Special Learning

Who trains BCBA candidates: what the BACB’s 2013-2025 pass-rate reports show

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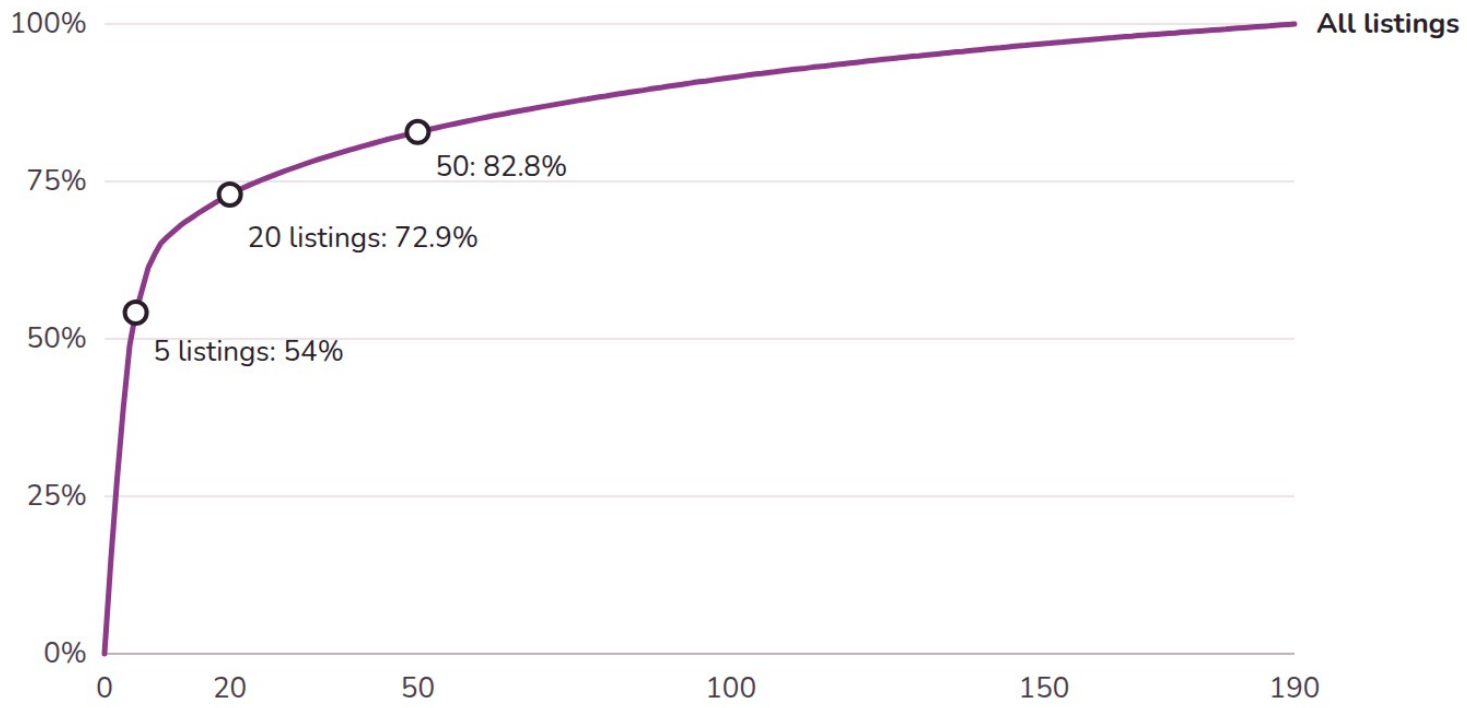
November 15, 2026

Built from the article
special-learning.com/universities/why-20-programs-train-most-bcba-candidates/



Illustration generated with an image model.

Five listings trained half of 2025’s first-time candidates; 20 trained 72.9%



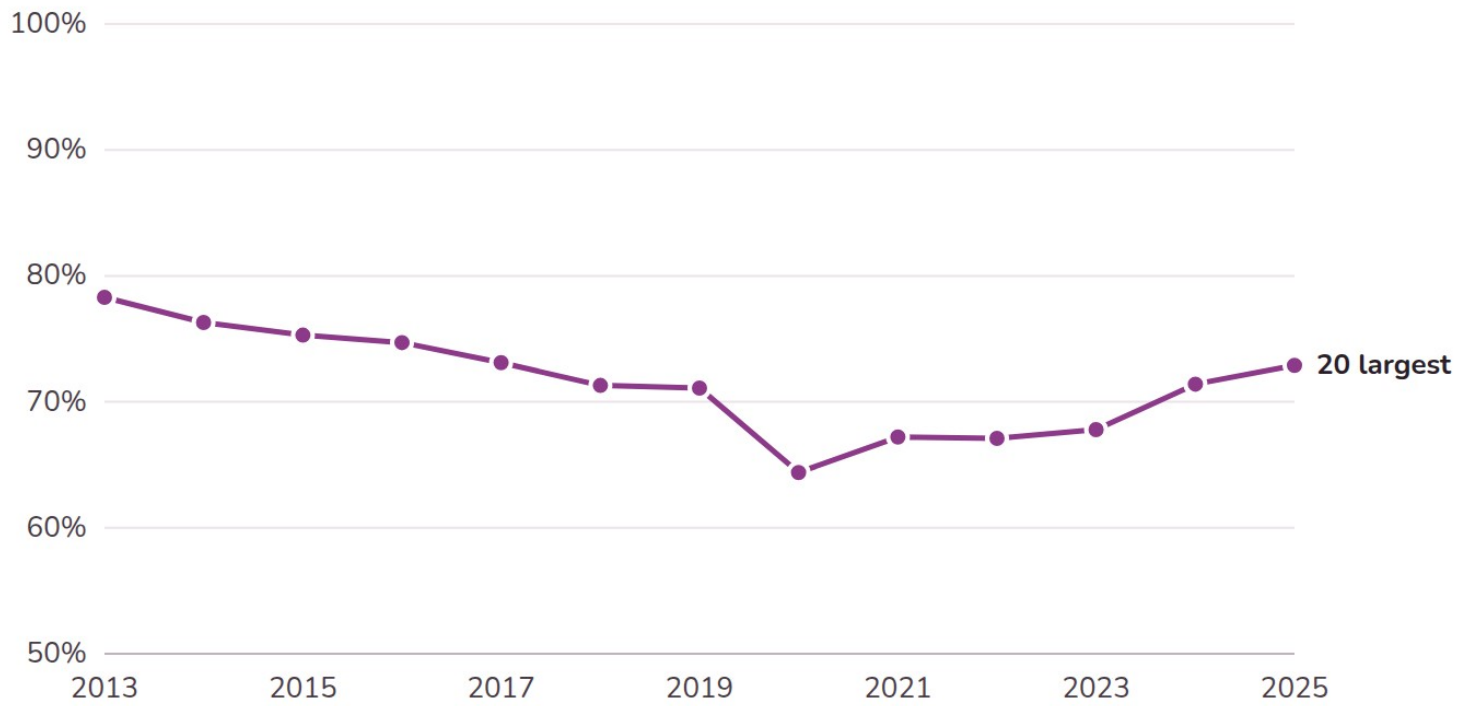
The 20 largest listings, at 19 universities, trained 5,899 of the 8,090 first-time BCBA candidates in those listings: 72.9%, or about three in four.

At the other end, 143 of the 190 listings had fewer than 20 candidates each, and the smaller half of all listings together had 743, about 9% of the total.

A “listing” is one row in the report; a university can have more than one.

Source: BACB, BCBA Examination Pass Rates for University Training Programs 2025, US listings (190 rows, 8,090 first-time candidates). Chart: Special Learning. The BACB states it lists a program only when it had more than six first-time candidates. 2025 figures use the 2025 report alone, including its marked rows that pool 2024 and 2025.

The 20 largest listings' share of first-time candidates, 2013 to 2025



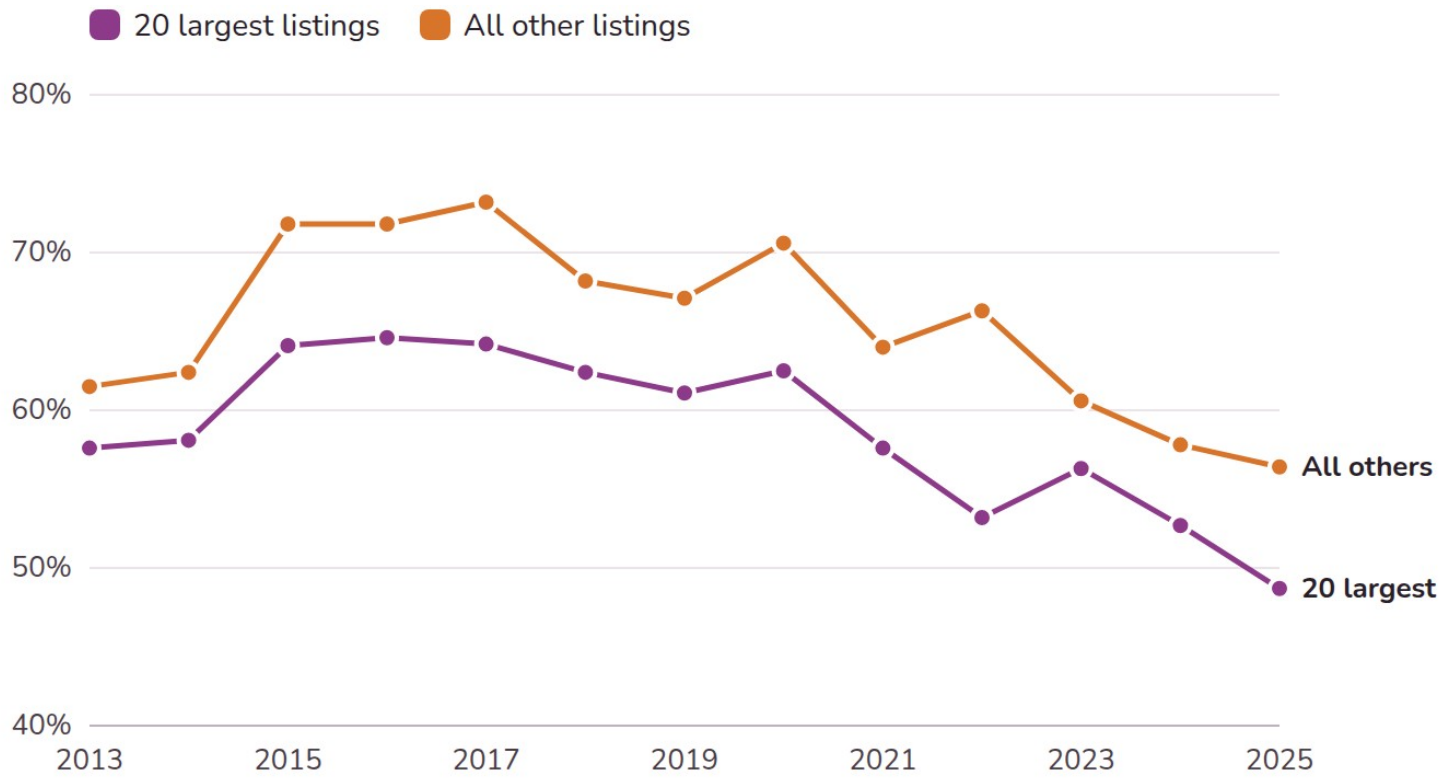
The concentration isn't new. In the BACB's 2015 figures the 20 largest US listings already held 75.3%.

It was 64.4% in 2020 and 72.9% in 2025, comparing the listings reported each year (coverage and eligibility rules changed over time).

The BACB's lists grew from 58 US listings in 2013 to 190 in 2025, so early years compare 20 of fewer programs.

Source: the BACB's university pass-rate reports, 2015-2019, 2016-2020, 2023, 2024 and 2025 (each year from the newest report that covers it; all 13 linked in the Program Finder). US listings only. Chart: Special Learning.

Pass rates fell at large and smaller programs alike



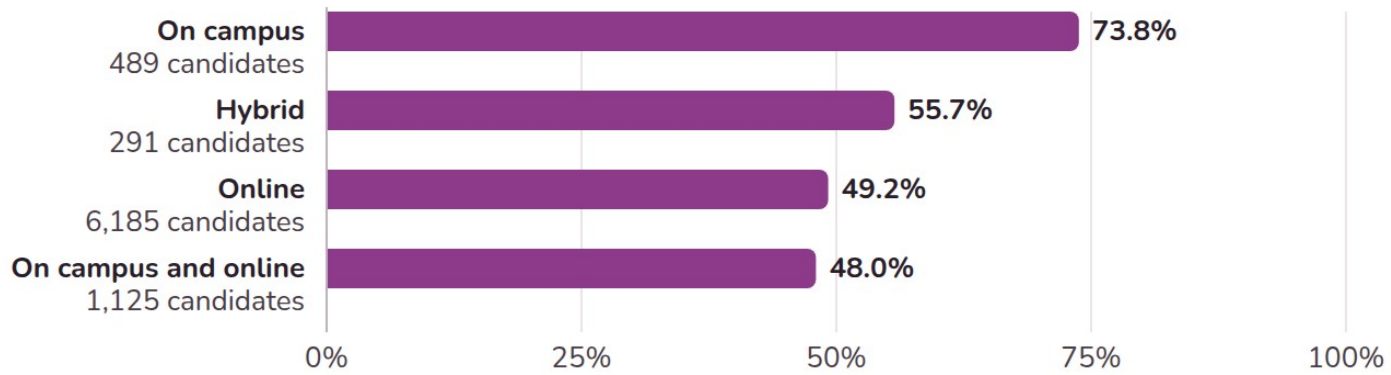
Since 2015, the estimated rate fell about 15 points both for the 20 largest listings (64.1% to 48.7%) and for all others (71.8% to 56.4%).

The BACB notes that “2025 was the first year the BCBA examination was based on the BCBA Test Content Outline (6th ed.)” (BACB 2025 report, page 1).

Source: the BACB’s university pass-rate reports, 2015-2019, 2016-2020, 2023, 2024 and 2025. Rates are estimates: each listing’s candidates times its printed (rounded) pass rate, added up. The 20 largest are picked again each year, so the groups change. Chart: Special Learning.

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2025 first-time pass rate by program format

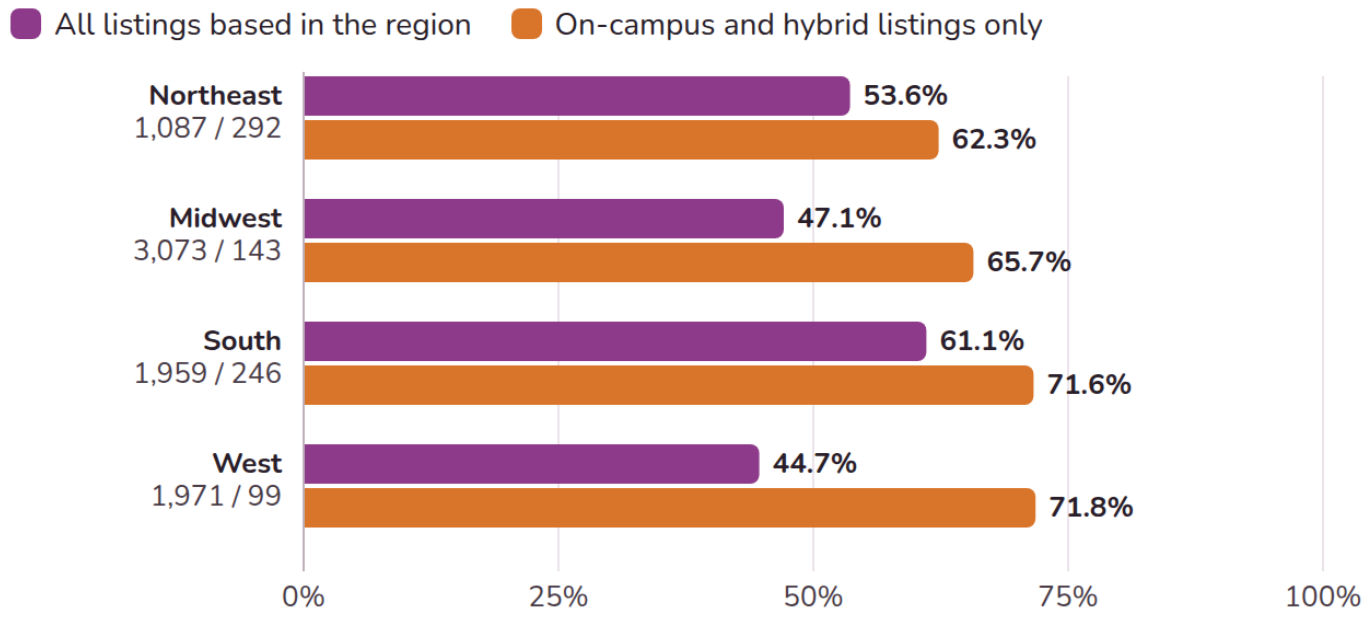


In 2025, an estimated 73.8% of candidates from on-campus listings passed, against 49.2% from online ones.

These groups also differ in size, and the data can't separate admissions, students' backgrounds, teaching and other program features.

Source: BACB 2025 report, format as the BACB lists it; rates estimated from printed rates. Over 2023-2025 the Rankings estimate the same pattern: 74.0% of 1,109 candidates from ranked on-campus programs passed, against 52.2% of 16,304 from ranked online ones.

2025 pass rate by the region where the program is based (not where students live)



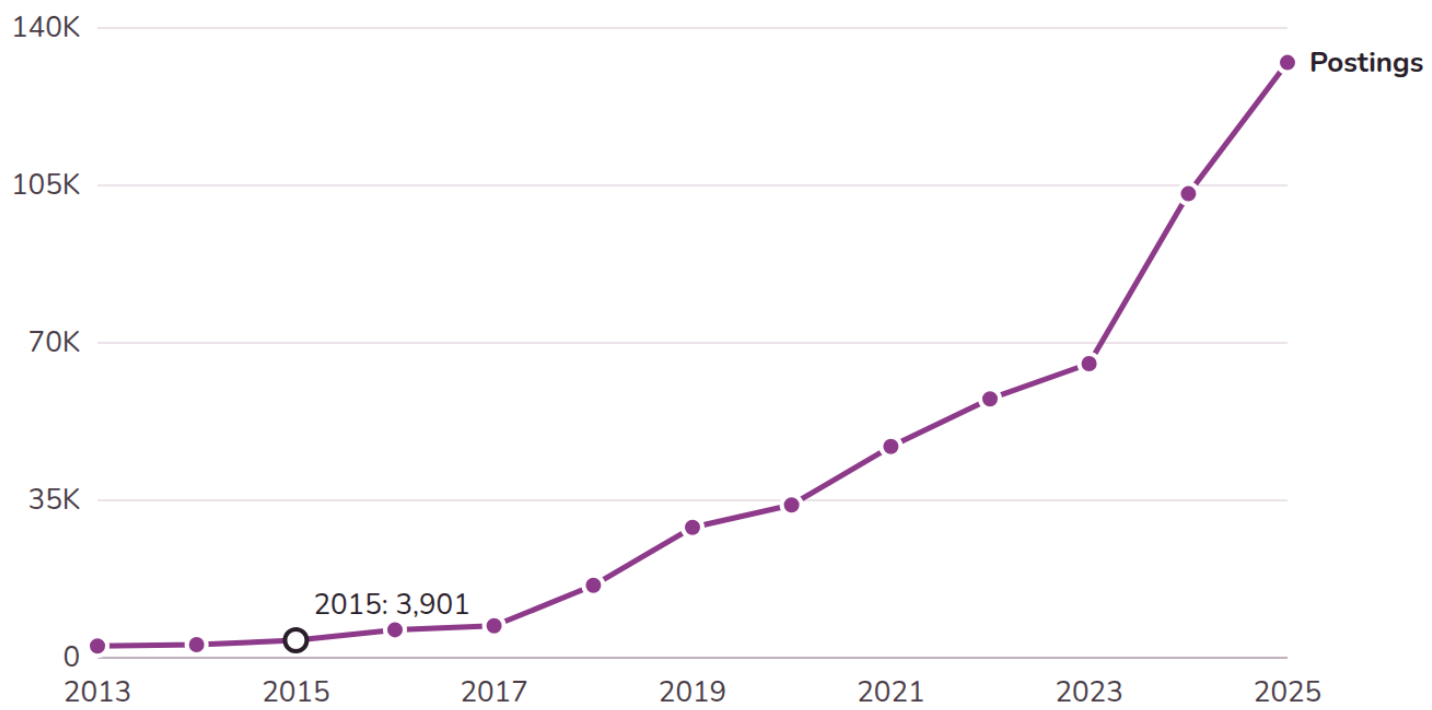
The BACB reports results by program, not by where a candidate lives, so these data can't show whether students from one part of the country pass more often than others.

What can be estimated is a pass rate grouped by each program's home state.

Counting only on-campus and hybrid listings, every region lands between 62.3% and 71.8%, on small numbers (780 candidates in all).

Source: BACB 2025 report; program state as matched to the federal IPEDS directory; regions as the US Census Bureau defines them. Numbers under each region: candidates in all listings / in on-campus and hybrid listings. Rates are estimated from printed rates.

Job postings asking for a BCBA, 2013 to 2025



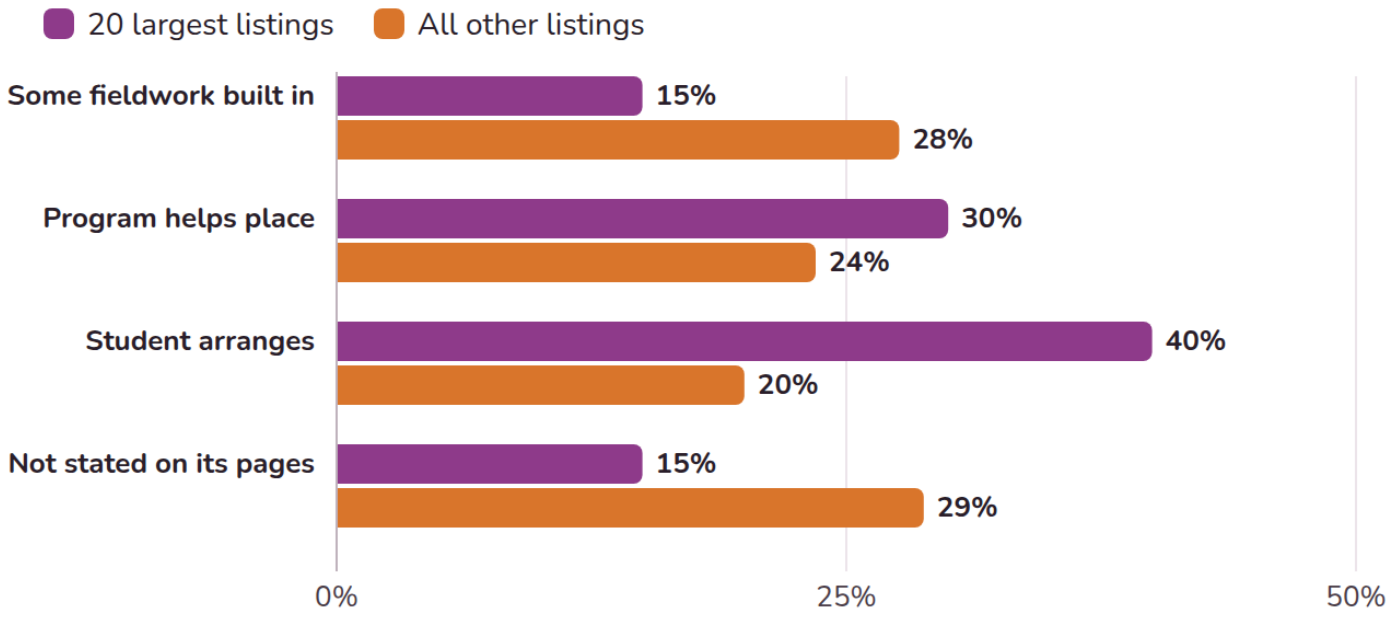
Job postings that required or preferred BCBA certification rose from 3,901 in 2015 to 132,307 in 2025.

Postings aren't filled jobs, but the direction is clear.

The BACB/Lightcast report finds demand "has increased each year since 2010, with a 28% increase from 2024 to 2025" (pages 1-2).

Source: BACB, US Employment Demand for Behavior Analysts: 2010–2025 (Lightcast job-posting data, duplicates removed), page 2. Chart: Special Learning.

How students get supervised fieldwork: the 20 largest listings and all others



Only 3 of the 20 largest listings build supervised fieldwork into the program, against 47 of the other 170; at 8 of the 20, students arrange their own.

These options can suit students who work while they study; whether fieldwork can happen at a student's own workplace depends on the program and the site.

Source: each program's own pages, as recorded in our Program Finder (school pages read November 8-9, 2026), matched to the BACB 2025 report listings. Share of listings, not of candidates. Chart: Special Learning.

The 2032 change: what the BACB and APBA say

BACB 2025 REPORT, PAGE 2

"Beginning January 1, 2032, all applicants for BCBA certification must have already completed a master's degree or higher from ABAI- or APBA-accredited programs to qualify."

It tells prospective students to "verify degree accreditation status before enrolling".

BACB, UNIVERSITY TRAINING FOR THOSE PURSUING BCBA CERTIFICATION

"Only ABAI or APBA-accredited program degrees will qualify for certification since pathway 2 will be discontinued."

"ABAI's Tier 2a- and 2b-recognized programs will no longer be accepted."

APBA ACCREDITATION FAQS

APBA "began accepting applications for review on January 20, 2026," and accredits master's programs only: "Stand-alone graduate certificate programs are not included".

That matters most where most candidates train: none of the 20 largest listings was marked accredited in 2025, and 10 of them offer a coursework-only route.

For the 2032 plan, check each program's current accreditation status and its stated plans directly with ABAI and APBA.

Sources: BACB 2025 report, page 2; BACB, University training for those pursuing BCBA certification; APBA accreditation FAQs. Full citations on slide 11.

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FOR YOUR CLASS

Questions for discussion

1. What does a program's first-time pass rate tell a student choosing a program, and what doesn't it? The BACB says pass rates "are not rankings, endorsements, or guarantees of future or individual performance."

2. How might format, schedule and cost relate to who enrolls in a program? What would you need to know before reading the gap in Figure 4 as a difference in teaching?

3. Estimated pass rates fell about 15 points from 2015 to 2025 at large and smaller listings alike (Figure 3). What questions would you ask before explaining a change across the whole field?

4. A student starts a coursework-only certificate today. What does the 2032 rule mean for their plan, and what should they ask their program, ABAI and APBA?

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Sources

Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). BCBA Examination Pass Rates for University Training Programs 2025. https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/bcba-pass-rates-2025/

BACB. BCBA Examination Pass Rates for Verified Course Sequences, 2015-2019 (combined). https://assets.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BCBA-Pass-Rates-Combined-201228-a.pdf

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US Census Bureau. Census Regions and Divisions of the United States. https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. IPEDS (each program's home state). https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/

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Special Learning. ABA Program Rankings, 2023-2025. https://special-learning.com/tools/aba-program-rankings/

Special Learning. Why about 20 programs train three in four US BCBA candidates. November 15, 2026. https://special-learning.com/universities/why-20-programs-train-most-bcba-candidates/

Pass rates for groups are estimates: each listing's candidates times its printed, rounded rate, added up. US listings only. The BACB's words: pass rates "are not rankings, endorsements, or guarantees of future or individual performance."

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More free material for instructors

special-learning.com/universities/instructors/

If a number about your program is wrong, every row in the Rankings and Finder has a correction link.

See something wrong? Write to contact@special-learning.com and we will check it against the source and correct it.

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