Thinking Outside of the University

Innovation in Alternative Teacher Certification

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Executive Summary

Teacher quality is critical to the success of all other education reform efforts, which is why forward-thinking education reformers are so focused on reforming teacher certification standards to boost quality. Adding urgency to the effort is a growing consensus that the supply of new teachers isn’t meeting the demand, particularly for subject shortage areas and hard-to-staff schools.

One approach to meeting the challenges of teacher quality and supply are alternative routes to teacher certification. These routes have been proliferating over the past decade, and they currently supply about one-fifth of new hires nationally. Teachers prepared through these programs have been found to be just as effective as those prepared through traditional routes within a short period of time. These routes can also increase diversity in the teaching pool.

Yet many alternative certification programs are no longer all that different from the traditional routes they have replaced. A recent study by Kate Walsh and Sandi Jacobs from the National Council on Teacher Quality found that many of the “alternative” programs are very similar to traditional preparation programs. The researchers found that the programs are only as selective, or even less selective, than education schools. What’s more, most alternative programs are not flexible enough to support non-traditional applicants and provide inadequate training and support for teacher candidates.

Minimizing the differences between standard and alternative programs still further, approximately 50 percent of alternative programs are operated by colleges and universities, and they often closely resemble traditional teacher preparation programs in terms of required professional coursework. Since traditional, university-based programs are not adequately preparing high quality teachers, particularly for hard-to-staff schools and subjects such as math and science, alternative programs are needed that try new and innovative approaches, rather than mimic traditional approaches.

A guide to duplicating successful alternative certification programs by Urban Institute researchers Beatriz Chu Clewell and Ana Maria Villegas noted four factors that are particularly important to a program’s success:
• Strong partnerships between preparation programs and school districts.

• A rigorous but flexible selection process using traditional and non-traditional criteria.

• Teacher education that meets the needs of non-traditional participants.

• A strong support system.

Studies conducted by other education researchers also emphasize providing a lengthy and comprehensive pre-service component involving practice teaching. In their study, Clewell and Villegas assume that alternative teacher preparation programs are housed in university schools of education, but none of the elements that they noted is dependent upon that relationship.

Indeed, non-profit organizations such as Teach For America and The New Teacher Project, community colleges, private entities, individual schools, and others can, with support and funding, develop innovative teacher preparation programs that can incorporate all of these elements and prepare prospective teachers for certification and a career in teaching. And those efforts are increasing apace.

Some states are adopting these alternatives to traditional teacher education schools.

Innovative programs operated by a diversity of providers can provide solutions to the unique challenges faced by charter schools, high-poverty or high-needs schools, reconstituted schools, and schools in rural areas, by preparing teachers who are specifically trained to meet those challenges. In contrast, teachers who have been prepared by university schools of education are typically prepared to seek employment in the general market and may lack skills that are necessary in high-needs schools.

What many of these innovative programs have in common is an emphasis on competencies rather than course credits for preparing new educators. Ideally, the programs or the districts that they partner with provide prospective teachers with opportunities to build these competencies through pre-service clinical experience, mentoring, induction, and ongoing professional development.

Finally, innovative programs create competition with education schools and other alternative certification programs. Their creative solutions for preparing teachers for challenging teaching placements could help to spur sorely needed change across the board. Education schools have been able to circumvent much of the competition by operating the majority of alternative certification programs themselves with the support of state policy. A true market-based approach to teacher preparation would encourage innovation in program development and delivery as programs compete to produce effective teachers.

Innovative Programs

The innovative preparation programs profiled in this report include the following:

• Teacher Intern Programs train teacher interns specifically for the school or type of school in which they will be working once they are certified. In most programs, an intern is expected to already demonstrate subject-area competency, usually through under-
graduate coursework, and teaches as a full-time teacher of record while completing training in pedagogy.

- **Teach for America and the New Teacher Project** are nationally recognized non-profit organizations that selectively recruit non-traditional teacher candidates to teach in high-needs schools with the mission of closing the achievement gap.

- **Online Programs** enable teachers to take courses and become certified on the Internet. They provide an economical option for teacher candidates who need more flexibility as they prepare for certification, who live in geographically remote areas, or who feel that they can meet certification requirements with little formal instruction.

- **Community Colleges** offer certification to prospective teachers who already hold a bachelor’s degree in a subject other than education.

- **Teacher Residency Programs** provide teacher residents, like novice doctors, with intensive support throughout their residency year. They do not teach as full-time teachers of record. Instead, they typically teach in a classroom alongside a mentor teacher and are given increasing levels of responsibility throughout the school year.

**Implications for Policy**

There is no empirical evidence that education schools do a better job of preparing teachers or that required professional education coursework increases student achievement. In many states, licensure requirements call for excessive amounts of coursework for new teachers, often virtually equivalent to earning a master’s degree and as Chester Finn and Mike Petrilli of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation state, “have merely re-ordered the traditional teacher-prep sequence without altering its substance.”

In order to allow innovative programs to develop, the following steps must be taken:

- **Revise Licensure Requirements to Reflect Teaching Competencies.** State licensure requirements should be revised to reflect a framework of teaching competencies that new teachers will be expected to master.

- **Revise Policies to Allow a Diversity of Providers.** States should revise their policies to allow non-profit and private organizations, community colleges, districts, regional service centers, individual schools, and others to develop and implement their own teacher preparation programs.

- **Strengthen Evaluation and Accountability of Teacher Preparation Programs.** All programs, traditional and alternative, should be held to the same high standard of quality, determined by the ability to prepare participants to meet state standards for certification and by the effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom.

- **Provide Federal Funding to Support Innovative Alternative Certification Programs.** The federal government should create financial incentives for states to expand their definition of alternate route programs to include a diversity of providers. Public funds should be made available to those programs that prove their ef-
fectiveness in recruiting and preparing competent teachers, especially those in high-needs areas.

The requirement that all teachers be “highly qualified”—established by Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965—has helped to keep teacher certification at the forefront of the national education reform agenda. In the current climate of support for educational entrepreneurship, one might expect that the creation of alternate routes to certification would have opened the floodgates for innovative supply-side solutions. Unless the barriers to innovation are removed, however, a marketplace of options cannot operate properly, and innovative programs cannot flourish or grow to scale.

Given the prevailing negative attitude about the current state of teacher preparation programs, both traditional and alternative, it seems appropriate to consider a new paradigm for teacher preparation in the 21st century. In the pages that follow, this report will briefly describe the evolution of alternative certification programs, define them and explain what we know from research about their efficacy, and profile innovative programs in several categories.
Introduction

The best teachers are the ones that students remember for years to come. It is those high-quality teachers who change students’ lives that teacher-education schools and certification programs should be striving to produce. Partly in response to the growing dissatisfaction with traditional teacher education preparation programs, most states have created alternate routes to certification. Given the current climate of support for educational entrepreneurialism, one might expect that the creation of alternate routes to certification would have opened the floodgates for innovative supply-side solutions. However, there is now a growing level of discontent with many of the newer alternative programs as well.

Alternative certification programs are one of the most promising solutions to addressing the twin challenges of teacher quantity and quality. We need more teachers and better teachers to help students thrive and to meet the requirement established by The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that all teachers be “highly qualified.”

In some states, promising innovations in teacher preparation include alternative certification programs administered by districts, regional service centers, and non-profit organizations such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project. Other providers include private and non-profit online programs, like ABCTE, community colleges, and even Charter Management Organizations, like High Tech High. These innovative programs are diversifying the teaching pool and preparing teachers for the unique challenges that they will face in their teaching positions.

Unfortunately, most states’ current policies create barriers to this sort of innovation by not allowing a diversity of providers to operate alternative certification programs. Unless the barriers to innovation are removed, a marketplace of options cannot operate properly and innovative programs cannot flourish or grow to scale.
The Current State of Teacher Preparation

State Certification Framework

In order to teach in a public school in the United States one must have a teaching certificate or license granted by the state or by an agency authorized to license teachers, typically the state board of education. In general, there are five types of teaching certificates:

- **Standard or professional certificates** are issued to teachers who have completed all state certification requirements.

- **Provisional certificates** are for those still enrolled in a certification program.

- **Probationary certificates** are issued to those completing a probationary teaching period.

- **Temporary certificates** may be issued to a beginning teacher lacking coursework or student teaching requirements.

- **Emergency certification** is effectively a waiver of certification requirements and is not permitted under NCLB.

The name and sequence of certificates awarded may vary from state to state, and each state has different requirements regarding professional coursework, tests, mentoring, induction, and probationary periods required for standard teaching certificate eligibility.

Most teachers are still prepared for certification through the traditional route. They earn a bachelor’s degree in education or another subject with a substantial amount of education coursework at a four-year university, after which they are typically eligible for either a probationary or a standard certificate.

A growing number of teachers are prepared for certification through an alternate route; this involves completing an alternative certification program designed for those who already have a bachelor’s degree in a subject other than education. These teachers often teach as full-time teachers of record with a probationary certificate while they complete the certification program.
The Traditional Route to Teaching Certification

The university route to teaching historically grew out of state and private normal schools—the first teacher preparation institutions, which trained high school graduates to be teachers. Many teachers in the 1800s were prepared in training programs connected with high schools or normal schools in large cities. Progressives in the early 20th century believed in improving teacher quality by requiring more formal training. As a result, collegiate normal school programs grew in number from only 4 in 1900 to 150 by 1930. Eventually, normal schools were phased out, partly because of the competition that they posed to universities. By the mid-20th century, university schools of education and state departments of education held a monopoly on the training and certifying of teachers.

In the years following World War II and the launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, which prompted fears that the United States was losing the “space race,” the U.S. system of teacher preparation came under scrutiny. The list of complaints included low standards for admission and completion in departments of education; a lack of intellectual rigor; an overemphasis on professional education courses, such as education theory, versus academic and liberal arts classes; inadequate opportunities for hands-on, or clinical, classroom experience; and finally the lack of reliable scientific evidence that traditional teacher education programs positively affect teacher performance.

Teacher preparation received further attention with the publication of “A Nation At Risk” in 1983, which argued that our poor educational performance was the result of a weak educational system. In terms of teacher preparation, the report found that: “Too many teachers are being drawn from the bottom quarter of graduating high school and college students,” and “the teacher preparation curriculum is weighted heavily with courses in ‘educational methods’ at the expense of courses in subjects to be taught.”

Many of these complaints about the quality of traditional programs remain the same today. Over this same period of time, research has also pointed out the low academic caliber of students who choose to major in education. In particular, education majors tend to score lower on college-entrance exams and attend less selective schools than their undergraduate peers. Still more researchers have been unable to make a connection between professional education coursework and teacher effectiveness. Despite these criticisms, old and new, most teachers are still prepared at university schools of education. Approximately 81 percent of the 220,777 teacher certification-program completers in 2003–2004 had come through the traditional route.

Alternate Routes to Teaching Certification

Concerns about the quality of university teacher preparation programs and projected teacher shortages were the impetus 25 years ago to create alternative pathways into the teaching profession. These alternate routes would attract higher quality candidates than university education schools by providing an opportunity for mid-career professionals and recent liberal arts graduates with bachelor’s degrees in other subjects to prepare for careers.
in teaching. Alternate routes would also significantly cut down on unnecessary and irrelevant professional coursework and instead focus on developing teaching competencies. Alternate routes to full certification were seen as a much more substantive alternative to increasingly prevalent emergency certificates.

New Jersey made headlines in 1984 with its Provisional Teacher Program, the first alternative certification program in the nation. This program still recruits talented individuals and enables them to earn a teaching certificate in one to two years by teaching under the supervision of a mentor while simultaneously taking only the necessary practical education courses. Driven by continued concerns about teaching shortages in particular subjects and geographical areas as well as the No Child Left Behind Act’s “highly qualified teacher” requirement, other states followed New Jersey’s lead. By 2007, 47 states had implemented at least one route to alternative certification. Today about one-fifth of new hires nationally are certified through one of the approximately 485 alternative certification programs operating through 130 different routes. In some states the percentage of teachers entering the profession through alternate routes is even higher. In Texas, almost 50 percent of new teachers are alternatively certified, and in California 24 percent of new hires prepare for certification through an alternate route. Nationwide, the number of teachers earning certificates through alternate certification programs has grown exponentially over the years, from only 275 in the 1985–86 school year to 59,000 in 2005–06.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Alternate Routes to Teaching Certification**

A major strength of training teachers through alternative routes to certification is that it holds promise for improving teacher quality and as a result, student

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**What Is an Alternative Certification Program?**

Dr. C. Emily Feistritzer, president and CEO of the National Center for Alternative Certification, presents the following definition of an alternate route program:

- “Routes specifically designed to recruit, prepare and license talented individuals who already had at least a bachelor’s degree—and often other careers—in fields other than education

- Rigorous screening processes, such as passing tests, interviews, and demonstrated mastery of content

- Field-based programs

- Coursework or equivalent experiences in professional education studies before and while teaching

- Work with mentor teachers and/or other support personnel

- High performance standards for completion of the programs.”
achievement. A recent study from Louisiana State University revealed, using student achievement data, that new teachers prepared through alternate route programs in the state performed as well as or better than experienced teachers.18 Another study of teacher qualifications and student achievement in New York City partially attributed the reduction in the disparity between teacher qualifications in high-income and low-income schools to a policy that permitted the creation of alternate routes to certification in 2000. Notably, the student achievement gap also narrowed during the same time period.19

Another study reached the conclusion that in “many cases a teacher’s pathway makes little difference in the achievement of students” and that initial differences generally disappear by the teacher’s second or third year of teaching.20 In other words, alternatively certified teachers are just as effective in a short period of time as traditionally trained teachers with regard to student outcomes.

Alternative routes to certification also increase diversity in the teaching pool. A multi-state survey from The National Center for Education Information provides insights into the demographic characteristics and attitudes of alternatively certified teachers. Among its findings were that alternative routes to certification attract more males, minorities, and older candidates than the traditional route. The survey also revealed that almost half of alternatively certified teachers would not have become teachers had an alternate route not been available.21

In fact, the flexible and accelerated scheduling of alternative certification programs appeals to non-traditional candidates, such as mid-career professionals, and the reduced cost (some programs are free, but most charge between $5,000 and $10,000) of most programs makes teaching a more accessible career for many people.22

Yet alternative certification programs are now beginning to attract the same sort of criticism that traditional programs have been receiving for decades. A recent study by Kate Walsh and Sandi Jacobs, “Alternative Certification isn’t Alternative,” reported that many alternative certification programs today are not true to the original intent of the movement. They found that many programs were only as selective, or even less selective, than education schools, that they were not flexible enough to support non-traditional applicants, and that they provided inadequate training and support for teacher candidates.23

Another cause for concern is that alternative certification programs operated by colleges and universities have grown faster since 2000 than those operated by any other entity, and now represent approximately 50 percent of the market.24 Often these programs closely resemble traditional teacher preparation programs. Twenty-seven states require alternate route candidates to complete either a master’s degree or practically the equivalent in coursework.

Much of this required coursework is theoretical, not practical, and is “not relevant to the immediate needs of a new teacher.”25 Over 80 percent of the randomly selected programs that Walsh and Jacobs surveyed that required more than 30 credit hours were run by colleges and universities. These excessive requirements hardly serve the needs of certification candidates, who are often teaching as full-time teachers of record while completing their certifications.
Innovation in Teacher Preparation

Innovation within Alternate Routes to Certification

Innovative alternative certification programs operated by a diversity of providers can provide solutions to the unique challenges faced by charter schools, high-poverty or high-needs schools, reconstituted schools and schools in rural areas. By preparing teachers who are trained to meet challenges in these specific educational environments, alternative certification programs deliver teachers to the classroom better prepared and more qualified.

In some states, innovative programs such as the High Tech High Intern Program and the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence have been authorized to prepare teachers for certification. Some states also allow school districts, regional service centers, community colleges, private entities, and non-profit organizations such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project to administer programs.

A guide on duplicating successful alternative certification programs by Urban Institute researchers Clewell and Villegas noted four factors that are particularly important to a program’s success. These factors were:

- Strong partnerships between preparation programs and school districts.
- A rigorous but flexible selection process using traditional and nontraditional criteria.
- Teacher education that meets the needs of non-traditional participants.
- A strong support system.

Studies conducted by other education researchers also emphasize providing a lengthy and comprehensive pre-service component involving practice teaching. While Clewell and Villegas assume that alternative teacher preparation programs are housed in university schools of education, not one of the elements that they noted is dependent upon that. Non-profit organizations, community colleges, private entities, individual schools and others can, with support and funding, develop innovative teacher preparation programs that can incorporate all of these elements and prepare prospective teachers for certification and a career in teaching.

What many innovative programs have in common is an emphasis on competencies rather than course credits for preparing new educators. Ideally, the programs, or the
districts that they partner with, provide prospective teachers opportunities to build these competencies through pre-service clinical experience, mentoring, induction, and ongoing professional development.

New research is demonstrating that unlike professional education coursework, these elements may provide returns in higher student achievement and reduced teacher turnover. According to the New Teacher Center, “every $1.00 spent on high quality teacher induction programs provides a return on investment of $1.66 after five years...a result of enhanced student learning and reduced teacher turnover costs.” More research is needed to determine the effects of other competency-based strategies for preparing teachers.

Innovative programs also create competition with education schools and other alternative certification programs that could help to spur change across the board. And change is sorely needed. Education schools have been able to circumvent much of the competition thus far by operating the majority of alternative certification programs themselves with the support of state policy. A true market-based approach to teacher preparation would encourage innovation in program development and delivery as programs compete to produce effective teachers.

Examples of Innovative Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher Intern Programs

Teacher intern programs are the most common type of alternative certification program, yet they can take many forms and are operated by several different types of entities.

Teacher interns are typically trained at and specifically for the school or type of school in which they will be working once they receive their certification. In most programs, an intern is expected to already demonstrate subject area competency, usually through undergraduate coursework, and teaches as a full-time teacher of record while completing training in pedagogy. Often, teacher intern programs require the certification candidate to secure employment as a teacher first, giving participants the advantage of being able to focus their training on knowledge and skills that will be immediately useful.

School District Programs

The most common non-university providers of alternative certification programs are school districts, which administer 21 percent of these programs. District administration has already worked well in Florida. Since 2002, the state has required all school districts to operate either their own state-approved alternative certification program or offer the state-designed version.

Florida’s alternative certification programs are very flexible, offering such options as rolling admissions and Saturday, evening, or online courses. The programs are competency-based and participants teach as full-time teachers of record while they work toward earning a standard teaching certificate. The district handles pedagogical training that corresponds with Florida’s 12 Accomplished Practices.

There are no credit hour requirements, but some districts choose to partner with
universities to offer pedagogical training, while in others, training is conducted by educators in the district. A typical program involves data collection, observation, and work with a district-provided mentor. In addition to meeting program requirements, participants must submit a competency portfolio and pass pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams. Fees for the programs vary and in some cases the district absorbs the cost. The state evaluates the programs based on teacher portfolios, teacher and administrator surveys, and assessment of participants’ employment status.¹²

Regional Service Center Programs

Regional service centers operate another 6 percent of alternative certification programs nationally.³³ A successful program is already in place in Texas. In that state, 20 regional Education Service Centers serve as liaisons between the Texas Education Agency and local school districts. These non-regulatory agencies were established by the Texas Legislature in 1965 and are supported by state and federal funds and fees for services. They provide support for school districts in their geographical area

Teacher Intern Programs

Alternative Certification Program—Hillsborough County, Florida³¹

Established in 1998, Hillsborough County’s program offers rolling admissions to certification candidates hired by district schools and approved charter schools. Candidates have three years to earn a certificate, but most complete the program in 18 months. Participants are responsible for ensuring that they meet state content requirements for certification and the district provides pedagogical training.

Participants complete six courses aligned with Florida’s 12 Accomplished Practices that are integrated with fieldwork carried out while serving as a full-time teacher of record.

Experienced school district personnel deliver evening and weekend courses at various school sites throughout the district. Participants must also create an electronic portfolio to demonstrate their mastery of teaching competencies.

The program’s mentoring component is based on the Steve Barkley mentoring and coaching model. Former administrators serve as mentors to 15–30 candidates, conducting observations and providing feedback and guidance. At the school site, candidates are observed and assessed a minimum of 11 times by a support team consisting of an administrator and a trained peer teacher.

This process serves as the teacher’s internship. In addition to successfully completing all program requirements, certification candidates must pass pedagogy, general and/or subject area exams, and meet any other requirements set forth by state law. The program is funded solely by participant fees of $1200. Over 1500 participants have completed the program in its nine-year history. Program completion and retention rates are high, at 92 percent and 75 percent respectively.

Educator Certification Program, Region XIII—Austin, Texas³³

Participants in Region XIII’s 17-month program prepare for elementary, secondary, special education, bilingual, and career and technical certification to meet the needs of local schools. Candidates undergo a rigorous selection process that uses TeacherInsight, an automated online interview tool many school districts use to help them identify the best teacher applicants. The program begins in January with a series of online courses to prepare participants for the TExES content test.

After completing the exam, participants are eligible for a Probationary Certificate and can seek employment as a full-time teacher of record for the upcoming school year during which they will carry out the internship component of the program. Beginning in mid-March participants attend 180 hours of evening and weekend courses in pedagogy. During the summer, candidates
complete two weeks (60 hours) of practice teaching in their subject area and are observed twice by their Field Specialist.

During the school year, a mentor teacher assigned by the school supports interns through four observations and discussions. The Region XIII Field Specialist also makes five half-day observation visits and provides feedback. Interns continue pedagogical training during the school year with an additional 60 hours of training.

After completing all program requirements, including coursework and assignments, passing pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams, and teach as a full-time teacher of record under the supervision of a district-provided mentor for at least one year to be eligible for standard certification.

Participants seeking certification in a critical needs certification area are eligible for a $2000 scholarship. Otherwise they are responsible for the $5,200 program cost. Between 1989 and 2004, over 2,000 interns completed the program, with 95 percent finding a position and remaining employed throughout the internship year.

High Tech High Teacher Intern Program and Graduate School of Education—San Diego, California

High Tech High was the first CMO in the state of California authorized to prepare teachers for certification. Both the Teacher Intern Program and the Graduate School of Education are embedded within High Tech High’s eight schools, creating “a laboratory for teaching and learning.” “We are putting the applied aspect of the learning before the theoretical,” says Jennifer L. Husbands, Director of HTH Graduate School of Education.

The HTH Teacher Intern Program provides a three-week pre-service experience and 600 hours of training and practice over a two-year period. Most courses are taught by High Tech High teachers and administrators and take place on-site on Tuesday afternoons and Saturdays during the first year of the internship. During the second year, interns demonstrate teaching competency by meeting the requirements of the California Teaching Performance Assessment.

Interns teach as full-time teachers of record at HTH, earn a full salary and benefits, and pay no tuition or fees for the program. They can receive a Preliminary Credential in math, science, English, history/social studies, Spanish, Mandarin, or art. Candidates must also pass all required pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams to qualify for licensure.

High Tech High’s Graduate School of Education opened its doors in 2007 and offers a M.Ed. with a concentration in Teacher Leadership. GSE students may be employed at HTH or elsewhere but still teach as full-time teachers of record while enrolled in the program. The GSE is not yet accredited for teacher credentialing.
the process of completing a certification program in order to teach, thereby eliminating much of the hiring autonomy that charter school principals had enjoyed.

School districts in California in partnership with universities had certified their own teachers for years, but High Tech High was the first CMO to be accredited to run a teacher intern program in the state. In accordance with state policy, High Tech High partnered with the University of San Diego to run the Teacher Intern Program and currently maintains an advisory relationship with the university. According to Jennifer Husbands, Director of HTH Graduate School of Education, “Having an in-house certification program ensures teachers receive practical, on-the-job experience that aligns with the school’s model while meeting state and federal certification requirements, and enables the school to recruit the teachers best suited to serve its students.”

In 2007, the Reach Institute for School Leadership, based in Napa Valley, California, joined High Tech High as the second CMO authorized to prepare teachers for certification. Teacher interns at both High Tech High and the Reach Institute for School Leadership benefit from the highly supportive environment of their schools as they complete the program, work with a mentor, and pass required pedagogy, general, or subject area exams for certification.

Another recent, innovative program involving charter management organizations is a joint venture between three charter management organizations in New York City: Uncommon Schools, KIPP and Achievement First, and Hunter College, a school within the City University of New York system.

This pilot program is being designed to meet the practical needs of new teachers already teaching in classrooms and the instructional philosophies of the schools managed by the CMOs. The program is intended to serve about 500 students by 2011, including those teaching in other schools not managed by the CMOs. Courses in the two-year program will be co-taught by charter school staff members and Hunter faculty, and students can earn certification and a master’s degree.

**Teach For America and The New Teacher Project**

Teach for America and The New Teacher Project are nationally recognized non-profit organizations that selectively recruit non-traditional teacher candidates to teach in high-needs schools with the mission of closing the achievement gap.

Teach for America focuses on recruitment, selection, and support services for outstanding recent college graduates who commit to teach for two years in underserved rural and urban communities. Research has shown that teachers recruited by Teach for America produce similar results regarding student achievement as compared to other teachers.

The New Teacher Project partners with school districts to recruit high-quality teachers for hard-to-staff schools and subjects. TNTP also works with school districts to improve their teacher hiring and school staffing functions and develops “new and better ways to prepare, develop, and certify teachers for public schools.” While Teach for America focuses primarily on recent college graduates, TNTP programs include a focus on career changers as well.
Typically, TFA corps members and TNTP teachers are certified through an established route to alternative certification in the district in which they will be employed. Teach for America in Connecticut and the New Teacher Project in Louisiana, Maryland, and Texas, however, have been authorized to independently prepare and recommend their own teacher candidates for state certification.

In 2007, Teach for America placed its first cohort of corps members in the state of Connecticut (see box below). After undergoing state review for accreditation, Teach for America Connecticut was approved as an alternate route to certification in elementary education, secondary mathematics, science, social studies, English, and world languages. Teach for America has strong partnerships with the districts that it works in and helps to place corps members in their teaching assignments, allowing them to target their training programs to the needs of the certification candidates.

Once teachers are hired, TFA works within Connecticut’s three-tiered licensure system and prepares corps members for an initial certificate. Corps members may choose to work toward a Provisional Educator Certificate by participating in the Beginning Educator Support and Training, or BEST Program, where they create a portfolio that demonstrates their teaching competencies.

While The New Teacher Project has worked with over 200 school districts in 26 states, it is only currently authorized to independently prepare and recommend teachers for certification in shortage areas in Louisiana, Maryland, and Texas. TNTP has partnered with school districts in all three states to design and implement programs that will meet local needs and state standards. Program requirements include participation in a pre-service institute with a practice teaching component, attending TNTP’s Teaching for Results content seminar series, teaching as a full-time teacher of record under the supervision of

Teach for America Connecticut

A Non-Profit Alternate Certification Program

Starting in 2007, Teach for America has recruited and trained high-achieving recent college graduates to work in low-income urban schools in New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford, Connecticut. Corps members qualify for a temporary 90-day certificate after completing a two-week induction and a two-week orientation in addition to TFA’s five-week institute, which includes a student teaching component. After 90 days of successful teaching in their placement school, corps members qualify for the initial educator certificate.

During their first year of teaching, corps members participate in a regional professional development program, monthly content seminars, and a new teacher support group. Corps members must also pass required PRAXIS exams (tests of teachers’ skills and knowledge required by many states as part of their licensure process) prior to their first year of teaching. Elementary teachers are required to complete six credit hours in literacy instruction through a university partner but there are no universal credit hour or coursework requirements for secondary teachers. The cost to participants ranges between $1200 and $2300, depending on coursework needed.
a district-provided mentor, and meeting state testing and certification requirements. TNTP tracks certification candidates’ progress using an electronic applicant-tracking system, called TeacherTrack.

Working closely with urban school districts, TNTP has certified over 800 teachers to date in these three states. TFA and TNTP’s unique formula—partnerships between organizations that have high standards for recruitment and a strong support system for new teachers—has provided an innovative solution for meeting the human capital needs of school districts.

Online Programs

Online alternative certification programs have the potential to expand the current system of teacher preparation by providing economical options for teacher candidates who need more flexibility as they prepare for certification, who live in geographically remote areas, or who feel that they can meet certification requirements with little formal instruction.

There is a high demand for online certification programs, evidenced by the 4,500 students enrolled in the Western Gover-
nor’s University online alternative teacher certification program. While the creation and accreditation of this program by NCATE is a promising move toward increasing the accessibility of teacher certification, students must complete the 18- to 24-month course before they can seek employment as a teacher.

In some states, non-university providers are operating online teacher preparation programs to meet the demand for flexible teacher preparation options. Texas, one of the leaders in allowing a diversity of providers to operate alternative certification programs, has authorized etools4Education, a private, for-profit company, to operate the Web-Centric Alternative Certification Program.

In addition to meeting state certification requirements—which include teaching as a full-time teacher of record under the supervision of a district-provided mentor and passing pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams—certification candidates complete a variety of online assignments and work remotely with a program administrator. The program’s directors have classroom and district

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**Online Certification Programs**

**Web-Centric Alternative Certification Program, Texas**

WCACP is administered by etools4Education, a private, for-profit education technology company. Candidates can complete all assignments and coursework from home in this 100 percent online program that emphasizes technological literacy and prepares new teachers to effectively integrate technology into their own classrooms.

Participants must complete a pre-teaching assignment and three other online modules that include online assignments, journal entries, surveys, chats, and forums. Candidates also use a video-conferencing and whiteboard system, allowing small group and individual face-to-face discussion or chats with a Program Administrator. To be eligible for a Texas Educator Certificate, participants must pass required TExES exams, teach for one year as a full-time teacher of record with a Provisional Certificate under the supervision of a district-provided mentor, and receive a recommendation from their principal. Participants are responsible for the entire $4,500 program cost.

**American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence**

ABCTE is a non-profit organization, founded in 2001 and funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant. ABCTE’s Passport to Teaching certification is available in 10 different subject areas: elementary education (K–6), special education (K–6), English language arts (6–12), math (6–12), general science (6–12), biology (6–12), chemistry (6–12), physics (6–12), U.S. history (6–12), and world history (6–12). In several states, ABCTE has partnered with the federal Troops to Teachers program and Spouses to Teachers program to provide preparation for certification.

Advisors help teacher candidates develop an individualized, self-paced study plan using a variety of materials. Candidates take exams to demonstrate subject matter mastery and pedagogical knowledge in secure testing centers. Participants must also meet individual state certification requirements such as passing required state tests and participation in mentoring programs.

ABCTE is also piloting a program for already certified teachers to earn an advanced Distinguished Teacher credential. The Passport to Teaching certification program costs $850, while the Distinguished Teacher Certification will cost around $1,200. In a preliminary report conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc., principals generally gave positive feedback about ABCTE certified teachers. However, most principals only had experience with one teacher certified through the program. Ninety-five percent of those principals indicated that ABCTE-certified teachers were as effective or more effective than their traditionally certified peers.
staff development experience and the company’s staff consists of experienced educators, professional business managers, and technology experts.\textsuperscript{49}

Another example of a successful online program is the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, or ABCTE, which has been approved to certify teachers in at least one subject area in Florida, Idaho, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Utah.\textsuperscript{50} In ABCTE’s program, candidates use an individualized, self-paced study plan to prepare themselves for content and pedagogical exams, enabling non-traditional candidates to more easily fulfill certification requirements. Participants must also meet mentoring and state testing requirements established by the state in which they are seeking certification.\textsuperscript{51}

Despite the advantages of online programs, some fear that their very flexibility may detract from their quality. Programs that certify teachers for employment in the general market may lack the strong partnership with districts and schools in which their participants will be teaching. Certainly further evaluation of these programs will be needed to demonstrate that their graduates are effective classroom teachers.

\section*{Community Colleges}

In 2000, Texas became the first state to authorize community colleges to offer alternative certification programs for prospective teachers already holding a bachelor’s degree in a subject other than education. At least 20 other states have followed Texas’s lead, but nationally, community colleges still only have primary responsibility for the administration of 2 percent of alternate route programs.\textsuperscript{52} A few community colleges, such as Great Basin College in Nevada and several institutions in Florida, Utah, New Mexico, and Louisiana now offer bachelor’s degrees in education.\textsuperscript{53} These programs cannot be categorized as alternative certification programs because they certify teachers with a bachelor’s degree, the way most university programs do. However, they do provide an innovative option for prospective teachers to earn certification. Many more community colleges have become involved in teacher preparation through the creation of post-baccalaureate alternative certification programs.

According to the Education Commission of the States, community colleges are “uniquely qualified to offer alternative certification teacher training programs based on their history of preparing non-traditional students to enter the workforce.”\textsuperscript{54} The flexible schedules and financial and geographical accessibility of community colleges appeal to non-traditional teacher candidates.

Furthermore, because the students that attend community colleges are often products of the local school district, the colleges have a stake in ensuring that the teachers are well prepared to teach in that system. Community college programs make teacher preparation more accessible for a diverse group of candidates by enrolling students from the local community. The average age of their students is 29,\textsuperscript{55} and the majority of students of color in higher education are enrolled in community colleges—42 percent and 55 percent of African-American and Hispanic students respectively.\textsuperscript{56}

Florida has also been a leader in developing community college-based certification. In 2004, the state, which estimates that
it will need over 200,000 new teachers in the next decade, approved the creation of Educator Preparation Institutes at community colleges to prepare and recommend college graduates for teacher certification. By the summer of 2006, all 28 community colleges in Florida had established EPIs and 25 of them opted to collaborate and develop common, transferable, competency-based courses.

While program lengths and costs vary by institution, all participants must meet the same standards required of traditional route teachers, including competency in Florida’s 12 Accomplished Practices. Experienced district personnel and/or community college faculty deliver instruction in professional knowledge and subject matter.

The community colleges partner with local school districts and/or private institutions to provide supervised field experience. In order to qualify for certification, participants must also pass pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams. The Florida DOE requires submission of an annual evaluation that includes documentation of teacher candidates’ success rates, subject matter competency, and readiness for teaching and student performance data. In 2006, about 3,000 certification candidates were enrolled in EPIs.

Community College Programs

**Great Basin College—Elko, Nevada**

Great Basin College serves a 62,000 square-mile area of rural northeast Nevada in which only 7 percent of teachers in the area’s six school districts formerly came from in-state. In 1999, the community college was authorized to offer bachelor’s degrees in elementary education, the first of three baccalaureate degrees for which the college received $1.5 million in funds from the state legislature. In 2005, the college was authorized to offer a bachelor’s degree in secondary education as well. Coursework is offered at the residential campus in Elko and at branch campuses, satellite centers, and online.

The program has a strong partnership with five school districts in the region through which they provide field and student teaching experiences. Students demonstrate teaching competencies through a performance rubric based on INTASC standards and the creation of an e-Portfolio that includes sample lesson plans, research, and videos of student teaching.

The first graduating class finished in May 2001, and since then about 20 students a year have graduated from the program. The success of the program at Great Basin, which is held up as a “model for innovation and efficiency,” has helped to change policies in the state of Nevada to allow other community colleges to petition to offer bachelor’s degrees.

**Educator Preparation Institute, Edison College—Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, and Naples, Florida**

At the Educator Preparation Institutes on Edison College’s three campuses, mid-career professionals are prepared for certification during a seven-month program. The program offers spring, summer, and fall admissions with classes meeting in the evening and all day on Saturdays to accommodate the schedules of non-traditional students. Taught by experienced district personnel, including teachers and administrators, courses are competency-based and practical, rather than theoretical. Participants may seek employment during or after the program but must meet all program requirements and pass pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams to be eligible for certification. In 2006, schools in Charlotte County, home to the Punta Gorda campus, hired about 40 program graduates and intended to more than double that number in 2007. Says Charlotte County School District Assistant Superintendent Rene Desjardins: “There’s no substitute for teaching experience, but there’s no experience like real-world experience.”
across the state, approximately equal to the number of education school graduates predicted to stay in-state.60

**Teacher Residency Programs**

Teacher residency programs often describe themselves as being modeled after training in the medical profession. Teacher residents, like novice doctors, are provided with intensive support throughout their residency year.

Instead of teaching as full-time teachers of record, teacher residents typically teach in a classroom alongside a mentor teacher and are given increasing levels of responsibility.

**Stanley Teacher Preparation Program—Denver, Colorado**

The Stanley British Primary School, a private elementary school, serves as the designated agency hosting the Stanley Teacher Preparation Program, preparing teachers for Colorado Elementary and Early Childhood Licensure. Each year, up to 30 teacher interns are chosen for this year-long program.

Interns teach alongside two different mentor teachers in two semester-long placements at Stanley British Primary or a partner school. Supported by their mentors, interns teach four days per week and take on increasing amounts of classroom responsibility as the year progresses. On Thursdays throughout the school year interns complete a total of 225 clock hours of coursework. They also have the option of participating in a master’s degree program at the University of Colorado, Denver that requires an additional 21 hours of coursework.

To get their Alternative Teacher License, interns apply to the Colorado Department of Education. Potential interns must either meet state content area coursework requirements or test-out through the College Level Examination Program. Life experience is also taken into consideration. Interns must pass either the PRAXIS or PLACE test in elementary education or early childhood education to qualify for licensure. They receive a stipend and medical benefits, and the school that hires them covers the $7500 licensure cost. Tuition for the master’s program is the responsibility of the student, but financial aid is available.

**New Teachers Collaborative—Devens, Massachusetts**

The New Teachers Collaborative is a teacher residency program for mid-career professionals and recent graduates based at the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School and the Regional Teacher’s Center in Devens, Massachusetts. The year-long program, based on the principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools, begins and ends with a summer coursework and planning session.

During the school year, collaborating teachers benefit from daily meetings with experienced teachers and teach with the support of a mentor for four days per week. Wednesdays are spent in full-day seminars, observing classes, participating in faculty meetings, or other professional development activities. Participants are formally observed three times per year by the program director and five times per year by their mentor teacher. Certification candidates demonstrate competency by preparing a final portfolio that includes curriculum and lesson plans, assessments, and examples of student work, 60 hours of classroom observations, weekly journal entries, a bibliography of readings, and a record of seminar work. Participants must also pass the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure to be eligible for an Initial License, valid for five years.

No tuition is charged for the program and participants receive a $15,000 stipend and benefits.

“My year in NTC was amazing. I learned to think about teaching and learning in entirely new and different ways than I had ever imagined. Now, three years after my NTC experiences, I find that this experience for me only has a greater and greater influence on how I teach. It is what I learned then that inspires me to once again rethink what I think I know and stretch myself to reach more students and to help them become passionate about what they are learning.”

– Janna Thomas completed NTC in 2006 and is currently teaching at Innovation Academy Charter School in Chelmsford, MA.
responsibility throughout the school year. The integrated coursework and practical experience is tailored to the particular needs of a school or group of schools, providing residents with targeted training in which they are able to use their classroom experience to inform their professional inquiry and vice-versa.

Each program is highly individualized, but generally programs are structured so that residents are in the classroom for four days per week and spend one day working on professional development activities on-site, including coursework. Investment in the success of participants typically does not end after program

**Academy for Urban School Leadership—Chicago, Illinois**

In 2008, 100 mid-career professionals and recent graduates will be recruited and prepared for certification and employment in Chicago Public Schools through AUSL’s year-long teacher residency program. Residents are required to pass a highly selective admissions process that involves AUSL staff members, AUSL administrators, and affiliated university faculty members. Candidates must also pass all required pedagogy, general, and/or subject area exams to qualify for licensure.

Over the course of the school year, residents are paired with a mentor teacher and work full-time in one of six training academies operated by AUSL. While gaining clinical classroom experience, residents earn a reduced tuition master’s degree from National Louis University or the University of Illinois at Chicago in which coursework is delivered on-site at the training academies by university faculty. Residents receive a training salary of $32,000 and health benefits.

In return, graduates of the program commit to teaching for five years in an under-performing Chicago public school and continue to receive intensive coaching and mentoring from an AUSL Professional Field Coach for the first three years. The program is part of a broader effort to improve the quality of public education in Chicago.

Residents are trained and then placed after graduation within a network of NCLB Turnaround Schools opened and operated by AUSL. In the past six years AUSL has trained 191 teachers who serve more than 4,500 low-income students in Chicago Public Schools. In addition, the program retains 91 percent of its graduates. As further evidence of the program’s success, “77.3 percent of students at the Chicago Academy met national standards in reading and 81.9 percent met those standards in math” in 2004.

**Boston Teacher Residency—Boston, Massachusetts**

The Boston Teacher Residency is a year-long school-based urban teacher residency program. Teacher Residents are placed in a cohort in designated Boston Public Schools and teach alongside a Mentor Teacher for four days a week for a full school year. On Fridays, after school, and during two summer sessions, participants take master’s level coursework centered around the Boston Public Schools’ Dimensions of Effective Teaching. Residents earn an $11,000 stipend, health care benefits, childcare reimbursement, and a forgivable loan for the full program cost during their training year.

They are also eligible for an AmeriCorps Education Award worth $4,725 upon successful completion of the program, which can be used to cover the cost of tuition for a master’s degree from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. In addition to meeting all program requirements, participants must pass the appropriate sections of the Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure. All graduates earn a Massachusetts Initial Teacher License, valid for five years, in their chosen subject area, and dual licensure in special education.
completion because residents often are asked to commit to a number of years with a particular school, consortium of schools, or district. Because of this, many residency programs are highly selective.

Private schools such as the Stanley British Primary School in Denver, Colorado, and Shady Hill School in Massachusetts have been cooperating with local school districts to prepare teachers for state certification using this model for decades. Katherine Boles, a Harvard University education professor who studied the Teacher Training Course at Shady Hill, said, “The thing we learned from [Shady Hill] is that you could invigorate your core teachers at the same time that you’re training the next generation, and that you could train them well. Probably not all teachers could be trained that way, especially if we need 2.5 million of them. But we could be using pieces of what they’re doing.”

While urban residency programs still represent only a tiny proportion of teacher preparation providers, these programs are nonetheless generating considerable attention. Urban residency programs are typically operated by an urban school district, sometimes in partnership with a university, depending on state policy requirements.

There are currently only three urban teacher residency programs in the nation: the Academy for Urban School Leadership in Chicago, the Boston Teacher Residency, and the Boettcher Teacher’s Program in Denver, Colorado. The New Teachers Collaborative in Devens, Massachusetts is also a residency program, housed in a charter school.

While teacher residency programs are expensive to organize and maintain, urban districts justify this cost by the increased retention rates that result from the program. Estimating the cost of losing a new teacher at $17,000, the Boston Public Schools reason that it makes financial sense to invest in teachers up front.
Implications for Policy

Current State Policies that Impede Innovation in Teacher Preparation

In many states, policies that establish excessive coursework requirements for teacher licensure and put limitations on entities authorized to provide teacher preparation are major barriers to the creation of innovative alternative certification programs. Often the developers of existing innovative programs had to work to bring about legislative and regulatory changes in order to operate their programs and connect prospective teachers with opportunities to master teaching competencies and earn certification.

Theoretically, teacher certification requirements ensure a minimum standard of quality. Some experts, such as Rick Hess, Director of Education Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, argue that teacher licensure should be altogether abolished. Others, such as the National Council on Teacher Quality, advocate revising state licensure requirements, particularly those that establish excessive professional coursework requirements that are burdensome to would-be teachers. NCTQ counts 28 states as having excessive coursework requirements for licensure, defined as requiring more than 18 total credit hours. The fact that, in many cases, state licensure requirements do not reflect teaching competencies is complicated by the lack of clear consensus on what qualities enable an educator to positively affect student achievement.

In most states, teachers can prepare for licensure through alternative as well as traditional routes. Policies in many states, however, prevent a diversity of providers from offering alternate route programs, and thus are barriers to the creation of innovative teacher preparation programs. Presently, 31 states require that institutions of higher education be involved in alternative certification programs either through direct supervision of the program, as a partner with a school district or other organization, or through credit hour requirements. This, in effect, gives university schools of education a monopoly on preparing teacher candidates for certification.

But the university-affiliated method is not necessarily the best. Take this lesson, from New Jersey’s flagship Provisional Teacher Program: the program’s creators found that not making “the alternate route program legally contingent on college participation” was one of the greatest contributors to its success.
Some states’ policies go further and discourage the creation and implementation of alternative certification altogether. North Dakota and Vermont have not yet created alternate routes to teacher certification, and Alaska does not use its route to prepare teachers. State policies in Nevada, Kansas, Oregon, Nebraska, and Maine mandate that districts can only hire alternatively certified teachers as a last resort measure if traditionally prepared teachers cannot meet their needs.

Alternative certification programs should be competency-based in order to provide the flexibility for innovative programs to flourish. Texas and Florida are examples of states that have policies in place that encourage the development of innovative alternatives to traditional programs. (See box on page 26). The following policy recommendations will help other states create a policy environment that is favorable to the development and expansion of innovative alternative certification programs.

**Policy Recommendations**

Most states’ current policies do not allow for the creation or operation of innovative alternative certification programs operated by a diversity of providers. Our recommendations would help states to form policies that allow alternative certification programs to flourish.

Dr. C. Emily Feistritzer, President and CEO of the National Center for Alternative Certification, has testified before Congress that “alternate routes have been a wonderful incubator for innovation in addressing niche teaching shortages with highly qualified teachers. A market driven environment needs to be encouraged, not stifled by attempts to standardize or develop regulations constricting experimentation with alternate routes.”

In order for even more states to benefit from the creative solutions to teacher quality and quantity issues that innovative teacher preparation programs can provide and that Dr. Feistritzer has advocated on the national level, they must make policy changes in the following areas:

- Address licensure requirements and policies that determine who can operate alternative certification programs.
- Reform the policies that affect the evaluation of teacher certification programs.
- Ensure that adequate public funding is provided for the creation, operation and evaluation of innovative alternative certification programs.

**Revise Licensure Requirements to Reflect Teaching Competencies**

Before undertaking reform, state policymakers should determine whether their state licensure requirements reflect the competencies that they expect beginning educators to have mastered.

New Jersey, for example, has already had some success in revising its licensure requirements. When creating the Provisional Teacher Program in the state, education reformers realized that the professional coursework required for licensure was not the result of a “conscious attempt to derive a coherent definition of quality,” but instead the “result of education fads, political lobbying by teacher educators and historical accident.”
Jersey reformed its professional coursework licensure requirements not only for alternate route teachers but for all teachers, underscoring the equivalency of the different routes and creating fair and reasonable standards for certifying teachers.

In order to create an environment that is conducive to teacher preparation reform, states must create a framework within which alternative certification programs can work to prepare beginning educators to master teaching competencies.

**Revise Policies to Allow a Diversity of Providers**

State policymakers should be willing to permit a diversity of providers to prepare teachers to meet the fair and reasonable standards established for licensure. Research shows that the relationship between the education coursework taken by a teacher and the effectiveness of that teacher is weak, yet most states still insist that alternative certification programs be run by institutions of higher education.

Schools of education have no incentive to limit coursework to only that which is necessary and practical for beginning teachers. By restricting the entities that are authorized to prepare teachers for certification to universities and university partnerships, states neglect to recognize that other providers can bring different strengths and new perspectives to teacher certification, such as the ability to target teacher preparation to local needs. States should revise their policies to allow non-profit and private organizations, community colleges, districts, regional service centers, individual schools, and others to develop and implement their own teacher preparation programs.

**Spotlight on Texas and Florida**

Texas and Florida have encouraged innovation by establishing flexible policies regarding authorized providers of alternative certification programs that enable a diversity of providers to operate programs:

Texas does not require university involvement in alternate route programs as long as the curriculum covers the state standards and addresses any unique local needs. Since Texas’s first alternative certification program opened in Houston in 1985, there has been tremendous growth in the market. There are now over 140 programs administered by districts, regional service centers, universities, community colleges, non-profit organizations, and private entities.

Florida’s alternative certification programs prepare participants to demonstrate mastery of Florida’s 12 Accomplished Practices. Programs are actually prohibited from requiring university coursework, but may partner with universities if they choose. Florida offers a state-run alternative certification program, requires each district to offer a program, has created Educator Preparation Institutes at community colleges, and allows for ABCTE certification.

In both states, participants teach as full-time teachers of record during the preparation process with support from a mentor teacher, and completion of the alternative certification program leads to a standard teaching certificate within two years.
Strengthen Evaluation and Accountability of Teacher Preparation Programs

Critics of alternative certification programs claim that it is difficult to guarantee the quality of the programs’ graduates, and thus these critics are hesitant to support the creation of innovative programs. Yet research has shown that there is often greater variation of teacher effectiveness within an individual preparation program than between different pathways. All programs, traditional and alternative, should be held to the same high standard of quality, determined by the ability to prepare participants to meet state standards for certification and by the effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom.

Under the Higher Education Act, or HEA, of 1998, Sec. 207, states are required to establish and report on criteria for assessing teacher preparation programs. In almost all states, the criteria include pass rates on teacher certification assessments and some indication of teachers’ knowledge and skills, usually through assessment. Programs that do not meet state standards must be reported to the Department of Education and are designated as low-performing or at-risk. However, some institutions house more than one program, yet HEA Title II only requires reporting at the institutional, not program level, and does not sufficiently address the effectiveness of program graduates in the classroom.

A potentially invaluable tool for addressing the question of whether graduates of a particular program positively affect student achievement are value-added studies based on longitudinal data such as the one led by George H. Noell at the Louisiana State University. Despite data limitations created by student and teacher mobility, retained students, and hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the study used student achievement data to measure the efficacy of three alternative teacher preparation programs.

Information gleaned from studies such as this one can then be used to strengthen existing teacher preparation programs and to create new programs. Currently the only other states moving forward with similar studies to evaluate the effectiveness of their teacher education programs are Ohio, Florida, and Virginia.

Short of a full scale value-added study, which can be very costly and time consuming, particularly considering that only four states require alternate route programs to report on the academic achievement of their graduates’ students, there are other ways that states can improve program accountability through data collection and dissemination. Currently only four states follow the National Council on Teacher Quality’s recommendation of collecting the results of program graduates’ first-year evaluations.

NCTQ also recommends that states disaggregate data for both traditional and alternate route programs and post this information on an annual online report card, something that currently only Kentucky does. This change alone would be a significant improvement to the reporting done under Title II of HEA as many institutions house multiple programs, both alternative and traditional.

However, evaluation and reporting requirements are only part of accountability systems, which in their current incarnation are often ineffective. The in-
effectiveness of an accountability mechanism should not be an excuse for prohibiting innovative alternative certification programs from entering the market but rather an incentive for the evaluation system’s improvement.

States should seriously consider evaluating teacher preparation programs based on the effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom, using this information to hold programs accountable and making this information available to the public.

Prospective teachers, principals, and regulatory boards need access to this information to ensure that good programs attract high quality teaching candidates, informed hiring decisions can be made, and ineffective programs can be shut down.

**Provide Federal Funding to Support Innovative Alternative Certification Programs**

The federal government should create financial incentives for states to expand their definition of alternate route programs to include a diversity of providers.

Public funds should be made available to those programs that prove their effectiveness in recruiting and preparing competent teachers, especially those that serve in high-needs areas.

With adequate funding, programs will be able to offer the elements that attract non-traditional teacher candidates—brevity, low-cost, convenience, and practicality of the training—all without compromising quality.

Through grants established by NCLB.

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**Steps to Encourage Success and Innovation in Alternative Certification**

**Revise Licensure Requirements to Reflect Teaching Competencies**

State licensure requirements should be revised to reflect a framework of teaching competencies that new teachers will be expected to master.

**Revise Policies to Allow a Diversity of Providers**

States should revise their policies to allow non-profit and private organizations, community colleges, districts, regional service centers, individual schools, and others to develop and implement their own teacher preparation programs.

**Strengthen Evaluation and Accountability of Teacher Preparation Programs**

All programs, traditional and alternative, should be held to the same high standard of quality, determined by the ability to prepare participants to meet state standards for certification and by the effectiveness of their graduates in the classroom.

**Provide Federal Funding to Support Innovative Alternative Certification Programs**

The federal government should create financial incentives for states to expand their definition of alternate route programs to include a diversity of providers. Public funds should be made available to those programs that prove their effectiveness in recruiting and preparing competent teachers, especially those that serve in high-needs areas.
or proposed in the re-authorization, the federal government can offer the financial support that innovative alternative certification programs need to establish themselves and expand.

One federal grant program already working to support the creation and expansion of alternate routes to certification is the Transition to Teaching Grants Program, provided for under NCLB. Programs must prepare candidates to meet relevant state certification requirements, place participants in high needs schools, and continue to support them for at least three years. Alternate route providers in many states, including state and local education agencies, non-profit or for-profit organizations, and institutions of higher education collaborating with local education agencies, have taken advantage of this grant program since its inception. If other states remove those barriers to innovation that limit alternate route providers to institutions of higher education, new, innovative programs could take advantage of this existing source of federal funding.

Another proposal for federal funding for innovative alternative certification programs is a Teacher Residency Program Grants initiative, provided for under a House of Representatives draft for the reauthorization of NCLB and sponsored by Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Buck McKeon (R-CA). The grant sets aside funds under Title II for high-need local education agencies to establish and support teacher residency programs. The agencies are encouraged to partner with non-profit community-based organizations.

The agency, however, must also partner with an accredited institution of higher education responsible for coursework. A positive feature of this grant program is a fund of 5 percent of the total grant amount allocated for evaluating the program in comparison to other programs that prepare teachers for high-needs schools using value added measures of student achievement gains of graduates of the program whenever possible.

It is promising that some congressmen have recognized residency programs as a teacher preparation model worth supporting. Yet the requirement to partner with an institution of higher education to administer the program is unnecessarily restrictive.
Conclusion

Today the question is no longer whether alternative routes to certification should be provided as an option for prospective teachers. Entrepreneurship has encouraged the development of creative and successful solutions to many pressing questions in education reform, and teacher certification is simply the next frontier.

Innovation and entrepreneurship in teacher preparation programs is the next logical step toward solving the teacher quantity and quality crisis. Many studies have shown that there is very little, if any, difference in the achievement of students taught by teachers prepared through alternate or traditional routes.

As the need for high-quality teachers continues to grow we are likely to see a higher demand for alternative certification programs and an increase in the number and variety of programs available. Accountability mechanisms are necessary to ensure that all programs, new and old, alternative and traditional, are preparing high-quality teachers who will improve student achievement.

We also must remove the policy barriers that make entry into the teaching profession difficult for adults with the desire to teach and valuable life experience to bring to the classroom. By allowing innovative supply-side solutions to enter the market of teacher certification, we can bring teacher education into the 21st century.
Sources for Program Specific Information

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5 Ibid.
7 While some sources distinguish between licensure and certification, they are used synonymously and interchangeably in this paper.

10 Ibid.
21 Emily C. Feistritzer, “Profile of Alternate Route Teachers” (Washington: National Center for Education Information, 2005).
23 Ibid.
24 Feistritzer, “State Policy Trends.”
25 Walsh, “Alternative Certification Isn’t Alternative.”
26 Clewall and Villegas, “Ahead of the Class.”
27 Allen, “Eight Questions.”


29 The innovative alternative certification programs described in this paper were chosen to demonstrate the range of teacher preparation options that could be offered to meet the diverse needs of prospective teachers, schools, districts, and states when a state removes the policy barriers that prohibit a diversity of providers to administer programs. They were not chosen to serve as best practice models, primarily because many of these programs are relatively new, and in many cases we lack the data necessary to evaluate their effectiveness.

30 Feistritzer, “State Policy Trends.”

31 See text box for more information about the district-run program in Hillsborough County, Florida.


33 Feistritzer, “State Policy Trends.”


35 See text box for a profile of the Region XIII Educator Certification Program.

36 See text box for more information about the High Tech High Teacher Intern Program and Graduate School of Education.


38 See text box for more information about the Reach Institute for School Leadership.

39 Bess Keller, “College and Charter Groups Team Up to Train Teachers; Leaders plan to expand pilot to include educators in non charter schools,” *Education Week*, February 5, 2008.

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43 See text box for more information about Teach for America Connecticut.


45 See text box for more information about Louisiana’s TNTP Practitioner Teacher Program and the Texas Teaching Fellows.


48 See text box for more information about the Web-Centric Alternative Certification Program.


50 See text box for more information about the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence.


52 Feistritzer, “State Policy Trends.”

53 See text box for more information about the Bachelor in Education at Great Basin College.


57 See text box for a profile of the Educator Preparation Institute at Edison College.


61 See Appendix A for more information about the Stanley Teacher Preparation Program.


63 See text boxes for more information about various teacher residency programs.
Email from Jesse Solomon, Director, Boston Teacher Residency Program.

Rick Hess, “Tear Down This Wall: The Case for a Radical Overhaul of Teacher Certification” (Washington: Progressive Policy Institute, 2001) p.27.


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Sidebar Endnotes

i Feistritzer, “State Policy Trends.”


v Erik W. Robelen, “Learning Where They Teach” (Bethesda: Education Week, July 18, 2007).


xiii Tricia Coulter and Bruce Vandal, “Community Colleges and Teacher Preparation: Roles, Issues and Opportunities” (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 2007).

xiv INTASC standards model standards for what beginning teachers should know and be able to do developed by a consortium of State Education Agencies coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers.


xvii This is only one example of 28 programs offered across the state.

xviii Scott, “Programs Prepare Teachers, and Fast.”


About the Author

Davida Gatlin was a Thomas B. Fordham Fellow at the Center for American Progress in the fall of 2007. One of eight Fordham Fellows chosen in the program’s inaugural year in an effort to bring teacher’s voices into the policy arena, Davida used her experience as a Teach for America corps member in Houston, Texas and as an English teacher in France to inform her research on teacher education and certification. Davida is currently teaching second and third grade at an international school in the Dominican Republic.

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