Why Schools Hired E-Certified Teachers.**

- The primary reason cited by principals for using the emergency certification option was to fill vacant positions and address severe staffing shortages. Some schools had unexpected staff resignations or retirements.
- Many schools already had educational technicians working in their schools and tapped this resource to fill teaching positions.

### **Challenges with Approval Process.**

- Some principals commented that they would like even more flexibility in the law for emergency certification. They want to support alternative pathways to certification and educators who are already working in schools.
- Principals found it challenging to obtain clear information and guidance on the emergency certification rules and process, and they expressed frustration with time delays in obtaining responses and approvals from the Maine Department of Education.

### **Number of and Type of Hires.**

- 41% of the responding principals indicated their schools had hired one emergency-certified teacher for regular education, 27% had hired two teachers. Only four schools had hired part-time teachers with this option. None of the schools responding to the survey had hired more than four emergency-certified teachers in regular education.
- 29% said their schools hired one emergency-certified teacher for special education. None of the schools had hired more than three emergency-certified teachers in special education.
- A majority (62%) of responding schools that employed emergency-certified teachers indicated they did not have long-term substitutes in core content areas. Overall, 41% of all schools taking this survey did employ long-term substitutes in core content areas. The most recent staffing data from the Maine Department of Education shows 38 teachers with the designation of long-term substitute, but it is not clear how accurate this number is. We do not know to what extent long-term substitute teachers are used to fill teaching vacancies statewide, why schools choose this option versus the emergency certification option, what qualifications the long-term subs have, and whether they meet the state's requirements by having certification in the grades and subjects they teach.

### **Where Teachers are Working.**

- For our survey sample, schools predominantly hired emergency-certified teachers for general education, followed by special education.
- At the elementary and middle grade levels, schools had significant numbers of emergency-certified teachers working in allied arts (art, music, health/ PE).
- At the secondary grade level, general education hires were more often in math and science, and other significant numbers were in world languages.
- Larger, city and suburban districts hired more teachers through emergency certification, consistent with their larger student enrollment. Schools in all settings and regions of Maine were hiring emergency-certified teachers.

### **Education and Experience.**

- 67% of responding principals said *all* of their emergency-certified teachers had a bachelor's degree (subject not indicated) at the time of hire, while 21% said their teachers did not have this degree.

- Smaller, more rural schools, schools in northern Maine and elementary grade schools were less likely to hire emergency-certified teachers who had a bachelor's degree. These schools were more likely to indicate their hires had other, equivalent work or academic experience.
- At the secondary level, emergency-certified teachers were more likely to have a bachelor's degree.
- 80% of principals said *all* of their emergency-certified teachers were currently enrolled in programs or coursework to become conditionally or fully certified. Larger, urban schools and schools in southern Maine were less likely to indicate that all of their hires were pursuing this coursework as required by the credentialing rules.
- About half of the responding schools indicated that *all* or *some* of their emergency-certified teachers were already employed in their schools as Ed Tech IIIs. Smaller, rural schools were more likely to indicate they hired their own Ed Tech IIIs.

#### **School Plans for Waivers.**

- 18% of principals indicated their schools would likely seek a traditional waiver for emergency-certified teachers once their temporary certification ends to keep them employed. About half were unsure if they would seek a waiver.
- Schools in northern Maine were more likely to indicate they would probably seek a waiver to extend the certification of their current hires. Schools that had indicated they had hired their Ed Tech IIIs into emergency-certified teaching positions were also more likely to indicate they would seek a waiver to extend the teachers' certification.

#### **Perceptions of Performance.**

- Half of the principals felt their emergency-certified teachers were performing lower than traditional teachers (39% said *somewhat lower*, 11% said *much lower*), while 39% of principals felt their emergency-certified teachers were performing *about the same* as traditional first or second-year teachers.
- More principals at the secondary grade level felt their emergency-certified teachers were performing higher than traditional first or second-year teachers, and they were less likely to check any areas of weakness for their emergency-certified teachers.
- Areas where teachers were performing less well were more likely to be classroom management, managing difficult student behaviors and using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content.
- Other areas of weakness included: lesson planning, student assessment, communication with families, creating appropriate learning environments, engaging students in learning, as well as managing the workload, pace and stress of the job.
- In the written comments, some principals noted the positive attitudes that emergency-certified teachers bring to their roles, including: enthusiasm, high motivation to do well, a willingness to learn and a strong work ethic. Principals saw the benefit of knowledge and expertise that individuals bring from their prior work or careers outside of education.



### **Supports Provided.**

- Nearly all principals indicated their emergency-certified teachers had received the same training/ professional development as their other teachers.
- For a majority of the responding schools, emergency-certified teachers also received induction/ orientation, formal and informal mentoring, and information about how to pursue conditional or full certification.
- Over a third of principals indicated their emergency-certified teachers also received additional training (39%) or individualized professional development (34%).
- Schools in small towns and rural areas were more likely to provide additional or individualized professional development, and secondary schools were more likely to provide informal mentoring and information on certification.
- The primary support principals indicated as provided by the Maine Department of Education was information on pursuing certification.

### **Additional Supports Needed.**

- Principals note that emergency-certified teachers need continued support in the form of professional development, mentoring and support from administrators to be successful in the short term and in the future. Classroom management was the most often cited area for professional training needed. Other areas mentioned included special education law and dealing with challenging student behaviors.

### **Teacher Retention.**

- Just over half (53%) of responding principals thought emergency-certified teachers were *just about as likely* to stay in the profession for the next five years as traditional, certified first or second-year teachers, but a third thought they were *less likely* to stay.
- Eleven schools had an emergency-certified teacher leave, and these were smaller districts of 100-500 students.
- Only seven schools had an emergency-certified teacher leave before the end of the school year.
- For schools where a teacher had left, the primary reason was the individual's decision that teaching was not a good fit for them or not feeling effective in this role. Over a third (36%) of principals said their emergency-certified teachers left because they did not want to take courses toward full certification.

### **School Practices for Teachers Who Leave.**

- Principals were about evenly split in indicating that their schools do or do not use exit interviews when teachers leave their positions prior to retirement.
- The majority of schools (72%) responding to this survey do not use exit surveys, but just over half of the principals (53%) indicated that having a standardized survey might be helpful and a third were *not sure*.

## Demographic Information.

- 36% of the 135 principals responding to this survey did not meet the criteria of working in a public school and/ or supervising an emergency-certified teacher. They only responded to a few, separate questions.
- Non-targeted principals indicated it was *somewhat likely* (47%) or *very likely* (21%) that their schools would hire an emergency-certified teacher in the 2023-24 school year.
- The majority of respondents (64%) did meet the criteria for this survey. We heard from about 11% of Maine’s public school principals.
- 81% of the targeted respondents were in the role of principal while two were superintendent/ principals, six were assistant principals, and two were teaching principals.
- Over a third (37%) of the principals worked in schools with elementary grades only, while 14% were in middle grade only and 19% were secondary grades only.
- Over a third (37%) worked in smaller districts of 100-500 students, while the same percentage worked in larger districts of 1,000 or more students.
- A majority of schools (62%) were in small towns, 23% in urban areas and 15% were rural remote.
- Responding schools were about equally distributed across geographic regions of Maine.

**What did we conclude overall from the study?** This study explored some initial trends and perceptions around the hiring, retention and performance of emergency-certified teachers in Maine, which was only an option during the last two school years. The data provided a deep dive into this topic and some important insights. However, the number of emergency-certified teachers in Maine is still relatively small, though many schools and districts have begun hiring teachers through this option. We found that about 43% or more of Maine’s regular public school districts and about 36% of the public schools have hired at least one emergency-certified teacher. Most districts have hired only one or two teachers using emergency certification, but others indicate they may hire with this option in the coming school year. More data will need to be collected over time to track how well these individuals are performing in their teaching roles, what supports are most critical, and whether they are likely to stay in the profession or not.

Broadly, we learned from this study that schools are using emergency certification to fill severe staffing shortages and principals feel this option is helping. Based on this survey, we could not clearly conclude from principals’ survey responses why school districts were using the emergency-certification option rather than a traditional certification waiver request. While schools are using the emergency-certification option, they are also filling positions by hiring long-term substitutes. This survey did not explore to what extent the long-term substitutes meet certification requirements. Schools have been able to draw on their existing Ed Tech III staffing to fill classroom teaching positions with the emergency-certification option, and that pool of staff

is now somewhat depleted, suggesting that schools will face even tougher odds in finding qualified educators in the coming year.

Principals expressed frustration with the difficulty of getting clear information and guidance through the certification process, as well as timely review and approvals from the Maine Department of Education. This has been an on-going source of frustration in recent years for school districts and urgent attention is needed to ensure adequate staffing capacity as well as efficient processes to handle the volume of certification questions and applications statewide.

Emergency-certified teachers are predominantly in special education and regular education at the elementary grade level. There are also a significant number of hires in the allied arts at the elementary and middle grades. At the secondary level, emergency-certification is helping to address ongoing staffing needs in math, science and world languages. The majority of hires have a bachelor's degree and most are reportedly pursuing coursework toward certification as required. Larger city and suburban districts have hired more educators through emergency certification, consistent with their larger student enrollment.

The assessment on teaching performance is mixed: about half of principals felt emergency certified teachers are performing at a lower level than traditional teachers, while 39% felt they were performing at about the same level. Classroom management, handling challenging student behaviors, and using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content were the frequently cited areas where these educators need additional training and support. On the other hand, principals felt their emergency-certified teachers often brought very positive work attitudes to their roles as well as expertise from prior work experience. For continued success in these teaching roles, principals emphasized the need for on-going professional development, mentoring and other support.

Just over half of the principals felt their emergency-certified teachers were just as likely to stay in the profession as traditional teachers, while a third thought they were less likely to stay. Relatively few emergency-certified teachers have left their positions according to the principals we surveyed. Unfortunately, over a third of those who left did so because they did not want to pursue coursework toward full certification, which is a requirement of the emergency certification option.

Only a third of the responding principals indicated their schools conduct exit interviews with educators who leave their positions prior to retirement and fewer indicated they do an exit survey. Over half of the principals indicated having a common survey instrument could be helpful for understanding why educators leave their teaching positions on a state-wide level.

In addition to hiring individuals through emergency certification, schools also hire individuals as long-term substitutes to teach core content areas. More research is needed to understand to what extent schools are choosing this option to fill teaching vacancies, why they choose to hire educators as long-term substitutes versus the emergency certification, how educators' qualifications may differ for these two job roles, and to what extent school districts are complying with the credentialing and certification requirements for educators hired in these roles.

### **What are some potential implications for education policy and/ or practice?**

Additional, ongoing research is needed to examine how teachers hired through the emergency-certification continue to perform over time, what supports they need, and how their retention rate compares with more traditional hires. Further, research should examine the performance and retention for groups of emergency-certified teachers who come from specific educational and work experiences to understand which ones need more support or what types of support to be successful. We also do not know how the actual qualifications of individuals employed as emergency-certified teachers compares with individuals employed as long-term substitutes teaching core content areas, and to what extent district practices are consistent with the credentialing rules. While hiring less prepared individuals to fill teaching vacancies may ease some of the staffing shortages on the short term, it does not provide a long-term solution, nor does it reverse the trend of fewer individuals seeking the teaching profession and more leaving the profession. Drawing on the broad findings from this survey of Maine public school principals, there are some implications for both policy and practice. We offer the following observations for consideration.

- ***Communication and Approval Process***—Principals voiced frustration with many aspects of the emergency-certification process. More clear information and guidance is needed on the rules and process through the Maine Department of Education’s website. Additional staffing and streamlining of the application review and approval processes may be needed to reduce the delays in responding to school district questions and approving applications.
- ***District Staffing Equity***—Statewide data as well as our survey results show that larger, city and suburban districts hired more teachers under the emergency-certification option, consistent with their larger student enrollments. These urban districts also reported fewer of their emergency-certified teachers were actively pursuing coursework toward certification. Smaller, more rural schools more often hired emergency-certified teachers with no bachelor’s degree. Taken together, there are important differences in staffing capacity and educator preparation based on location in the state which can contribute to a lack of equity in the quality of education provided to students.
- ***Coursework for Certification***—The survey data indicate that some educators hired through the emergency-certification option are not actively pursuing coursework toward conditional or full certification as the law requires. Some principals indicated that this is a challenge or barrier for their educators, and some have left their positions as they were not willing or able to pursue further educational preparation toward certification. In written comments, principals called for increased flexibility and supports to help educators work and complete their coursework toward certification. Many schools are supporting new educators in this way through residency programs and partnerships with local universities. The shift toward more online, on-demand education options supports this need. Some schools seek alternate pathways to credentialing that eliminates some of

the currently required coursework.

- ***On-going Supports Needed***—Principals indicated that emergency-certified teachers were performing at about the same level or lower level than traditional hires. Classroom management was the most frequently cited area where these educators need more support, while handling challenging student behaviors and using appropriate instructional strategies were also frequently cited areas. Other areas were also mentioned. While most of the schools we heard from did provide professional development and mentoring to these teachers, the survey did help to identify the particular areas where less prepared educators need additional, targeted supports. Schools may need to partner with other districts and local universities to provide the training needed, while mentoring is still a local responsibility. Some states are using remote mentoring and coaching resources to pool resources regionally or across the state. Retired educators or administrators might be an untapped resource to serve in this role.
- ***Retention of Educators***—With increased numbers of teachers leaving their positions and the profession in recent years, particularly since the pandemic, more research is needed to understand why teachers in Maine are leaving their positions. There is currently no common system for gathering that information statewide to help inform policy and practice. Developing a common exit survey that teachers could complete anonymously could help provide useful information about what type of preparation and supports teachers need to be successful, as well as other factors. If less prepared educators are hired and are less likely to stay in the profession, more effort will be needed to improve their retention. Individualized learning plans and mentoring may be critical for these and other teachers. Alternative approaches to increase mentoring capacity should be considered, such as small group mentoring and regional approaches.
- ***Less Qualified Educators***—In order to meet severe staffing shortages, schools are hiring less qualified individuals to serve as classroom teachers. This includes both emergency-certified teachers as well as long-term substitute teachers. More research is needed to understand the extent to which long-term substitute teachers are being used to fill teaching vacancies, why schools choose to hire educators as long-term substitutes versus the emergency certification, how educators’ qualifications may differ for these two job roles, and to what extent school districts are complying with the credentialing and certification requirements for educators hired in these roles.

**What methods were used to conduct this study?** MEPRI conducted an anonymous, online statewide survey in February and March 2023 to explore Maine school principals’ perceptions about emergency-certified teachers. The Maine Principal’s Association (MPA) disseminated MEPRI’s survey to their email list of 1,471 members and non-members statewide, which includes both public and private school and district leaders in different job roles. This survey targeted public school principals. A total of 135 school principals completed the online survey. Of those, 51 respondents indicated they were either private school leaders or had not

supervised any emergency-certified teachers in the past two school years, and they were only asked to answer a few of the survey questions. The remaining 84 respondents met the criteria for targeted participation and completed the full survey which consisted of fixed-choice items and five open-ended questions.

Survey topics included: information on emergency-certified hires (the number of part-time and full-time emergency-certified teachers hired by the school in the past two school years, the grade levels and content areas, and the primary reason for hiring emergency-certified teachers); challenges in getting requests for hiring approved; information on the education and experience of these hires, an assessment of their performance compared to traditional first or second year teachers; supports provided by the school districts or by the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and additional supports needed; retention of emergency-certified teachers and reasons emergency-certified teachers have left their positions; and school practices related to conducting exit interviews or surveys with teachers who leave their positions.

Quantitative survey data results are reported with a focus on response frequencies and basic descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from written comments to five open-ended questions were analyzed using an open-coding method for themes (Charmaz, 1995; Miles et al., 2020) with some representative quotes shared in this report.

The following research questions guided this study:

- What were the primary reasons that schools have hired emergency-certified teachers in Maine?
- What challenges if any did schools experience in the approval process for hiring?
- In what grade levels and content areas have Maine schools hired emergency-certified teachers?
- What are Maine principals' perceptions of the performance and retention of emergency-certified teachers?
- What supports or training have school districts provided to these teachers and what additional supports do they need?

**How robust are the findings?** A total of 84 principals from public schools in Maine that had recently hired an emergency-certified teacher met the criteria for this survey and completed the survey. Based on the most recent staffing data available, there are approximately 822 school administrators of which about two thirds are principals and one third are assistant principals. Using this number, we heard from roughly 11% of these school administrators. When we examined the demographic characteristics of our survey sample, it was broadly representative of the schools in Maine in terms of grade spans, district size and location. The survey data drill down into many specific questions about emergency-certified teachers and provide rich data for a preliminary look at how this new certification option is working.

## **Introduction**

This report presents findings from a research study conducted by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) at the request of the Maine State Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. This study featured a statewide survey of Maine school principals to explore their perceptions about the performance, retention and support needs for emergency-certified teachers. These findings contribute to the on-going research conducted by MEPRI in recent years focusing on educator workforce challenges and needs in Maine.

## **Background**

Both Maine and other US states have experienced increased challenges in recent years with PK-12 educator retention and staffing shortages (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Emerging research suggests that educator turnover and school staffing shortages became even more severe during the pandemic (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2022; Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Lieberman, 2021). Some educators cited job-related stress, burnout, increased workload and low pay as reasons they might or did leave the profession early during this time period (Carver-Thomas et al., 2021; Kamenetz, 2022; Lieberman, 2021a). The increased problem of staffing shortages also creates challenges for school leaders (Castro, 2022; Lieberman, 2021b). Smaller, rural schools often find it harder to attract and retain new teachers, based on a variety of factors including less competitive beginning salaries and the reduced amenities and housing found in these smaller, geographically isolated areas (Fairman et al., 2019).

Maine and other states have enacted policies to address teacher shortages by providing fast-tracked pathways for teacher certification to fill vacancies (Blad, 2022). Maine adopted the emergency teacher certificate option in June 2021, which allows an individual with minimal or no college education and no student teaching experience to become emergency-certified teachers (MRSA 20-A, Chpt. 502, §13012-B). Even before the pandemic, a MEPRI survey study of Maine school principals in 2019 revealed that they were already hiring teachers from non-traditional pathways (Fairman et al., 2020).

Other states have addressed their educator shortage through similar efforts that may use a variety of terms for the less prepared or experienced educators that districts may hire. However, these new options for filling teacher vacancies are often acknowledged as a method of last resort where no certified educators could be found (Heubeck, 2022). Michigan, Arizona and Oklahoma are a few of the states that adopted changes in recent years to allow for the hiring of individuals

with minimal preparation through “emergency certification.” In some states, the percentage of emergency-certified teachers grew significantly even before the pandemic. In Oklahoma, the percentage of emergency-certified teachers doubled from 2016-17 to 2021-22 (Heubeck, 2022). One analysis of national data estimated that in 2017 there were 109,000 educators who were uncertified in their area of teaching responsibility (Sutcher et al., 2019). It is uncertain how states will be able to move away from their growing reliance on emergency-certification with the current lack of an adequate supply of prepared educators to meet workforce needs, particularly in some of the harder to fill subject areas (Fairman & Lech, 2023).

Reliable data on teacher retention rates for emergency-certified or non-certified teachers are not easily obtainable for comparison with traditional teacher hires with conditional or full certification. One article reported that emergency-certified teachers in Oklahoma had a significantly lower average three-year retention rate of 19% compared to about 40% for traditionally certified teachers (Heubeck, 2022). One study of pandemic impacts on the teacher workforce in Massachusetts found higher turnover rates during this period, particularly for newly hired teachers, and attributed part of this to reduced professional licensure requirements in the state. However, the same report also found a positive outcome of the relaxed licensure rules that contributed to an increase in the overall ethnic and racial diversity of the state’s teacher workforce (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2022).

Prior research indicates that less qualified teachers or teachers without certification may produce poor instructional quality that negatively impacts student achievement (Hattie, 2009; Johnson, 1999; Ladd & Sorensen, 2016). As mentioned earlier, the turnover rate for uncertified or emergency-certified teachers may be higher than for traditionally certified teachers. Research has also demonstrated that unstable staffing in schools can impair student learning and achievement (Sorensen & Ladd, 2018). In most studies, teacher quality or teaching performance is measured by students’ score outcomes on state standardized tests. Studies often ignore other measures of teaching performance and specific skills teachers need to engage with students and their families. There is a lack of broad research comparing teacher knowledge or skills for uncertified or emergency-certified teachers versus traditionally certified teachers.

There is scant research on the particular kinds of supports that non-certified or emergency-certified teachers need to be successful. A study of traditional and emergency-certified teachers in 2002 that included a survey and interviews about their teaching careers



concluded that reducing class size for these new teachers, allocating time for professional development or coursework, increased mentoring and administrative supports, providing clear guidelines on student discipline and school security were helpful to teachers' success. Emergency-certified teachers felt substantially less prepared in their content knowledge, classroom management, ability to use effective teaching techniques and ability to diagnose student learning needs. This study also found a significantly higher portion of traditionally certified teachers said they would choose to teach again compared to emergency-certified teachers (Justice et al., 2003).

More research is needed to understand how emergency-certified teachers perform in the classroom, what supports they need to be successful, and if they are more likely to leave the profession than educators with more traditional preparation.

### **Methodology**

MEPRI conducted an anonymous, online statewide survey in February and March 2023 to explore Maine school principals' perceptions about emergency-certified teachers. Approval of the study was provided by the University of Maine's Institutional Review Board. A draft survey instrument was developed with input from practicing school principals and leaders from professional educational organizations in Maine, and then the survey was piloted by principals and district administrators. The Maine Principal's Association (MPA) disseminated MEPRI's survey recruitment email message to their members statewide along with a link to the survey. MPA also emailed their members with a reminder for principals to complete the survey if they had not done so.

The survey consisted of mostly fixed-choice items and five open-ended items on topics including: information on emergency-certified hires (the number of part-time and full-time emergency-certified teachers hired by the school in the past two school years, the grade levels and content areas, and the primary reason for hiring emergency-certified teachers); challenges in getting requests for hiring approved; information on the education and experience of these hires, an assessment of their performance compared to traditional first or second year teachers; supports provided by the school districts or by the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and additional supports needed; retention of emergency-certified teachers and reasons emergency-certified teachers have left their positions; and school practices related to conducting exit interviews or surveys with teachers who leave their positions.

The MPA has 1,471 members and non-members included in their email communications list. This includes both public and private school leaders as well as some district administrators in various job roles. The MEPRI survey only targeted public school principals, which was emphasized in the emailed recruitment message for this survey. We do not know how many school principals on the MPA's list actually received or opened the email message. A total of 135 school principals completed the anonymous, online survey. Of those, 51 respondents indicated they were either private school leaders (n=3) or had not supervised any emergency-certified teachers in the past two school years (n=48). The non-targeted participants were invited to respond to a few of the survey questions. The remaining 84 respondents met the criteria for targeted participation, by indicating they were public school principals and had also supervised emergency-certified teachers within the past two years.

We used the most recent staffing data available from the Maine Department of Education, which has many duplicate entries and errors for school staff. After sorting through the data and eliminating the duplicates, we found there are 822 school administrators of which about two thirds are principals and one third are assistant principals. These administrators work in 542 regular Maine public schools and 188 school districts with enrolled students. Thus, our survey sample represents about 11% of these school administrators.

Quantitative survey data results are reported with a focus on response frequencies and basic descriptive statistics. Qualitative data from written comments to five open-ended questions were analyzed using an open-coding method for themes (Charmaz, 1995; Miles et al., 2020) with some representative quotes shared in this report.

The following research questions guided this study:

- What were the primary reasons that schools have hired emergency-certified teachers in Maine?
- What challenges if any did schools experience in the approval process for hiring?
- In what grade levels and content areas have Maine schools hired emergency-certified teachers?
- What are Maine principals' perceptions of the performance and retention of emergency-certified teachers?
- What supports or training have school districts provided to these teachers and what additional supports do they need?

## **Findings**

In this section, we first describe data on the number and location of emergency-certified teachers in Maine reported by the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) to provide some background context on the statewide numbers. Following that, we describe the findings from the MEPRI survey this spring.

### **State Data on Emergency-Certified Teachers**

As we mentioned in the background section, Maine adopted the emergency teacher certificate option in June 2021. In written testimony provided by the Maine Department of Education to the state legislature in Feb. 2022, it was reported that 375 emergency certificates had been issued for teachers and 195 were employed in Maine schools (Maine Legislature, 2022). It is not clear why there is such a large discrepancy between the reported number of certificates issued to individuals and the number employed in schools, as school districts make the request for an emergency certification to fill a vacancy. The largest number of these emergency-certified teachers were employed at the elementary grade level in special education, followed by general elementary education. Other areas with fewer hires were in physical education and English as a second language. Most districts had employed only one emergency-certified teacher by Feb. 2022, while a few larger districts had more. Two large and racially diverse districts employed more emergency-certified teachers, consistent with their larger student enrollments: Lewiston had 21 and Portland had ten.

Based on more recent data provided to MEPRI by the Maine Department of Education in early 2023, a total of 404 emergency certificates had been issued for teachers over the two school years since the rule was adopted. We found that about 43% of Maine's public school districts had hired at least one emergency-certified teacher. Just over a third (36%) of public schools had hired at least one emergency-certified teacher. These calculations were based on the total number of public school districts (n=252), but some of these districts do not operate schools or have attending students. Thus, the actual percentage of districts with an emergency-certified teacher is likely higher and closer to 50%.

MEPRI also examined demographic data for these educators. Not all of these teachers could be matched with their employing district. For the 286 that could be matched, most were teaching in public schools (88%) at the elementary grade level (38%) with about one fifth (21%) working at the secondary level and 18% at the middle level. The remaining teachers were teaching in schools of mixed grade span levels. Over half of these emergency-certified teachers

were working in special education (55%) while 42% were in general education. Three quarters of these emergency-certified teachers were female. The majority (63%) of these teachers had a bachelor's degree, and 13% had a master's degree (not necessarily in education).

Examining the data provided by the state, MEPRI found that the larger more urban school districts employ larger numbers of emergency-certified teachers, consistent with their larger enrollments. One negative implication is that students with higher levels of economic disadvantage and/ or from more diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds may be more likely to have teachers with minimal teacher preparation. Another negative implication is that these districts will face the challenge of supporting, mentoring and retaining larger numbers of less prepared teachers at the same time they continue to cope with on-going staffing shortages and turnover.

We also examined the most recent, available staffing data from the Maine Department of Education and found 38 educators had the designation of long-term substitute teacher. It is not clear how accurate this number is. Schools are currently filling vacant teaching positions with both long-term substitute hires and emergency-certified hires, but it is not clear what factors determine their choice of one option over the other nor what qualifications the long-term substitute teachers have.

### **Findings from the Principal Survey**

In the following sections, we present the findings from MEPRI's survey of public school principals, organized by the topics covered by the survey.

#### ***Demographic Information***

Of the 135 Maine school principals who completed the survey, over one third (36%) did not meet the criteria for participation as stated in the outreach email message, as they were teaching in non-public schools and/ or had not supervised any emergency-certified teachers in the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school years. The majority (64%) of respondents did meet these criteria.

Table 1. Principals Participating in the Survey

Principal Respondents	Supervised Emergency- Certified Teacher	Has Not Supervised Emergency Teacher	Total
Public School	64% 84	36% 48	100% 132
Non-public School	100% 3	0% 0	100% 3
Total	64% 87	36% 48	100% 135

The survey included some demographic questions to get a sense of the specific job roles for respondents, their school’s grade level composition, where the schools were located in Maine and school size. These questions not only allowed us to check on the representativeness of our survey sample, but they also allowed us to disaggregate the results for selected survey items to see if perceptions about emergency-certified teachers differed by district size or local. Not all of the 84 public school respondents that had recently hired an emergency-certified teacher answered the demographic questions. Of the 53 respondents who answered the question about their current job role, 81% indicated they were solely in a principal role this year while 8% were in dual roles of teacher/ principal or superintendent/ principal, and 11% were in an assistant principal role. (Two superintendent/ principal respondents wrote their job role under the category of “other” on this survey item.) For the purpose of simplicity, we refer to the respondents simply as “principals” in this report.

Table 2. Job Role of Respondents

Job Role	Percent Principals	n=
Principal	81%	43
Teaching Principal	4%	2
Assistant Principal	11%	6
Superintendent/Principal	4%	2
Total	100%	53

A larger percentage of responding principals (37%) indicated they worked in schools that included elementary grade levels only, compared to other grade level configurations. One fifth of the participants worked in secondary grade only schools. This survey sample is consistent with the fact that a majority of schools in Maine serve students in elementary grades, and the largest portion of principals are administrators for elementary grade levels.

Table 3. Grade Levels in School

Grade Levels in School	Percent Principals	n=
Elementary	37%	26
Elementary, Middle	17%	12
Middle	14%	10
Middle, High School	4%	3
High School	19%	13
Elementary, Middle, High School	9%	6
Total	100%	70

The largest number of respondents indicated they worked either in smaller school districts with a total enrollment of 100-500 students or, by contrast, in a larger district of 1,000. The survey sample is fairly consistent with statewide data on district enrollment in Maine, but may slightly over-represent the largest districts. According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data, the largest portion of school districts in Maine (38%) fall into the enrollment range of either 100-500 students, followed by 30% of districts with 1,000 or more students. A larger proportion of Maine’s students attend the larger districts, and those larger districts more often have assistant principals.

Table 4. Total District Enrollment

District Enrollment	Percent Principals	n=
Less than 100 students	11%	6
100-500 students	37%	20
501-999 students	15%	8
1,000 or more students	37%	20
Total	100%	54

The survey also asked respondents to self-select the best description of their school/ community setting and region. A majority of principals (62%) indicated their schools were located in small towns while just under a quarter (23%) indicated they were located in a city or suburban setting. The respondents were almost equally distributed across four regions of the state, with a slightly higher percentage (28%) from southern Maine. In Maine, most schools are located in rural or small town settings, while the largest number of students are actually found in the larger urban or suburban districts of southern Maine. Tables 5 and 6 present this demographic information for our survey sample.

Table 5. School and Community Setting

	Percent Principals	n=
City/ Suburban	23%	12
Small town	62%	33
Remote rural	15%	8
Total	100%	53

Table 6. Region of Maine

	Percent Principals	n=
Central	26%	14
Northern	23%	12
Southern	28%	15
Western	23%	12
Total	100%	53

Non-targeted principals were invited to respond to a few questions on the survey. One open-ended question asked non-targeted principals for the primary reason their schools did not seek to hire teachers through the emergency certification option. Six principals responded to this question with comments. The comments were brief and indicated that they did not need to hire teachers under the emergency certification option as they were able to hire conditional or fully certified teachers. One principal noted the decision to avoid hiring emergency-certified teachers

was based on their “lack of foundational knowledge and practicum experience” while another noted that the decision was made by the superintendent.

Another question asked non-targeted principals how likely it was that their school will hire an emergency-certified teacher in the 2023-24 school year. Their responses were mixed, but a majority (68%) indicated it was either *somewhat* or *very likely* while a third said it was *not at all likely*.

Table 7. Likelihood of Hiring E-Certified Teachers in 2023-24

Response	Percent Principals	n=
Not at all likely	32%	15
Somewhat likely	47%	22
Very likely	21%	10
Total	100%	47

We asked all principals taking this survey if their schools currently have any long-term substitutes teaching in core content areas. Anecdotally, there is substantial evidence that schools are filling their teaching vacancies with long-term substitutes. A total of 108 principals (targeted and non-targeted) responded to this question on long-term substitutes. A majority (62%) of the responding principals who indicated their schools have emergency-certified teachers also indicated that their schools do not have long-term substitutes. For the schools without emergency-certified teachers, over half indicated they did not employ long-term substitutes in core content areas. It should be noted here that the state’s credentialing rules require long-term substitute personnel to be certified in the grade and subject they are teaching, and there is no time limit as there is for an emergency-certified teacher. By contrast, emergency certification is only given for one year and can only be issued up to three times per applicant. Our survey did not provide clear evidence on why schools would choose one hiring option over the other.



Table 8. Schools with Long-term Substitutes in Core Content Areas and Use of Emergency-Certified Teachers

	No Long-term Subs	Yes Long-term Subs	Total
No Emergency Teachers	56% 25	44% 20	100% 45
Emergency Teachers	62% 39	38% 24	100% 63
Total	59% 64	41% 44	100% 108

***Why Schools Hired Emergency-Certified Teachers***

The targeted school principals were asked in an open-ended question to explain the primary reason their schools had hired through the emergency teaching certificate option rather than a traditional waiver for hiring that may be granted by the Commissioner of Education. Of the 84 targeted principals who completed the survey, 58 principals responded to this question. A majority of the comments (31) highlighted teacher shortages as the primary factor, with almost half of those (15) explaining that their preferred candidate was not certified or could not obtain a conditional certification. A middle school principal commented, “There were no candidates with the right form of certification,” while an elementary principal shared,

We had someone with the talent and skill level to teach the course but what not able to reach an immediate pathway to certification. This person is more than qualified but because of cumbersome certification pathways they had to work under an emergency ticket. The path to become certified for this person is in my opinion overkill and may result in us losing a good teacher and a good fit for our school.

Nine principals cited unexpected teacher resignations or retirements as contributing factors, where they needed to fill positions quickly. Where administrators were unable to attract potential candidates, trusted employees who did not have full teaching certification (e.g., educational technicians), were recruited for the emergency-certification. This, coupled with a depleted candidate pool led to leveraging emergency certification as a pathway to filling those vacancies. As one high school principal shared, “an ELA position was a last minute need, and

again the person we were interested in was an Ed Tech in the building and was very close to finishing their course work.” Another high school administrator looked to fill an unexpected vacancy with an emergency certified teacher because, “they were more qualified than a long-term sub.”

### ***Challenges with Approval Process***

Principals were also asked in an open-ended question what barriers or challenges if any their schools have experienced in having a request to hire through the emergency certificate option approved by the Maine Department of Education. Comments describing challenges were shared by 18 principals. These comments primarily described concerns around the certification application and approval process. Some principals noted that their job candidates lacked the necessary requirements to be hired under the provisions for emergency certification. More often, the concerns centered on the process itself including: not being able to find clear information about emergency-certification rules on the state agency’s website, disagreement with the rules and requirements, and not getting timely feedback or approval from the Maine Department of Education.

Two principals wrote about the perceived rigidity of the emergency certification rules or process, commenting:

The certification office is far too rigid in requirements too often. We don't need stricter certification at this point. We need flexibility so we can bring people in who have real life experience to teach our students as well (high school administrator).

The Certification department is very rigid and will not give this person an option to present a portfolio of work for certification purposes due to nobody working in the office (they are all remote) and quote, ‘it is too much work for the DOE to evaluate a portfolio at this time’ (elementary school administrator).

Some principals commented on the challenge of finding answers to questions or information about emergency certification rules or the process on the Maine Department of Education’s website. One high school administrator described the online portal as “not user friendly.”

Other principals shared their frustration with what they perceived as breakdowns in communication with the Maine Department of Education that resulted in slow responses to

questions or approvals. an elementary principal cited, “the wait time from the Maine DOE has been a challenge.” Similarly, a middle school principal expressed concerns with the “time delay on requests and communications” from the Maine DOE. One high school administrator shared a particular experience, commenting, “In one of the three emergency certifications, there was an unnecessary delay in the teacher obtaining the emergency certification that appeared to be strictly human error (a certification was originally denied but then quickly corrected).” Anecdotally, complaints about the time delays in getting certification applications approved were quite prevalent across the state during the pandemic and there were calls for increased staffing to cope with the workload. In addition, during the current school year, some staff in the agency’s certification office left their positions which may have caused even more disruptions in communications with schools and delays in approvals.

***Number of Hires***

The data reported by the MDOE indicated that most school districts seeking approval for the emergency certification from the state have only hired one teacher through this option, while few districts have hired more than one. Further, that data indicated a larger number of hires in special education compared to regular education, and more at the elementary grade level.

In the MEPRI survey, responding principals predominantly indicated their schools had hired only one emergency-certified teacher since that option had been approved in June 2021, and that the hire had been a full-time rather than part-time teacher in regular education. A total of 41% of the schools had hired one full-time teacher and a quarter of the schools (27%) had hired two full-time teachers in regular education through emergency certification. Only four principals said their schools had hired part-time regular education teachers through emergency certification. Tables 9 and 10 present the data on regular education teachers hired with emergency certification.

Table 9. Number of Full-Time, E-Certified, Regular Ed Teachers Hired

Emergency-Certified Teachers	Percent Principals	n=
1	41%	29
2	27%	19
3	13%	9
4	4%	3
Total	85%	60

Table 10. Number of Part-Time, E-Certified, Regular Ed Teachers Hired

Emergency-Certified Teachers	Percent Principals	n=
1	4%	3
2	1%	1
Total	6%	4

The principals responding to this survey indicated that their schools hired special education teachers through emergency certification less often. Over a third (39%) of the principals indicated their schools had hired at least one full-time special educator and only one principal indicated their school had hired one part-time special educator through the emergency certification option.

Table 11. Number of Full-Time, E-Certified, Special Ed Teachers Hired

Emergency-Certified Teachers	Percent Principals	n=
1	29%	20
2	4%	3
3	6%	4
Total	39%	27

Smaller districts often hired only one emergency-certified teacher, while districts with larger enrollments typically hired two or three full-time regular education teachers through emergency certification. This trend is consistent with the data reported by the MDOE on where emergency-certified teachers in Maine work. Similarly, schools located in rural areas were more likely to employ only one full-time regular education teacher through emergency certification while schools in more urban settings more often had more than one such hire.

Table 12. Number of E-Certified Full-time Reg. Ed. Teachers by District Size

Emergency-Certified Teachers	Less than 100 students	100-500 students	501-999 students	1000 or more students	Total
1	67%	45%	38%	32%	42%
	4	9	3	6	22
2	33%	20%	25%	32%	26%
	2	4	2	6	14
3	0%	15%	13%	16%	13%
	0	3	1	3	7
4	0%	5%	0%	5%	4%
	0	1	0	1	2
Total	100%	85%	75%	84%	85%
	6	17	6	16	45

Table 13. Number of E-Certified Full-time Reg. Ed. Teachers by Locale

Emergency-Certified Teachers	City or Suburb	Small town	Remote rural	Total
1	17%	45%	63%	42%
	2	15	5	22
2	33%	27%	13%	26%
	4	9	1	14
3	25%	12%	0%	13%
	3	4	0	7
4	8%	3%	0%	4%
	1	1	0	2
Total	83%	88%	75%	85%
	10	29	6	45

***Where Emergency-Certified Teachers are Working (grade, subjects)***

This study explored where emergency-certified teachers are being hired and employed in terms of the grade level and areas. While the statewide data reported by the Maine Department of Education indicated a larger percentage of emergency-certified teachers were hired into special education positions followed by general education, our smaller survey sample indicated the opposite trend. A majority of principals responding to this survey indicated that their emergency-certified teachers were predominantly hired to work in general education, followed by special

education. A third of the principals (7/ 21) who indicated general education hires at the secondary grade level also indicated the content areas were math and science. A significant number of principals also indicated there were emergency-certified teachers hired in the allied arts (art, music, health/ PE) at the PreK/ elementary grades (23%) and middle grade (13%), while 25% of principals at the secondary level indicated that their schools had hired these teachers for world languages. Tables 14-16 provide these data. Note that principals could indicate their school had hired teachers in more than one content area.

Table 14. Areas for E-Certified Teacher Hires for PreK/ Elementary Grades

Areas	Percent Principals	n=
PreK or Kindergarten classroom	10%	4
Elementary General Education	73%	29
Elementary Special Education	28%	11
Allied Arts (art, music, health/ PE)	23%	9
English as a second language	3%	1
Gifted and Talented	3%	1
Other: Title 1	3%	1
Total	--	40

Table 15. Areas for E-Certified Teacher Hires for Middle Grades

Areas	Percent Principals	n=
General Education	75%	18
Special Education	25%	6
World languages	8%	2
Allied arts (art, music, health/ PE)	13%	3
English as a second language	0%	0
Gifted and talented	0%	0
Other: Science	4%	1
Total	--	24

Table 16. Areas for E-Certified Teacher Hires for Secondary Grades

Areas	Percent Principals	n=
General Education (indicate what content areas)	62%	13
Special Education	43%	9
World languages	24%	5
Allied Arts (art, music, health/ PE)	0%	0
English as a second language	5%	1
Gifted and talented	0%	0
Other:	10%	2
Total	--	21

### ***Education and Experience of Hires***

Principals were asked what portion of emergency-certified teachers hired by their schools were already working as Ed Tech IIIs in the school or district. About half of the responding

principals indicated *none* to this question, while the other half were split in responding either *all* or *some* to this question. Clearly many schools are hiring their Ed Tech IIIs into classroom teaching positions in either regular education or special education to cope with staffing shortages. One advantage of this arrangement is that the educational technicians are already familiar with the school and have established relationships with staff and students prior to taking on the role of teacher. We further found that a higher portion of smaller rural schools and districts were more likely to hire their own Ed Tech IIIs using the emergency certification option than larger systems in more urban settings.

Table 17. E-Certified Teachers that Worked as Ed Tech IIIs within the District

	Percent Principals	n=
All	25%	15
Some	26%	16
None	49%	30
Total	100%	61

Table 18. Ed Tech IIIs hired into E-Certified Teaching Positions by District Size

	Less than 100 students	100-500 students	501-999 students	1000 or more students	Total
All	67% 4	16% 3	38% 3	26% 5	29% 15
Some	17% 1	32% 6	13% 1	32% 6	27% 14
None	17% 1	53% 10	50% 4	42% 8	44% 23
Total	100% 6	100% 19	100% 8	100% 19	100% 52



Table 19. Ed Tech IIIs Hires into Teaching Positions by School Setting

	City / suburban	Small town	Remote rural	Total
All	8% 1	34% 11	38% 3	29% 15
Some	25% 3	31% 10	13% 1	27% 14
None	67% 8	34% 11	50% 4	44% 23
Total	100% 12	100% 32	100% 8	100% 52

When asked about the educational background of emergency-certified teachers their schools had hired, our survey results were consistent with the statewide data reported by the Maine Department of Education. A majority of principals (67%) indicated that *all* of their hires had a bachelor’s degree at the time of hire (though not necessarily in education), while a fifth (21%) of the principals indicated their hires did not have a bachelor’s degree, and 11% said *some* of their hires had this degree. Larger and more urban schools and districts were more likely to hire emergency-certified teachers who already had a bachelor’s degree than the smaller school systems in rural settings. The tables all indicate the percentages of principals who responded to the demographic questions.

Table 20. E-Certified Teachers with a Bachelor’s Degree

	Percent Principals	n=
All	67%	41
Some	11%	7
None	21%	13
Total	100%	61

Table 21. E-Certified Teachers with a Bachelor’s Degree by District Size

	Less than 100 students	100-500 students	501-999 students	1000 or more students	Total
All	67% 4	50% 10	75% 6	84% 16	68% 36
Some	0% 0	15% 3	25% 2	11% 2	13% 7
None	33% 2	35% 7	0% 0	5% 1	19% 10
Total	100% 6	100% 20	100% 8	100% 19	100% 53

Table 22. E-Certified Teachers with a Bachelor’s Degree by School Setting

	City / suburban	Small town	Remote rural	Total
All	83% 10	64% 21	63% 5	68% 36
Some	17% 2	15% 5	0% 0	13% 7
None	0% 0	21% 7	38% 3	19% 10
Total	100% 12	100% 33	100% 8	100% 53

A larger percentage of principals working in middle grade schools or secondary schools indicated their emergency-certified teachers had a bachelor’s degree, compared to elementary schools.

Table 23. Portion of E-certified Teachers with a Bachelor’s Degree by Grade Span Level

	All	Some	None	Total
Elementary	61% 14	13% 3	26% 6	100% 23
Elementary, Middle	67% 6	0% 0	33% 3	100% 9
Middle	71% 5	0% 0	29% 2	100% 7
Middle, High School	67% 2	33% 1	0% 0	100% 3
High School	85% 11	8% 1	8% 1	100% 13
Elementary, Middle, High School	50% 3	33% 2	17% 1	100% 6
Total	67% 41	11% 7	21% 13	100% 61

The survey also asked principals what portion of emergency-certified teachers hired by their schools did not hold a bachelor’s degree at the time of hire, but had other, equivalent work or academic experience to qualify for the emergency certification option. The results shown in tables 24-26 indicate that smaller and rural remote schools as well as schools in the northern part of Maine were more likely to have hired emergency-certified teachers without a bachelor’s degree. Again, the percentages shown indicate the percentages of responding principals.

Table 24. E-Certified Teachers without a Bachelor’s Degree by District Size

	Less than 100 students	100-500 students	501-999 students	1000 or more students	Total
All	33% 2	30% 6	13% 1	5% 1	19% 10
Some	0% 0	20% 4	13% 1	11% 2	13% 7
None	67% 4	50% 10	75% 6	84% 16	68% 36
Total	100% 6	100% 20	100% 8	100% 19	100% 53

Table 25. E-Certified Teachers without a Bachelor’s Degree  
by School Setting

	City / suburban	Small town	Remote rural	Total
All	8% 1	15% 5	50% 4	19% 10
Some	8% 1	18% 6	0% 0	13% 7
None	83% 10	67% 22	50% 4	68% 36
Total	100% 12	100% 33	100% 8	100% 53

Table 26. E-Certified Teachers without a Bachelor’s Degree by Region

	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
All	0% 0	50% 6	7% 1	25% 3	19% 10
Some	36% 5	0% 0	7% 1	8% 1	13% 7
None	64% 9	50% 6	87% 13	67% 8	68% 36
Total	100% 14	100% 12	100% 15	100% 12	100% 53

The survey also asked principals what portion of their emergency-certified teachers hired were currently enrolled in programs or coursework to become either conditionally or fully certified teachers. The vast majority (80%) of principals responded that *all* of their hires were pursuing this coursework or training. There was a difference by region in Maine and district enrollment size. Principals from northern Maine indicated *all* of their hires were pursuing this coursework or training. Principals in southern Maine and in larger districts were less likely to indicate all of their emergency-certified teachers were pursuing coursework toward certification, which is one of the requirements of the law for emergency certification.

Table 27. Portion of E-Certified Teachers Pursuing Coursework for Conditional or Full Certification

	Percent Principals	n=
All	80%	49
Some	16%	10
None	3%	2
Total	100%	61

Table 28. Portion of E-Certified Teachers Pursuing Coursework by Region

	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
All	79% 11	100% 12	60% 9	83% 10	79% 42
Some	21% 3	0% 0	33% 5	17% 2	19% 10
None	0% 0	0% 0	7% 1	0% 0	2% 1
Total	100% 14	100% 12	100% 15	100% 12	100% 53

Table 29. Portion of E-Certified Teachers Pursuing Coursework by District Size

	Less than 100 students	100-500 students	501-999 students	1000 or more students	Total
All	100% 6	85% 17	75% 6	68% 13	79% 42
Some	0% 0	15% 3	25% 2	26% 5	19% 10
None	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5% 1	2% 1
Total	100% 6	100% 20	100% 8	100% 19	100% 53

***School Plans for Waivers***

The emergency teacher certification rules (Chapter 115) specifies that no more than three emergency certificates can be issued to any individual educator. One survey item asked principals if their school would seek a traditional waiver to extend any of the time allowed for their current emergency-certified hires. Just over half (51%) of the responding principals indicated they were *not sure* and almost a third indicated they did not plan to seek traditional waivers. Schools in northern Maine were more likely to indicate they would probably seek a waiver to extend the certification for their current emergency-certified teachers.

Table 30. Schools Planning to Seek Traditional Waivers

	Percent Principals	n=
No	31%	19
Not Sure	51%	31
Yes	18%	11
Total	100%	61

Table 31. Plans for Traditional Waivers by Region

	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
No	36% 5	25% 3	27% 4	17% 2	26% 14
Not Sure	43% 6	42% 5	60% 9	67% 8	53% 28
Yes	21% 3	33% 4	13% 2	17% 2	21% 11
Total	100% 14	100% 12	100% 15	100% 12	100% 53

Additionally, schools that indicated they had hired their educational technicians into emergency-certified teaching positions were more likely to also indicate they would seek traditional waivers to extend their certification.

Table 32. Plans for Traditional Waivers by Portion of E-Certified Teacher Hires Who Were Already Ed Techs in the School

	All	Some	None	Total
No	13% 2	25% 4	45% 13	32% 19
Not Sure	60% 9	50% 8	48% 14	52% 31
Yes	27% 4	25% 4	7% 2	17% 10
Total	100% 15	100% 16	100% 29	100% 60

***Performance of Emergency-Certified Teachers***

Given that the emergency-certification law allows for educators to be hired with less education and teacher preparation, it is important to assess how they are performing in their teaching roles. Overall, the assessment of their performance was mixed. Half of the responding principals indicated their emergency-certified teachers were performing lower in comparison with other traditional first or second-year teachers they have hired in the past, while 39% indicated they were performing about the same. There were no differences in their performance assessment by district size, local or region in the state.

Table 33. Performance of E-Certified Teachers Compared to Traditional First/ Second Year Teacher Hires

	Percent Principals	n=
Much higher performance	4%	2
Somewhat higher performance	7%	4
About the same	39%	22
Somewhat lower performance	39%	22
Much lower performance than traditional teachers	11%	6
Total	100%	56

However, we did see a difference in principals’ performance appraisals of emergency-certified teachers by grade spans. More than a third (36%) of principals at the secondary level indicated their emergency-certified teachers were performing *much higher* or *somewhat higher* than traditional first or second-year teachers, while 70% of principals at the elementary grade

level indicated their emergency-certified teachers were performing *somewhat lower* or *much lower* than traditional first or second-year teachers. More than half (57%) of principals at the middle grade level indicated their emergency-certified teachers were performing *about the same* as traditional teachers while 43% indicated they showed *somewhat lower* performance. Recall that table 23 showed that emergency-certified teachers working at the secondary grade level were more likely to have a bachelor’s degree already at the time of hire than were teachers at the elementary or middle levels. Having more educational preparation may be one reason that secondary level principals assessed their emergency-teachers’ performance higher than did other principals. Another factor could be the type of prior career/ work experience and expertise that their emergency-certified teachers have. More research would be needed to understand the kinds of prior work experience and expertise that emergency-certified teachers are bringing to their role as teachers.

Table 34. Performance of E-Certified Teachers Compared to Traditional First/ Second Year Teacher Hires by Grade Span Level

	Elem.	Elem., Middle	Middle	Middle, High School	High School	Elem., Middle, High School	Total
Much higher performance	0% 0	11% 1	0% 0	0% 0	9% 1	0% 0	4% 2
Somewhat higher	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	27% 3	17% 1	7% 4
About the same	30% 6	44% 4	57% 4	33% 1	36% 4	50% 3	39% 22
Somewhat lower performance	50% 10	33% 3	43% 3	67% 2	18% 2	33% 2	39% 22
Much lower performance	20% 4	11% 1	0% 0	0% 0	9% 1	0% 0	11% 6
Total	100% 20	100% 9	100% 7	100% 3	100% 11	100% 6	100% 56

Principals who indicated their emergency-certified teachers performed *about the same* or *lower* than traditional teachers were asked if there are particular areas where emergency-certified teachers perform less well than traditional first or second-year teachers. A total of 48 principals (55%) responded to this survey question. A majority of these principals indicated that



emergency-certified teachers performed less well in the areas of classroom management (65%), managing difficult student behaviors (65%), and/ or using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content (60%). About half of the principals (52%) indicated instructional planning was a weak area, and just under half (44%) indicated that designing student assessments and communicating with families were weak areas. A significant portion of principals identified other weak areas including the ability to create an appropriate learning environment (38%) or engage students in learning (23%), as well as other areas that relate to professional commitment and managing the workload, pace and stress of the job.

Table 35. Areas Where E-Certified Teachers Perform Less Well

Area	Percent Principals	n=
Managing the classroom	65%	31
Managing difficult student behaviors	65%	31
Using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content	60%	29
Planning for instruction/ being prepared to teach	52%	25
Designing student assessments	44%	21
Communicating with families	44%	21
Understanding and implementing the curriculum	40%	19
Creating an appropriate learning environment	38%	18
Understanding the work is not just 8-3 pm	38%	18
Managing the workload	35%	17
Managing job stress	29%	14
Engaging students in learning	23%	11
Managing time/ pace of the job	21%	10
Demonstrating professional dispositions	13%	6
Using technology for instruction	2%	1
Engaging in on-going professional development	2%	1
Total	100%	48

When we examined responses to this question using the school demographic variables, we found that 54% of secondary school principals either rated their emergency-certified teachers as performing better than traditionally certified teachers or did not check any area of weakness, which may be another indicator that they feel their emergency-certified teachers are performing well in the job. The table below presents results for just the schools with distinct grade spans (n=32 principals) and indicates the secondary school principals were less likely to indicate their emergency-certified teachers showed weakness in the areas listed.

Table 36. Areas of Perceived Weak Performance by Grade Span Level

Area	Elementary		Middle		High School		Total	
Managing the classroom	68%	13	86%	6	50%	3	69%	22
Managing difficult student behaviors	63%	12	71%	5	67%	4	66%	21
Using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content	58%	11	71%	5	50%	3	59%	19
Planning for instruction/ being prepared to teach	68%	13	29%	2	17%	1	50%	16
Designing student assessments	47%	9	43%	3	33%	2	44%	14
Communicating with families	53%	10	43%	3	17%	1	44%	14
Understanding and implementing the curriculum	47%	9	29%	2	33%	2	41%	13
Managing the workload	53%	10	29%	2	17%	1	41%	13
Understanding the work is not just 8-3 pm	47%	9	29%	2	33%	2	41%	13
Creating an appropriate learning environment	42%	8	43%	3	17%	1	38%	12
Managing job stress	32%	6	29%	2	33%	2	31%	10
Engaging students in learning	21%	4	29%	2	0%	0	19%	6

Managing time/ pace of the job	21%	4	14%	1	17%	1	19%	6
Demonstrating professional dispositions	16%	3	14%	1	0%	0	13%	4
Engaging in on-going professional development	0%	0	0%	0	17%	1	3%	1
Using technology for instruction	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	100%	19	100%	7	100%	6	100%	32

The survey included an open-ended question for principals asking if there are any areas where emergency-certified teachers show particular strengths in their teaching roles. A total of 34 principals responded with written comments. Overall, the comments suggested that emergency-certified teachers demonstrate a number of strengths as well as specific areas for growth. A majority of the comments (n=17) regarding strengths related to the general, positive attitudes that these educators come to their positions with including enthusiasm, high motivation to do well, a willingness to learn, and a strong work ethic. One high school principal characterized their emergency-certified teacher as “very eager to be successful,” while an elementary school principal shared their new hire was “very flexible and eager to learn new things.” Administrators shared emergency certified teachers were open to feedback and wanted to improve and learn new teaching practices and strategies. One participant commented a strength of their new hire was being “extremely open to coaching and feedback,” another citing “a strong work ethic, and wanting to get better and improve.” One high school administrator commented, “they view the role as something to aspire to such that they take seriously the emergency status and the opportunity to build toward full certification.”

A few comments (n=5) noted how emergency-certified teachers transitioned from a career outside of the teaching profession, bringing with them expertise or content knowledge in a certain discipline. A high school principal commented, “They have previous training in the subject matter.” Another principal shared, “The emergency-certified teachers we hired all had a background in the fine arts, so this was their strength.” For one administrator, professional experiences outside the field of education resulted in a greater ability to “make curriculum relevant to students in the classroom and put it to use in the real world,” while another

elementary school principal described their teacher as “creative” and an “outside the box thinker.” Emergency-certified teachers were said to often be “older and bring life experiences that help them to manage classrooms compared to new teachers fresh out of college,” and are described as “collaborative in their work with content and grade-level colleagues, having fantastic instincts, just lacking the proper training to know what to do when curveballs came their way.”

### ***Supports Provided and Needed***

Principals had the opportunity to indicate what types of training or support their emergency-certified teachers have received or need. Using a provided list and option to write in “other” types of support, principals first indicated the type of support their school or district provided to their emergency-certified teachers hired within the past two school years. Nearly all principals said those teachers had received the same training/ professional development that was offered to other teachers in their school or district (92%), formal mentoring (85%), and/ or induction/ orientation as new teachers (82%). Emergency-certified teachers were less likely to receive other types of support from their school or district. A majority of principals indicated their emergency-certified teachers received information on how to pursue conditional or full certification (61%) and/ or informal mentoring (57%). Fewer principals (39%) said the teachers had received additional training or development beyond what was offered to other teachers, and a third (34%) of principals indicated they had provided individualized professional development for these teachers. Six principals wrote in other support such as district financial support for coursework toward full certification, weekly meetings with administrators, and coaching. When we examined demographic variables, we found that small town and rural schools were more likely to provide additional or individualized professional development to their emergency-certified teachers. Secondary schools were more likely to provide informal mentoring and information on pursuing full certification.

Table 37. Supports Provided by School or District

Type of Support	Percent Principals	n=
The same training/ PD that is offered to other teachers	92%	56
Formal mentoring	85%	52
Induction/ orientation	82%	50
Information on how to pursue conditional or full teacher certification	61%	37
Informal mentoring	57%	35
Additional training/ PD beyond what is offered to other teachers	39%	24
Individualized PD	34%	21
Other:	10%	6
Total	100%	61

We also asked principals what supports the Maine Department of Education provided to their emergency-certified teachers. Far fewer principals responded to this question (n=39) with 22 (36%) not responding, which perhaps indicates that they did not feel their teachers had received support from the state agency. Five principals wrote in “unsure” or “not aware of any” and four principals indicated “none.” A majority of principals who did respond to this question indicated the state had provided some information on how to pursue conditional or full certification. We found no differences in principals’ responses by school demographic variables.

Table 38. Supports Provided by MDOE

Type of Support	Percent Principals	n=
Information on how to pursue conditional or full teacher certification	69%	27
Induction/ orientation	10%	4
Training or PD	3%	1
Mentoring (Please indicate how.)	0%	0
Other: wrote in "unsure"	13%	5
Other: wrote in "none"	10%	4
	100%	39

Two open-ended questions asked principals about the training and support needs for their emergency-certified teachers. First, principals were asked about what supports teachers need to

be effective in the short-term as emergency-certified teachers. A total of 40 principals wrote comments to this question. Most of the written comments emphasized the need for professional development, with over a third of the comments specifically citing the need for training in classroom management practices. For example, one elementary principal shared, “administrators need to find the time to train these new teachers with strategies for classroom and time management,” while another high school principal suggested “professional development in the areas of classroom management, teaching methods, and motivating students to learn.” Other areas mentioned included special education law and dealing with challenging student behaviors.

After professional development, the need for mentorship (n=7) and administrative support (n=7) were the next most frequently cited supports needed for emergency-certified teachers. As one elementary school principal shared,

They need weekly meetings with administration for the opportunity to know expectations and have the opportunity to ask questions. With all they are responsible for, this is the only way to ensure students' needs are being met. They also need peer observation and mentoring.

Another administrator commented that emergency certified teachers require “a lot of observation from administrators, feedback, and reflection-based conversations regarding instructional practice.”

Some principals noted the need for additional support from the Maine Department of Education, specifically to provide greater flexibility for access to completing course training and more clarity around expectations for certification. Participants cited the need for flexibility to assist the effort of individuals, particularly those already working in schools, to complete course work and differentiated pathways to certification. One elementary administrator commented, “they need an option for a waiver or certificate after showing evidence of successful teaching.” Similarly, and alluding to pressures created by the teacher shortage, another high school administrator shared, “certified teachers need a more flexible way to professional certification; the time for RIGID certification standards needs to end before we have a major crisis where we cannot find educators,” suggesting potential revisions to the teacher certification process.

A second open-ended question asked principals what support teachers would need in the future, after their emergency-certification ends, to be effective teachers. A total of 35 principals responded to this question with comments. Here, the responses mirrored the needs described for

current support, with a majority of the comments relating to professional development needed, primarily in classroom management, but also including areas of instruction and assessment. Alluding to a need for differentiated supports, an elementary school administrator suggested support “depends on the teacher and their skill base, but generally continued classroom management and the art of teaching is needed,” while another suggested a “continuation of job specific professional learning opportunities in the areas of instruction and assessment are key areas that need to be addressed,” adding, “it is imperative that emergency-certified teachers are held to the same standards expected of professional educators.”

As was the case with immediate support needed, principals also emphasized external supports needed from the Maine Department of Education for continued success (e.g., flexibility, alternative pathways to certification, additional time to complete certification) to support individuals working toward certification. Some principals felt they had qualified teacher candidates who did not need the required coursework for certification to be competent educators. One elementary school administrator commented,

We had someone with the talent and skill level to teach the course but was not able to reach an immediate pathway to certification. This person is more than qualified but because of cumbersome certification pathways, they had to work under an emergency ticket. The path to become certified for this person is, in my opinion, overkill and may result in us losing a good teacher and a good fit for our school.

### ***Retention of Emergency-Certified Teachers***

The survey asked principals how likely emergency-certified teachers were to stay in the teaching profession over the next five years compared to traditional first or second-year teachers who are fully certified. Just over half (53%) of principals said there was *about the same likelihood* that emergency-certified teachers they’ve hired would stay as the traditional, fully certified teachers. However, a third of the principals thought emergency-certified teachers were *somewhat or much less likely* to stay in the profession.

Table 39. Likelihood of E-Certified teachers Staying in the Profession for Next 5 Years Compared to Traditional, Certified First or Second-Year Teachers

	Percent Principals	n=
Much more likely to stay	6%	3
Somewhat more likely to stay	9%	5
About the same likelihood of staying	53%	28
Somewhat less likely to stay	25%	13
Much less likely to stay in the profession than traditional teachers	8%	4
Total	100%	53

On another survey item, the vast majority of principals (78%) indicated that none of the emergency-certified teachers their schools have hired within the past two years have left their positions. Of the eleven schools indicating that one or two of their emergency-certified teachers had left, more in smaller districts of 100-500 students.

Table 40. Number of E-Certified Teachers Who Left

Number of Teachers Leaving	Percent Principals	n=
0	78%	40
1	16%	8
2	6%	3

Table 41. Number of Schools Where E-Certified Teachers Left by District Size

District Enrollment	n=
Less than 100 students	1
100-500 students	5
501-999 students	2
1000 or more students	3
Total	11

The survey also asked how many of the emergency-certified teachers left their position before the end of the school year. Only seven (14%) of the principals indicated they had an emergency-certified teacher leave before the end of the school year.



Table 42. Schools Where E-Certified Teachers Left Before the End of the School Year

Number of Teachers Leaving	Percent	n=
0	84%	43
1	14%	7
To be determined, as it is March 2023.	2%	1

On another survey item, principals were asked to indicate the primary reasons their emergency-certified teachers had left their positions, using a provided list or writing in another reason. Eleven principals responded to this question. The majority (73%) indicated that the teachers had left because they decided teaching was not a good fit for them, or they did not feel effective in the position. Over a third (36%) indicated the teachers did not want to take courses to earn full certification. Principals who wrote in other reasons indicated that the position was only temporary or that the teacher left for job or career outside of education.

Table 43. Reasons E-Certified Teachers Left Position

Reason for Leaving Position	Percent	n=
Decided teaching was not a good fit or did not feel effective in the position	73%	8
Did not want to take courses to earn full certification	36%	4
District decided they were not performing effectively in the position	18%	2
District found a fully certified teacher to fill the position	9%	1
Sought a position in another community location	0%	0
Accepted a higher paying teaching position elsewhere	0%	0
Returned to former job role in the district (e.g., Ed Tech, sub, etc.)	0%	0
Other:	36%	4
Total	100%	11

***School Practices when Educators Leave***

With high teacher turnover in some schools and staffing shortages across the state, more information about why teachers choose to leave their positions before retirement age and whether or not they plan to stay in the teaching profession would be very helpful to state and local policymakers and administrators. The survey explored whether schools are using exit interviews or surveys for this purpose with educators who leave their jobs, and whether principals thought having a common survey instrument developed for their use would be helpful. The principals responding to our survey were about equally split on the question of whether they use an exit interview, but the majority indicated they do not use an exit survey. Only 9% of principals said they do both an interview and survey.

Table 44. Schools that do Exit Interviews

	Percent Principals	n=
No	36%	19
Sometimes	30%	16
Yes	34%	18
Total	1	53

Table 45. Schools that do Exit Surveys

	Percent Principals	n=
No	72%	38
Sometimes	17%	9
Yes	11%	6
Total	1	53

When analyzing the data by school and district demographics, we found that larger districts were more likely to do exit interviews, while remote rural schools and schools in northern Maine were the least likely to do exit interviews.

Table 46. Schools that do Exit Interviews by District Size

	Less than 100 student	100-500 students	501-999 students	1000 or more students	Total
No	33% 2	65% 13	25% 2	11% 2	36% 19
Sometimes	17% 1	10% 2	63% 5	42% 8	30% 16
Yes	50% 3	25% 5	13% 1	47% 9	34% 18
Total	100% 6	100% 20	100% 8	100% 19	100% 53

Table 47. Schools that do Exit Interviews by School Setting

	City / Suburban	Small town	Remote rural	Total
No	25% 3	33% 11	63% 5	36% 19
Sometimes	33% 4	33% 11	13% 1	30% 16
Yes	42% 5	33% 11	25% 2	34% 18
Total	100% 12	100% 33	100% 8	100% 53

Table 48. Schools that do Exit Interviews by Region

	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
No	21% 3	75% 9	13% 2	42% 5	36% 19
Sometimes	21% 3	8% 1	53% 8	33% 4	30% 16
Yes	57% 8	17% 2	33% 5	25% 3	34% 18
Total	100% 14	100% 12	100% 15	100% 12	100% 53

Just over half of the responding principals (53%) felt it would be helpful to have a standard exit survey instrument (anonymous) to better understand why teachers leave their positions and what their career plans are afterwards. About a third of principals (32%) said they were *not sure*.

Table 49. Would a Standard Exit Survey Instrument be Helpful?

	Percent Principals	n=
No	15%	8
Not Sure	32%	17
Yes	53%	28
Total	1	53

### Conclusion

This study explored some initial trends and perceptions around the hiring, retention and performance of emergency-certified teachers in Maine, which was only an option during the last two school years. The data provided a deep dive into this topic and some important insights. However, the number of emergency-certified teachers in Maine is still relatively small, though many schools and districts have begun hiring teachers through this option. We found that about 43% of Maine’s regular public school districts and about 36% of the public schools have hired at least one emergency-certified teacher. Most districts have hired only one or two teachers using emergency certification, but others indicate they may hire with this option in the coming school year. More data will need to be collected over time to track how well these individuals are performing in their teaching roles, what supports are most critical, and whether they are likely to stay in the profession or not.

Broadly, we learned from this study that schools are using emergency certification to fill severe staffing shortages and principals feel this option is helping. Based on this survey, we could not clearly conclude from principals’ survey responses why school districts were using the emergency-certification option rather than a traditional certification waiver request. While schools are using the emergency-certification option, they are also filling positions by hiring long-term substitutes. This survey did not explore to what extent the long-term substitutes meet certification requirements. Schools have been able to draw on their existing Ed Tech III staffing

to fill classroom teaching positions with the emergency-certification option, and that pool of staff is now somewhat depleted, suggesting that schools will face even tougher odds in finding qualified educators in the coming year.

Principals expressed frustration with the difficulty of getting clear information and guidance through the certification process, as well as timely review and approvals from the Maine Department of Education. This has been an on-going source of frustration in recent years for school districts and urgent attention is needed to ensure adequate staffing capacity as well as efficient processes to handle the volume of certification questions and applications statewide.

Emergency certified teachers are predominantly in special education and regular education at the elementary grade level. There are also a significant number of hires in the allied arts at the elementary and middle grades. At the secondary level, emergency-certification is helping to address ongoing staffing needs in math, science and world languages. The majority of hires have a bachelor's degree and most are reportedly pursuing coursework toward certification as required. Larger city and suburban districts have hired more educators through emergency certification, consistent with their larger student enrollment.

The assessment on teaching performance is mixed: about half of principals felt emergency certified teachers are performing at a lower level than traditional teachers, while 39% felt they were performing at about the same level. Classroom management, handling challenging student behaviors, and using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content were the frequently cited areas where these educators need additional training and support. On the other hand, principals felt their emergency-certified teachers often brought very positive work attitudes to their roles as well as expertise from prior work experience. For continued success in these teaching roles, principals emphasized the need for on-going professional development, mentoring and other support.

Just over half of the principals felt their emergency-certified teachers were just as likely to stay as traditional teachers, while a third thought they were less likely to stay. Relatively few emergency-certified teachers have left their positions according to the principals we surveyed. Unfortunately, over a third of those who left did so because they did not want to pursue coursework toward full certification, which is a requirement of the emergency certification option.

Only a third of the responding principals indicated their schools conduct exit interviews with educators who leave their positions prior to retirement and fewer indicated they do an exit survey. Over half of the responding principals indicated having a common survey instrument could be helpful for understanding why educators leave their teaching positions on a state-wide level.

In addition to hiring individuals through emergency certification, schools also hire individuals as long-term substitutes to teach core content areas. More research is needed to understand to what extent schools are choosing this option to fill teaching vacancies, why they choose to hire educators as long-term substitutes versus the emergency certification, how educators' qualifications may differ for these two job roles, and to what extent school districts are complying with the credentialing and certification requirements for educators hired in these roles.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

Additional, ongoing research is also needed to examine how teachers hired through the emergency-certification continue to perform over time, what supports they need, and how their retention rate compares with more traditional hires. Further, research should examine the performance and retention for groups of emergency-certified teachers who come from specific educational and work experiences to understand which ones need more support or what types of support to be successful. We also do not know how the actual qualifications of individuals employed as emergency-certified teachers compares with individuals employed as long-term substitutes teaching core content areas, and to what extent district practices are consistent with the credentialing rules. While hiring less prepared individuals to fill teaching vacancies may ease some of the staffing shortages on the short term, it does not provide a long-term solution, nor does it reverse the trend of fewer individuals seeking the teaching profession and more leaving the profession. Drawing on the broad findings from this survey of Maine public school principals, there are some implications for both policy and practice. We offer the following observations for consideration.

- ***Communication and Approval Process***—Principals voiced frustration with many aspects of the emergency-certification process. More clear information and guidance is needed on the rules and process through the Maine Department of Education's website. Additional staffing and streamlining of the application review and approval processes may be needed

to reduce the delays in responding to school district questions and approving applications.

- ***District Staffing Equity***—Statewide data as well as our survey results show that larger, urban districts are much more likely to hire teachers under the emergency-certification option, consistent with their larger student enrollments. These urban districts also reported fewer of their emergency-certified teachers were actively pursuing coursework toward certification. Smaller, more rural schools more often hired emergency-certified teachers with no bachelor’s degree. Taken together, there are important differences in staffing capacity and educator preparation based on location in the state which can contribute to a lack of equity in the quality of education provided to students.
- ***Coursework for Certification***—The survey data indicate that some educators hired through the emergency-certification option are not actively pursuing coursework toward conditional or full certification as the law requires. Some principals indicated that this is a challenge or barrier for their educators, and some have left their positions as they were not willing or able to pursue further educational preparation toward certification. In written comments, principals called for increased flexibility and supports to help educators work and complete their coursework toward certification. Many schools are supporting new educators in this way through residency programs and partnerships with local universities. The shift toward more online, on-demand education options supports this need. Some schools seek alternate pathways to credentialing that eliminates some of the currently required coursework.
- ***On-going Supports Needed***—Principals indicated that emergency-certified teachers were performing at about the same level or lower level than traditional hires. Classroom management was the most frequently cited area where these educators need more support, while handling challenging student behaviors and using appropriate instructional strategies were also frequently cited areas. Other areas were also mentioned. While most of the schools we heard from did provide professional development and mentoring to these teachers, the survey did help to identify the particular areas where less prepared educators need additional, targeted supports. Schools may need to partner with other districts and local universities to provide the training needed, while mentoring is still a local responsibility. Some states are using remote mentoring and coaching resources to pool resources regionally or across the state. Retired educators or administrators might be

an untapped resource to serve in this role.

- ***Retention of Educators***—With increased numbers of teachers leaving their positions and the profession in recent years, particularly since the pandemic, more research is needed to understand why teachers in Maine are leaving their positions. There is currently no common system for gathering that information statewide to help inform policy and practice. Developing a common exit survey that teachers could complete anonymously could help provide useful information about what type of preparation and supports teachers need to be successful, as well as other factors. If less prepared educators are hired and are less likely to stay in the profession, more effort will be needed to improve their retention. Individualized learning plans and mentoring may be critical for these and other teachers. Alternative approaches to increase mentoring capacity should be considered, such as small group mentoring and regional approaches.
- ***Less Qualified Educators***—In order to meet severe staffing shortages, schools are hiring less qualified individuals to serve as classroom teachers. This includes both emergency-certified teachers as well as long-term substitute teachers. More research is needed to understand the extent to which long-term substitute teachers are being used to fill teaching vacancies, why schools choose to hire educators as long-term substitutes versus the emergency certification, how educators' qualifications may differ for these two job roles, and to what extent school districts are complying with the credentialing and certification requirements for educators hired in these roles.



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## Author Information

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## Appendix A: Principal Survey Instrument

### MEPRI Principals' Survey on Emergency-Certified Teachers-- 2023

The Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) is conducting this survey at the request of the state legislature to explore the experience of Maine public schools with educators hired recently through the emergency teacher certificate since June 2021. You are invited to share your views by completing this anonymous survey conducted by Dr. Janet Fairman, Associate Professor, School of Learning and Teaching, College of Education and Human Development.

Background Information on Emergency Teacher Certification: In June 2021, Maine approved a new, temporary teacher certification option known as an emergency certificate specifically to address staffing shortages in schools. Educators with an emergency certificate might have one of the following qualifications: 1) a bachelor's degree or equivalent work/ academic experience; 2) an Ed Tech III certificate; or 3) simply be enrolled in an educator preparation program/ coursework. By contrast, educators with a conditional certificate may have completed more of their preparation towards a professional certificate.

#### Supervision of Emergency-Certified Teachers

Q1. Have you directly supervised the performance of any teachers hired with an emergency teaching certificate in the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school year in Maine?

Yes

No

Q2. Do you currently work within a public school system? (i.e., not private, town academies, charter or special purpose school)

Yes

No

[Question for non-targeted principals responding]

Q3. How likely is it that your school will hire an emergency-certified teacher in the 2023-24 school year?

- Not at all likely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

[Question for non-targeted principals responding]

Q4. Briefly, what was the primary reason your school did not seek to hire teachers through the emergency teaching certificate option?

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[Question for non-targeted principals responding]

Q5. Does your school currently have any long-term substitutes in core content areas?

- Yes
- No

Q3. Which grade levels are included in your school? (check all that apply)

- Elementary
- Middle
- High School

Q4. How many full-time emergency-certified teachers has your school hired since June 2021? (please indicate a number)

Regular education teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Special education teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Q5. How many part-time emergency-certified teachers has your school hired since June 2021? (please indicate a number)

Regular education teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Special education teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Q6. Has your school hired some emergency-certified teachers after the start of a school year?

Yes

No

Q7. In what areas has your school hired emergency-certified teachers at the PreK or elementary grade level? (check all that apply or skip if none)

PreK or Kindergarten classroom

Elementary General Education

Elementary Special Education

Allied Arts (art, music, health/ PE)

English as a second language

Gifted and Talented

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q8. In what areas has your school hired emergency-certified teachers at the middle grade level? (check all that apply or skip if none)

- General Education
- Special Education
- World languages
- Allied arts (art, music, health/ PE)
- English as a second language
- Gifted and talented
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q9. In what areas has your school hired emergency-certified teachers at the secondary grade level? (check all that apply or skip if none)

- General Education (indicate what content areas)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Special Education
- World languages
- Allied Arts (art, music, health/ PE)
- English as a second language
- Gifted and talented
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q10. Briefly, what was the primary reason your school sought to hire teachers through the emergency teaching certificate option, rather than a traditional waiver?

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Q11. What portion of the emergency-certified teachers hired by your school were already working as an Education Technician III in your school or district?

- None
- Some
- All

Q12. What portion of the emergency-certified teachers hired by your school held a 4 year post-secondary (bachelor's) degree at the time of hire?

- None
- Some
- All

Q13. What portion of the emergency-certified teachers hired by your school did not hold a bachelor's degree at the time of hire but had equivalent work or academic experience?

- None
- Some
- All



Q14. Chapter 115 specifies that no more than three emergency teaching certificates can be issued to an individual educator. Will your school seek a traditional waiver for any of your emergency-certified teachers to extend the time allowed for them to become certified?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

Q15. Does your school currently have any long-term substitutes in core content areas?

- Yes
- No

### **Supports and Professional Development**

Q16. What portion of the emergency-certified teachers hired by your school are currently enrolled in programs or coursework to become either conditionally or fully certified?

- \_\_None
- \_\_Some
- \_\_All

Q17. What support has your school or district provided to emergency-certified teachers hired since June 2021? (check all that apply)

- Induction/ orientation
- The same training/ PD that is offered to other teachers
- Additional training/ PD beyond what is offered to other teachers
- Individualized PD
- Formal mentoring
- Informal mentoring
- Information on how to pursue conditional or full teacher certification
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q18. What support has the Maine Dept. of Education provided to your emergency-certified teachers? (check all that apply)

- Induction/ orientation
- Training or PD
- Mentoring (Please indicate how.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Information on how to pursue conditional or full teacher certification
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q19. What additional training or support do emergency-certified teachers need to be effective while serving as emergency-certified teachers?

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Q20. What training or support will your emergency-certified teachers need in the future, after their emergency certification ends?

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**Job Performance**

Q21. What is your overall assessment of the performance of emergency-certified teachers, compared to traditional first or second year teachers you have hired?

- Much lower performance than traditional teachers
- Somewhat lower performance
- About the same
- Somewhat higher performance
- Much higher performance

Q21a. In what areas do emergency-certified teachers perform less well than traditional first or second year teachers? (check all that apply)

- Planning for instruction/ being prepared to teach
- Creating an appropriate learning environment
- Understanding and implementing the curriculum
- Using appropriate instructional strategies to teach content
- Designing student assessments
- Using technology for instruction
- Engaging students in learning
- Managing the classroom
- Managing difficult student behaviors
- Communicating with families
- Demonstrating professional dispositions
- Engaging in on-going professional development
- Managing the workload
- Managing job stress
- Managing time/ pace of the job
- Understanding the work is not just 8-3 pm

Q22. Are there any areas where emergency-certified teachers show particular strengths in their teaching roles?

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Q23. What barriers or challenges if any has your school experienced in having an emergency-certification request approved?

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**Retention**

Q24. In your opinion, compared to traditional first or second year teachers who are fully certified, how likely are your emergency-certified teachers to stay in the teaching profession over the next 5 years?

- Much less likely to stay in the profession than traditional teachers
- Somewhat less likely to stay
- About the same likelihood of staying
- Somewhat more likely to stay
- Much more likely to stay

Q25. How many of your emergency-certified teachers have left their positions? (please indicate a number)

- Number of teachers who left: \_\_\_\_\_

Q26. How many of your emergency-certified teachers left their positions before the end of a school year? (please indicate a number)

- Number of teachers who left: \_\_\_\_\_

Q27. For the emergency-certified teachers who have left their positions, what were the primary reasons for leaving their positions? (check all that apply or skip if none left)

- Sought a position in another community location
- Accepted a higher paying teaching position elsewhere
- Decided teaching was not a good fit or did not feel effective in the position
- Did not want to take courses to earn full certification
- Returned to former job role in the district (e.g., Ed Tech, sub, etc.)
- District decided they were not performing effectively in the position
- District found a fully certified teacher to fill the position
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- I don't know

**Exit Survey for Educators**

Q28. Does your school/ district currently use an exit interview with teachers who leave the district?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Q29. Does your school/ district currently use an exit survey with teachers who leave the district?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

[Question for both targeted and non-targeted principals responding.]

Q30. Would your school district find it helpful to have a standard exit survey instrument (anonymous) to better understand why teachers leave their teaching positions and what their career plans are?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

### **Demographics**

Q31. Your current job position:

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Teaching Principal
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q32. What is the total student enrollment in your district?

- Less than 100 students
- 100-500 students
- 501-999 students
- 1000 or more students

Q33. Which category best describes your school / community setting?

- City/ urban
- Suburban
- Small town
- Remote rural

Q34. In what region of the state is your school located?

- Northern (Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington)
- Central (Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo)
- Western (Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset)
- Southern (Cumberland, York)

This is the end of the survey. If you wish to go back to previous questions you may do so.

**When you are ready to submit this survey, please hit the forward arrow below.**