

Results in Brief: Study of the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program

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The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant aims to increase the number of highly qualified individuals teaching in high-need fields, such as reading specialist, mathematics, or science, at high-need schools. TEACH Grants provide up to \$4,000 per academic year to students preparing to become teachers. To receive a TEACH Grant, students must sign a service agreement to teach in a high-need field and school for a minimum of four years in an eight-year period. After leaving their program, recipients must provide annual certification indicating that they intend to or are currently teaching in a high-need field and school. For recipients who do not meet the service or certification requirements, their TEACH Grants convert to loans. This study was conducted to better understand institutional practices in implementing the TEACH Grant program and to identify factors associated with grant recipients not meeting the grant requirements.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How do TEACH Grant recipients view the grant requirements and to what extent do recipients fulfill those requirements?
2. What factors are associated with TEACH Grant recipients not meeting the grant requirements?
3. How do institutions of higher education administer TEACH Grants and support grant recipients?

STUDY DESIGN

Findings in this report are based on data collected from institutions and TEACH Grant recipients through surveys and interviews as well as from existing data. Surveys were administered to all 472 institutions that awarded TEACH Grants to at least 10 recipients in 2014–15 and to a random sample of 500 TEACH Grant recipients who had either graduated from or left the 472 institutions.

Site visits were conducted at nine institutions administering TEACH Grants and included interviews with faculty who work in teacher preparation, as well as staff in admissions, financial aid, and student support roles. The extant data analysis included administrative data on TEACH Grant recipients and documents that institutions used to promote awareness about the TEACH Grant.

A limitation of this study is that some respondents did not answer questions related to their reasons for not meeting the grant requirements.

Highlights

- More than half (58 percent) of the TEACH Grant recipients said the TEACH Grant was somewhat or very influential in their decisions to pursue teaching in a high-need field at a high-need school.
- When TEACH Grant recipients first received their grants, 89 percent thought they were likely or very likely to fulfill the service requirements, but at the time of the survey, 63 percent had their grants converted to a loan because they had not met the service requirements or the annual certification requirements.
- Recipients who did not meet the grant requirements reported both employment-related factors, such as teaching in a position that did not qualify as TEACH Grant service, as well as process-related factors, such as not understanding the service requirements and not knowing about the annual certification requirement.
- Institutions were more likely to report using TEACH Grants to make higher education more affordable for students than to encourage students to pursue teaching in a high-need field at a high-need school.
- If TEACH Grants were counted against the federal annual loan limit, 42 percent of students who received TEACH Grants in 2013–14 would have exceeded that limit.
- Seventy percent of institutions provided students with placement services for qualifying TEACH Grant service positions.

TEACH GRANT RECIPIENT VIEWS AND OUTCOMES

Fifty-eight percent of the TEACH Grant recipients said the TEACH Grant was somewhat or very influential in their decisions to pursue teaching in a high-need field at a high-need school. Almost half (44 percent) said that the TEACH Grant was somewhat or very influential in their decisions to pursue teaching as a career. Thirty-three percent of the recipients said that the grants did not influence their decisions to pursue teaching as a career, and 19 percent said that the grants did not influence their decisions to pursue teaching in a high-need field and school.

Eighty-nine percent of the TEACH Grant recipients thought they were likely or very likely to fulfill the service requirements when they first received their grant. Recipients who eventually had their grants converted to loans retrospectively reported being less likely to meet the service requirements when they first received their grant.

Among TEACH Grant recipients who began their eight-year service obligation period prior to July 2014, 63 percent had their grants converted to an unsubsidized loan because they did not meet service requirements or annual certification requirements as of June 2016. Among the remaining, 6 percent completed their service in full, and 31 percent have grants requiring service.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RECIPIENTS NOT MEETING THE TEACH GRANT REQUIREMENTS

Recipients who did not meet the grant requirements reported both employment-related factors and process-related factors.

- **Employment-related factors** included teaching in a position that did not qualify as TEACH Grant service (39 percent) and not working as a certified teacher (33 percent).
- **Process-related factors** included not understanding the TEACH grant service requirements (32 percent), not knowing about the annual certification process (19 percent), and challenges with the certification process (13 percent).
- Twenty-four percent reported other factors such as never being certain of intention to teach and changing to a nonteaching, administrative position at a school (e.g., promotion to principal) prior to fulfilling their service.

TEACH Grant recipients who did not meet the grant requirements were less likely than those who met certification and/or service requirements to say they were well informed about the service requirements

during the process of obtaining their first grant (39 percent and 65 percent, respectively).

Grant-to-loan conversion rates were higher among males, students with federal loans, and Pell Grant recipients. For example, 66 percent of then TEACH Grant recipients who were Pell Grant recipients had a grant converted to a loan versus 58 percent of those who were not Pell Grant recipients.

INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Institutions were more likely to report using TEACH Grants to make higher education more affordable for students than to encourage students to pursue teaching in a high-need field at a high-need school.

Nearly all (92 percent) institutions reported using TEACH Grants to make higher education more affordable for students. Almost half (49 percent) of the institutions reported using TEACH Grants to encourage students to pursue teaching in a high-need field at a high-need school.

Ninety-three percent of the IHE Survey respondents indicated that the financial aid office led oversight of the grant, whereas 7 percent indicated that oversight was led by other departments, such as the college of education.

If TEACH Grants were counted against the federal annual loan limit, 42 percent of students who received TEACH Grants in 2013–14 would have exceeded that limit.

Federal loan limits exist to protect students from excessive borrowing. Although TEACH Grants are not intended to be loans and do not count against federal loan limits, nearly two-thirds of recipients examined ultimately had their grants converted to loans.

Seventy percent of institutions provided students with placement services for qualifying TEACH Grant service positions.

More than half of the participating institutions reported providing guidance to students on how to identify teaching positions that would qualify under the grant requirements (58 percent). Fewer institutions indicated that they provided updated lists of available positions to students (48 percent).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The complete report is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/ppss/reports.html>.