

Confronting the Issue of Teaching Out of Field: Innovation or Inequity?

Minda López, Jim Van Overschelde, & Jane Saunders
Texas State University

Presented at AACTE 2024 in Denver, CO



What is teaching Out-of-Field (OOF)?

- When teachers teach classes for which they are not licensed, they are **teaching out of field** (OOF) (du Plessis, 2015; Ingersoll, 1998; 2019).
- OOF teaching is not due to a lack of basic education (ie. bachelor's degree or Initial Teacher Education ITE) or training but is a **mismatch between teachers' field of training and their teaching assignments.**

What is teaching Out-of-Field (OOF)?

- Researchers are thinking about OOF as beyond licensure and also as:
 - “goodness of fit” (Sharplin, 2014)
 - Boundary crossing (Hobbs, 2013)
 - Teacher “at homeness” (DuPlessis, 2014)
 - Teacher identity (Bosse & Törner, 2015; Hobbs, 2013)
 - Teacher beliefs and competencies (Shueler et al., 2016)

Why does teaching Out-of-Field (OOF) happen?

- **Shortage of teachers** – higher supply and demand (Hobbs & Torner, 2019)
- **Equity issue** – licensed teachers in wealthier schools (Ingersoll, 2002)
- Need for teachers/adults in every classroom (Hobbs & Torner, 2019)

Where does teaching Out-of-Field (OOF) happen?

- This is primarily a **secondary (Grades 7-12) phenomenon across all content areas.**
- It happens most in **under-resourced & rural schools,** schools with **higher percentages of EBs and students of color.**
- From theater, art and music to speech, history, and government to English, Math and the Sciences.
- From a study in Texas from 2011-2018, the highest number of OOF classes taught was English.



Teaching Out-of-Field (OOF) in TX **by total number**

(between 2011-12 and 2017-18)

Rank by #	Subject	# of classes	Percentage OOF	Number OOF
1	ELA	2,121,281	26.7%	566,382
2	Math	2,058,826	24.4%	502,353
3	P.E.	1,295,166	34.6%	448,127
4	History	1,166,007	31.3%	364,960
5	Spanish	756,989	34.6%	261,918

Van Overschelde & Piatt, 2020



REDEE
Research for Educator Equity & Excellence

Teaching Out-of-Field (OOF) in TX **by number OOF**

(between 2011-12 and 2017-18)

Rank by # OOF	Subject	# of classes	Number OOF
1.	ELA + RDG	2,441,267	650,218
2.	History+ Geo + Govt + SS	1,747,603	560,787
3.	Math	2,058,826	502,353
4.	Science + Bio + Chem + Phy + IPC + Earth Science	1,833,121	456,661
5.	P.E.	1,295,166	448,127

Teaching Out-of-Field (OOF) in TX **by percentage**

(between 2011-12 and 2017-18)

Rank by %	Subject	# of classes	Percentage OOF	Number OOF
1.	Earth Science	28,924	53.5%	15,474
2.	Physics/ Chemistry	150,120	47.0%	70,556
3.	Sociology	24,169	45.6%	11,021
4.	Social Studies	32,012	41.7%	13,349
5.	Psychology	39,431	41.3%	16,285

Van Overschelde & Piatt, 2020



Why does teaching OOF matter?

- Students show **less academic growth** when taught OOF (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2010; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002).
- The likelihood of being taught OOF is **higher for students of color and Emergent Bilinguals as well as students in rural schools** (Beswick, Fraser, & Crowley, 2016; Nixon et al, 2017).
- **1 in 4 core classes of high poverty schools** has an OOF teacher compared with **1 in 9 in low poverty schools** (Almy & Theokas, 2010).
- Teachers assigned OOF tend to leave faster, impacting **retention and quality** (Donaldson & Johnson, 2010).



Is teaching OOF always negative?

- **Opportunity vs. Deficit Positions** (Hobbs & Törner, 2019).

Opportunity:

- Teachers have some control over what they teach, may be supported and resourced.
- With culture of collaboration and innovation, OOF teaching can lead to learning, expansion, and new passions and interests (Hobbs, 2013)

Deficit:

- Teachers do not choose or have increased stress
- Competence is compromised leading to more stress, poor self-efficacy and disillusionment which leads to teacher attrition (Coetzer & Coetzee, 2015; Pillay et al., 2005, Schueler et al., 2016)

“Whether OOF teaching is considered a ‘problem’ for the teaching profession is ultimately determined by the impact on students” (Hobbs & Törner, 2019)



REDEE
Research for EDucator Equity & Excellence

How have **national** policies impacted teaching OOF?

- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)
- NCLB attempted to reduce the number of teachers teaching OOF by increasing requirements for teachers (Highly qualified teachers). Teachers were highly qualified if they had at least a bachelor's degree, full state licensure, and demonstrated competency in the subject being taught (NCLB, Section 7801[23][b][ii] as quoted in Van Overschelde & Piatt, 2020)

How have **national** policies impacted teaching OOF?

- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015)
- Increased **local control** with the idea that freedom from federal mandates would increase student achievement, improve teacher quality, and provide previously underserved students with more effective teachers (ESSA Section 2001 as cited in Van Overschelde & Piatt, 2020).
- **ESSA requires distribution of OOF teachers to be equitable** between low & high income children and white students & students of color.
- **OOF teaching has increased dramatically** since the “Every Student Succeeds Act” in 2015



How have **state**
policies impacted
teaching OOF?

OOF in Florida

Volusia county asked OOF assigned teachers to “complete a minimum of 6 semester hours or 120 hours of in-service [professional development/learning] in the OOF certification area to be eligible to teach in succeeding years (Hobbs & Törner, 2019).

The county school district website has a list of approved teachers for 2017-2018.

OOF in Oklahoma

- Oklahoma implemented ESSA local control by allowing school districts the unlimited and indefinite use of **emergency teaching licenses**. Since 2020, schools can hire and permanently employ untrained and unqualified teachers as long as they hold an emergency license.
- **Teachers must be enrolled in a degree-based TPP and must submit annual reports showing they are making progress toward teacher licensure.**
- Oklahoma issued three times more emergency licenses in 2023-24 than it graduated new teacher candidates from TPPs.



OOF in Texas

- Texas implemented ESSA by creating ***Districts of Innovation (DOI)***. DOI allows school districts to legally circumvent existing state statutes and rules associated with teacher recruitment, preparation, and licensure.
- Schools can now recruit and hire untrained and unlicensed people to teach, and **schools do not need to disclose this practice to parents and guardians.**
- **Over half (55%) of all new teachers hired in 2022-23 in Texas were not qualified to teach. In rural communities the situation is even worse. Of the new hires, 72% were unqualified, up from 18% just 10 years before.**

What about in your state?

Do you know how teaching OOF has been defined in your context?

- What are state policies around teacher licensure?
- What kind of teacher preparation programs do you have?
- Where can you find this information?



Teaching OOF and EPP Accountability: What's the Connection?

EPP Accountability

The three most common data sources for evaluating teacher preparation programs include:

- Teaching observations.
- Satisfaction surveys from graduates, employers and K-12 pupils in the graduates' classrooms.
- Student growth on standardized tests.

APA, 2014



EPP Accountability in Texas

- Student academic growth on state standardized tests is a key metric for EPP accountability in Texas, based on growth from one year to the next.
- Ignores teaching OOF.
- **What might the implications of this be for EPPs?**

EPP Accountability in Texas & OOF teaching

- Principal ratings vary according to teaching OOF.
- Teacher persistence varies when teaching OOF.
- Student academic growth varies when teaching OOF.

EPP Accountability in TX and ELA student growth

- In grades 10, 9, and 8 the teachers teaching English OOF have students who learn the least (compared to licensed in-field, interns, and test-licensed).
- In grade 7, intern teachers' students learn the least followed by OOF teachers (-2.4% & -2.9% SD, respectively).
- It takes from 2 (Intern teachers, grade 9) to 29.2 years (OOF teachers, grade 10) to overcome the deficits in their student growth (Lopez, Van Overschelde & Saunders, 2023).

ELA student growth—how long does it take to overcome these deficits?

English Class	Test-License	Intern-License	OOF-License
Grade 10	11.6 Years	12.2 Years	29.1 Years
Grade 9	4.9 Years	2.2 Years	12.1 Years
Grade 8	5.2 Years	8.4 Years	10.6 Years
Grade 7	3.5 Years	11.7 Years	9.7 Years

EPP Accountability in TX and ELA student growth

- Teachers who are assigned (who does this assigning?) to teach OOF have a negative impact on student growth.
- Research indicates the likelihood of having an OOF teacher is higher for already marginalized populations (Emerging Bilinguals, students of color, rural areas), exacerbating inequalities.
- Assigning teachers to teach OOF is out of the purview of EPPS.

What about in your state? What does EPP Accountability take into consideration?

- What are state policies around EPP accountability?
- How does teaching OOF impact this accountability?



What are implications of teaching OOF on education overall and on educator preparation? What can we as EPPs do about it?

- Inform teacher candidates of implications of teaching OOF
- Train teacher candidates across licensure areas
- Provide microcredentials/prep for licensure for other content areas
- Work with principal certification programs
- What else?