



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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October 1, 2026

The Honorable Abigail D. Spanberger
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Sam Rasoul
Chair, House Committee on Education

The Honorable Barbara A. Favola
Chair, Senate Committee on Education and Health

Dear Governor Spanberger, Delegate Rasoul, and Senator Favola:

Pursuant to Chapter 891 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is pleased to submit this interim report on the work of the Alternative Licensure Pathways Workgroup. The General Assembly directed the VDOE to convene a stakeholder workgroup to conduct a comprehensive review of alternative licensure pathways for public school teachers in the Commonwealth and to develop recommendations to improve the quality, efficacy, and outcomes of these pathways. The legislation requires an interim report by October 1, 2026, summarizing activities to date, preliminary findings, data collected, gaps in available data, and any initial recommendations.

Since enactment, VDOE has developed a year-long work plan aligned to the statutory charge; identified and convened stakeholders representing perspectives from across Virginia's educator workforce and preparation landscape; developed an initial framework for understanding the range of alternative pathways included within the legislation; and begun assembling workforce, licensure, preparation, and retention data to support the work. The VDOE is also engaging the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL), which serves as an advisory body to the Board of Education, as part of the broader stakeholder engagement process and will continue to seek input from candidates, school divisions, preparation providers, institutions of higher education, and other stakeholders throughout the work.

This interim report reflects the beginning of that process. At its first convening on September 17, the workgroup established a common understanding of Virginia's licensure system and examined the broad range of pathways included in the legislation, including career switcher programs, iTeach, division-led and other nontraditional preparation programs, local eligibility licensure, and long-term substitutes serving as teachers of record. Members considered important differences among pathways- including who provides preparation, when preparation occurs relative to becoming the teacher of record, and the level of support provided- and began identifying the questions that should guide the workgroup's review.

The workgroup also reviewed available workforce data, which showed that while Virginia's statewide teacher vacancy rate has declined from 3.86 percent to 2.54 percent over four years, staffing challenges vary substantially by region and endorsement area, and first-year teachers continue to be retained at lower rates than more experienced teachers. Members emphasized that the data currently available do not yet allow the Commonwealth to fully understand which pathways are producing the strongest results. They identified the need to better understand who enters through each pathway; differences in cost, preparation and mentoring; rates of licensure completion and long-term retention; where alternatively prepared teachers work; and, ultimately, teacher and student outcomes. Members also highlighted the importance of clearer, more navigable pathways for prospective teachers and consistent expectations for preparation and support, while recognizing that different regions and school divisions have different capacity to provide that support. These questions will guide the workgroup's next phase as it moves from defining the current landscape toward examining evidence and developing recommendations for Virginia's future licensure system.

The workgroup will continue its review through 2027, with a final report and recommendations due October 1, 2027.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenna Conway', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jenna Conway
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Alternative Routes to Licensure: Board Work Session

September 23, 2026



Areas to Be Covered

- Legislative Mandate
- Overview of SB540
- Timeline
- Overview of Licensure in Virginia
- Current State: Data on Virginia's Educator Pipelines

Legislative Mandate

*§ 2. The Department of Education (the Department) shall convene a stakeholder work group for the purpose of conducting **a comprehensive review of and making recommendations on the alternative licensure pathways** for public school teachers in the Commonwealth.*

Overview of SB450

According to SB450, VDOE shall:

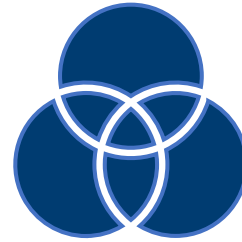
- **Conduct a comprehensive review of Virginia's alternative pathways to teacher licensure**, examining how current pathways are structured and operating across the Commonwealth.
- **Convene a stakeholder workgroup** to inform the review and bring perspectives from across Virginia's educator preparation and workforce landscape.
- **Examine the quality, efficacy, and outcomes of alternative pathways**, with attention to whether they are effectively preparing individuals to enter and succeed in the teaching profession.
- **Identify opportunities to strengthen and improve the pathways**, including recommendations for changes to Virginia's approach to alternative licensure.
- **Develop recommendations informed by available data and stakeholder input**, while identifying areas where additional or better data may be needed to understand pathway participation and outcomes.
- **Provide an interim report by October 1, 2026**, summarizing the workgroup's preliminary findings and initial recommendations.
- **Provide a final report by October 1, 2027**, containing the workgroup's findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education and Health.

Workgroup Charge



Understand

- What is the current workforce landscape in Virginia?
- Who enters through alternative pathways?
- Who completes licensure?
- Who stays?
- Where do they teach?
- What happens when our workforce demands exceed our supply of prepared teachers?



Compare

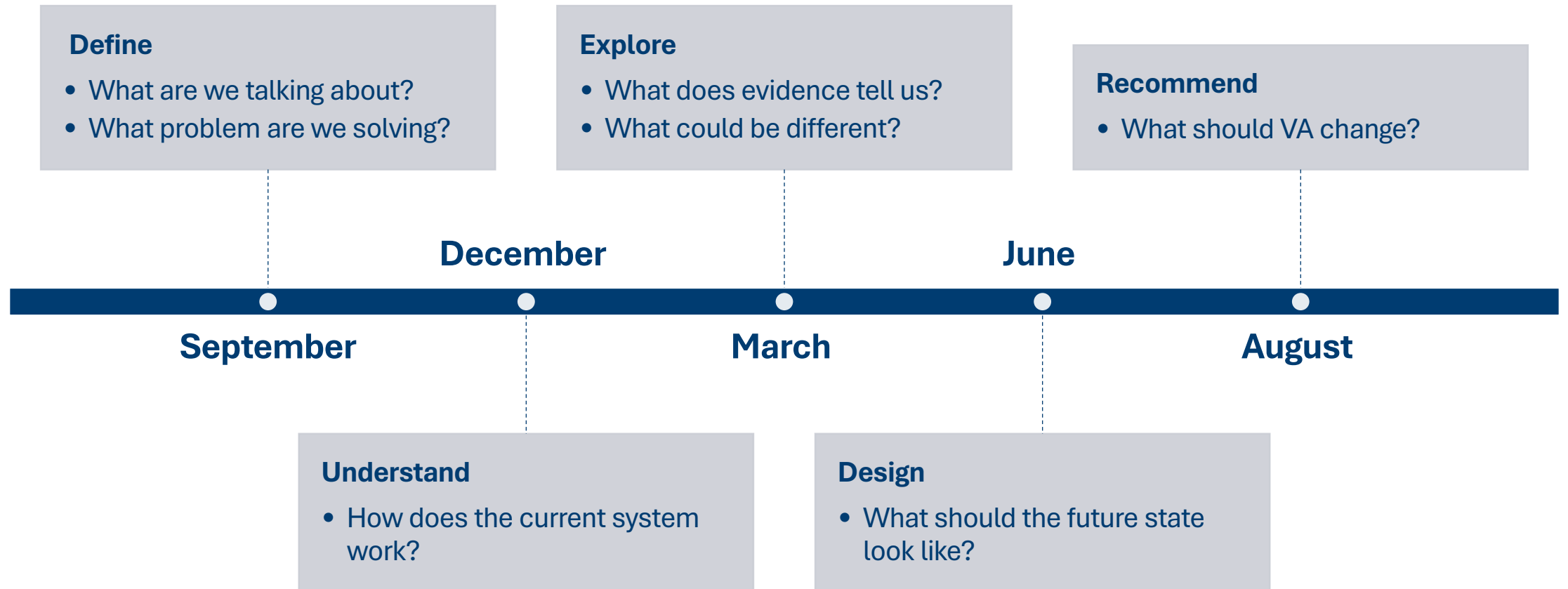
- Preparation
- Mentoring and support
- Cost
- Classroom readiness
- Teacher and student outcomes across a variety of workforce solutions, including long term substitutes



Recommend

- Essential criteria for effective pathways
- Standards for partnerships
- Policy, legislative, and funding changes

Timeline with Monthly Goals



Licensure in Virginia

Key Components of Virginia Teaching License

License includes two major components:

- **Content / Endorsement**

- What are you qualified to teach?
- Examples:
 - Elementary Education PreK-6
 - Mathematics
 - English
 - Special Education

- Candidates demonstrate the required content knowledge/competencies for the endorsement sought.

- **Professional Studies**

- What do you need to know and be able to do as a teacher?
- Includes areas such as:
 - Human development and learning
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Assessment
 - Classroom/behavior management

- Courses and learning experiences designed to prepare candidates across these areas

Key Terms

License

Virginia's authorization for an individual to serve as a licensed school personnel.

Endorsement

The subject/grade/role area attached to a license that identifies what the individual is authorized to teach or perform

Provisional License

A nonrenewable license valid for up to three years that allows an individual who meets specified entry requirements to complete remaining allowable professional studies/licensure requirements while employed

Renewable License

The license an individual may obtain after satisfying the applicable requirements, renewed every 10 years

Educator Preparation Program (EPP)

A defined education program responsible for preparing teachers or other professional school personnel. Virginia's program-approval regulations define and govern these programs separate from individual licensure.

Two Sets of Board Regulations Shape System

Licensure Regulations for School Personnel

- What must an individual meet to become licensed?
- Licenses, endorsements, professional studies requirements, alternate routes, provisional licenses

Regulations Governing the Review & Approval of Education Programs

- What must an approved preparation program provide and demonstrate?
- Program approval, program competencies, curriculum, clinical experiences, accountability/program outcomes

Virginia License Types

Fully Licensed/ Renewable License

- Collegiate Professional License (standard teaching license, all requirements met)
- Postgraduate Professional License (meets prior license and holds graduate degree)
- Technical Professional License (Path to renewable license that is based significantly on technical/occupational expertise, no bachelor degree required)

Provisional License

- Generally gives a candidate 3 years to satisfy the outstanding requirements necessary to move to renewable license
- Many routes to get here (iTeach, career-switcher programs, division-led or IHE alternative prep program, TFA)

Local Eligibility License

- 1 year, allows a school division to employ someone who has a bachelor's degree and relevant experience/training but does not yet meet requirements for a VA license
- Valid only in issuing division (can not be used for certain endorsement areas, like special education, and divisions are limited in how many they can employ)

Defining "Alternative Pathways"

SB450: Review of Multiple “Alternative Routes”

- Local eligibility licensure
- Career switcher program
- Teach for America license
- Any other alternate route to licensure used to meet requirements for a provisional license under Virginia law/regulations
- iTeach Virginia Alternate Route to Licensure Program
- Any non traditional education preparation programs offered by:
 - A public institute of higher education (IHE) in VA
 - A school division, or
 - A certified provider for alternate routes to licensure
- Long-term substitute teachers acting as teachers of record

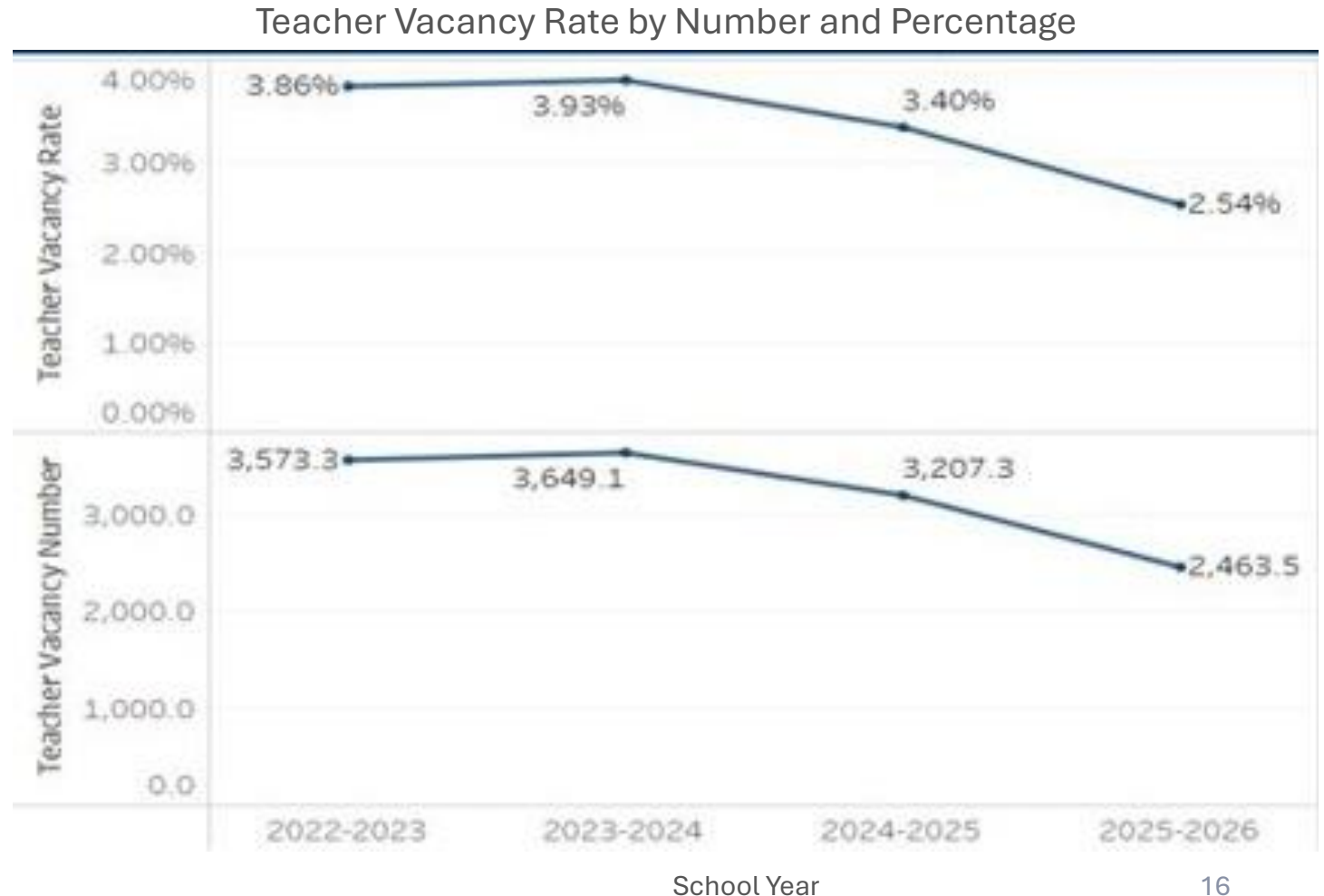
Starting Framework

- Traditional Preparation
 - Approved preparation completed through a traditional EPP pathway
 - Preparation → Clinical experience → License → Teacher of Record
- Nontraditional/Alternative Preparation Programs
 - A defined preparation program, but delivered through a nontraditional model
 - Could be offered through IHE, division, certified provider
 - Preparation may occur before and/or while teaching
- Alternative Routes to Meeting Licensure Requirements
 - A route through which an individual satisfies requirements for licensure without necessarily completing a defined preparation program
 - Requirements + Teaching Experience/support → Full Licensure

What do we know about Virginia's teacher pipeline?

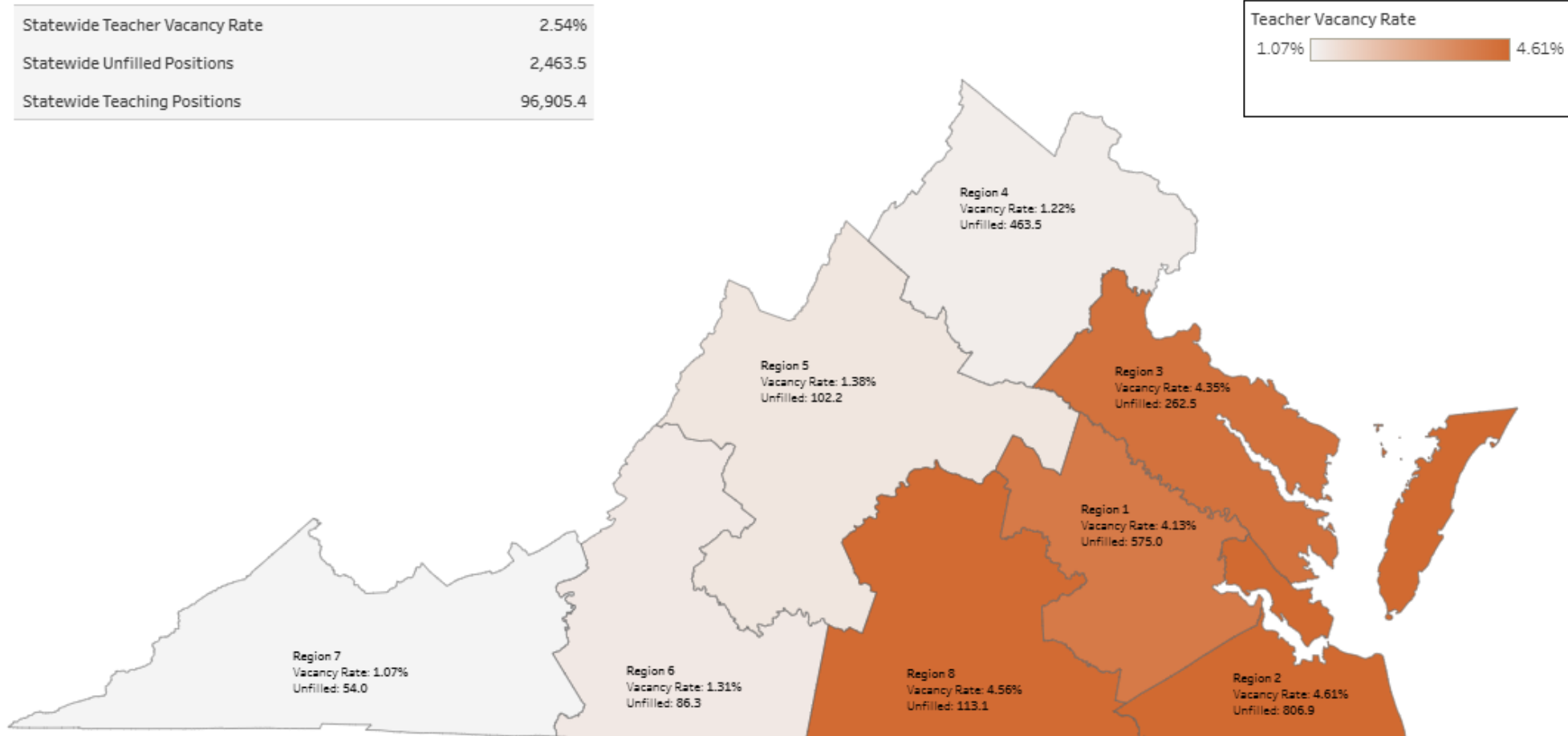
Statewide Teacher Vacancy Rate

The [Teacher and School Staffing Vacancy Dashboard](#) shows a decrease in the teacher vacancies over the last 4 years from 3.86% to 2.54%.

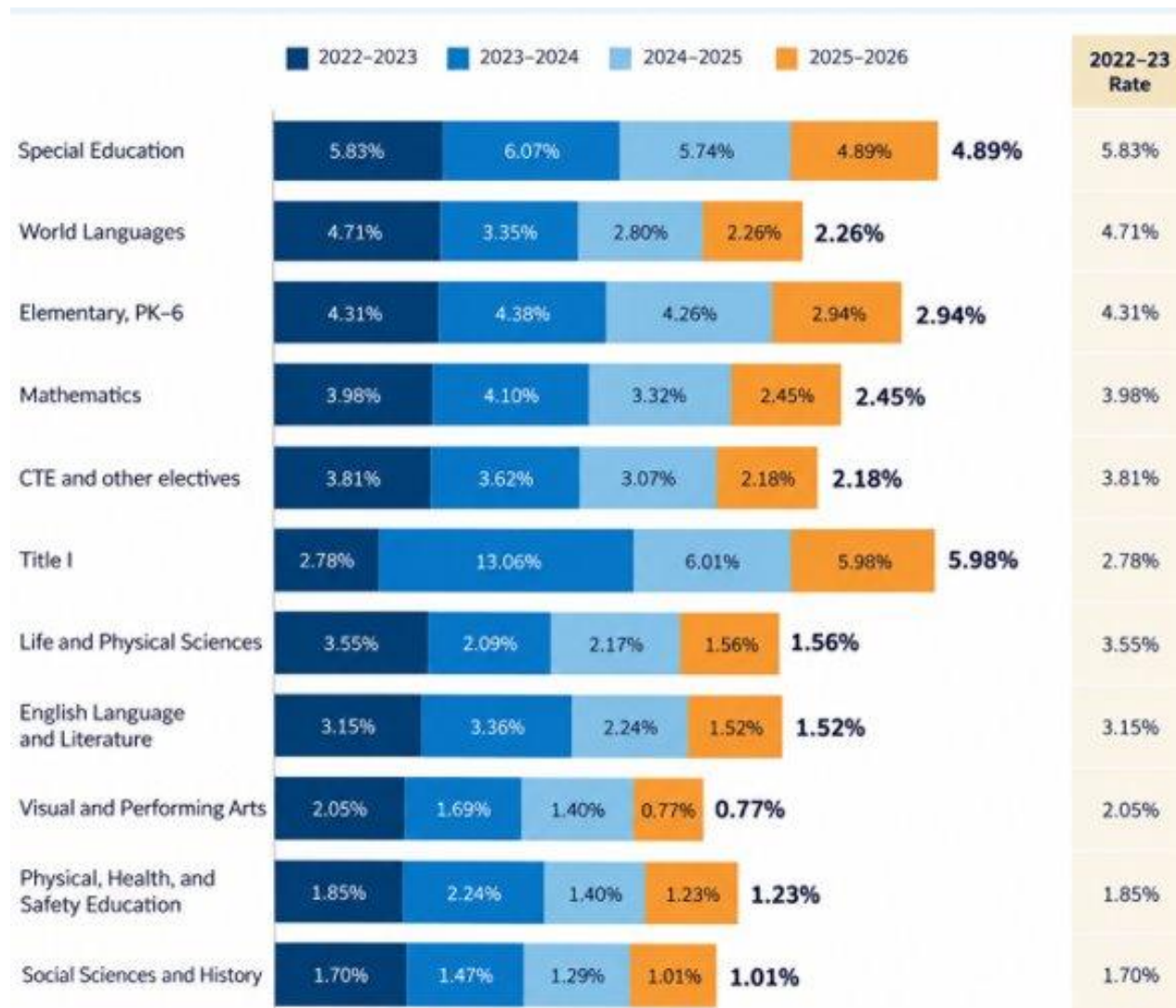


Staffing Challenges: Unevenly Distributed

Virginia Teacher Vacancy and Unfilled FTEs by Region, 2025-2026



Vacancy by Endorsement Area

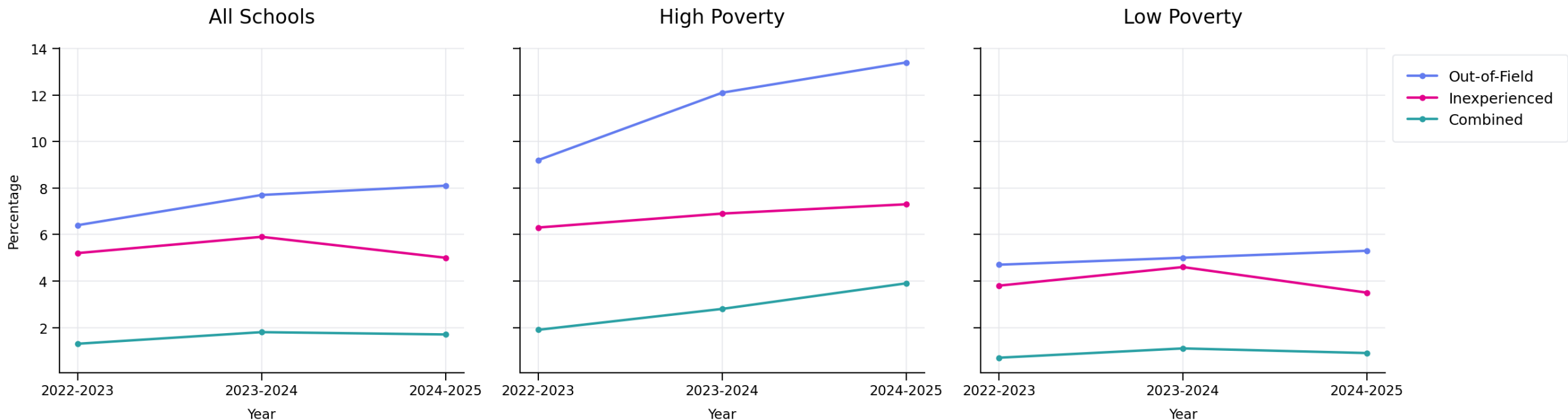


Despite statewide progress, persistent shortages in key subject areas underscore the need for targeted workforce strategies.

Concentration of Out of Field and "Inexperienced" Teachers

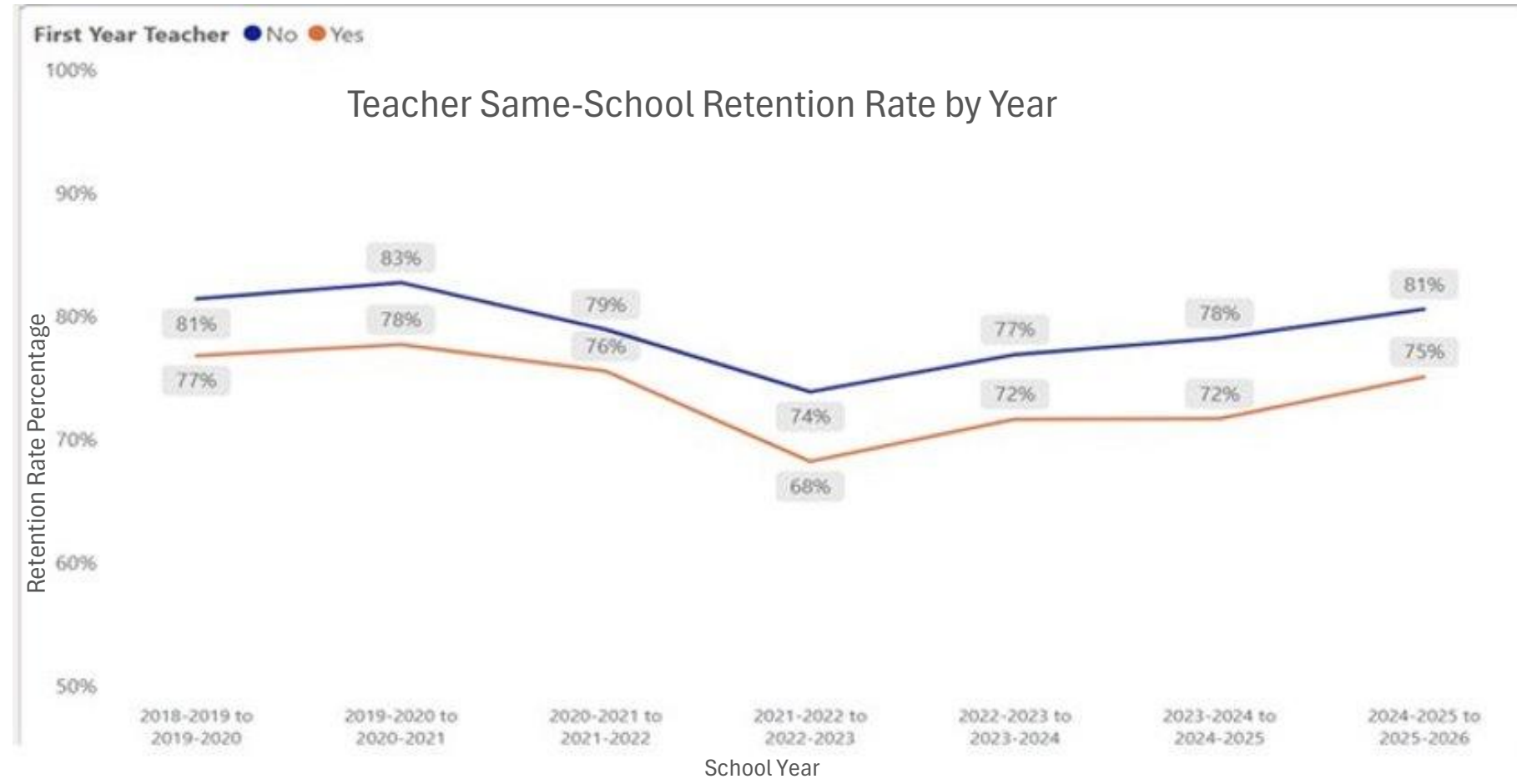
- Out of field teachers refers to teachers teaching a subject or course outside of their endorsement area
- Inexperienced teachers refers to teachers in their first year of teaching.
- These groups of teachers appear to be disproportionately concentrated in high poverty schools.

Out-of-Field and Inexperienced Teacher Trends by School Poverty Level



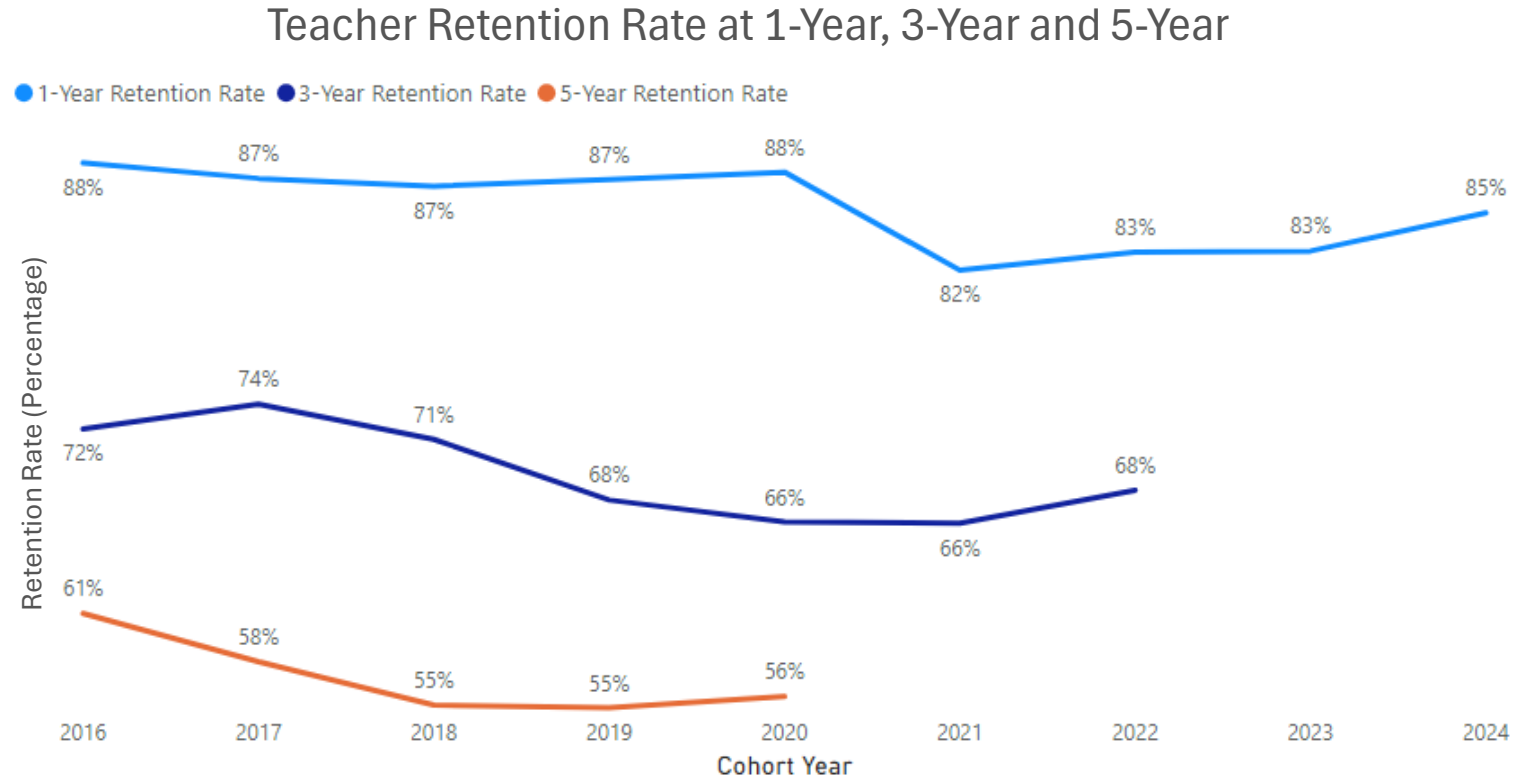
Teacher Same-School Retention Rate

Teacher retention has rebounded, but a persistent gap remains for first-year teachers.



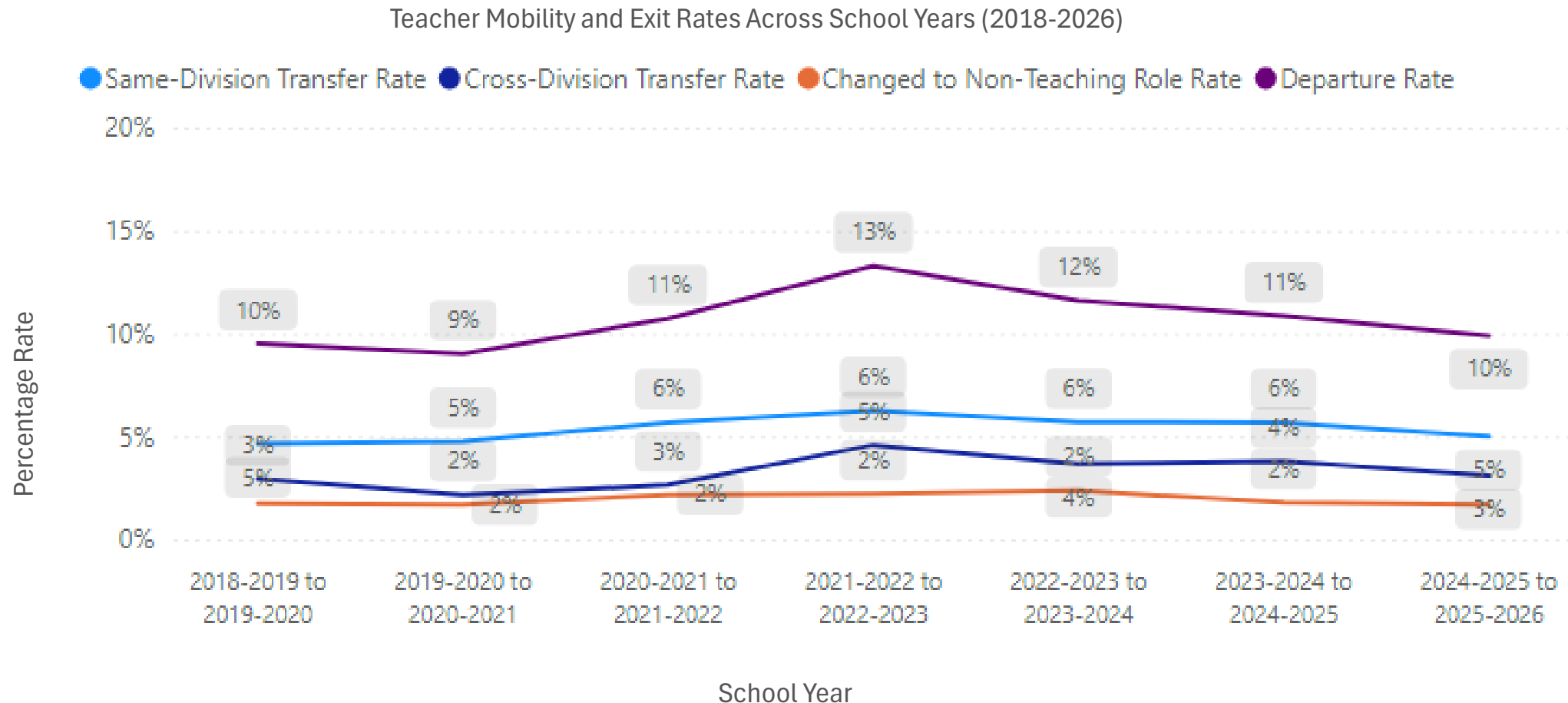
Teacher Retention by Cohort

While most teachers remain at their school from one year to the next, mobility accumulates over time: only about two-thirds remain at the same school after three years, and just over half remain after five years.



Where Are Teachers Going When They Leave?

Most teacher mobility reflects movement within the profession- not leaving it.



Long-Term Substitute Teachers in Virginia, 2025–26

89,182

unique teachers across the
131 divisions

1,023

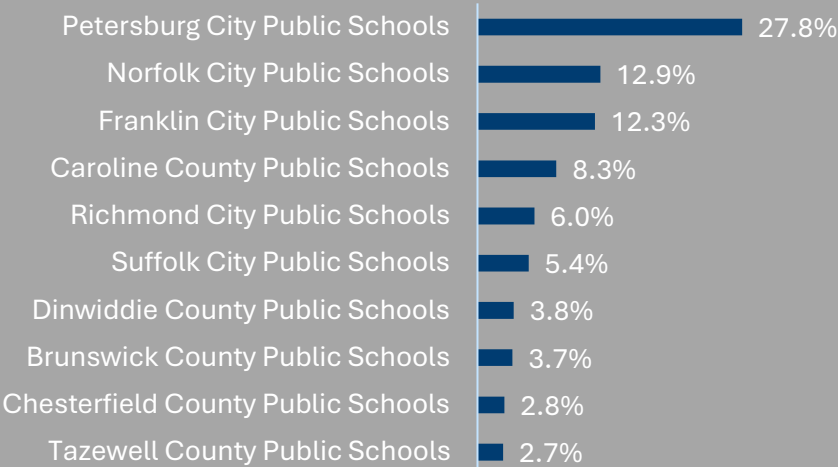
long-term substitutes
reported

1.15%

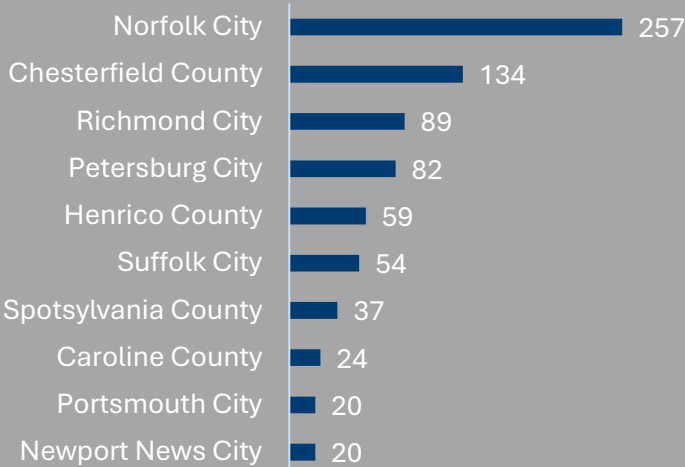
statewide ratio of long-term substitutes to unique
teachers

Long-term substitutes represent a relatively small share of Virginia's overall teacher workforce, but their use varies considerably across school divisions. **67 of 131 divisions** reported no long-term substitute teachers, and **64** divisions reported at least one long-term substitute teacher.

Divisions with the highest reported long-term substitute shares

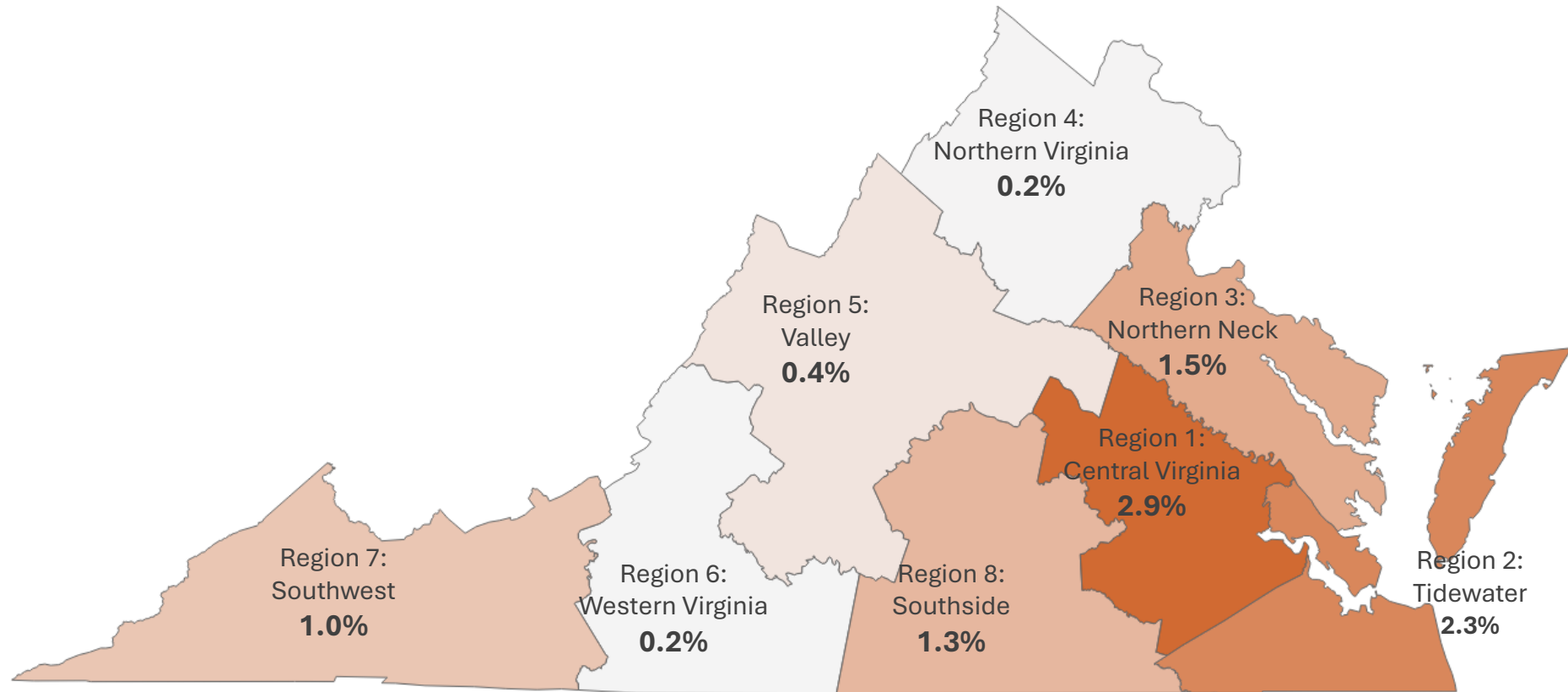


Divisions with the highest numbers of reported long-term substitute



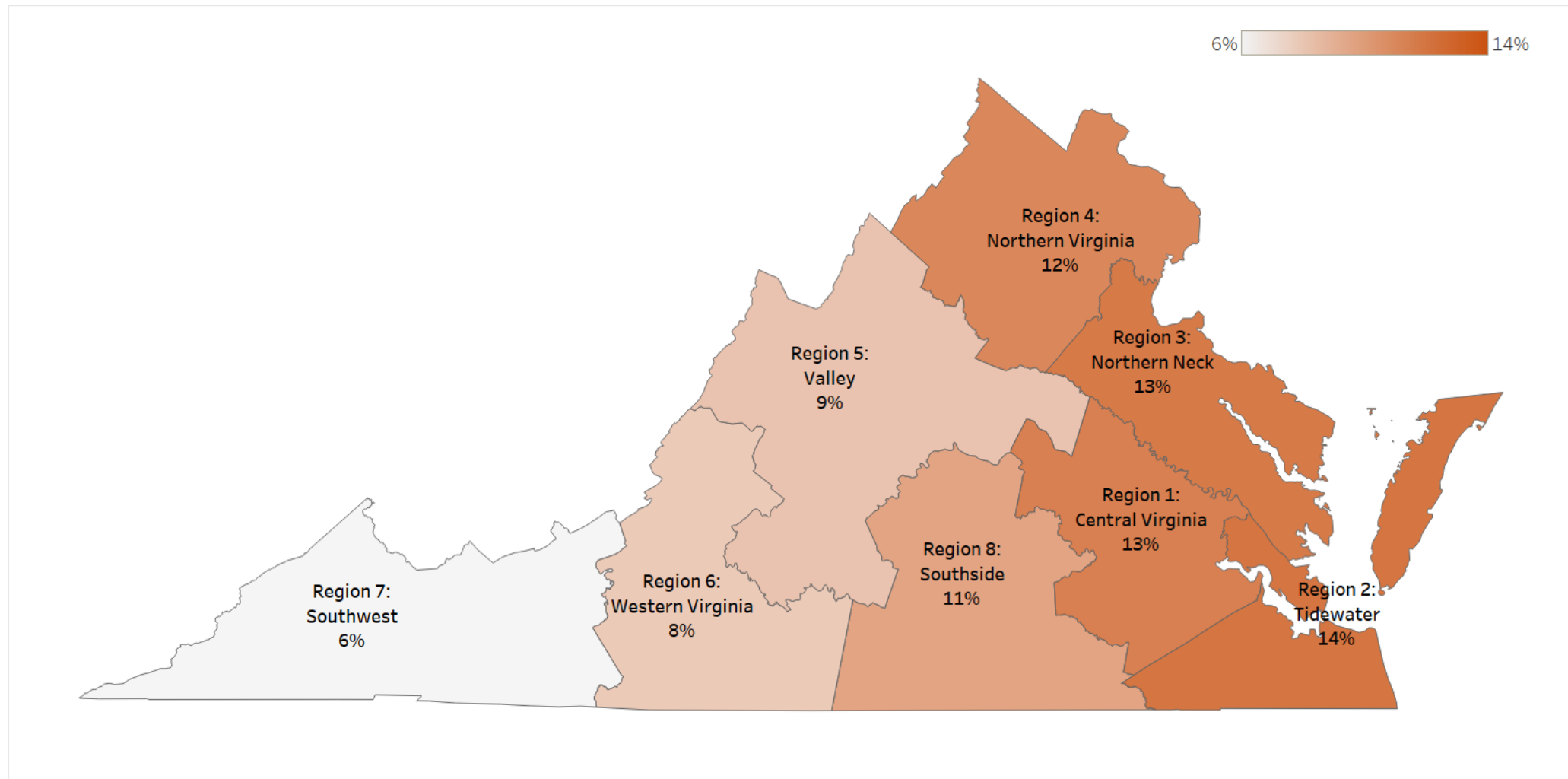
Notes: Data is based on 2025-2026 school year fall snapshot.

Long-Term Substitute Teachers (2025–26)



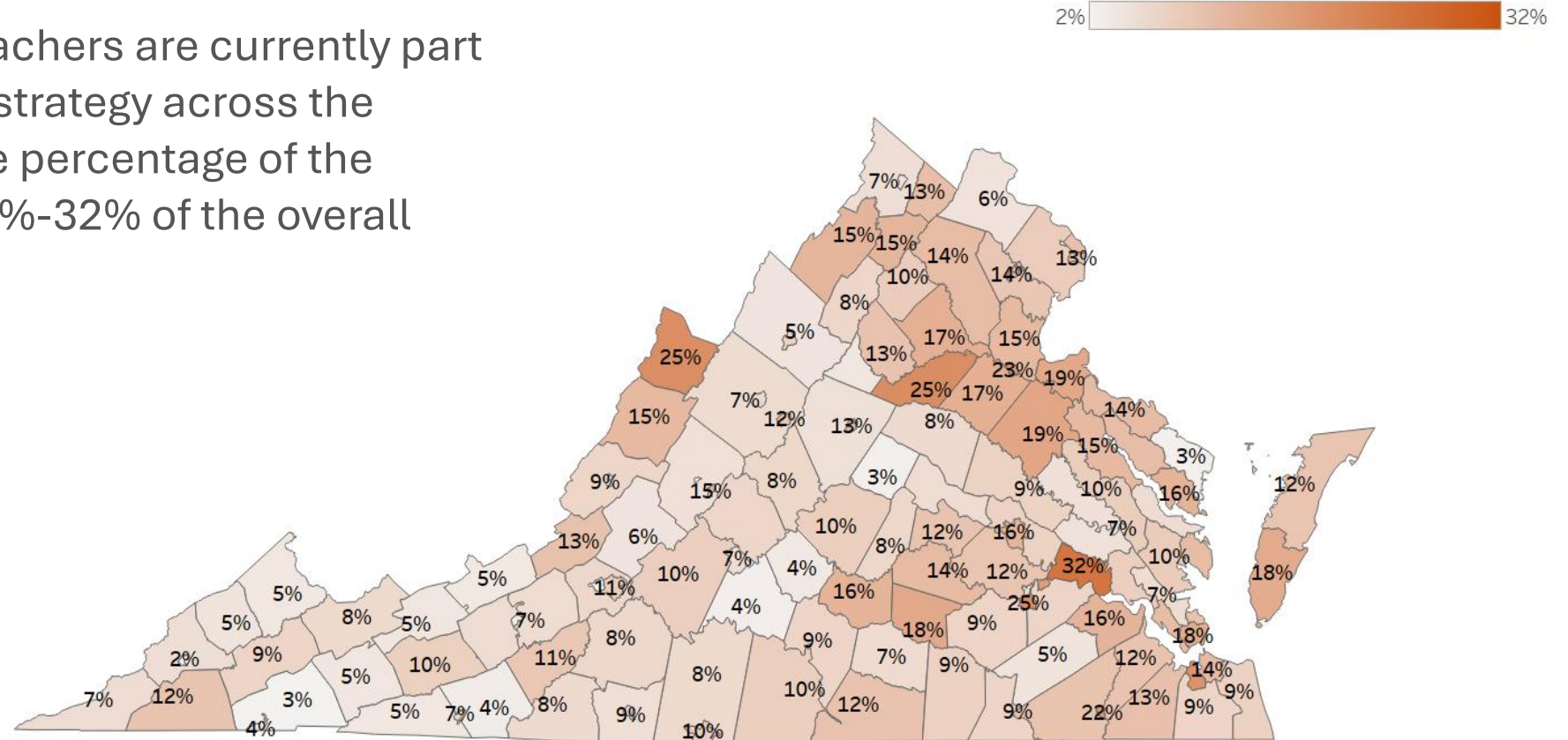
Notes: Data is based on 2025-2026 school year fall snapshot.

Provisional Licenses by Region (2025-26)

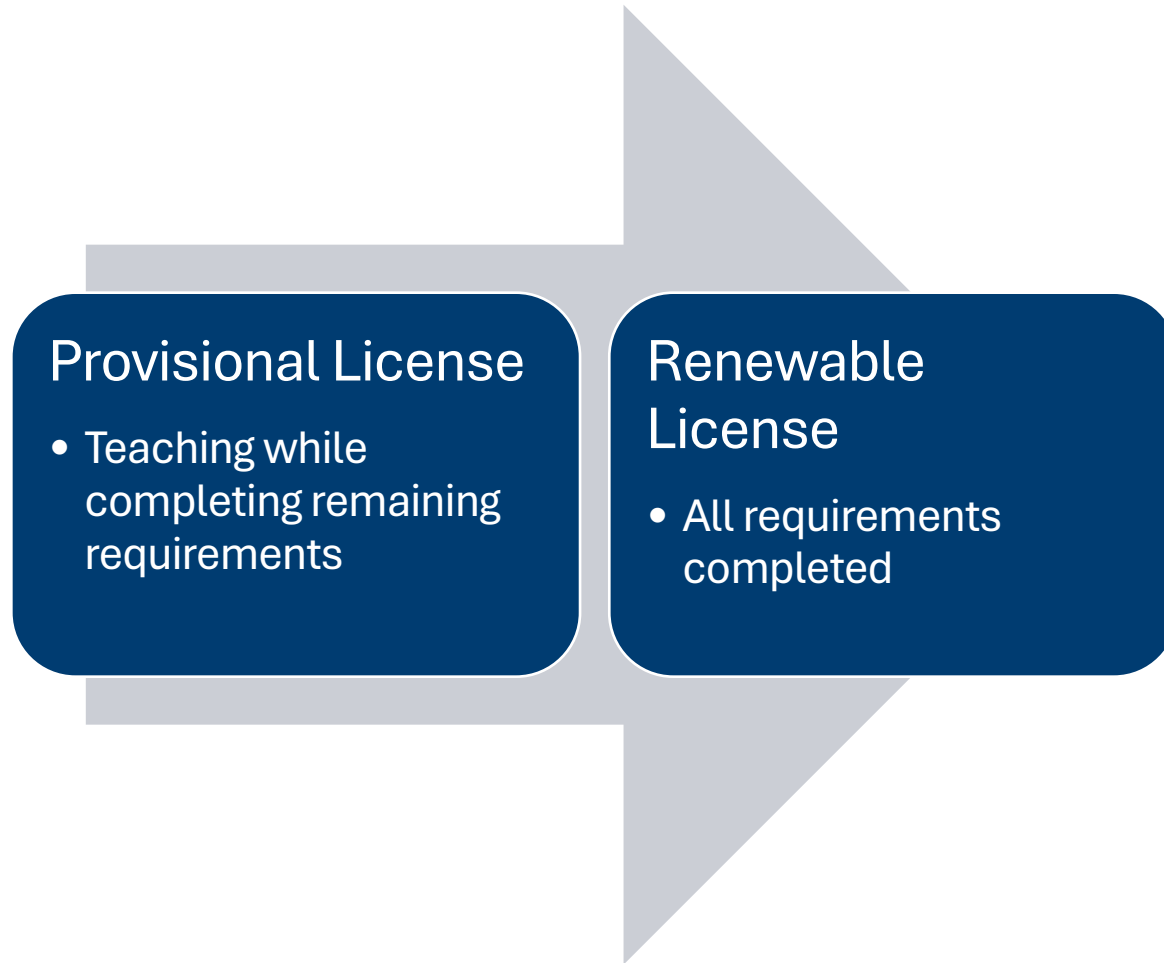


Provisional Licenses by Division (2025-26)

Provisionally licensed teachers are currently part of every division staffing strategy across the Commonwealth, with the percentage of the workforce ranging from 2%-32% of the overall teaching corps.



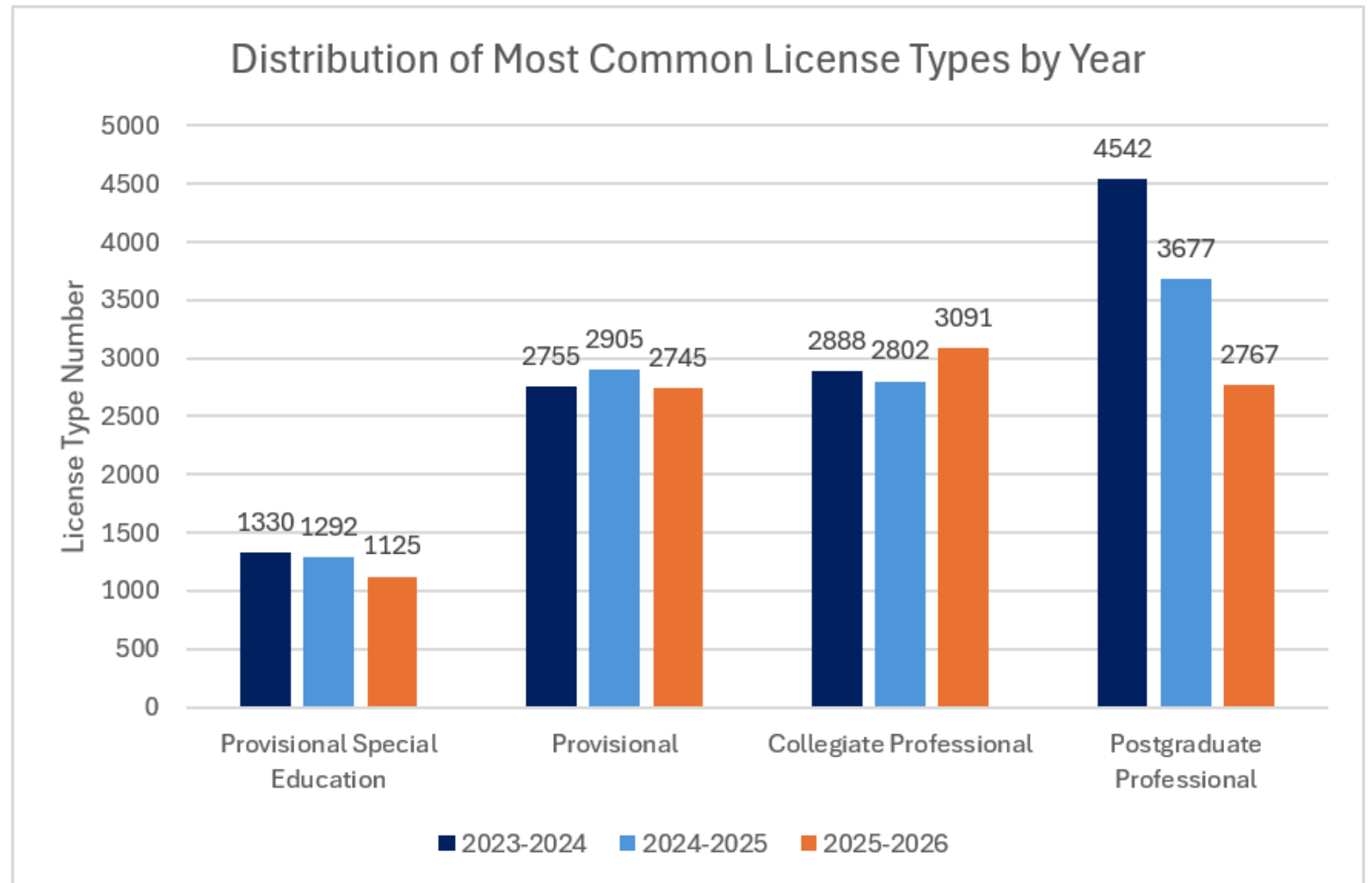
Teachers: From Entry to Renewable License



- How many successfully convert?
- How long does it take?
- Where do candidates get stuck?
- Does this differ by preparation pathway?
- What happens to teachers after licensure- where do they teach and do they stay?

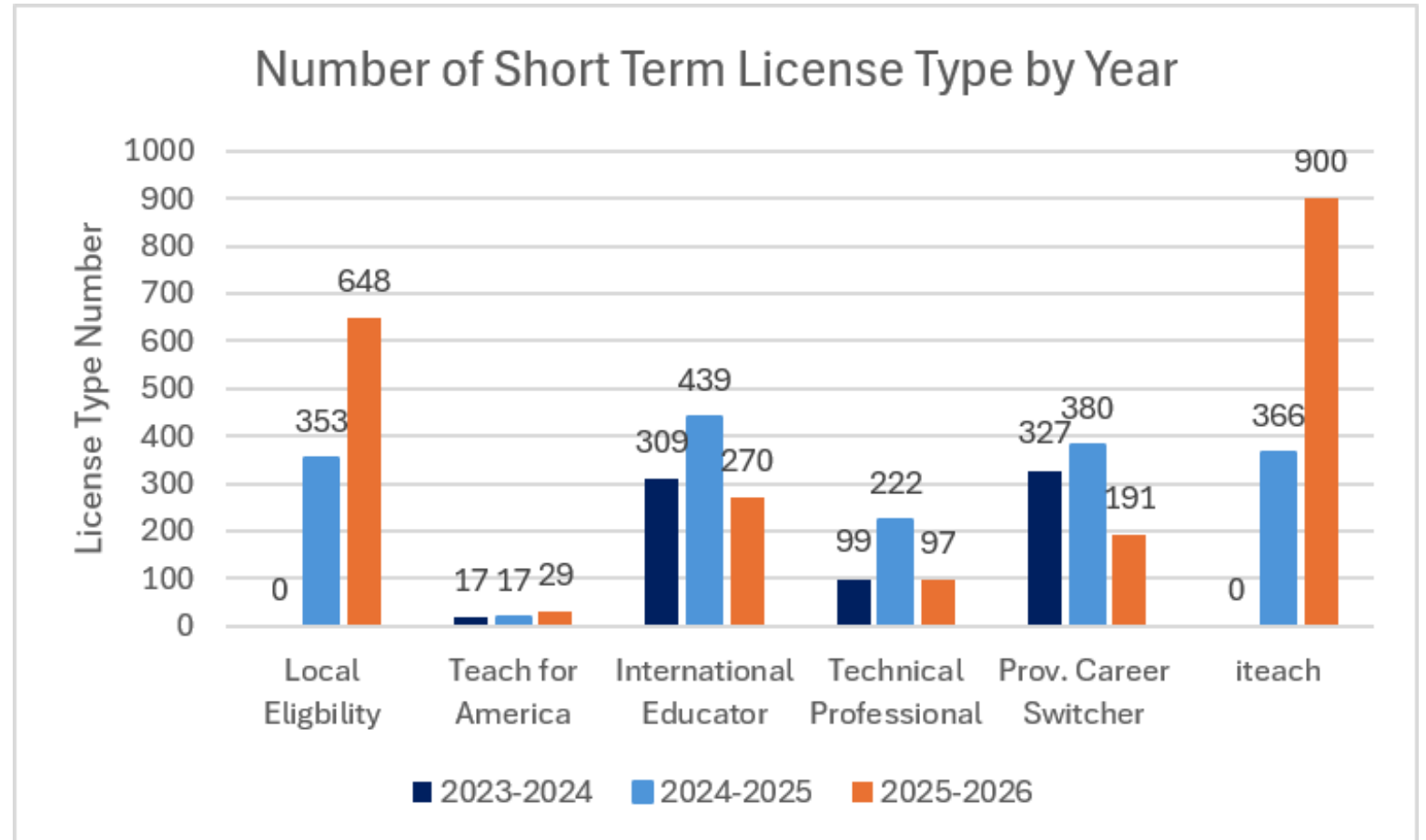
Distribution of License Types

Thousands of teachers enter classrooms **while** completing licensure requirements



Number of Short Term Licenses

Local Eligibility Licenses and iteach licenses are increasing by two and three-fold, while career switcher and international educator license types are decreasing in popularity.



Stakeholder Engagement

- ABTEL meets a minimum of five times per year to discuss and weigh in on licensure and teacher education matters.
- The Alternative Route to Licensure Workgroup will meet five times this year in preparation to make recommendations on more clearly defining and measuring quality of alternative routes to licensure.
- ABTEL and the Alternative Route to Licensure Workgroup both met this month to review the current landscape of Virginia's teacher workforce you saw today and define the problem we are trying to solve as it relates to the Alternative Route to Licensure Workgroup.

Next Steps

- Continue to engage ABTEL and Alternate Route Workgroup in discussions about recruitment, retention of teachers, barriers to entry, and supports needed to ensure high-quality preparation pathways.
- Refine areas of our data collection process to ensure we have reliable data to understand the current landscape.
- Begin the process of modernizing the licensure system to reduce barriers to entry and support the better collection and analysis of licensure data.

Appendix A- ABTEL Members

- Douglas Arnold
- Beth Ashley
- Pamela Bailey
- Katie Breaud
- Megan Bush
- Audrey Church
- Jennine Donaldson
- Shelby Elliott
- Jennifer Goen
- Kim Halterman
- Lindy Johnson
- Jessica Jones
- Hon. Karen Keys-Gamarra
- Daniel Lewis
- Eric Moffa
- Sharnita Montgomery
- Lianna Moss-Everhart
- Monica Osei
- Lauren Paz Soldan
- Ronald Ramsey
- Hon. Shelly Simonds
- Susan Traner
- Hon. Schulyer VanValkenburg
- Katie Werner
- Stephanie West
- Kerry Whitacre

Appendix B- Alternate Route to Licensure Workgroup Members

- Tanya Andreas
- Jackie Baker
- Maggie Barber
- Carol Bauer
- Nancy Bradley
- Thomas Brewster
- Catie Brownback
- Faye Covington-Bradley
- Shep Critzer
- Jessica Dadey
- Corey Dotson
- Shelby Elliott
- Hon. Barbara Favola
- Rasha Gaafar
- Kelley Gaske
- Shaquarius Godley
- Mindy Green
- Amy Griffin
- Endia Hatcher
- Graham Johnson
- Jessica Jones
- Denny Keffer
- Mabel Eliana Lamprea
- Amna Louai
- Tracy Martin
- Erin McDonnell-Jones
- Luke Miller
- Carole Nelson
- Kimberly Ogden
- Kristin Pantazis
- Lisa Pennycuff
- Hon. Sam Rasoul
- JoWanda Rollins Fells
- Andrew Rozell
- Tracy Ann Scott
- Melanie Simmonds
- Antionette Stroter
- Ryan Tauriainen
- Jennifer Whitaker
- Simone Whitaker
- Kathryn Wrenn
- Xianxuan Xu

Appendix C– Alternate Route to Licensure

Workgroup Organizations Represented

- Advisory Board for Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL)
- Amherst County Public Schools
- Arlington County Public Schools
- Bedford County Public Schools
- Charlotte County Public Schools
- Chesapeake Public Schools
- Greenville County Public Schools
- Hanover County Public Schools
- Henrico County Public Schools
- Henry County Public Schools
- iteach
- King George County Public Schools
- Longwood University
- Newport News City Public Schools
- Newport News City Public Schools
- Old Dominion University
- Portsmouth Public Schools
- Prince William County Public Schools
- Randolph-Macon University
- Richmond Public Schools
- Rockingham County Public Schools
- Shenandoah University
- State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV)
- Suffolk County Public Schools
- Tazewell County Public Schools
- Teach for America
- University of Virginia
- VA Association of School Superintendents (VASS)
- VA Association of College and Teacher Educators (VACTE)
- VA Association of School Personnel Administrators (VASPA)
- Virginia Community College System (VCCS)
- Virginia Education Association (VEA)
- Virginia General Assembly
- VA Longitudinal Data System
- VA Parent Teacher Association
- VA School Boards Association
- Virginia State University
- VA TESOL

Appendix D- Considerations for Long Term Substitute Data

- VDOE collects a snapshot of long term substitutes employed by a division in a Fall data collection window, however we do not yet have consistent, reliable data to indicate how widespread the use of long term substitutes to fill teaching vacancies is.
- HB2201, passed in 2025, directed VDOE to collect this data more specifically.
- After the first round of data collection, it became clear that collecting this data as a one-off data collection did not yield reliable enough data, a second round of data is currently being collected using a revised process and this collection will be integrated into a more reliable process moving forward.