

# The Increasing Reliance on Emergency Permits for Teachers in Pennsylvania

BY SEAN VANNATA & MARY EDDINS

JUNE 2025

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher shortages have become increasingly prevalent nationwide, a trend amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pennsylvania's educator shortage presents a significant challenge to its public education system, particularly affecting specific subject areas and certain regions. The state has experienced:

- **A sharp decline in the number of newly certified teachers.** The state issued only 7,677 Instructional I certifications for classroom teachers in 2023-24, down from a high of 21,045 in 2010-11;<sup>1</sup>
- **Higher rates of teacher attrition or teachers leaving positions.** 7.7% of Pennsylvania teachers left their positions in 2023-24 compared to 6.2% in 2022-23 and 5.4% in 2020-21;<sup>2</sup> and
- **High numbers of teacher vacancies.** Schools reported more than 2,000 classroom teacher vacancies across the state in 2023-24 and 2024-25.<sup>3</sup>

One consequence of this teacher shortage is an increased reliance on “emergency permits” or emergency certificates to fill open teaching positions.<sup>4</sup> In Pennsylvania, when school districts, charter schools, and other Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are unable to fill positions of need with traditionally certified teachers, they can request emergency permits from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Individuals without full certification can fill classroom teaching positions with an emergency permit if they meet specific criteria—earned a bachelor's degree and, if the placement is to fill an ongoing position, enrolled in a state-approved certification preparation program to work toward a standard certification. Emergency permits expire each year but can be reissued if the individual has completed the required number of credits in their preparation program.<sup>5</sup>

While emergency permits help LEAs fill open positions and offer aspiring educators a non-traditional route into the teaching profession, the growth in emergency permit use raises critical questions around educational equity. Research indicates that access to experienced and certified teachers can improve students' academic achievement and overall development.<sup>6,7,8</sup> To transition emergency certified teachers into long-term, fully certified teachers, state and local leaders must address the many challenges these educators face. Many emergency certified teachers may struggle in the classroom due to their limited experience in classroom management and pedagogy. Some emergency-certified teachers experience financial burdens and significant stressors in completing coursework and passing the Praxis certification test required to transition into long-term, fully certified teachers.<sup>9</sup>

This brief from Research for Action's (RFA) Pennsylvania Clearinghouse for Education Research project (PACER) examines emergency permit data from PDE to provide a deeper understanding of how emergency permits have been and are being used by Pennsylvania LEAs. The analysis focuses on the rising reliance on two specific

types of permits (Type 01 and 04) that are used to hire long-term substitutes, or staff who fill teaching positions for up to a full academic year. Because they educate students for extended periods of time and more directly impact student learning, the use of these types of emergency certified teachers warrants closer examination. More specifically, this brief:

1. Analyzes emergency permit use over time and across different LEA types (districts, charters, and career and technical centers or CATCs),
2. Explores emergency permit use by classroom subjects to uncover new findings on which subjects have experienced the sharpest increase in use of emergency certified teachers, and
3. Highlights LEAs with the highest emergency permit rates and examines their key characteristics.

# Key Findings



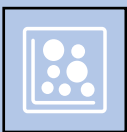
**Pennsylvania's emergency permit rate has increased significantly during the nine years in which data is available.** Statewide, the emergency permit rate has risen from 0.9% in 2015-16 to 5.7% in 2023-24.



**Emergency permit usage has increased across all LEA types, but emergency permit usage is highest in Pennsylvania's charter schools.** In the most recent school year, the statewide emergency permit rate was 13.4% for charters and 4.9% for districts.



**Emergency permit usage has increased for teachers of all subjects, but special education teachers have experienced the sharpest rise.** The stark increase in emergency permits issued to special education teachers may reflect a statewide policy change in addition to a specific shortage of special education teachers.



**Emergency permits are highly concentrated within a small number of Pennsylvania's school districts.** Just 20 school districts (out of 499) issued half of all emergency permits in 2023-24. Most school districts have an emergency permit rate under 2%, and 98 districts employ no emergency certified teachers at all.



**Districts that serve higher concentrations of historically marginalized students and are inadequately funded have higher rates of emergency certified teachers on average.** Emergency permit rates are higher in districts that serve more students of color and students with economic disadvantages. Additionally, districts with the highest emergency permit rates have the largest per-pupil funding inadequacies.

# Approach to Analysis and Data Limitations

To study emergency permit use over time, RFA combined PDE’s emergency permit data and staff summary data<sup>10</sup> to calculate the ratio of emergency permits to total classroom teachers, or the **emergency permit rate**. This rate refers specifically to Type 01 and 04 emergency permits, which are used to hire long-term substitutes. All emergency permit types are detailed below.

## Emergency Permit Rate

The ratio of emergency permits to classroom teachers.

$$\frac{(\text{\# of Type 01 and 04 emergency permits issued})}{(\text{\# of classroom teachers})}$$

This calculation cannot indicate the exact percentage of teachers certified with an emergency permit because of two key data limitations. First, the emergency permit data provides the *number of emergency permits issued*, rather than the *number of teachers* actively certified with an emergency permit. This may include multiple permits for one teacher as teachers can hold more than one emergency permit. Second, PDE’s staff summary data, which provides the number of teachers within an LEA and is a separate dataset from the emergency permit data, does not identify if staff hold a specific emergency permit type, making it unclear which emergency-certified teachers are counted in the total teacher counts. Despite these limitations, the calculated emergency permit rate provides a strong indication of the degree of emergency permit use in LEAs and the state.

Additional caution should be considered when comparing emergency permit rates across LEA types. First, Pennsylvania charter schools are concentrated in specific geographic regions, often urban centers of the state. This analysis compares statewide charter averages to district averages, not against their school districts of residence. In addition, differences in teacher certification requirements prevent a pure apples-to-apples district/charter school comparison. State law requires that 100% of school district teachers must be certified (either through traditional certification or emergency certification),<sup>11</sup> meaning the emergency permit rate for districts provides an estimate of the number of teachers without a traditional certificate. However, the Pennsylvania charter school law only requires that 75% of non-special education teachers must be certified (100% of special education teachers must be certified).<sup>12</sup> These differences in requirements mean that our analysis likely undercounts the number of teachers in charter schools who are not traditionally certified, as state professional staffing data does not indicate which teachers lack certification of any type.

## Pennsylvania’s Emergency Permit Types

**Type 01 and 04 are for long-term substitutes and are the focus of this analysis.**

- *Type 01*: Long-term substitute with educational obligation to pursue certification.
- *Type 02*: Act 97 waiver of certification for individual facing furlough.
- *Type 04*: Long-term substitutes with no educational obligation.
- *Type 06*: Day-to-day substitutes.
- *Type 08*: Teachers on cultural exchange permit.
- *Type 09*: Classroom monitor permits.

Lastly, the detailed emergency permit data published by PDE only provides data at the LEA level, not at the school level. School district LEAs may have large variation in emergency permit usage between their schools which cannot be measured with public data.

The majority of analyses are presented at the state or sector level. A file sharing the emergency permit rates for each individual LEA in 2023-24 is [available for download](#).

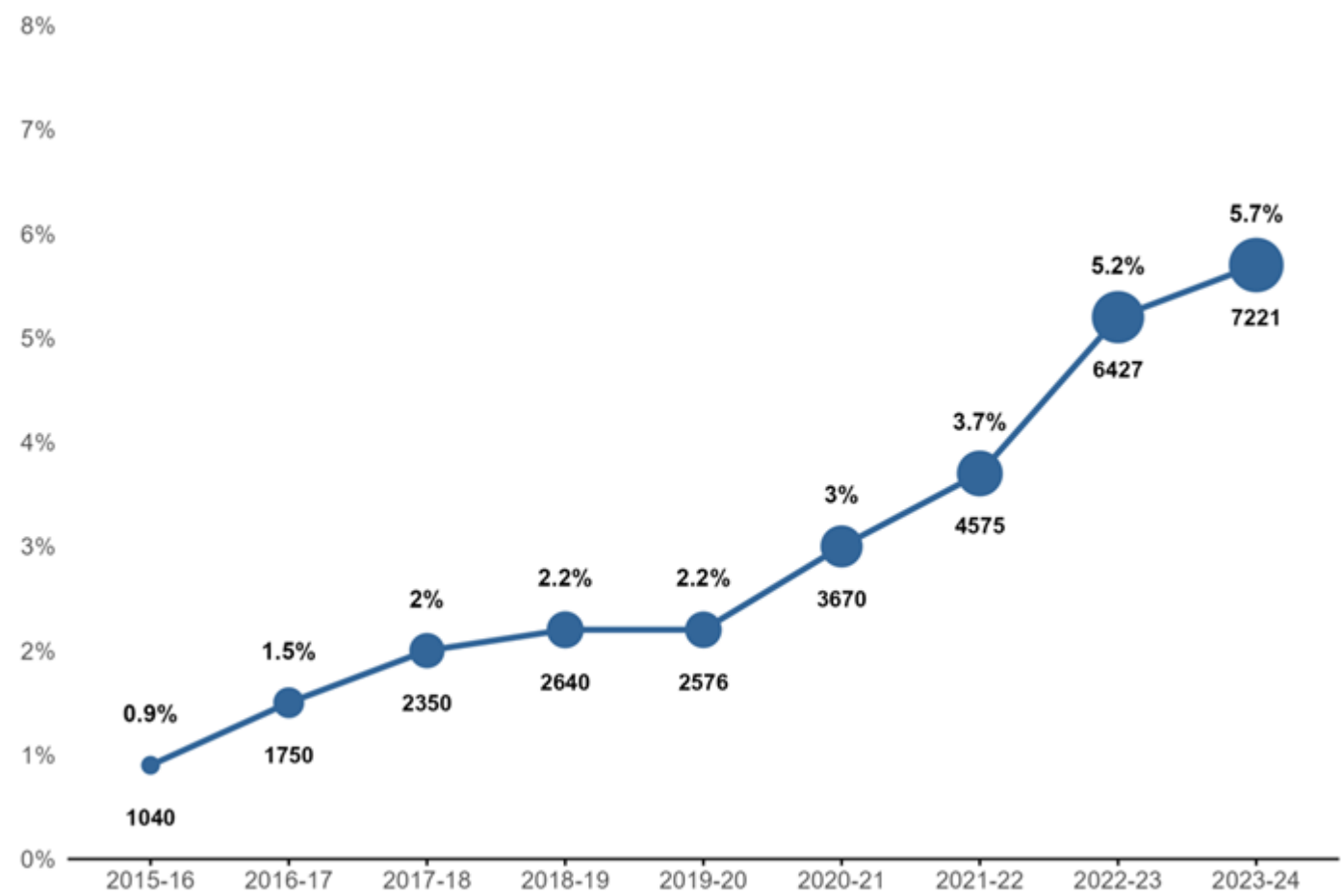
## Findings

### *Emergency Permit Use Over Time in Pennsylvania*

**In Pennsylvania, the emergency permit rate and the number of emergency permits issued have both sharply increased over time.**

From the 2015-16 to 2023-24 school year, the rate of emergency permit use in Pennsylvania increased from 0.9% to 5.7%. Figure 1 displays Pennsylvania’s emergency permit rate and total number of emergency permits issued over time. In 2023-24, PDE issued 7,221 emergency permits, an increase of 6,181 since 2015-16.

Figure 1. Emergency Permit Rate and Total Number of Emergency Permits, Pennsylvania, 2015-16 to 2023-24



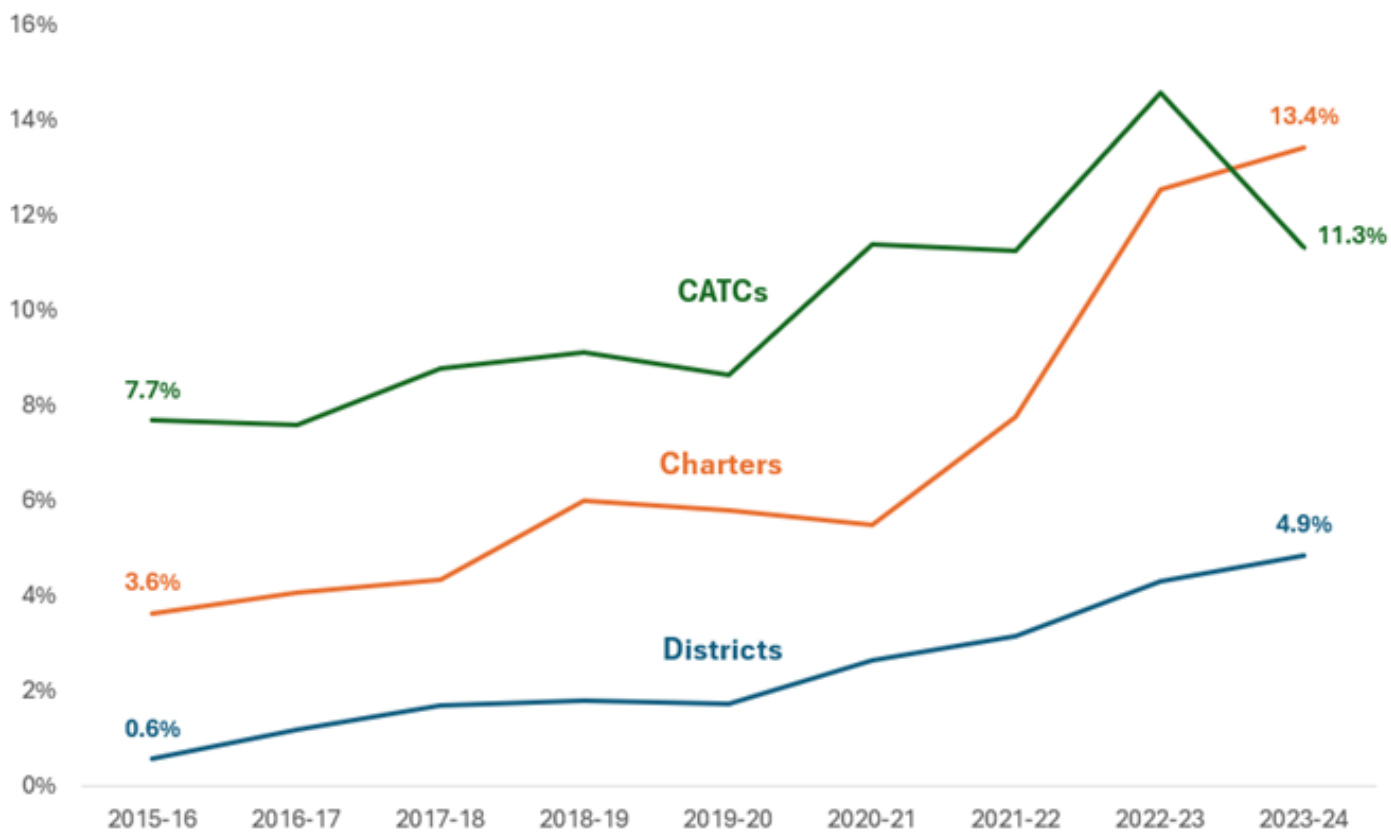
Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data and Staff Summary Report Data.

Note: Figure 1 displays the statewide emergency permit rate from the first year of available data on emergency permits (2015-16) to the most recent year of data available (2023-24). This is calculated by dividing the total number of emergency permits in the state by the total number of teachers in the state. The top label represents the emergency permit rate for the corresponding year (5.7% in 2023-24). The bottom label and the size of the marker represents the total number of emergency permits issued that year (7,221 in 2023-24).

**Districts, charters, and CATCs have all increased their reliance on emergency permits over time. However, Charter and CATCs have consistently had higher emergency permit rates.**

Figure 2 shows the emergency permit rates in Pennsylvania over time by LEA type (districts, charters, and CATCs). CATCs consistently employed emergency certified teachers at the highest rate, until 2023-24, when charters had the highest emergency permit rate (13.4%). Later sections of this brief will delve deeper into emergency permit use within districts and charters.

Figure 2. Emergency Permit Rate by LEA Type, Pennsylvania, 2015-16 to 2023-24



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data and Staff Summary Report Data.

**While emergency permit rates have increased for teachers of all subjects, there has been a particularly sharp rise in emergency permit use for teachers of special education.**

Figure 3 shows the emergency permit rate of teachers by subject category (vocational and elective courses, core subjects, languages, and instructional support) from 2015-16 to 2023-24. Among the subject areas, instructional support experienced the largest increase in emergency permit usage. The emergency permit rate for instructional support increased from around 0% to greater than 9% over the nine years studied. This is largely driven by the increasing use of emergency permits in special education, which is further detailed in Figure 4. World languages have consistently had high emergency permit rates and were 6.9% statewide in 2023-24.

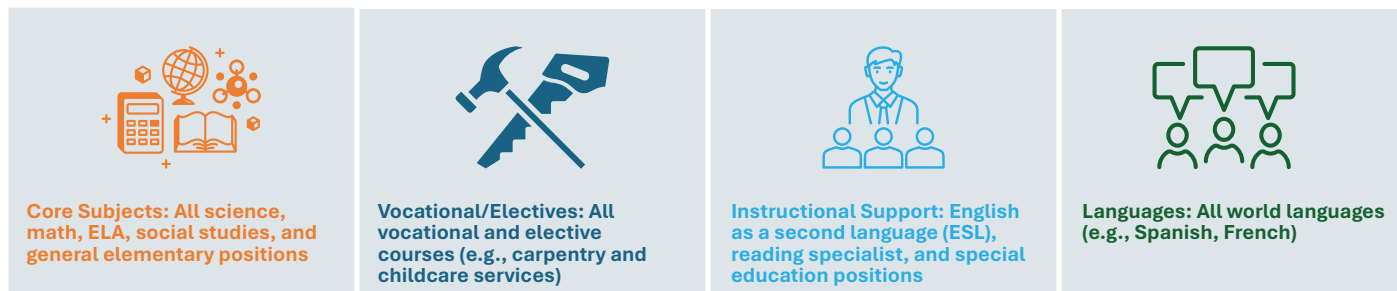
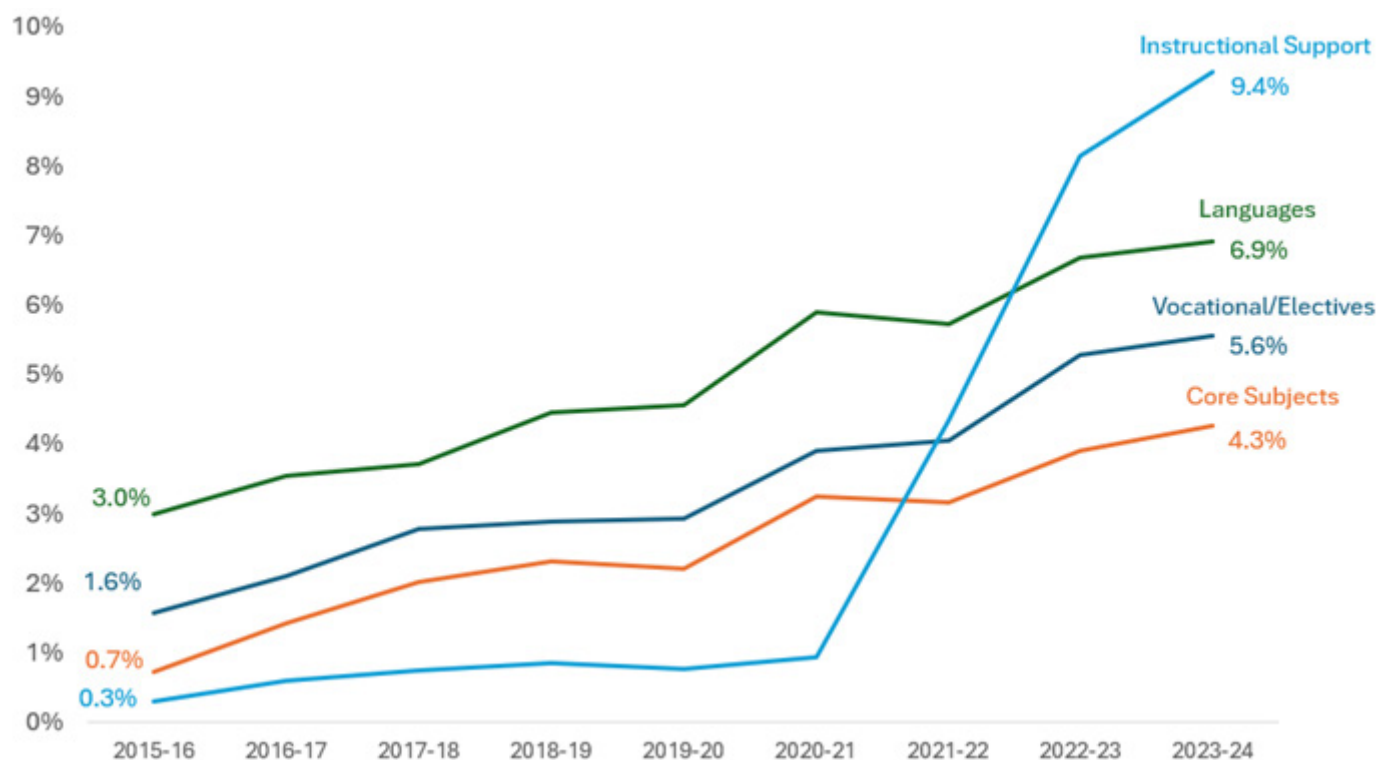


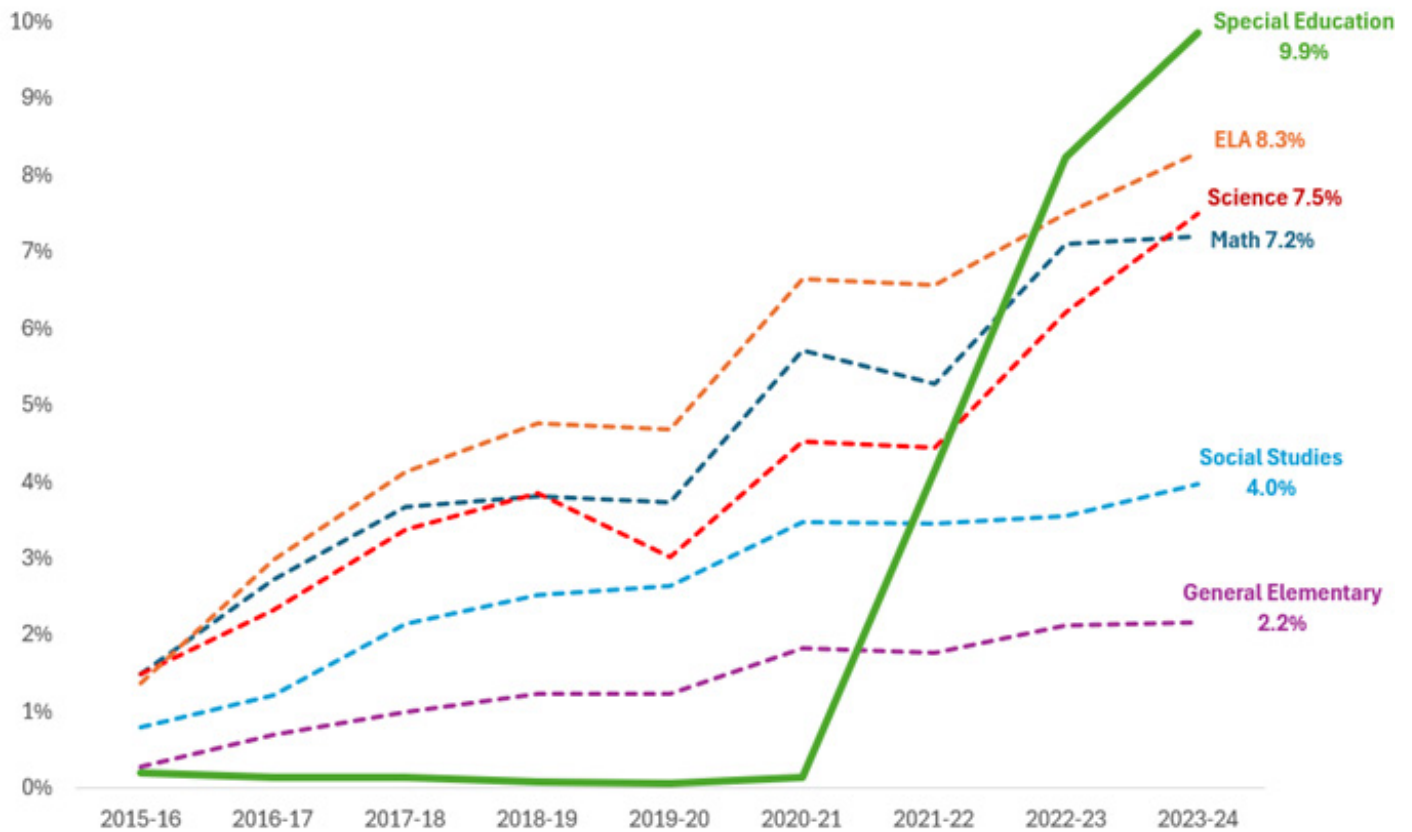
Figure 3. Emergency Permit Rates by Subject Category, Pennsylvania, 2015-16 to 2023-24



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data and Staff Summary Report Data.

Figure 4 illustrates the trends in emergency permit rates over time in Pennsylvania for core subjects and special education. ELA teachers had the highest rates until the 2022-2023 school year, when special education surpassed all other subjects. In the most recent school year (2023-24), math and science also had relatively high emergency permit rates (7.2% and 7.5%), while general elementary had the lowest rate (2.2%).

Figure 4. Emergency Permit Rate by Core Subject and Special Education, Pennsylvania, 2015-2016 to 2023-2024



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data and Individual Staff Report Data.

Note: Core subject categories of ELA, Science, Math, and Social Studies correspond with grades 7-12. General elementary corresponds to grades K-6. Special education includes all grades.

The surge in emergency permits for special education teachers is likely attributed to multiple factors, including changes in special education certification requirements. In the past, special education teachers were required to first obtain a Level 1 certification in a general subject before completing additional coursework for special education certification in PK-8 or 7-12. As of January 1, 2022, a change in Pennsylvania law permitted special education to become a standalone, PK-12 certificate.<sup>13</sup> This change made it possible to issue single emergency permits for the special education subject area, which likely contributes to the sharp rise in emergency permit use for special education teachers starting in the 2021-22 school year. The statewide and nationwide shortages of special education teachers are another likely reason for the increase.<sup>14 15</sup> In Pennsylvania, there is a growing number of students receiving special education services, further straining the special education teaching workforce and likely increasing the number of emergency permits issued for the subject.<sup>16</sup>

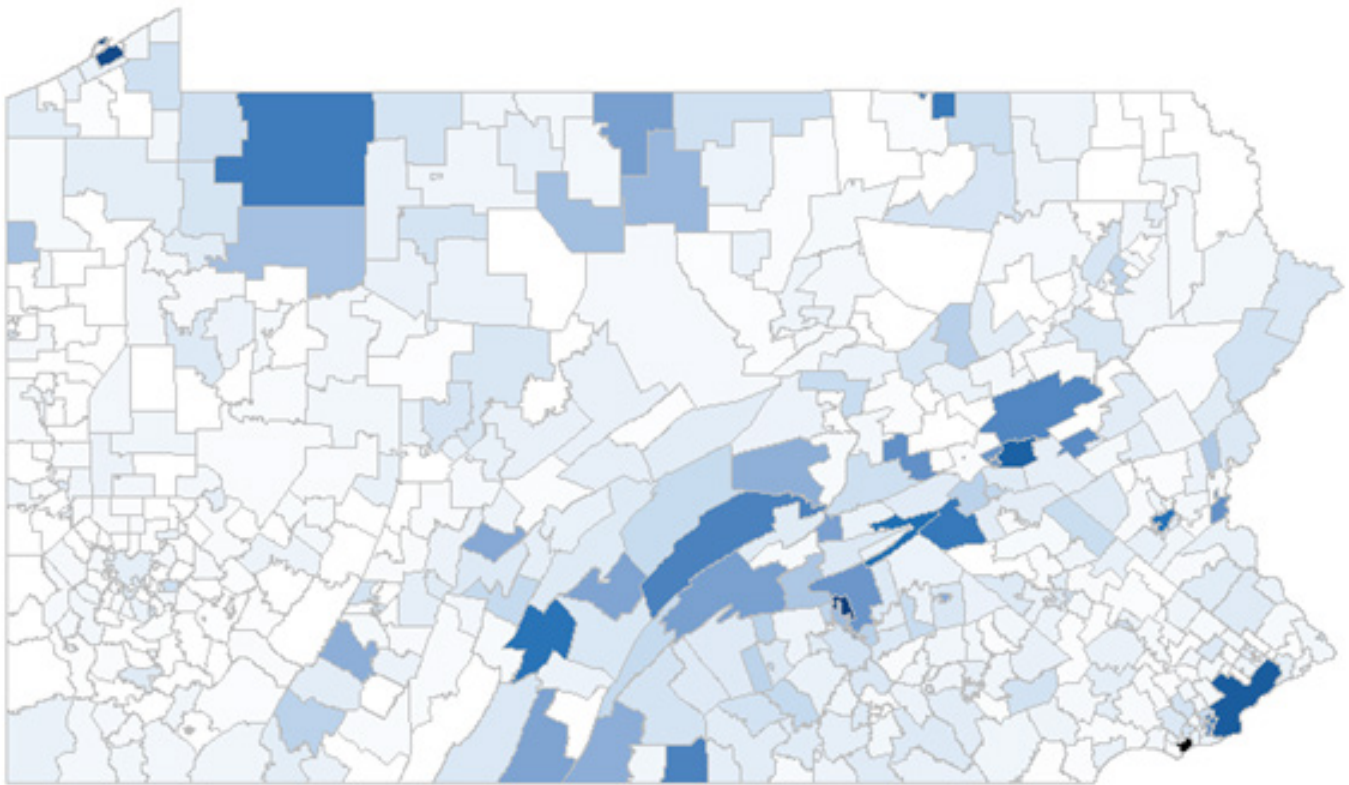


## A Closer Look at Emergency Permit Rates Across Pennsylvania Districts

**The rise in the emergency permit rate among Pennsylvania school districts has largely been driven by a small number of districts.**

Out of 499 school districts in Pennsylvania, 20 districts employed half of all emergency permits in 2023-24. The heat map (Figure 5) below shows the concentration of emergency permit use among a small number of districts across the state. In this visual, school districts with higher emergency permit rates appear darker. As shown, many school districts employ little to no emergency certified teachers. In 2023-24, there were close to 100 school districts with a 0% emergency permit rate, and most districts had an emergency permit rate of less than 2%. Figure 11 in the Appendix further details the distribution of emergency permit use to show that most districts rarely use emergency permits, and the rising rate is driven by a small number of districts.

Figure 5. Spatial Analysis of Emergency Permit Rates, Pennsylvania School Districts, 2023-24



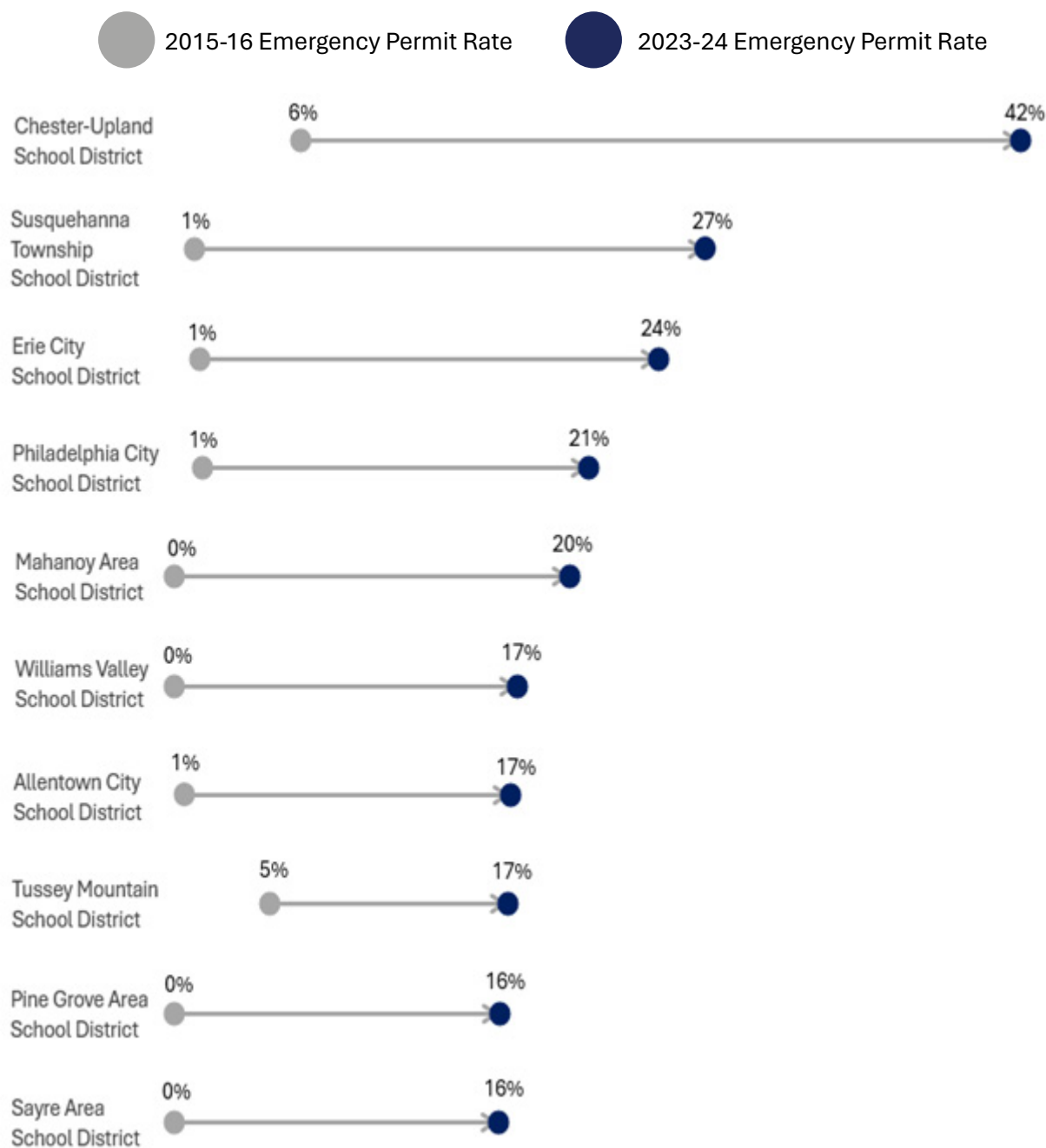
Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data and Staff Summary Report Data.

Note: Borders represent individual school district LEAs. **Darker shading = higher emergency permit rate.**

Many of the same districts where emergency permit use is currently concentrated are also districts that have seen the most dramatic *growth* in emergency permit use over time. Figure 6 shows the growth from 2015-16 to 2023-24 among the 10 school districts with the highest emergency permit rates. In 2015-16, these ten districts issued only 133 emergency permits and had relatively low emergency permit rates, with many of them at 0% or 1%. By 2023-24, these 10 school districts issued 2,352 emergency permits, accounting for 43% of all emergency permits in the state. The largest growth occurred at Chester Upland School District, which increased from 6% to 42% emergency permit rate over this period.



Figure 6. Growth of Emergency Permit Rates Among the Top 10 School Districts Pennsylvania School Districts, 2015-16 to 2023-24



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data and Staff Summary Report Data.

**Districts that use emergency permits at the highest rates serve more students of color, serve more economically disadvantaged students, and are the most inadequately funded.**

**Approach to Comparing High- and Low-Emergency Permit Use Districts.** To understand the characteristics of districts with different levels of emergency permit use, we divided all 499 Pennsylvania school districts into five equal-sized groups (quintiles) based on their emergency permit rate in the 2023-24 school year. We then compared student and district characteristics across these groups. The emergency permit rate for each group was calculated by dividing the total number of emergency permits by the total number of teachers within that group. The five groups were defined as follows:

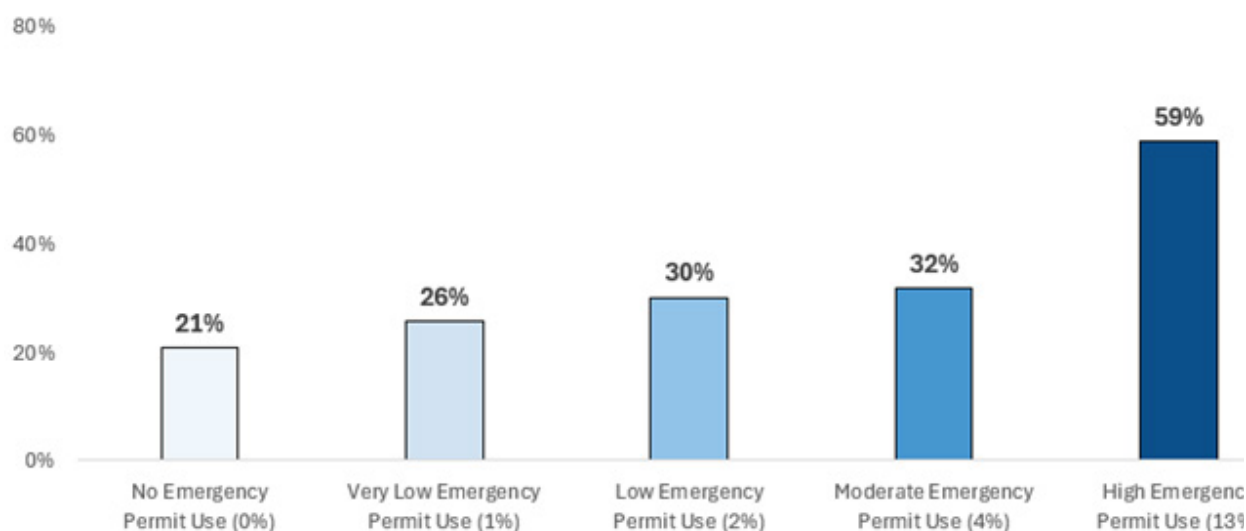
1. **No Emergency Permit Use:** 100 districts with the lowest emergency permit rates; the quintile-level emergency permit rate is **0%**.<sup>17</sup> (Individual district emergency permit rates range from 0% to .2%, and 98 out of these 100 districts have no emergency permits.)
2. **Very Low Emergency Permit Use:** 100 districts with a quintile-level emergency permit rate of **1%** (Individual district emergency permit rates range from .3% to 1.3%).
3. **Low Emergency Permit Use:** 100 districts with a quintile-level emergency permit of **2%** (Individual district emergency permit rates range from 1.4% to 2.6%).
4. **Moderate Emergency Permit Use:** 100 districts with a quintile-level emergency permit rate of **4%** (Individual district emergency permit rates range from 2.7% to 4.9%).
5. **High Emergency Permit Use:** 99 districts with the highest quintile level emergency permit rate of **13%** (individual district emergency permit rates range from 5% to 42.3%).

**What We Found.** Overall, districts with high emergency permit rates serve a higher proportion of students of color and economically disadvantaged students and face the largest disparities in school funding adequacy. Additional descriptive statistics of district quintiles can be found in Table 1 of the Appendix. Figure 14 in the Appendix details the distribution of emergency permit use within the “high emergency permit use” quintile.

Figure 7 displays the percentage of students of color across each quintile, calculated as the share of students of color among all students enrolled in the districts comprising each quintile. For example, in the 99 districts that make up the “high emergency permit use” quintile—which has an emergency permit rate of 13%—a majority of students (59%) are students of color.

Our analysis found districts with higher emergency permit rates serve students of color at much higher rates. Prior research found that compared to white students, students of color in Pennsylvania have less access to advanced curriculum, experienced teachers, and positive school climates and that these gaps are among the largest in the nation.<sup>18</sup> Students of color are more likely to attend inadequately funded school districts.<sup>19</sup> These inequities are compounded by the state’s teacher shortage and rising use of emergency permits, as students of color are more likely to be taught by educators with less experience and without a full certification.

Figure 7. Percent of Students of Color by Emergency Permit Rate Quintile, Pennsylvania Districts, 2023-24



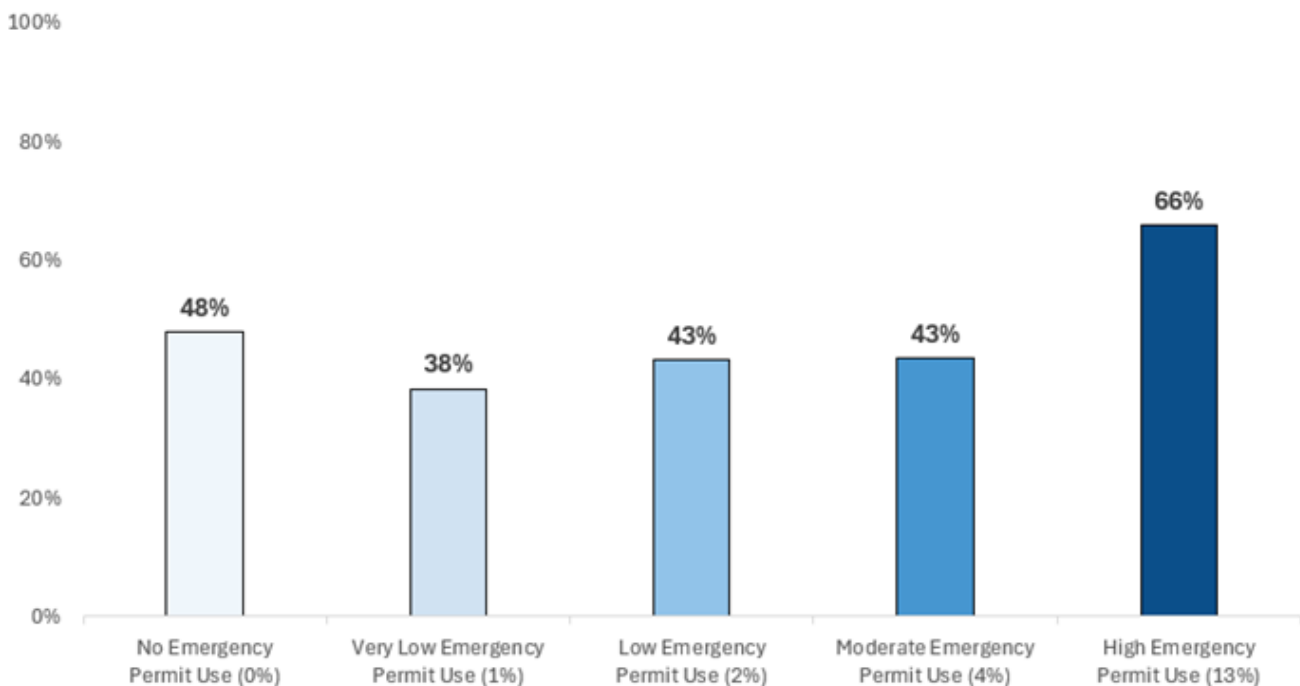
Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data, Staff Summary Report Data, and Future Ready Data.

Note: Bar graph colors indicate the emergency permit rate of the corresponding quintile. **Darker shading = higher emergency permit rate.**

Districts with higher emergency permit rates also serve higher proportions of students with economic disadvantages. Figure 8 shows that 66% of students in the 99 districts with the highest emergency permit rate are economically disadvantaged, which is substantially higher than all other quintiles. The “no emergency permit use” quintile has the second highest rate of economically disadvantaged students (48%) and other quintiles had relatively similar rates.

Pennsylvania students’ access to educational opportunities is highly dependent on their economic status. When comparing students who receive free lunch to those who don’t, the state has one of the largest gaps in educational opportunities in the country.<sup>20</sup> As shown in Figure 8, students with economic disadvantages are also more likely to be taught by an emergency certified teacher, compounding the educational barriers already associated with poverty.

**Figure 8. Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students by Emergency Permit Rate Quintile, Pennsylvania Districts, 2023-24**



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data, Staff Summary Report Data, and Future Ready Data.

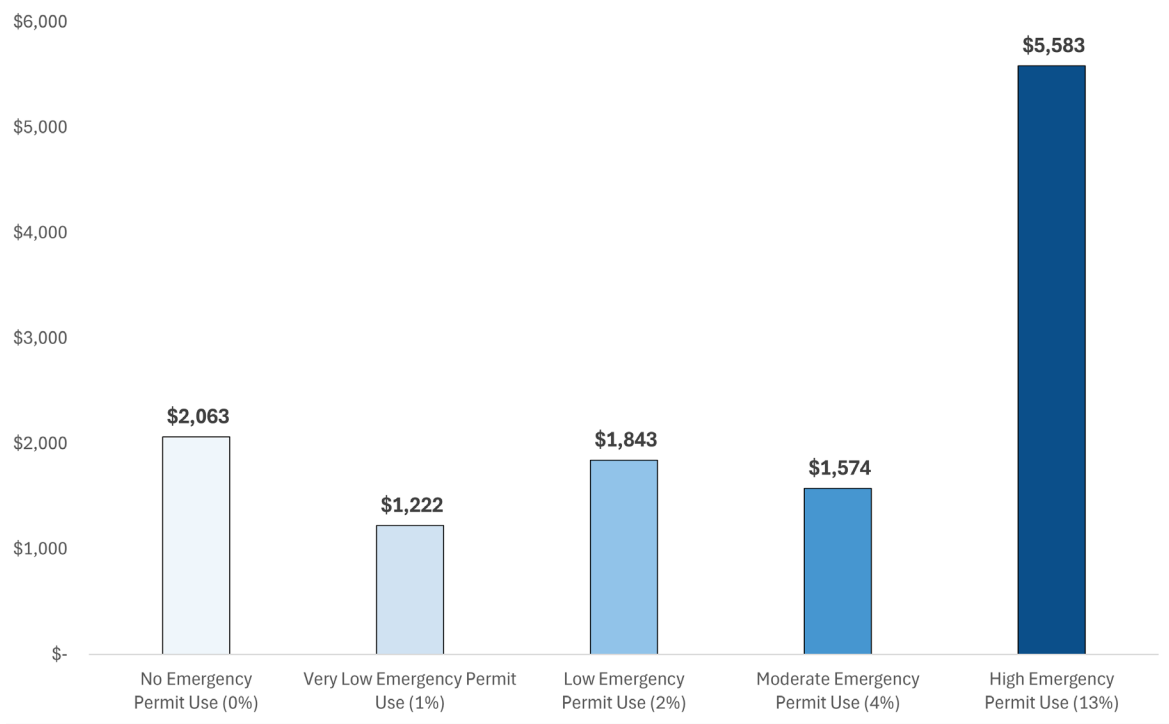
Note: Bar graph colors denote the emergency permit rate of the corresponding quintile. **Darker shading = higher emergency permit rate.**

Finally, we compared district per-pupil funding gaps across the quintiles. Adequacy gaps refer to the shortfall between current educational funding amounts and the amount necessary to provide students with sufficient educational resources and opportunities.<sup>21</sup> In 2024, Pennsylvania lawmakers calculated a statewide adequacy gap of roughly \$4.8 billion dollars, of which \$4.5 billion was the state’s responsibility.<sup>22</sup> The state’s data indicates that 135 districts are adequately funded while 364 have per pupil funding gaps ranging from a low of \$13 per-pupil to a high of over \$13,000 per pupil.<sup>23</sup> A district’s per-pupil adequacy gap is simply the size of their total adequacy gap divided by their number of students.

As shown in Figure 9, districts with the highest emergency permit rates have substantially higher per-pupil adequacy gaps. The 99 districts with the highest emergency permit rates have an overall per-pupil adequacy gap of \$5,583, which is more than \$3,000/pupil more than any other quintile. It is intuitive that these measures are closely tied; districts with fewer financial resources face greater challenges in attracting and retaining teachers and more frequently need to rely on emergency permits to staff classrooms. This finding

speaks directly to the policy implications of the rise in emergency permit use. Districts that use emergency permits at higher rates need resources to both recruit and retain fully certified teachers and support the emergency certified teachers working in hard-to-staff positions. For further discussion of the characteristics of Pennsylvania school districts by degree of funding adequacy, see RFA’s recent PACER report, [State of Inequity: Disparities in Pennsylvania School Districts by Degree of Funding Adequacy](#).

Figure 9. Average District Per-Pupil Funding Adequacy Gap by Emergency Permit Rate Quintile, Pennsylvania Districts, 2023-24



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data, Staff Summary Report Data, and Future Ready Data.  
Note: from Bar graph colors denote the emergency permit rate of the corresponding quintile. **Darker shading = higher emergency permit rate.**

Emergency Permit Use in Pennsylvania’s Charter Schools

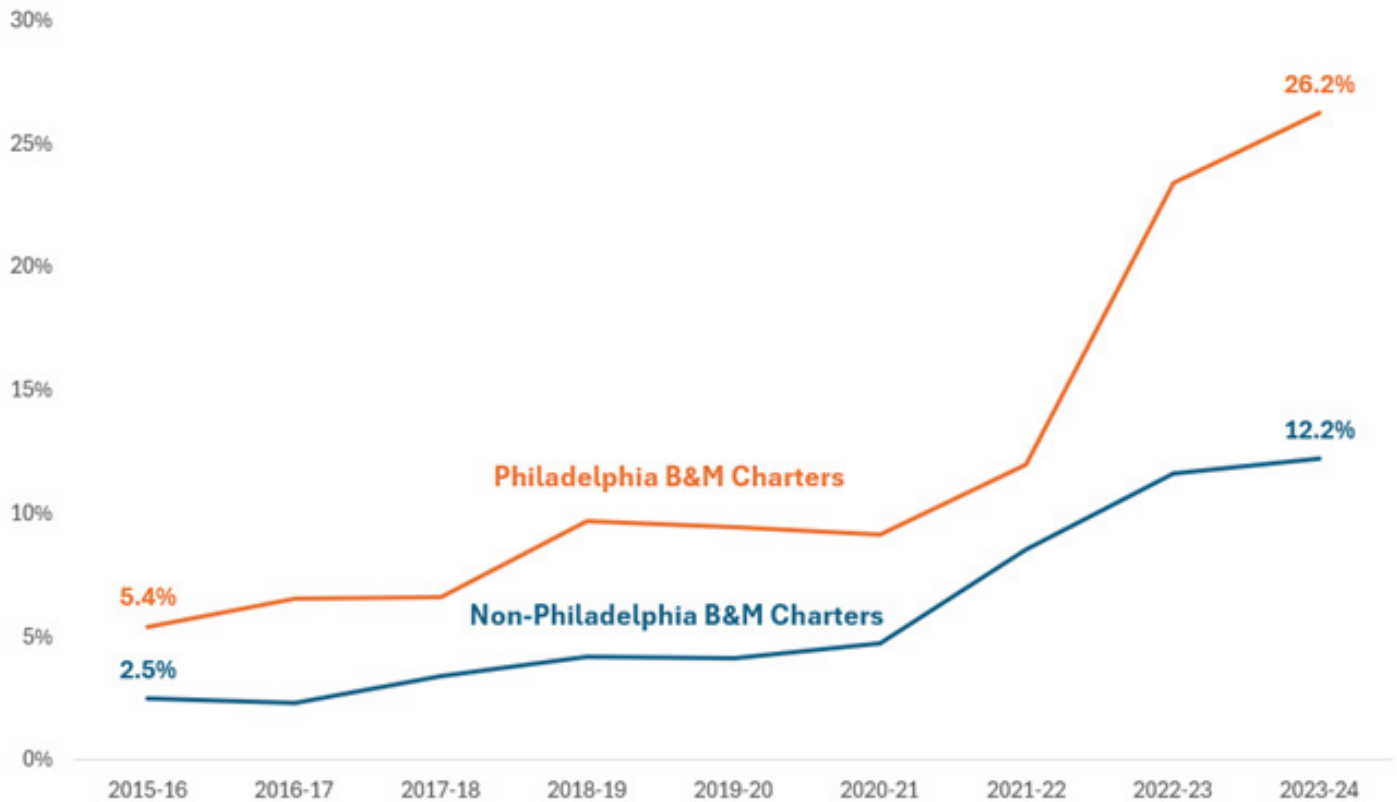
As discussed, Pennsylvania charter schools have consistently had higher rates of emergency permits than school districts on average. Similar to districts, the statewide emergency permit rate for charters is still driven by a relatively small number of charter schools, with half of charter school emergency permits issued to 32 out of 175 charters. All of these are “brick-and-mortar” charter schools which have much higher rates of emergency permit use than cyber charters. In 2023-24, the emergency permit rate was 20% for brick-and-mortar charters compared to only 1.5% for cyber charters. Figure 12 in the Appendix details the distribution of emergency permit use across all charter schools.

Philadelphia brick-and-mortar charter schools have a very high emergency permit rate (26.2%).

More than 60% of Pennsylvania’s brick-and-mortar charter school students are in Philadelphia, and these students are often taught by emergency certified teachers. Among the 30 charter schools with the highest emergency permit rates in Pennsylvania for 2023-24, 26 are in Philadelphia County. Within Philadelphia, charter emergency permit rates are very high (25.5% for all charters in the county) and higher than the average for the School District of Philadelphia (20.5%). Figure 10 displays the emergency permit rates of brick-and-

mortar charters in Philadelphia and compares them to the emergency permit rates of all brick-and-mortar charters outside of Philadelphia County. Emergency permit rates for brick-and-mortar charters in Philadelphia have consistently been higher, and as of the most recent year, had an emergency permit rate of 26.2%, compared to 12.2% for all other brick-and-mortar charters.

Figure 10. Emergency Permit Rate in Brick-and-Mortar Charter Schools Philadelphia vs. Non-Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2015-2016 to 2023-24



Data Sources: PDE Detailed Emergency Permit Data, Staff Summary Report Data, and Future Ready Data.

Finally, as noted earlier, an important caveat to consider when comparing districts to charter schools is that the Pennsylvania charter school law only requires charter schools to maintain a minimum of 75% certified teachers, and emergency permits are included when schools calculate that threshold. Meanwhile, PDE does not publicly report on the total number of traditionally certified teachers. Thus, it is likely that, at least in some charter schools, the total rate of teachers who are not traditionally certified (either emergency certified or not certified at all) is significantly higher than what is calculated here.

## CONCLUSION

Our analysis found that emergency permit use in Pennsylvania has risen over time, and this statewide increase has been primarily driven by a small number of high-use LEAs. Districts, charters, and CATCs all experience concentrated emergency permit use in a small number of LEAs, but district emergency permit use is intensely concentrated, with only 20 of 499 districts using half of all emergency permits in the state. The sharpest increases in emergency permit use have occurred in high-need subjects such as special education and in LEAs that serve historically marginalized student populations and operate under an extreme lack of adequate resources.

While emergency certified teachers are stepping up to fill vacancies and provide essential roles across LEAs most impacted by the mounting teacher shortage, these trends are a clear signal of challenges facing the state's teacher workforce. As state and local educational leaders look to address these issues, they face a dual imperative of both strengthening high-quality pathways into teaching and supporting emergency certified teachers. This support is especially important for those who are interested in remaining in the profession long-term and who show strong potential to become adequately prepared and fully certified teachers with additional training.

Recent research from other states shows that emergency certified teachers are more racially diverse than teachers certified through traditional programs, suggesting that emergency certification in Pennsylvania could be reducing certification barriers and increasing entry points into the profession for teachers of color and teachers with more diverse experiences.<sup>24</sup> Local reporting also expresses the value and diversity emergency certified teachers can bring to school communities. In the School District of Philadelphia, for example, district officials have cited emergency certified teachers as an important source of new teachers and as a valuable asset to their schools.<sup>25</sup>

It is likely, however, that many emergency certified teachers require additional preparation and financial support to successfully transition into long-term, fully certified and effective teachers. Other reporting has highlighted the significant challenges emergency certified teachers often face in the classroom, including limited experience and training in classroom management and pedagogy, which can impact their effectiveness and student learning outcomes.<sup>26</sup> To ensure emergency certified teachers are supported and part of a sustainable and effective workforce strategy, state and local leaders must invest in policies and programs that remove barriers to certification, provide adequate training and professional learning opportunities, and improve working conditions that encourage retention.

Emergency certified teachers can undeniably add value to Pennsylvania schools. However, more research is needed within our own state's context to better understand the factors driving the rise in emergency permit usage. Additionally, understanding the characteristics, prior experiences, and career motivations of emergency certified teachers could uncover new ways to support them and bolster the teacher pipeline. Further research on the different pathways into teaching, including those leveraging emergency permits, needs to focus on both the experiences of individuals within different pathways and the broader impact that they have on students and school communities.



# APPENDIX

Appendix Figures 11, 12, and 13 are histograms illustrating the distribution of emergency permit use across different LEA types (districts, charters, and CATCs) in 2023-24. Each bar represents the number of LEAs that fall within a particular range of emergency permit use. The band widths were selected to reflect the patterns of the distributions.

These figures show that statewide, emergency permits are concentrated in a small number of LEAs. Emergency permit use is most highly concentrated among district LEAs, which are detailed in Figure 11. More than 400 districts had emergency permit rates between 0% and 5%, and the majority of emergency permits were issued to the 20 districts with the highest rates of use. Figures 12 and 13 show that emergency permit use is concentrated among charters and CATCs, but less so than in district LEAs. However, both charters and CATCs have some LEAs with very high emergency permit rates (greater than 40%).

Figure 11. Number of District LEAs by Emergency Permit Rate, 2023-24

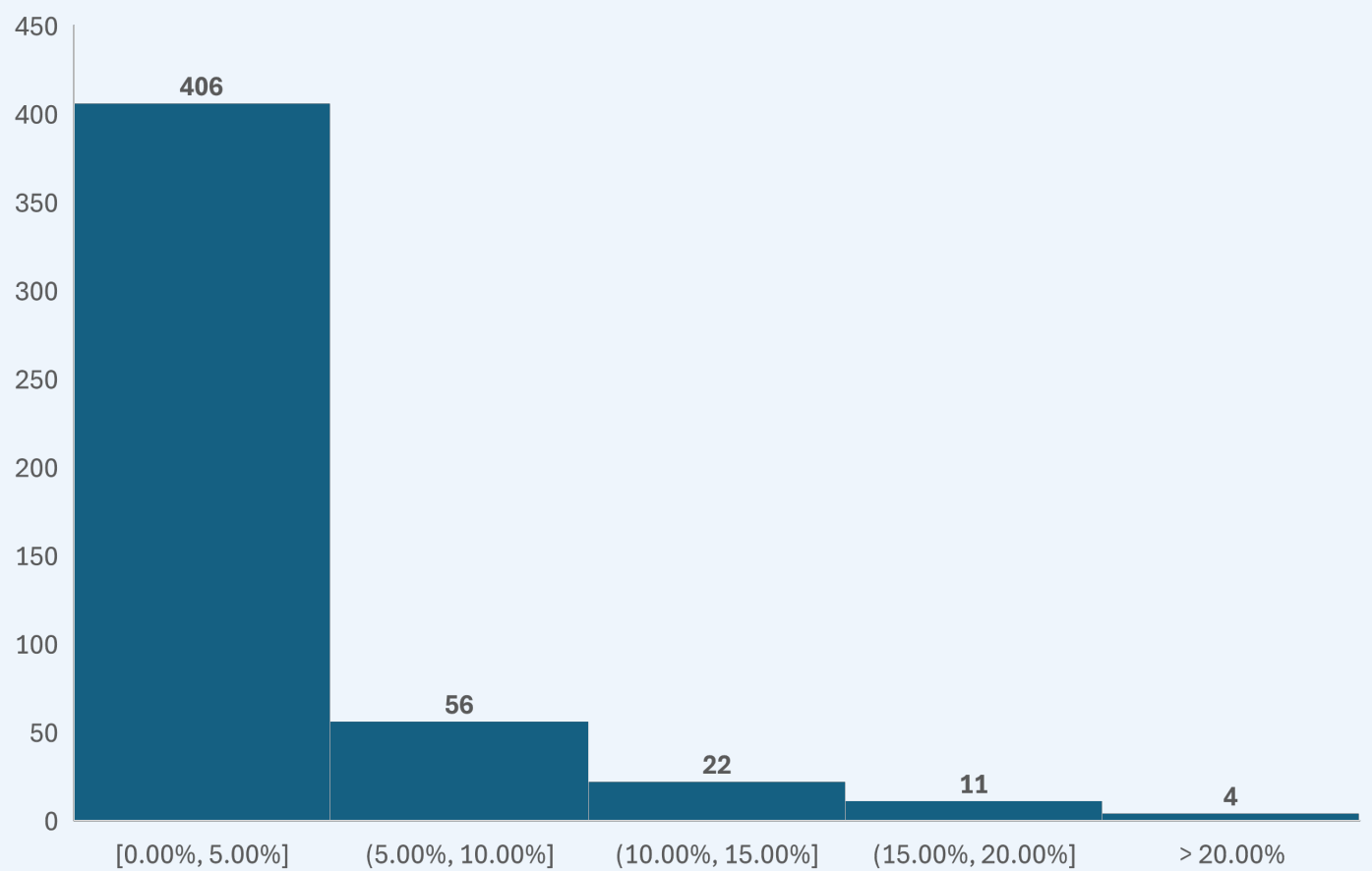


Figure 12. Number of Charter LEAs by Emergency Permit Rate, 2023-24

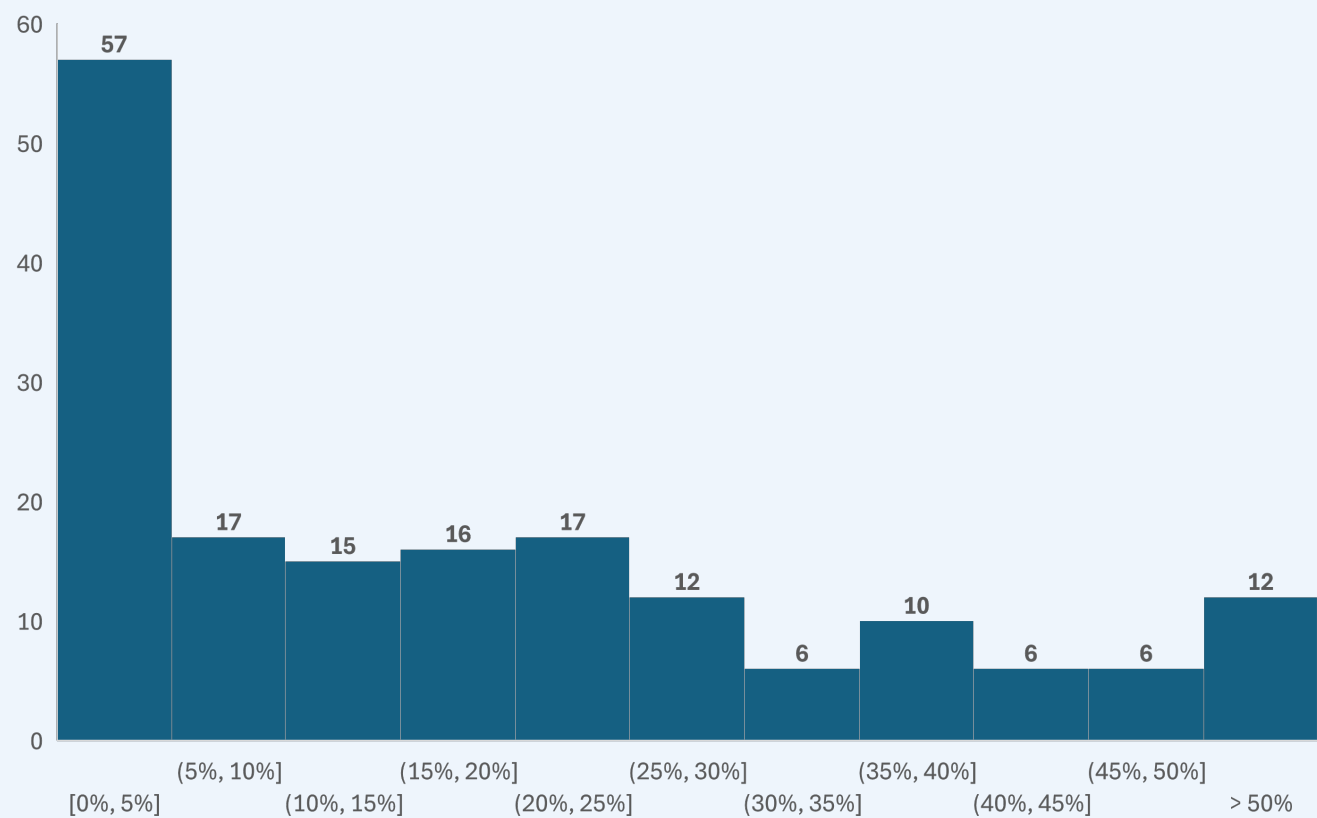


Figure 13. Number of CATC LEAs by Emergency Permit Rate, 2023-24

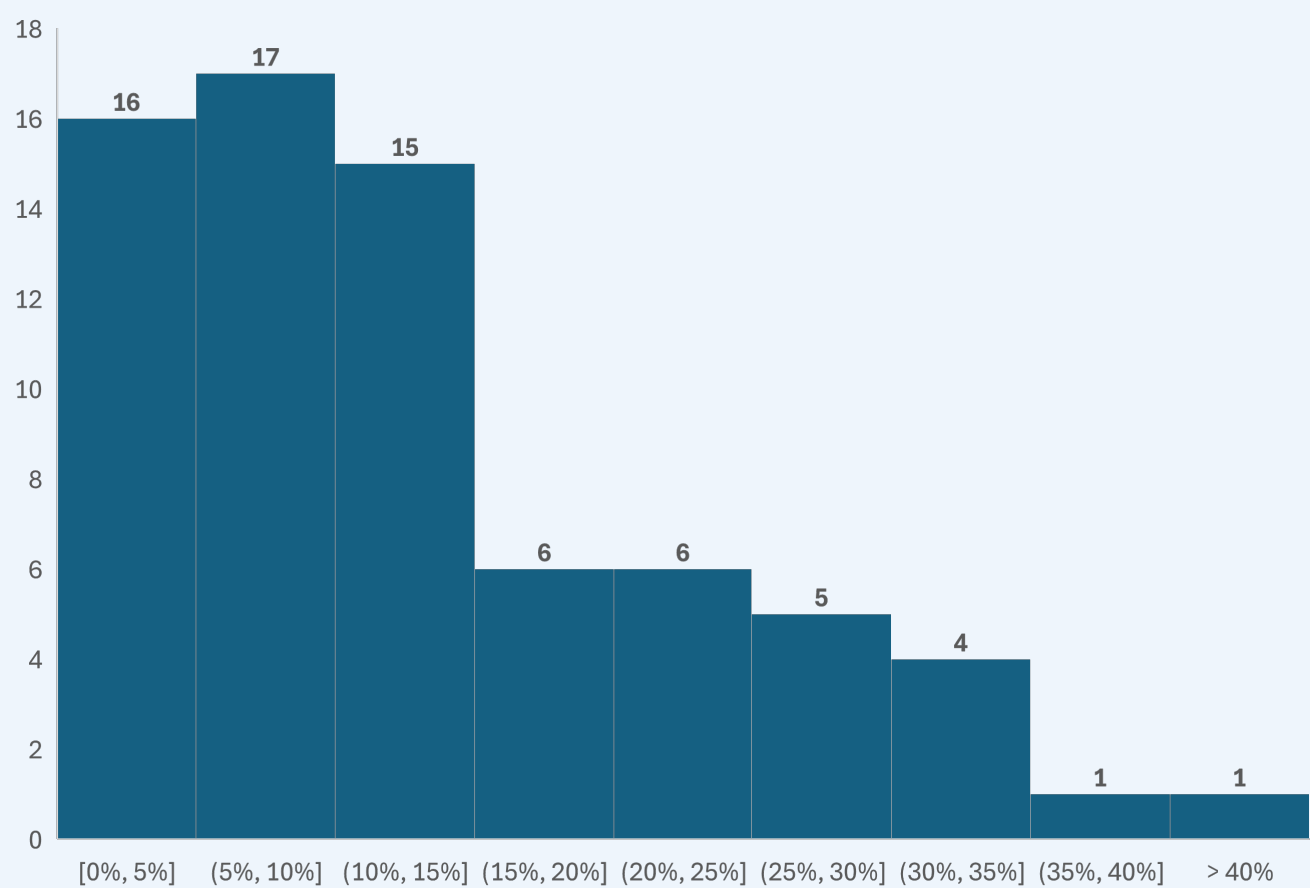


Figure 14 is a histogram of all districts within the “*high emergency permit use*” quintile. This visual shows that even among the 99 districts with the highest emergency permit rates, there are a relatively small number of districts accounting for a majority of the emergency permits issued. A total of 63 out of 99 districts have an emergency permit rate under 10%, and only 4 total districts have an emergency permit rate above 20%.

Figure 14. Number of District LEAs by Emergency Permit Rate within the “*High Emergency Permit Use*” Quintile, 99 Districts, 2023-24

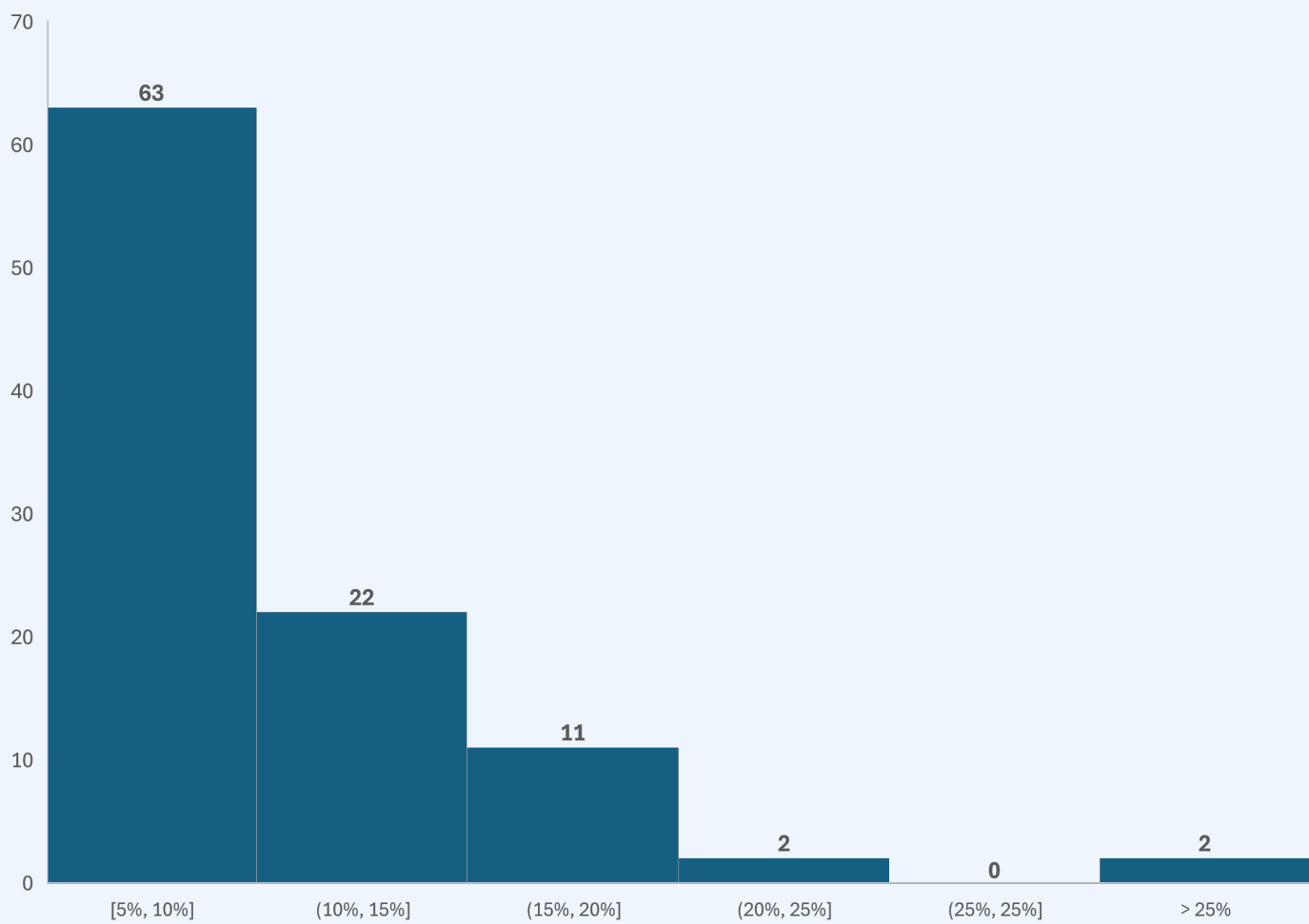


Table 1. District Emergency Permit Quintiles, Pennsylvania, 2023-2024

Emergency Permit Rate Quintile	Total Number of Emergency Permits in Quintile	Total Number of Classroom Teachers in Quintile	Emergency Permit Rate	Percent Students of Color	Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students	Per-Pupil Adequacy Gap
No Emergency Permit Use (N = 100 Districts)	2	12,744	0%	21%	48%	\$1,898
Very Low Emergency Permit Use (N = 100 Districts)	191	23,537	.8%	26%	38%	\$1,765
Low Emergency Permit Use (N = 100 Districts)	431	23,144	1.9%	30%	43%	\$1,900
Moderate Emergency Permit Use (N = 100 Districts)	838	22,755	3.7%	32%	43%	\$2,067
High Emergency Permit Use (N = 99 Districts)	3,996	30,229	13.2%	59%	66%	\$3,437
<b>Pennsylvania Total</b>	<b>5,458</b>	<b>112,409</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>36.5%</b>	<b>49.0%</b>	<b>\$2,211</b>

# ENDNOTES

1. Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2025, March 1). *Act 82 of 2018 Report*.  
<https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/education/documents/data-and-reporting/2025-act%2082%20of%202018%20report-2025-03-01.xlsx>.
2. Fuller, E. (2023, May 26). *Exacerbating the shortage of teachers: Rising teacher attrition in Pennsylvania from 2014 to 2023*. Center for Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis.  
[https://ed.psu.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/ceepa-research-brief-2023-6-\\_exacerbating-the-shortage-of-teachers-ed-fuller-1.pdf](https://ed.psu.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/ceepa-research-brief-2023-6-_exacerbating-the-shortage-of-teachers-ed-fuller-1.pdf).
3. Pennsylvania Department of Education. *2024-2025 Professional Staff Vacancy Report Q1*.  
[2024-25-professional-staff-vacancy-report-Q1.xlsx](#) [vacancysummary2023-24.xlsx](#)
4. Heubeck, E. (2022, June 28). Emergency certified teachers: Are they a viable solution to shortages? *Education Week*  
[Emergency Certified Teachers: Are They a Viable Solution to Shortages?](#)
5. Pennsylvania Department of Education. *Emergency Permits*.  
[Emergency Permits | Department of Education | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)
6. Rhodes, A., & Marder, M. (2024) Measuring the value of teachers from traditional certification pathways in Texas: A Comprehensive study. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 32(51).  
<https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.32.8556>
7. Darling-Hammond, L., Holtzman, D. J., Gatlin, S. J., & Heilig, J. V. (2005). Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher certification, Teach for America, and teacher effectiveness. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(42).  
<https://epaa.asu.edu/index.php/epaa/article/view/147>
8. Kini, T., & Podolsky, A. (2016). *Does teaching experience increase teacher effectiveness? A review of the research*. Learning Policy Institute.  
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/does-teaching-experience-increase-teacher-effectiveness-review-research>
9. “Fully certified teachers” are considered teachers that have completed a teacher prep program, passed the Praxis, and are issued a traditional level 1 or 2 certificate from PDE.  
  
Graham, K. (2024, Nov. 23). The number of Philly teachers without full certification has more than doubled. It comes at a cost. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. <https://www.inquirer.com/education/emergency-teaching-certification-philadelphia-teacher-shortage-20241123.html>
10. Pennsylvania Department of Education. Professional and Support Personnel.  
<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/data-and-reporting/school-staff/professional-and-support-personnel.html>.
11. Pennsylvania Department of Education. (n.d.). “Highly Qualified” Certification under ESSA. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Retrieved April 13, 2025, from <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/educators/certification/help/certification-faqs/highly-qualified-cert-under-essa.html>
12. Pennsylvania Department of Education. (September 2023). *Charter schools* (24 P.S. §§ 17-1701-A – 17-1732-A). Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.  
<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/resources/policies-acts-and-laws/basic-education-circulars-becs/purdons-statutes/charter-schools.htmlHome+2>
13. Temple University College of Education and Human Development. (n.d.). *Special education PK-12 certification*

changes (2021).

<https://education.temple.edu/certification/special-ed-2021>

14. Williams, S. (2024, July 9). *Philly special ed teacher rose from school bus attendant with the help of the district's 'grow your own teacher' effort*. WHY? <https://why.org/articles/philadelphia-teacher-shortage-gemayel-keyes/>.
15. Mezzacappa, D., & Ross, A. (2024, June 24). Philly needs to hire more than 450 teachers, with the worst shortage in special ed. *Chalkbeat Philadelphia*. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/philadelphia/2024/06/24/teacher-shortage-special-education-recruitment-event/>
16. Pennsylvania School Boards Association. (2024). *2024 State of Education report*. <https://www.psba.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-State-of-Education-report.pdf>.
17. Emergency permit rates for quintiles are weighted averages of all district emergency permit rates within that quintile. This is calculated by dividing all emergency permits within a specific quintile by all classroom teachers within the same quintile.
18. Bamat, D., & Freeman, J. (2022, October). Persistent unequal access to educational opportunity in Pennsylvania for K-12 students. Research for Action. <https://www.researchforaction.org/researchresources/persistent-un-equal-access-to-educational-opportunity-in-pennsylvania-for-k-12-students/>
19. Lapp, D. (2025). *State of Inequity. Disparities in Pennsylvania School Districts by Degree of Funding Adequacy*. Research for Action. <https://www.researchforaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/state-of-inequality-disparities-in-pennsylvania-school-districts-by-degree-of-funding-adequacy.pdf>
20. Educational Opportunity Dashboard. Research for Action. <https://www.researchforaction.org/educational-opportunity-dashboard/>
21. Pennsylvania State Education Association. *School Funding Fast Facts: Adequacy Targets and Adequacy Payments* <https://www.psea.org/issues-action/key-issues/key-issue-school-funding/adequacy-targets-and-adequacy-payments/>
- Hughes, S.A. (2025, March 12). Extra funding for 100s of Pa. districts in question. See if yours could be affected- *Spotlight Pennsylvania*. <https://www.spotlightpa.org/news/2025/03/pennsylvania-school-aid-distribution-controversy/>
22. Meyer, K. (2025, January 14) Pennsylvania's poorest schools got an extra \$500 million last year. Is more money on the way? *Chalkbeat Philadelphia*. <https://www.chalkbeat.org/philadelphia/2025/01/14/pennsylvania-schools-got-500-million-more-last-year-whats-next/>
23. Lapp, D. (2025). *State of inequity: Disparities in Pennsylvania school districts by degree of funding adequacy*. Research for Action. <https://www.researchforaction.org/research-resources/k-12/state-of-inequity-disparities-in-pennsylvania-school-districts-by-degree-of-funding-adequacy>
24. Goldhaber, D., Gratz, T., & Theobald, R. (2023). *The relationship between pandemic-era teacher licensure waivers and teacher demographics*. CALDER Center. <https://caldercenter.org/publications/relationship-between-pandemic-era-teacher-licensure-waivers-and-teacher-demographics>
25. Graham, K.A. (2024, November 23). Philadelphia's reliance on emergency teaching certifications surges amid ongoing



teacher shortage. The Philadelphia Inquirer.

<https://www.inquirer.com/education/emergency-teaching-certification-philadelphia-teacher-shortage-20241123.html>

26. Sheehy, M. (2024, July 25). *Good intentions, worrisome results: The impact of emergency teacher licensure in Massachusetts*. National Council on Teacher Quality.  
<https://www.nctq.org/research-insights/good-intentions-worrisome-results-the-impact-of-emergency-teacher-licensure-in-massachusetts/>

## ABOUT RESEARCH FOR ACTION

Research for Action (RFA) is a Philadelphia-based nonprofit education research organization. We seek to use research to improve equity, opportunity, and outcomes for students and families. Our work is designed to strengthen early education, public schools, and postsecondary institutions; provide research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners, and the public; and enrich civic and community dialogue. This report is a product of RFA's Pennsylvania Clearinghouse for Education Research (PACER) project, which seeks to inform state education policy discussions through rigorous objective research. For more information, please visit <https://www.researchforaction.org/project/pennsylvania-clearinghouse-for-education-research-pacer>.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The PACER project is generously funded by The Heinz Endowments and the William Penn Foundation. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders. Thank you to additional members of the RFA team who provided valuable contributions to this report, including Kim Glassman, David Lapp, and Maja Pehrson.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sean Vannata is a Senior Research Analyst at RFA. Sean has experience in social policy research and quantitative analysis. Much of Sean's research has focused on the education interventions and policies in the Philadelphia area, and he is committed to advancing educational and economic systems that expand opportunity and support all students in reaching their potential.

Mary Eddins is a Research Associate at RFA. Mary is a mixed-methods researcher who primarily focuses on K-12 education policy research. Mary has extensive experience working in the field of education including her former role as a classroom literacy teacher.





3675 Market Street, Suite 200  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

[www.researchforaction.org](http://www.researchforaction.org)

| [info@researchforaction.org](mailto:info@researchforaction.org)

| (267)295-7760

