## GAP AREA: Students with disabilities (SWDs) are more likely to be assigned to out-of-field teachers

By meeting Massachusetts’s moral imperative to provide **all students with equitable access** to excellent educators, schools can also close gaps in educational outcomes.

## I. [Use additional data](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/equitableaccess/resources/templates-otherdata.docx)

* Analyze Student Learning Experience (SLE) [detailed reports](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edwin/gateway/slereport-supp.html), comparing rates of assignment of SWDs to out-of-field teaches by subject taught.
* Determine if special education teachers have lower retention rates.
* Compare difficulty of teacher recruitment (for example, rate of late hiring dates) by subject taught and program area.
* Determine whether disproportionate assignment of SWDs to out-of-field teachers overlaps with other equity gaps; for example, if students of color or economically disadvantaged students are overrepresented among SWDs, it may be a cause of those student groups’ rates assignment to out-of-field teachers.
* Identify schools, subjects, and types of courses in which teachers are most frequently teaching out-of-field.

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## II. [Ask self-assessment/ stakeholder engagement questions to explore root causes](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/equitableaccess/resources/templates-rootcauseanalysis.docx)

* Are out-of-field teachers concentrated in specific courses, such as substantially separate classes?
* Does the district have teachers/paraprofessionals who are working toward special education certification, or special educators working toward adding a content-area certification?
* Do special educators switch to other program areas? If so, why?
* If teachers who serve SWDs have lower retention rates, why do they leave?

Are teacher recruiting/hiring practices different for teachers of SWDs? Are parents/community members involved in hiring teachers of SWDs?

## Resources

**Guides for other gap areas**

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* The Edwin Out of Field Teacher Assignments Report (SE821) lists assignments of out-of-field teachers in a district
* A [searchable database](https://gateway.edu.state.ma.us/elar/licensurehelp/ProgramSearchPageControl.ser) to identify programs that prepare teachers for special education or other hard-to-staff roles
* [Keeping Quality Teachers](https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/li-05-01.pdf) summarizes best practices for retention of effective teachers and provides self-assessment tools, with a focus on special educators
* The [Leading Educational Access Project](http://www.doe.mass.edu/leap/pd.html) offers training and resources to promote educational access and decrease inappropriate eligibility decisions for special education
* A [brief guide](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/mentor/hard-to-staff-roles.docx) on recruitment and retention of teachers in hard-to-staff areas
* Some out-of-field teachers may use [Structured Guidance & Supports](http://www.doe.mass.edu/licensure/academic-prek12/sgs/) for meeting the licensure Competency Review
* [Strategy overviews and tools](http://wgee.org/best-practices/promising-practices-by-district/) from districts working to improve recruitment and induction
* [District advisory](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/advisories/DistrictPipeline.docx) and [guidance](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/equitableaccess/partnerships.pdf) on educator pipeline development
* [Example](https://www.mtholyoke.edu/media/mhc-holyoke-partner-teacher-training) of a “grow your own” program, which can develop new special educators
* The [Master Schedule Review](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/8b-masterschedreview.docx), a tool from the [Guidebook for Inclusive Practice,](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeval/guidebook/) supports scheduling to meet the needs of diverse learners

## III. [Develop strategy starting points](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/equitableaccess/resources/templates-strategies.docx) & [monitor progress](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/equitableaccess/resources/templates-progress.docx)

* When recruiting teachers, or placing student teachers, target high performing preparation programs that prepare teacher candidates for hard-to-staff subjects, including special education.
* Consistently communicate with preparation programs about your district’s hiring needs.
* Develop earlier, prioritized hiring for teachers certified in special education *and* hard-to-staff content areas.
* Evaluate and enhance the new teacher induction program, and other teacher supports, to support and retain teachers of SWDs.
* Systematically support teachers working to add special education certification, or special educators working to add content certification.
* Provide opportunities for [teacher leadership](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/leadership/), and differentiated training professional development, to retain effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects.
* Develop a clear process for monitoring progress, with short-term and long-term metrics.