

## Success in High-Need Schools Journal

### Volume 2, #1

**Theme:** "Alternative and Accelerated Certification"

---

#### Introduction

This second issue of Success in High-Need Schools is devoted to the theme "Alternative and Accelerated Certification." It features articles and commentary on non-traditional Illinois programs that recruit and prepare a diverse corps of highly qualified teachers for high-need schools.

## Table of Contents

Four Perspectives on Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification, <i>by Phyllis Burstein, Carole O’Connel, and Steve Tozer</i> .....	3
CMAC: A Collaborative Experiment in Alternative Certification at Aurora University, <i>by Donna DeSpain, Gary Jewel, and Jody Piro</i> .....	17
Flying Solo: Meeting the Challenges in Transition to Teaching Alternative Certification Cohort Programs, <i>by Stan Burcham, Barbara Clark, and Shirley Morgenthaler</i> .....	26
Triumphant Teachers: Origins and Markers of Excellence of Alternative Routes to Standard Teacher Certification in Illinois, <i>by Dominic Belmonte</i> .....	34
Partnering for Alternative Certification: A Collaboration Between Dominican University and Teach for America, <i>by Sr. Colleen McNicholas</i> .....	43
Why Chicago Public Schools Invests in Alternative Certification for Teachers, <i>by Nancy Slavin</i> .....	49
Academic Rigor is Not Enough, <i>by Jan Fitzsimmons</i> .....	51

## Four Perspectives on Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification, by *Phyllis Burstein, Carole O'Connel, and Steve Tozer*

### Author Bios



**Steve Tozer**

Steve Tozer is a Professor in Policy Studies in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. After receiving his Ph.D. in Philosophy of Education at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he remained there on faculty from 1982 to 1994, serving for three years as Chair of the Senate Committee on Educational Policy and, from 1990 to 1994, as Head of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Since moving to University of Illinois-Chicago in January 1995, Professor Tozer has become active in professional preparation reform at the state and national levels. As Chair of the Governor's Council on Teacher Quality in Illinois, he led changes in teacher certification laws in Illinois in partnership with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Beginning in 1997, he led the funding and design of the first system-wide program of new teacher mentoring and induction for new teachers in Chicago Public Schools. He is currently extending that work with a funded initiative to provide intensive new teacher support in one of Chicago's hardest-to-staff West Side neighborhoods. Also in partnership with Chicago Public Schools, Professor Tozer recently led the design and implementation of a doctoral program in Urban Education Leadership to produce transformative leaders for low-performing urban schools.

Professor Tozer's research interests have focused on social context knowledge in teacher preparation. He is currently engaged in a two-year research study to compare performance differences of teachers prepared in alternative certification programs and those prepared in standard undergraduate and graduate programs. His work in reform of the professional preparation and development of teachers and school leaders has been funded by Joyce Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, McDougal Family Foundation, Chicago Community Trust, and the Chicago Public Education Fund, among others. In 1999 he received the Stevenson Award from the Association for Teacher Educators for leadership and dedication to the education profession.

Professor Tozer is past President of the Council for Social Foundations of Education and current President of the American Educational Studies Association. His book, *School and Society: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, is now in its fifth edition (McGraw Hill), and he is lead editor of *The Handbook of Research in Social Foundations of Education*, forthcoming in 2006 (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates).



**Phyllis Burstein**

Phyllis Burstein has concurrent teaching appointments at DePaul University as adjunct faculty and The Chicago Public Schools where she has taught for the past fifteen years, currently serving as Art Department Chair at Walter Payton College Prep. She has taught art, education, and research courses at National-Louis University, The School of the Art

Institute of Chicago, and Northeastern Illinois University. As a PhD student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago, she has worked as Professor Tozer's research assistant since 2004. Among other projects, she assisted with identifying performance quality among alternatively certified teachers and designed a website for the Ed.D. Program in Urban Education Leadership. Her research interests include teacher preparation, and how the American high school is represented in the media. She has presented her research at several conferences including The American Educational Studies Association, The National Art Education Association, and The Curriculum and Pedagogy Conference.



**Carole Bishop O'Connell**

Carole Bishop O'Connell is Project Coordinator of the Alternative Teacher Certification in Chicago Public Schools research project funded by the Joyce Foundation. In 1996, as a graduate student, she assisted Steve Tozer with the Illinois State Board of Education/ University of Illinois at Chicago Task Force project that developed the multiple tiers of teacher certification in Illinois. O'Connell received her doctorate in Curriculum Design from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2002. Her teaching and research interests include teacher education, early childhood education, and educational policy. Currently an adjunct faculty member at UIC, O'Connell will move to the College of Education at Roosevelt University as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the fall 2006 term.

#### **Abstract**

This article describes pivotal moments during the past two decades in the history of the movement to develop alternative routes to traditional teacher certification. The authors review the literature on the effectiveness of these programs and explain the political and ideological struggle between "professionalists" and "deregulators," which has made the movement controversial. The research suggests that the variation in the effectiveness of teachers with the same certification status is greater than the variation in effectiveness between alternative and traditionally certified teachers. More is known currently about the characteristics of effective programs than about their specific teacher preparation outcomes. Clearly, more research is needed. (*Note: Research for this article was funded in part by the Joyce Foundation.*)

#### **Four Perspectives on Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification**

It has now been 20 years since the 1986 publication of the Holmes Group's *Tomorrow's Teachers* and The Carnegie Commission's *Teachers for the 21st Century* reports, which were intended to transform the practice of teacher preparation in the U.S. (Tozer, Violas & Senese, 2006). But the year before, something else happened that arguably has had far greater impact on teacher preparation than either of those highly publicized reports. In 1985, New Jersey established the groundbreaking Provisional Teaching Certificate, which jump-started the proliferation of alternative teacher certification programs nationwide.

Alternative routes are such a recent development in the history of the teaching profession and so diverse in their design that agreement on what to call them remains elusive. They are variously known as "Alternative Teacher Certification," "Alternative Certification Programs," "Alternative Routes to Teaching," and "Alternative Routes to Certification," among other labels. The inconsistent terminology has led one of the field's leaders, Emily Feistritzer, to ask:

ATC, ACP ART, ARTC, ARC, AC . . . Question: What do they stand for? Answer: Essentially the same thing. Regardless of the terminology or acronym, "alternative" — in the context of teacher certification — refers to . . . alternatives to the

traditional college, campus-based (usually undergraduate) teacher education program route culminating in a certificate (license) to teach. The most accurate term to describe what is now going on at the state level is “alternative routes to teacher certification” (2005, p. 2).

Although agencies such as the National School Boards Association prefer “Alternative Certification Programs,” we will follow Feistritzer's lead in using “alternative routes to teacher certification” (ARTC), primarily because ARTC seems most complete and accurate. While many emergency and temporary certifications have existed for decades in the teaching profession, ARTC emphasizes the development of new and different routes to regular teaching licensure. And, it is important to add, this development has taken place in a particular historical context marked by a fair amount of debate about the future of the teaching profession.

Because the ARTC phenomenon has been both complex and contentious for more than 20 years, it is useful to examine it from varying perspectives. Different lenses allow insight into different dimensions of the phenomenon. First, for example, it is important to be clear on the definition of ARTC so it will be evident what is being discussed and what is not. Second, a historical perspective provides meanings that go beyond definitional clarity to tell the whys and wherefores of an educational innovation that has developed so rapidly. Third, the historical perspective reminds us that important political and ideological perspectives divide supporters and critics of ARTC—two overlapping camps that Martin Haberman, a pioneer in teacher selection, dubs the “professionalists” and the “deregulators” (2006). Both seek to improve education, but one group seeks to do so by regulating through professional preparation and standards, and the other group by deregulating the profession to allow market forces to prevail in supplying teachers. This debate introduces a final lens in examining ARTC—the educational outcomes perspective: What does the alternative certification movement, after all, produce in terms of teaching and learning? What does it mean for the future of public schools and the teaching profession?

Employing each of these four perspectives helps to answer different questions about ARTC. The four primary questions we will examine are as follows:

- What are alternative routes to teacher certification, in theory and practice?
- How does examining the history of ARTC deepen our understanding of them?
- How have ideological differences shaped differences of opinion over ARTC, and why does this matter?
- What are the educational outcomes of ARTC?

### **Definitions: Theory and Practice**

In addition to the terms introduced earlier, other terms also are used to describe ARTC. These include “fast tracks to teaching” and “accelerated programs” of teacher certification. These colloquial descriptors identify what is often most attractive about ARTC to career changers: a direct route to full-time teaching that does not require an extensive preparation period. In fact, this feature is characteristic of most if not all definitions of ARTC. A sample definition of “accelerated paths” is offered by the National Association of State Boards of Education:

ACPs [Accelerated Career Paths] are generally defined as pathways to a teaching certificate that fall outside of a full-time, four or five-year teacher preparation program. They can include programs for mid-career switchers, programs to prepare paraprofessionals to become teachers, and programs for new college graduates who decide after graduation to enter teaching. The vast majority of these programs are designed for candidates who already have a bachelor's degree, who are employed as teachers while they complete the program, and who earn a regular teaching license as a result of completing the program (Roach and Cohen, 2002, p. 2).

This definition attends to the supply side of the teaching-learning equation rather than the demand side. That is, it

addresses the target populations who would become teachers, rather than the needs of students in hard-to-staff subject areas or in low performing schools or in predominantly minority neighborhoods with shortages of minority teachers. Virtually all accounts of the history of ARTC locate its origins in the advent of teacher shortages, either in general or in specific areas, so the demand side of the equation is often assumed: that is, we need ARTC teachers because of the need for quantity as well as quality. There are not enough teachers in some subjects and some locales, and there are not enough high quality teachers in general. The issue of shortage areas becomes explicit in Class B of Feistritzer's typology of 11 approaches to ARTC:

**Class B:** Teacher certification routes that have been designed specifically to bring talented individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree into teaching. These routes involve specially designed mentoring and some formal instruction. However, these routes either restrict the route to shortages and/or secondary grade levels and/or subject areas (2005, p.16).

Class A is the category that Feistritzer reserves for those routes that meet criteria independent of shortage areas:

- The alternative teacher certification route has been designed for the explicit purpose of attracting talented individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree in a field other than education into elementary and secondary school teaching.
- The alternate route is not restricted to shortages, secondary grade levels, or subject areas.
- These alternative teacher certification routes involve teaching with a trained mentor, and any formal instruction that deals with the theory and practice of teaching during the school year — and sometimes in the summer before and/or after. (2000, p.16)

Feistritzer's eleven types all are variations on the ARTC theme, ending in “Class K: These avenues accommodate specific populations for teaching, e.g., Teach for America, Troops to Teachers and college professors who want to teach in K-12 schools” (2005, p.16).

### **ARTC for Different Needs**

Part of the reason for the variation in definitions is that ARTC programs meet different needs in different contexts. For example, it was reported in *Education Week* (2004) that the entire state of North Carolina was facing a teaching shortage of several thousand teachers annually for the foreseeable future (p. 51). The need for ARTC in North Carolina is not restricted to urban schools or secondary education or special education. The state needs teachers, and even ARTC does not provide enough to meet the need. In contrast, Chicago Public Schools is aggressively recruiting ARTC teachers not because of a general shortage, but to meet the needs of specific teaching subjects and specific schools with persistent vacancies (Williams, 2004a). What makes ARTC attractive to Chicago Public Schools is precisely their targeted nature. ARTC programs partnering with Chicago Public Schools are designed, to a far greater extent than regular certification programs, to provide teachers for the hardest-to-staff areas: special education, world languages, middle grades, and secondary math and science.

Shortages may be targeted to specific need areas (more math teachers, more teachers of color, more teachers in low-performing, high-turnover schools), or they may address the perception of teacher shortages in general — or both. In October 1998, *Chicago Sun Times* reporter Leslie Baldacci applied for the largest and most successful ARTC in Illinois at the time, the now discontinued Teachers for Chicago Program. Baldacci later wrote:

I had no education credentials on paper, but the alternative certification program required only a bachelor's degree and a 2.5 overall college grade-point average. As the nation faced a critical teacher shortage, alternative certification programs were popping up all over the place. Some cities were offering teachers free housing. Others were putting

signing bonuses on the table . . . .

The Teachers for Chicago program seemed like the perfect alternative path to teacher certification for me. It would cut through red tape at the state and city boards of education and requirements for entering graduate school. It would give me credit for as much of my undergraduate coursework as possible and keep required make-up work to a minimum. Most important, it would put me in a classroom immediately as a teacher, with a mentor looking over my shoulder and working with me daily.

The program would pay for my master's degree. I would earn \$24,000 a year (2004, p 9).

A very different way to define alternative certification is not by purposes that address teacher quantity or shortages, but by the elements of program design. This is difficult because programs vary widely state-to-state and even intra-state. However, in general, ARTC programs do not look like traditional undergraduate or even graduate teacher preparation programs that require completion of a degree and/or certification before full-time teaching can begin. Haberman's idealized summary of a "pure" ARTC is intended to reveal the "deregulator" rationale behind each program component:

The essential knowledge base for alternative certification programs is the competence of candidates in the cognate disciplines (#1). This base can be readily assessed by written tests of subject matter (#2). All professional studies are merely skills and information that can be readily learned on the job, through common sense, practice, having a colleague in the school (#4) and an occasional meeting (#5). The basic assumption is that candidates learn to teach by teaching (#3) and can do so in the most difficult school situations (#6) if they know their subjects. Finally the determination of who should be licensed is based on performance, including student achievement (#7), and that those most capable of making these decisions are the candidates' employers (#9 and #10) (2006, p. 8).

ARTC programs, whether national in scope, such as Troops to Teachers or Teach for America, or locally designed models offered by teacher education institutions and school districts, provide different variations on the components Haberman identifies. When schools and colleges of education offer ARTC programs, for example, they are not likely to endorse the almost exclusive emphasis on content knowledge and attendant de-emphasis on pedagogical knowledge national models.

### **ARTC Program Summary Definition**

Variations such as the above notwithstanding, the following general definition of ARTC identifies the features that most, if not all, programs have in common: They are designed to increase the quantity and quality of certified teachers by allowing baccalaureate degree-holders, including but not limited to career-changers, to earn their teaching certificates through full-time teaching accompanied by professional coursework and clinical supervision. In contrast to "traditional" teacher certification programs, teaching employment typically begins with minimal preliminary training, usually offered in the summer before teaching begins. While many ARTC program are designed to address specific areas of teaching shortage, such as in some subjects or some locales, other programs are intended to produce high-quality teachers irrespective of shortage areas.

### **Historical Context**

The proliferation of ARTC programs in the past two decades has been fueled in part by two organizations independently pursuing the goal of supporting and nurturing what Feistritzer has referred to as the "alternative certification movement." Feistritzer was instrumental in starting the National Center for Educational Information (NCEI), which spawned the National Center for Alternative Certification (NCAC), of which she currently is president. NCAC expanded the work of NCEI, a long-standing primary source of information about the growth and status of ARTC

programs throughout the nation. The NCAC web site describes its current focus:

Established in September 2003 with a discretionary grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Alternative Certification is a one-stop, comprehensive clearinghouse for information about alternative routes to certification in the United States. The Center, through a toll-free Call Center and a major interactive Web site, [www.teach-now.org](http://www.teach-now.org), provides immediate answers to questions and guidance for individuals interested in becoming teachers, as well as for policymakers, legislators, educators, researchers and members of the public. (<http://www.teach-now.org/aboutncac.cfm>)

In February 2006, NCAC held its third annual conference in San Diego. The conference invitation asserted, “alternative routes to certification have evolved into a major force affecting many aspects of new teacher preparation. About one third of new hires in classrooms across the country are entering teaching through some alternative route.”

In the period between the establishment of NCEI and NCAC, the National Association for Alternative Certification (NAAC) also began to disseminate information on the rationale and implementation of ARTC programs. In Chicago in March 2006, NAAC held its 16th Annual Conference, with a keynote welcome from Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan. NAAC's mission statement describes its position as follows:

“(NAAC) advocates standards-driven programs for alternative routes to certification/licensure and promotes research-based and innovative professional development by exchanging best practices, funding and sharing research, providing networking opportunities and awarding scholarships to enhance pre-K-12 student achievement.” (<http://www.alt-teachercert.org>)

The first edition of the *NAAC Online Journal* was published coincident with the conference. Martin Haberman contributed the lead article, and one of three scholarships offered by NAAC to alternative route interns is the Haberman Education Foundation Scholarship. As Feistritzer is the driving force behind NCAC, Haberman is the driving spirit behind NAAC. Conference attendees from across the country presented research on ARTC initiatives and celebrated the movement's successes.

### **Benchmark Years in ARTC Development**

Two decades into the ARTC movement, it is clear that ARTC programs have come a long way in a short time. The years 2001, 1996, and 1986 — five, ten and 20 years ago — provide benchmarks for thinking about significant events in this history. Earlier still, the year 1983 deserves special mention for the Reagan White House publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the launching point for the late 20th century school reform movement. The report's demand for improved student learning and improved teacher quality helped fuel the alternative certification movement. Also in 1983, New Jersey Governor Tom Keane convened a task force, headed by the late Ernest Boyer, to create an alternative to teacher certification, which would attract liberal arts graduates to the teaching profession. Feistritzer, a participant, has called the task force, “officially the beginning of the alternative certification movement” (2005, p. 1). The National Center for Educational Information was founded at that time to begin tracking developments in alternative certification, and it remains today one of the best sources of information in that area.

By 1986, when the Holmes Group and the Carnegie Commission published manifestos on the future of the teaching profession, New Jersey had created a national stir with its Provisional Teaching Certificate, and other states soon followed. Holmes and Carnegie called for teacher preparation to be more rigorous and more grounded in professional research, even calling for extended programs of teacher preparation. Meanwhile, the nascent alternative certification movement was putting teachers into classrooms with only a summer of preparation. By the end of 1985, six states had produced nearly 300 ARTC teachers. By 1996, this number had grown to some 7,000 ARTC graduates in 16 states. Even



the American Association of College Teachers of Education (AACTE), widely regarded as a main pillar in the teacher education establishment, was in the ARTC business, publishing *Alternative Paths to Teaching: A Directory of Postbaccalaureate Programs* (1996).

In 1986, ARTC programs were still in their infancy. Despite considerable growth, by 1996 the movement was still far from what it has become today. In 1996, alternative certification still was not fully on the radar screen in most educational discourse. It was not, for example, on that year's agenda of the national Governors' Conference on education, which called for an annual accounting of education progress. *Education Week* began writing its *Quality Counts* series in response to the Governors' Conference, but did not include ARTC as one of the many indicators of progress in its first Teaching Quality report — nor did it do so for several years thereafter. By January 2006, *Quality Counts* included ARTC programs as a mainstream indicator of “Efforts to Improve Teacher Quality” (p. 86). Today, the National Center for Educational Information reports that 47 states have produced more than 200,000 ARTC teachers. In Texas, for example, the majority of new teachers are now trained in alternative certification programs, compared with none in 1986.

Five years ago, two events on the federal level — passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and funding for the American Board for Certification of Teaching Excellence — promised to have significant impact on the ARTC movement. Among the many far-reaching provisions of NCLB was the stipulation that, by the end of the current school year (2005-06), all teachers must be “fully qualified.” While it is largely the responsibility of each state to determine the precise meaning of “fully qualified,” the Act in effect holds ARTC programs to the same standards to which all teacher education programs are held. The chief difference between the two is that ARTC candidates are allowed to work full time as teachers while earning their teaching certificates. Moreover, the second major event of 2001 — the establishment of the American Board for Certification of Teaching Excellence (ABCTE) — demonstrates that the NCLB “highly qualified teacher” standard for alternative routes to certification may be more accommodating than many anticipated.

The ABCTE is potentially more significant to the teaching profession than NCLB because it reduces teacher certification requirements. A project of what Haberman calls the “deregulators” and the US Department of Education, ABCTE has developed a “Passport to Teaching,” described on the ABCTE web site as the “premier national teacher certification program . . . ideal for knowledgeable and motivated professionals who want to change careers and pursue their dreams of becoming teachers, and for current teachers who need to earn their certification” (<http://www.abcte.org/passport>).

The ABCTE web site presents a five-step individualized program of study intended to prepare post-bachelor's candidates to “demonstrate mastery on rigorous examinations of subject area and professional teaching knowledge.” All of this can be done without the assistance of a college of education or any teacher preparation program other than the individualized study plan. Currently, this method can lead to certification in five states — Florida, Idaho, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Utah. However, efforts are in place to extend the initiative to all other states as well. The web site assures that “All teachers certified through Passport to Teaching are considered highly qualified according to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.”

### **Political/Ideological Perspectives**

Certainly, the advent of ABCTE has changed the future field of play in alternative certification. While schools and colleges of education can embrace the opportunity to provide their own ARTC programs, ABCTE allows prospective teachers with undergraduate degrees to forgo higher education programs altogether. ABCTE and the Passport to Teaching are as staunchly opposed by those whom Haberman terms the “professionalists,” as they are energetically supported by those whom he terms the “deregulators.” In a 2006 web article on alternative routes, Haberman offers a concise and colorful account of the ideological tensions dividing the two camps — both of which profess to improve

student learning by improving the quality of classroom instruction. First, he describes the professionals, sometimes referred to as the “educational establishment:”

. . . faculty and administrators in education departments and colleges, the administrators and staffs of the 50 state education departments, the NEA and the AFT, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and until the year 2000, the United States Department of Education . . . Professionals firmly believe that colleges and universities are capable of preparing teachers and indeed are the only organizations capable of doing so. Essentially, the professionalist position is based on the existence of their knowledge base, which they equate with the knowledge bases used to prepare other professionals, e.g. physicians, nurses, lawyers, engineers . . . The stated goal of the professionals is to limit the power to certify teachers to schools and departments of education in colleges and universities. They are dedicated to the proposition that no one should enter a classroom as a licensed teacher who has not completed a state approved program of professional studies offered by an accredited school of education. (Haberman, pp. 5-6)

Opposing the professionals, says Haberman, are the deregulators, who are viewed by the educational establishment as driven by a conservative, market-based ideology:

The constituencies comprising the deregulators group hold a range of opposing views. . . . They believe that what teachers know is not a “professional knowledge base” known only to teachers but common sense known to anyone who is a college graduate, a parent, or anyone in the general public who is willing to think about their own school experiences. The deregulators believe that in place of education courses people learn to teach by actually teaching. . . . The essence of the deregulators' argument is that what is wrong with schooling in America is that the teachers don't know enough of the subjects they teach, and that the whole structure of licensing teachers is a protectionist plot to keep people who possess the requisite knowledge in the cognate fields from teaching children. Some of the constituencies comprising the deregulators group include those who support private, parochial, charter, voucher and home schools; the United States Department of Education since 2000; several prominent foundations; many academics in the liberal arts and in fields outside of education; large numbers of the general public and many elected officials. The stated goal of the deregulators is to do away with current state systems of teacher licensing and allow schools to hire knowledgeable teachers in a free market system. (Haberman, pp. 5-6)

There can be no doubt that a rift such as that described by Haberman is both real and persistent. The evidence for this goes back to educators' vigorous resistance to New Jersey's provisional certification in 1985; it continues in the current conflict between supporters and critics of ABCTE over whether any national test can, by itself, provide adequate evidence of an individual's preparedness to be a teacher (Basinger, 2003). It is well-documented in the extensive references in journal articles such as “Does Teacher Certification Matter? Evaluating the Evidence” (Darling-Hammond, Berry, & Thoreson, 2001). At the same time, as the title of that article suggests, it is fair to question whether the rift is based on political/ideological differences or simply on an empirical question: Do teachers really need extensive preparation in professional education courses to learn how to teach well?

In the next section, we will turn to that empirical question. Before doing so, however, it is important to ask whether a political/ideological perspective adds anything to our understanding of the alternative certification movement. We argue that it does — because the differences between the professionals and the deregulators are not simply disagreements about educational data between two groups who share the same set of beliefs and values about social and political life. These differences identify two groups with different visions of the good society and liberal democracy itself.

Professionals do not believe that “free market” forces will provide well for the poor, any more than that the poor

are well provided for by the market forces governing lawyers or medical doctors. Deregulators counter that the educational establishment, with all its bureaucratic requirements and professional knowledge base, has not served the educational interests of the poor, and the time for change is overdue. The deregulators might even accuse the professionalists of their own kind of conservatism — one that seeks to protect the status quo instead of embracing changes that might better serve the educational needs of the least well served.

The political/ideological debate raises questions about whose interests are being served by ARTC and what vision of democracy is being promoted: one tending toward “quasi-socialist” values of state-regulated social equality, or one leaning toward “free-market” capitalist values? Legler (2002) points out that the political agendas at work regarding alternative certification:

Like many controversial issues, ideologies and interests drive much of the debate and subsequently the research questions and the ways in which they are studied....Those who have lost faith in the ability of higher education programs to adequately prepare teacher candidates (Haberman, 1991) look for evidence that supports alternative certification, while those with an interest in maintaining the traditional model of teacher education (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999) look for deficits in the alternative model. . . .It would seem that the best course of action is to learn from the research about the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful alternative programs, so that those that do arise or continue can be as effective as possible.

### **Educational Outcomes Perspective**

In terms of educational policy, the distance between the professionalists and the deregulators may not be as great as it first appears. Both sides argue for well-prepared teachers who can successfully help all children, rich or poor, learn to read, write, compute, speak, and think effectively. Much of the debate, as Legler suggests, boils down to whether ARTC programs prepare teachers who can do this and at what cost can these programs accomplish this goal. In March 2000, this discussion took an especially visible turn when the Educational Commission of the States (ECS) hosted a debate on quality teaching between Linda Darling-Hammond, executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), and Chester E. Finn, Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation. Darling-Hammond fairly could be characterized as the chief spokesperson for the “professionalist” position for more than a decade, and likewise Finn for the “deregulators.” Instead of disagreeing at every turn, the two found broad areas of agreement:

These areas of agreement boiled down to the need to produce competent and caring teachers for every classroom and the need to measure the effectiveness of those teachers in rigorous ways. The disagreements centered around the best way to accomplish those common goals (<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/12/92/1292.htm>).

By 2003, the “professionalist” National Commission on Teaching and America's Future called for moving the debate beyond the dichotomy of alternative vs. traditional certification into efforts to study what makes teacher preparation effective for student learning in schools, regardless of the “alternative” status of the program (NCTAF, 2003). The educational outcomes perspective allows us to ask, and to some degree answer, two key questions: 1) How does the quality of teachers certified through ARTC programs compare to the quality of teachers certified through established teacher preparation programs? 2) What are the characteristics of ARTC programs that seem to produce competent and caring teachers committed to staying in the profession?

In the past decade, considerable research has been generated in response to both of these questions. Literature reviews, such as Legler's (2002) and more recent research articles provide excellent overviews of the research to date (Johnson, Birkland, & Peske, 2005; Ringrose & Adkinson, 2005).

### Difficulty of Researching Teacher Preparation Outcomes

Any discussion of ARTC program outcomes must acknowledge that the rigorous study of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in general is still inchoate. An influential study by Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2002) revealed that what we know about the effectiveness of teacher preparation is dwarfed by what we don't know. Familiar with the Wilson et al. findings, ARTC researchers have tried to develop research designs that will yield valid results. Two recent studies that address methodology, rather than a report of actual outcomes, are the Harvard Project on the Next Generation of Teachers (Johnson, Birkeland, & Peske, 2005) and *Examining Teacher Preparation: Does the Pathway Make a Difference?* (Boyd, Grossman, et al, 2004). In *Studying Teacher Education* (2005), leading teacher education researchers Cochran-Smith and Zeichner conclude that research on outcomes of ARTC programs vs. traditional programs is inconclusive, but much is known about effective and ineffective components of each.

Recent studies identify a trend in the comparative research, as suggested in the following *Education Week* article (March 22, 2006), "Path to Classroom Not Linked to Teachers' Success:"

The certification pathway that New York City school teachers took to their classrooms seemed to have little relationship to how effective they were in raising students' scores, concluded a study that matched some 10,000 teachers with six years of test results. The research also found that the variation in effectiveness among teachers with the same certification status — traditionally certified, alternatively certified, members of the Teacher for America program, and uncertified—was much greater than the variation between groups (Keller, p. 10).

Humphrey and Wechsler (2005) reached a similar conclusion in case studies of seven ARTC programs: "More research is needed. . . .Even before this full body of research becomes available, however, policy makers have enough information to begin a more reasoned and data driven discussion of alternative certification." They argued that the available knowledge tells us:

- Alternative certification participants consist of a diverse group of young and older adults, who tend to reflect the gender mix of the teaching profession as a whole and the racial composition of the local labor market.
- Only a small fraction of alternative certification participants are career changers from the mathematics and science professions.
- The value of on-the-job training depends on the participant's background and the school context.
- Although mentoring is an important component of all programs, most programs exert little control over the quality of the mentoring that occurs.

Certainly, two more important measures of the success of ARTC programs are retention rates and program costs — and neither has been well researched to date. Teacher retention is considered to be one of the Achilles heels of the teaching profession and is largely responsible for existing teacher shortages, which create the need for ARTC programs (NCTAF, 2003). While TFA, for example, has been criticized for the low retention rate of its candidates as compared to traditional teacher preparation programs (Williams, 2004b), it is a relatively weak foundation on which to base a retention argument against ARTC programs in general. TFA is unusual in that it is designed for a two-year teaching experience, while nearly all other ARTC programs are designed for career-long preparation. A recent review by the Educational Commission of the States concludes: "The research provides *limited support* [emphasis original] for the modest conclusion that the retention rates of alternative routes can be comparable to, and even exceed, that of traditional route graduates" (ECS, p. 6). The rapid increase of ARTC programs in the past decade has now created a foundation for additional research to be conducted.

Because the key factor influencing teacher retention tends to be school-culture related (NCTAF 2003), it would not be

surprising if future research were to reveal that the school environment itself is more significant than the pathway to teaching in affecting new teacher retention rates. The ECS study concludes that working conditions of teachers, including teacher autonomy and administrative support, should be important policy concerns in retention of all teachers, regardless of preparation pathway (ECS, p.5).

The costs of ARTC programs are also under-researched at this point. While cost is not strictly an educational outcome, it provides an important measure of what it will take to achieve positive outcomes. It is notoriously difficult to gauge actual costs of traditional teacher preparation programs, and researching the costs of ARTC programs that differ dramatically in program design and sponsorship is not proving to be an easier. In 2002, an organization that cares a great deal about program funding, the National Association of School Boards of Education (NASBE), published a set of recommendations that relied on cost studies done in 1988, 1990 and 1994, because good studies of program costs are few and far between. The NASBE recommendations noted that: 1) ARTC programs may be significantly more expensive than traditional programs, but that 2) it is hard to draw firm conclusions because costs vary so much from program to program (Roach and Cohen, p. 17).

In Chicago, as in some other districts, the school district itself is helping to defray some of the program costs to students by contributing funding to programs. Such partnership models may have promise not only for ARTC programs, but for traditional programs as well, if those programs can show they are targeting district needs.

### **Program Characteristics**

The second question central to the educational outcomes perspective asks which characteristics of ARTC programs seem to produce competent and caring teachers committed to staying in the profession. This question is particularly important when we recognize the great diversity among ARTC program designs. That is, even if it is concluded that one or more specific ARTC programs produce teachers who are as effective as those from traditional programs, ARTC programs may not all be equally successful. What program components seem to be most important, then? Legler's six elements of effective programs (2002) continue to stand up to subsequent research:

1. high standards and proper screening of candidates for entry into AC programs;
2. solid academic instruction in pedagogy, subject matter, classroom management, and child development – preferably *before* the teacher candidate begins to teach;
3. an organized and comprehensive system of support from experienced, trained mentors once the candidate begins working in a school;
4. if possible, a period of observation and assistance in the classroom of an experienced teacher *before* the candidate begins teaching solo;
5. ongoing training, instruction, and reflection once the candidate assumes control of a classroom; and
6. continuous monitoring, evaluation, and feedback of individual and group performance to allow for adjustment and improvement in teaching and program management.

Research by Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2002) is consistent with Legler's six points, but with the caveat that it is difficult to say with certainty what program components are effective without knowing which programs are producing successful learning among children and youth in schools. Nevertheless, as the 2006 NAAC Conference attests, program components such as recruitment, clinical experience, mentoring, and ongoing professional support seem to be crucial for observable successes and retention of ARTC candidates. The Humphrey-Wilson caution that the kind of school in which one learns to be a teacher may be crucial for that teacher's professional development may be particularly important if the focus of the ARTC model is "on the job" learning. A recent NCTAF publication, "Induction into Learning Communities" (2005), emphasizes that the development of all new teachers, regardless of pathway to the profession, will be strongly influenced by the kind of professional learning community in which they find

themselves. We would add that future research may reveal this factor alone to be more influential than whether a program is “traditional” or an “alternative” route to certification.

### Concluding Remarks

We know a lot today about Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification Programs that we did 20 years ago. They are not just a temporary aberration in the history of teacher preparation, but are making a large and significant contribution to addressing teaching shortages throughout the nation. The early research suggests that teachers who come through ARTC programs are not appreciably different from traditionally prepared teachers in teaching effectiveness, although it is too early to conclude this with certainty. There appear to be wide variations among programs in design, effectiveness, and cost. However, preliminary research suggests that program features such as careful candidate selection, strong mentoring, ongoing professional development, and good administrative support are important for the success of ARTC candidates — and, it seems important to add, for all new teachers, whatever their path to teaching. Finally, because education schools and departments are heavily involved in implementing and researching ARTC, it is likely that ARTC programs will have a lasting impact on teacher education in general. At the same time, schools and departments of education have an important opportunity to shape the future of Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification. The long-term impact of the American Board for Certification of Teaching Excellence remains to be seen.

### References

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (1993). *Alternative paths to teaching: A directory of postbaccalaureate programs*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Baldacci, L. (2004). *Inside Mrs. B's classroom: Courage, hope and learning on Chicago's south side*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Basinger, J. (2003, June 27). Federal lawmakers call for investigation of teacher-education group. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A18.
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., Wyckoff, J., McDonald, M., & Hammerness, K. (2006). *Examining teacher preparation: Does the pathway make a difference?* Albany, NY: Teachers' Policy Research. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from [http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/Examining\\_Teacher\\_Preparation\\_Full\\_Description.pdf](http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/Examining_Teacher_Preparation_Full_Description.pdf)
- Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. (1986). *A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st century*. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Zeichner, K. (2005). *Studying teacher education: Report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Berry, B. & Thoreson, A. (2001). Does teacher certification matter? Evaluating the evidence. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23 :1. (Spring) 57-77.
- Dill, V.S., & Stafford, D. (1996). *Alternative teacher certification: History, handbook and how-to*. Houston, TX: National Center for Teacher Certification Information, Haberman Educational Foundation.
- Educational Commission of the States. (2000). *Two paths to quality teaching: Implications for policymakers: An ECS staff comparison of the positions of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and the*



Thomas B. Fordham Foundation . Washington, DC: Educational Commission of the States. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/12/92/1292.htm>

Feistritzer, C.E. (2005). State policy trends for alternative routes to teacher certification: A moving target. *Conference on Alternative Certification: A Forum for Highlighting Rigorous Research*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Information and National Center for Alternative Certification. Retrieved on May 20, 2006, from <http://www.teach-now.org/CEFState%20Overview%20FINAL4.pdf>

Fulton , K., Yoon, I. , & Lee, C. (2005). *Induction into learning communities*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from [http://www.nctaf.org/documents/nctaf/NCTAF\\_Induction\\_Paper\\_2005.pdf](http://www.nctaf.org/documents/nctaf/NCTAF_Induction_Paper_2005.pdf)

Haberman, M. (2006). What makes a program “alternative certification?” An operational definition. *NAAC Online Journal*, 1 (1) 5-11.

Holmes Group, Inc. (1986). *Tomorrow's teacher: A report of the Holmes Group*. East Lansing, MI: Holmes Group, Inc.

Humphrey, D. & Wechsler, M. (2005). *Insights into alternative certification: initial findings from a national study*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Research International. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=12145>

Ingersoll, R. (2001). *Teacher turnover, teacher shortages, and the organization of schools*. Seattle, WA: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/Turnover-Ing-01-2001.pdf>

Jacobson, L. (2004, June 23). Texas teachers taking alternative routes. *Education Week*, 23:27.

Johnson, S.M., Birkeland, S.E., & Peske, H.G. (2005). *A difficult balance: Incentives and quality control in alternative certification programs*. Cambridge, MA: Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Keller, B. (2006, March 22). Path to classroom not linked to teachers' success. *Education Week*, 25 (28): p.10. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.edweek.org/agentk-12/job-seeker-resources/2006/03/22/28alternate.h25.html>

Legler, R. (2002). *Alternative certification: A review of theory and research*. Washington, DC: Learning Point Associates and North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from [www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/altcert/index.html](http://www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/html/altcert/index.html)

National Association for Alternative Certification. (2006). Statement of Purpose. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from [http://www.alt-teachercert.org/statement\\_of\\_purpose.htm](http://www.alt-teachercert.org/statement_of_purpose.htm).

National Center for Alternative Certification. Dear Educator (invitation to 2006 annual conference). See also [www.teach-now.org](http://www.teach-now.org)

National Center for Alternative Certification web site <http://www.teachnow.org/aboutncac.cfm>

- National Center for Educational Information (2005). Table, *Numbers of teaching certificates issued to persons who completed an alternative route, by state: 1985-2004*. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.teach-now.org/Table2.pdf>.
- National Commission on Teaching and America 's Future (2003). *No dream denied: A pledge to America 's children* . Washington, DC: Author.
- National Commission on Teaching and America 's Future (1996). *What Matters Most: Teaching and America 's Future* . New York, NY: Author.
- Passport to teaching: ( <http://www.abcte.org/passport> ).
- Ringrose, L.C. & Adkinson, J. (2005). *Does Teacher Certification Make a Difference in Student Learning?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada.
- Quality counts at 10: A decade of standards-based education. (2006, January 5). *Education Week* , 25 :17.
- Roach, V. & Cohen, B.A. (2002). *Moving past the politics: How alternative certification can promote comprehensive teacher development reforms*. Alexandria, VA.: National Association of State Boards of Education.
- Shortage trends and licensure guidance. (2004). *Education Week*, 24 : 51.
- Tozer, S., Violas, P., & Senese, G. (2006). *School and society: Historical and contemporary perspectives* . New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Williams, Debra (2004a). A new breed of teachers *Catalyst Chicago*. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/arch/09-04/0904main1.htm>
- Williams, Debra (2004b). Teach for America on hot seat. *Catalyst Chicago*. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.catalyst-chicago.org/arch/09-04/0904tfaprint.htm>.
- Wilson, S., Floden, R., & Ferrini-Mundy, J. (2002). Teacher preparation research: An insider's view from the outside. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53 :3. 190-204.



## **CMAC: A Collaborative Experiment in Alternative Certification at Aurora University, by Donna DeSpain, Gary Jewel, and Jody Piro**

### **Author Bios**



**Gary Jewel**



**Jody Piro**

Dr. Piro has held positions as teacher, dean, and principal in public schools in Illinois. She holds a BS in Secondary Education and an MS in Educational Administration from the University of Illinois, Urbana and an Ed.D. from Northern Illinois University. She has written on a variety of topics, including qualitative research methodology. Dr. Piro teaches in both strands of the Ed.D. program, and also teaches research courses.



**Donna DeSpain**

Donna DeSpain is the Dean of Adult and Graduate Studies at Aurora University. Her experience in education has run the gamut from teaching middle school mathematics, directing an Academic Resource Center, to her current position in university administration. She began her career at Aurora as the Director of the Transition to Teaching alternative certification program. In her current role, Donna oversees the recruitment of students into all adult and graduate programs. She is also responsible for the design and implementation of all adult and graduate initiatives. Donna periodically teaches both undergraduate and graduate math and education courses. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Mathematics from Purdue University. She has recently finished the coursework for the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from AU and is busy working on her dissertation which is focused on the cohort delivery method in graduate education programs. Donna is proud to add that she serves on the school board at Our Lady of Tepeyac High School in Pilsen.

### **Abstract**

In response to concerns of various groups including the Illinois Large Unit District Association and the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI), the Consortium Model of Alternative Certification (CMAC) was organized in 2001 to address Illinois' critical shortage of teachers. The program was spearheaded by ACI member Aurora University, which gained Illinois State Board of Education approval for what became the CMAC model. CMAC drew together Aurora University, the Rockford and Aurora school districts, Northern Illinois University, and Waubesa Community College to offer a collaborative cohort program in Rockford and, later, in Aurora. This article describes the program curriculum and organization and the lessons learned through CMAC.

**CMAC: A Collaborative Experiment in Alternative Certification at Aurora University**

Educators interested in demographic trends long have anticipated a major shortage in the nation's teaching force resulting from the "graying" of teachers born during the baby boom years. National estimates of the projected teacher shortage have ranged as high as two million. Moreover, the percentage of these teachers who are minorities or male is much lower than that of students as a whole. In Illinois, for example, only 15% of teachers are minorities in contrast with a student body that is 40% minority (Illinois State Board of Education, 2002). The demographic trends of shortages and imbalances have been exacerbated by the policies and decisions of state and local governments.

First, most states have enacted early retirement policies in an effort to reduce payroll costs that accrue from having large numbers of veteran teachers making the maximum on salary schedules that reward seniority. Politicians favor early retirement even though these policies are of questionable benefit. In Illinois, early retirement statutory provisions have consistently been extended. Also, early retirement clauses commonly are included in local collective bargaining agreements, further solidifying the practice of moving members of the teaching force toward retirement as early as age 55.

In addition, state legislators and local school boards have been lobbied for smaller class sizes at all levels. These pressures have further complicated transition planning by increasing the demand side of the equation. As a result, local school districts serving students in high-need schools have incurred a formidable teacher replacement problem. These districts, which are most in need of high quality faculty, are often affected by shortages first, due to the superior ability of wealthier districts to attract and retain teachers, particularly in subject areas in which shortages are greatest: science, mathematics, language arts, and special education (Civic Committee of Chicago, 2004).

At the instigation of many of these school districts — both high-need and others — a novel and promising approach to the problem has emerged in Illinois. The system endeavors to: 1) add capacity through the collaboration of colleges and universities that certify teachers and 2) enhance preparation, induction, and retention of new teachers by engaging school districts in candidate selection, preparation and induction activities.

The Large Unit District Association (LUDA), an organization of Illinois' largest school districts, serves most of the state's urban communities and high-need schools. These communities often are home to small private colleges, community colleges, and regional universities, both public and private. LUDA has spearheaded a program for these institutions to collaborate to head off the teacher shortage problem. Professor Paul Thurston of the University of Illinois at Urbana was the first to outline this approach when he delivered a white paper to the LUDA districts at their fall 2000 conference in Chicago (Thurston, 2000).

This white paper discussed the difficulties of ratcheting up the capacity of Illinois higher-education institutions to produce highly qualified teachers under current law. It also observed that alternative certification programs had been of little help because the programs tended to exist outside "the system." Candidates who pursued alternative credentials were seen as inferior to traditionally prepared candidates. As a result, nontraditional candidates often were chosen for employment only as a last resort. According to Thurston, a model that sought out, certified, and inducted talented professionals from other fields would change this perception. Individuals would be recruited not simply to fill shortages, but because professionals of their caliber were needed in teaching.

To ensure the program's success, Thurston suggested, hiring districts had to be involved in the front end of candidate selection. Having a district select and sponsor candidates and then monitor their progress would enhance the district's support and commitment. As a result, induction and retention would become natural extensions of a continuum fostered through collaboration among the central institutions in the education community.

Adapting the current certification scheme to accommodate alternative certification was a challenge for everyone. Novel approaches are labor-intensive, and few institutions have the capacity or endurance to overcome the traditional roadblocks, which include limited funding, professional bias, or legal impediments. Thurston argued that a consortia approach would allow for the responsibility, accountability, and financial obligations to be shared.

The LUDA white paper convinced member institutions to develop a model that would serve as a prototype for the state. The areas selected to pilot such a model were the far western exurbs of Chicago and northwestern Illinois districts that were experiencing staffing difficulties. Three LUDA school districts volunteered: DeKalb, Rockford and the West Aurora Public Schools. Aurora University, a private institution affiliated with the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) agreed to participate, as did Waubensee Community College and Northern Illinois University. Soon ACI, the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, and representatives of the participating teachers unions also came to the table. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) saw promise in the approach and assigned key staff to assist the collaboration. It was believed that a successful project in this region could be replicated in many other areas of Illinois.

The Consortium Model of Alternative Certification (CMAC) was launched in 2001. Initially energized by volunteerism, CMAC garnered fiscal support through the successful pursuit of a Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Waubensee Community College was the administrative agent for the grant. The grant provided for staffing the project and contributed to its flexibility under then-current law. CMAC developed a collaborative proposal for submission to ISBE, and Aurora University sought approval to be the certifying institution for CMAC. ISBE subsequently approved Aurora's application.

Stimulated and sustained by HECA funding, the first CMAC cohort initiative was undertaken with Rockford and Freeport schools. Dr. Jody Piro of Aurora University was assigned to coordinate this first cohort, serving as intern advisor and as cohort liaison with the CMAC. In 2003, a second cohort was recruited in collaboration with the East and West Aurora school districts. ACI funding support for this second group came from a U.S. Department of Education Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant awarded to the organization in fall of 2002. Donna DeSpain advised and coordinated the Aurora TTT cohort.

### **Rockford/Freeport Cohort**

Members of CMAC launched the alternative certification cohort for the Rockford and Freeport school districts during the 2002-2003 school year. CMAC provided the platform for a partnership among Aurora University, Northern Illinois University, Waubensee Community College, and the Rockford school district. Aurora University would grant Elementary (K-9) and Secondary (6-12) degrees in the areas of biology, computer science, English, mathematics, physical education, and social studies. CMAC also was able to take advantage of a unique opportunity to collaborate with the Northwest Illinois Transition to Teaching program. This program subsidized the training of four candidates from three northwest school districts (Freeport, Pearl City, and Eastland) with the Rockford cohort.

The Rockford and Freeport School Districts identified and recommended candidates for alternative certification. The criteria for admission into the program included compliance with ILCS 5/21-5c requirements (a minimum of five years of education-related employment, graduation from an accredited college with bachelor's degree, and successful completion of Illinois Test of Basic Skills and subject matter tests). All candidates in the first class held bachelor's degrees from accredited institutions, and four had advanced degrees. All were career-changers from fields that included journalism, sales, electrical contracting, and the military.

Classes began in spring 2002, in a Rockford high school. Students attended class throughout the summer and engaged in practicums in Rockford and Freeport schools.

At the end of the summer, following successful completion of their coursework and practicums, candidates were provisionally certified. Most of the students then were offered positions and became regular, full-time teachers in Rockford or Freeport schools, earning first-year teaching salaries. One candidate took the more traditional route by student-teaching at a neighboring district school.

In addition to their internships, candidates took methods courses meeting one or two nights a week at the Rockford Schools. As they navigated their way through the first year of teaching, the interns were mentored by their university clinical supervisors and also by teaching faculty from Aurora University, Northern Illinois University, and Waubesa Community College.

The CMAC model concept reflected the conceptual framework of the Aurora University College of Education. The framework states that the College of Education will strive to work collaboratively within the broader professional education community. This goal is rooted in the belief that individuals learn best when pursuing knowledge of educational theory while engaged in the practice of teaching within professional contexts.

As the full-time Aurora University faculty liaison to the cooperating districts, Professor Piro taught classes, provided ongoing academic mentoring, and assessed final portfolio projects. In addition, Northern Illinois University and Waubesa Community College provided a team of professors who taught subject-area theory and pedagogy and conducted student-teaching supervision and mentoring. The Rockford school district also supplied qualified instructors for courses in elementary methods. The benefit of this approach was that it allowed district instructors to align their curriculum initiatives and school improvement plans with the required methods courses. This curriculum vehicle became a pathway to communicate district action plans to the interns.

The Rockford school district provided two liaisons from its Human Resources Department who worked with Aurora University to facilitate communications between candidates and their supervisors. Rockford also provided instructional space for methods courses; coordinated methodology courses to reflect state and district standards, school improvement plans, and portfolio requirements; and arranged for practicums and the supervision of student teachers.

Both Aurora University and the Rockford and Freeport school districts closely monitored the intern-teachers. Benchmark criteria were analyzed throughout the program. To meet university benchmarks, candidates were expected to complete Masters-level coursework with a 3.0 GPA or better, pass the Disposition Assessment, and complete student teaching successfully. To meet district benchmarks, candidates were expected to maintain the continued sponsorship of cooperating school districts and successfully complete student teaching.

A training program for mentor-teachers was implemented by the Rockford school district, which also paired mentor-teachers and candidates. Northwest school district mentor-teachers were trained at Northern Illinois University. A CMAC-sponsored mentor training program also was made available to prospective mentor-teachers in the DeKalb and West Aurora school districts.

Completing an electronic portfolio was the culminating project of the degree program. Based on the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, the electronic portfolio requirement obliged interns to produce materials that satisfied the standard in question such as lesson plans or tapes of classes. The process allowed interns to demonstrate their interpretation of the standards and to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses for further professional development.

#### **Aurora University TTT Cohort**

In early February 2003, Aurora University and ACI sponsored a community information fair to attract and screen

candidates for a second Aurora University cohort, which would receive scholarship funding from ACI's TTT grant. The TTT grant provided tuition stipends of \$5,000 to interns in exchange for three years of teaching in high-need schools. East and West Aurora school districts agreed to interview and select TTT interns for their high-needs schools.

Nearly 250 persons attended the information fair, evidencing strong interest in the TTT program. Although many showed up out of curiosity and some lacked the qualifications required for candidacy in an alternative certification program (most often, the bachelor's degree or five years professional experience), by early March more than 100 seriously interested individuals had been identified. The opportunity to complete an accelerated master's degree program and to become teachers of record in a high-need classroom that fall was particularly attractive.

By the time the program began in June, 17 candidates had completed the application process. Ten of these students were elementary candidates; seven were secondary candidates. Of the secondary candidates, six were interested in mathematics and one in history. All students began the cohort by registering for three courses and a practicum to be offered during summer 2003. Passing the Illinois Test of Basic Skills was a requirement for continuing enrollment in the fall term.

Table A: The cohort curriculum schedule:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Credit Hours</b>	<b>Elementary Certification</b>	<b>Secondary Certification</b>
Spring 2003	3	Adv. Ed. Psych	Adv. Ed. Psych
Summer 2003	3	Methods of Instruction	Methods of Instruction
Summer 2003	2	Practicum	Practicum
Summer 2003	3	Survey of Except Indiv	Survey of Except Indiv
Fall 2003	3	Methods Reading Elem	Reading & Learning in Content
Fall 2003	4	Standards Based Teaching	Standards Based Teaching
Winterlude 2003	3	Technology in the School	Technology in the School
Winter 2004	3	Math Methods Elem	Math or History Methods Sec
Winter 2004	3 *	Middle School: Missions & Methods	Middle School: Missions & Methods

Spring 2004	3 *	Adoles Devel & Learning	Adoles Devel & Learning
Spring 2004	3	Philosophic Foundations	Philosophic Foundations
Summer 2004	6	Stnds Based Teaching Portfolio	Stnds Based Teaching Portfolio
36 required			

\* One course chosen as an elective and the other chosen to satisfy middle school endorsement.

Because the summer practicum course marked the point where students had to leave full-time employment to attend the program full time, it became the checkpoint for them to decide whether to continue in the program. The summer practicum required a minimum of 50 classroom clock hours of observation and teaching at least three lessons. Students were placed in the summer school programs in Aurora's elementary schools and at Waubensee Community College, where the county's secondary summer school was housed. By the start of practicum, 15 students remained in the cohort, while Aurora University continued to work with the two school districts to finalize fall placements.

By fall, 11 of the 15 continuing TTT students had secured internship placements. Ten students were placed in Districts 129 or 131, and one was placed in Bellwood. Of the four not placed, two students chose to postpone their internships because of family and work obligations. The two not placed were affected by a decrease in the number of openings in local schools. In particular, Elgin (U46) had experienced a budget shortfall the previous spring. Many teachers were laid off, which produced a glut of certified teachers in the Aurora market. Nonetheless, all four TTT students who were not hired into internship positions in schools chose to continue in the master's program and follow the more traditional student-teaching track available to them.

The 11 TTT students who were placed in internships were supported by district school mentors, a university supervisor, and ACI induction activities. Aurora University offered a training session for the school mentors early in the fall. Unfortunately, the session had low attendance. Fortunately, the Aurora workshops offered through ACI's *Induction Academy* were informative and helpful in dealing with actual classroom situations. In addition, a university supervisor was responsible for visiting classrooms twice each semester and counseling students.

The coursework necessary to complete the TTT program was fairly rigorous and offered continuously during the internship year. Three courses and a practicum were offered in the summer prior to the fall internship. Two courses were offered during each 2003-04 academic year term. One course was offered in the three-week January Winterlude term. (See Table A.) Interns were required to take classes two nights a week during their first year of teaching. Although necessary to accelerate degree completion and to integrate theory and practice, students and faculty alike had concerns about the heavy workload. Traditionally, student teachers are counseled against taking courses while they student teach, even though they have a longer time frame for completing their academic work.

Mixing elementary and secondary interns in the same cohort was another concern. Because of the small size of the cohort, TTT students took some classes alongside graduate students in education for some courses. Although this design was efficient for delivery of coursework, TTT students saw this as a hindrance to the real-time support they

needed to address the variety of issues they faced in their internships.

The final requirement for completion of the program was the portfolio assessment course offered in summer 2004. Of the 11 students who followed the TTT model fully, including placement in school internships, nine completed the portfolio assessment course and received their master's degree "on time," 14 months after beginning the program. One of the 11 chose not to continue in teaching and did not complete the program, and the other student received his master's degree a year later.

Tracking the seventeen candidates who accepted admission into the TTT program at Aurora University which began in May 2003, yields the following outcomes:

- Two students did not continue past the first summer and did not complete the practicum.
- Five students currently are teaching in an elementary setting; three of the five are in high-need schools.
- Five students are currently teaching in a secondary setting; three are in high-need schools.
- Two students are employed in higher education settings.
- Two students have chosen employment outside of education.
- One student opted to delay his program and is scheduled to student teach in 2006-7.

#### **Lessons Learned from the Two Cohorts**

1. **High-Need School Employment:** Confirmation of employment by schools for the internship year must be secured prior to the intern beginning the program. Interns need to understand fully their obligation for three years of continuous employment in a high-need school prior to accepting federal grant monies. If employment in a high-need school does not occur following program completion, students need to understand fully their grant repayment obligations to repay their stipends.
2. **Program Coursework:** Coursework needs to be delivered in a format that allows for a significant number of courses to be offered prior to beginning the internship year. The initial practicum experience should be tied to specific coursework so that the reflective process can be fully explored, appreciated, and assessed. Periodic best practices in teaching workshops need to be made available to TTT interns as they manage their first year. The portfolio assessment should be developed over the length of the program and culminate in the final course.
3. **Mentors:** School mentors need to be carefully trained and available to interns during the entire first year. TTT graduates should help mentor new TTT candidates.
4. **Program Management:** The TTT program should employ a full-time director/coordinator to manage all aspects of the cohort. The university supervisor should be available to observe each student's classroom at least monthly. Universities offering cohorts should develop alternative arrangements for interns who do not obtain or lose their school-intern placement, especially for reasons beyond the intern's control (funding, position availability), in order to ensure an opportunity to complete the program. Universities also should align their pedagogical instruction with district, state, and national standards and initiatives.
5. **School District Partner Responsibilities:** School districts must foster respect for alternative certification programs. The Aurora TTT interns reported feeling that their peer teachers questioned their classroom qualifications. TTT students are beginning second careers and bring valuable professional and life experience into the classroom. Whenever possible, connections should be made between their previous work and the classroom. University and district personnel should regularly communicate with interns regarding their progress as teachers and on personnel issues. For example, many cohort members are surprised by the number and types of discipline problems they encounter in their



classrooms. Career-changers require ongoing professional development and mentoring, especially regarding classroom management. Weekly feedback and problem-solving sessions involving both university and district personnel are important in addressing such issues.

6. Intern Enthusiasm and Commitment to Cultural Diversity: The enthusiasm of TTT students should be celebrated and nurtured to prevent burnout. TTT students are eager to learn new teaching strategies and have a passion for students who are different from them. They generally embrace this diversity as they find their way in the classroom. The TTT students at Aurora University were anxious to learn about the cultures of their students and, in some cases, enrolled in Spanish language classes to help them communicate with their students and their families. Perhaps some elementary language training could be incorporated in future TTT programs.

### Conclusion

Reflections on the CMAC-inspired alternative certification cohorts at Aurora University suggest several conclusions. Most important, the two cohorts added significantly to the teaching corps in high-need schools. Both cohorts proved to be effective pathways for career-changers to make the professional transition to teaching, armed with best practices for high-need schools. They were able to bring their previous education, their experiences from the world of work, and their newly formed educational philosophies and pedagogies into their classrooms. In this they exemplify Aurora University's commitment to "the transformative power of learning."

The CMAC initiative currently is dormant. Fiscal challenges have limited the availability of intern placements in the districts it served, thus reducing demand for candidates from alternative programs, and population growth in the area has added to the candidate pool. In addition, current law allows approved alternative programs to recommend certification for teachers only in subject areas for which the certifying institution has state approval. In Aurora University's case, this limitation precludes working with districts in some of the most critical areas of need, i.e., special education, physics, and chemistry. Nevertheless, some very valuable lessons have emerged from the CMAC collaboration, and these lessons have not been lost during the current lull. Elements of the venture are reflected in efforts by other ACI colleges and high-need districts to work together to address shortages in other parts of Illinois. Rockford College, for example, now is working with the Rockford Public Schools to assist career-changers.

Despite the hiatus, nothing has happened to change the long-term demographic trends that led to launching CMAC. Consequently, it is important to continue to search for ways to counter the factors that inhibit the development of alternative pathways for high quality teachers into the classrooms of high-need schools. The importance of that search is given urgency by the success stories that have played out in Rockford and Aurora, as many successful professionals from other fields have become leading teachers in these districts. Continuing networking and collaboration among ACI member colleges and universities should be encouraged in order to add to our capacity to recommend candidates for certification in areas of severe shortage. Without innovation and ingenuity, the current system cannot provide the capacity to meet the problem.

Current law governing programs for alternative certification are products of the perception that we need to restrain and inhibit their use rather than facilitate them. The law seems to suggest that these programs are a last resort. A legislative compromise designed to placate critics has limited the creativity of those seeking to use the model as a means to encourage talent from other professions to enter teaching. Each CMAC candidate was a unique individual with a highly distinctive portfolio of experience. The route to certification could be much more meaningful if an individual certification plan (ICP) could be developed for each, reflecting their widely differing backgrounds and educational needs. Instead, a one-size-fits-all mentality still dominates in approaching teacher preparation.

Finally, the CMAC experience points out the importance of developing models that are not simply "alternatives," but



legitimate approaches that integrate the programs of the university and the staffing models used by the school systems. If districts provide for the internship model in their planning, candidates will have a much better chance of being embraced by the teaching force. If the model is only an afterthought, it is likely to remain forever at risk of abandonment. Illinois cannot afford to lose such talent in its efforts to expand the pool of highly qualified teachers for our schools.

## References

- Association for Employment in Education. (2004). *Executive summary: Educator supply and demand in the United States*. Columbus, OH; Author.
- Civic Committee of Chicago. (2004). *Improving results: Transforming the teaching profession in Illinois*. Chicago, IL: Author.
- Haberman, M. (1992). Alternative certification: Can the problems of urban education be resolved by traditional educators? *Teacher Education and Practice*, 8, 13-27.
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2000). *Illinois public school enrollment projections: 2000-01–2008-09*. Springfield, IL: Author. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/TSAD01.pdf>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2003). *Annual report: Educator Supply and Demand*. Springfield, IL : Author. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/supply\\_demand\\_03.pdf](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/research/pdfs/supply_demand_03.pdf)
- Northern Illinois University. (2001). *Alternative route to initial elementary, early childhood, secondary, standard special certification*. DeKalb, IL : Author.
- Thurston, P. (2000). *The LUDA response to shortages of teachers and administrators in Illinois public schools*. Naperville, IL: Author.

## **Flying Solo: Meeting the Challenges in Transition to Teaching Alternative Certification Cohort Programs, *by Stan Burcham, Barbara Clark, and Shirley Morgenthaler***

### **Author Bios**



**Stan Burcham**

Dr. Stan Burcham, former superintendent of Harmony Emge School District 175, Belleville, Ill., Sparland Community Unit School District #3, Sparland, Ill., Cornell High School District #70 and Cornell Community Consolidated School District #426, Cornell, Ill., is the program coordinator for the Transitions to Teaching program at McKendree College. Burcham is also a former assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, Coal City Community District #1, Coal City, Ill., and a former principal of Flora Junior High School, Flora, Ill. and former assistant principal of Flora High School, Flora, Illinois.

Burcham, who received his doctorate in educational leadership from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, is also the Coordinator for the Associated Colleges of Illinois' Metro East Teacher Induction Academy.



**Shirley Morgenthaler**

**Barbara Clark**

### **Abstract**

In 2001, the Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI) launched an initiative to address an alarming state teacher shortage, particularly in hard-to-staff schools, and to figure out how ACI member colleges and universities might collaborate with schools, community colleges, businesses, and funding bodies to meet this challenge. In 2005, these efforts led to the development and state approval of a secondary-level alternative certification cohort program in mathematics and science. The program was designed to become a statewide model for certifying science and math teachers as well as teachers of other high-need subjects. Lead institution Concordia University partnered with Elmhurst College, St. Xavier University, the Chicago Public Schools, the Golden Apple Foundation and ACI to start the first cohort in spring 2004. Another ACI member, McKendree College, gained state approval for its program, based on the Concordia model, and initiated the first "Metro East" cohort in the East St. Louis region during summer 2004. The ACI initiative received significant support from a \$3.3 million U.S. Department of Education Transition to Teaching grant awarded late in 2003, which provided tuition stipends to career-changers to encourage them to teach in high-need schools. This article describes these two Transition to Teaching partnerships and some of the lessons learned from their experiences.

### **Chicago Math and Science Cohort Program**

According to data gathered by the National Center for Alternative Certification (<http://www.teach-now.org/overview.cfm>), Illinois is one of 48 states currently implementing one or more forms of alternative teacher

certification. These programs have several common characteristics, such as a rigorous admission process for applicants who are required to pass basic skills and content area tests and who must possess a bachelor's or higher degree in a field other than teacher education. Applicants accepted in these programs then are enrolled in education courses that provide them with a foundation for their teaching internship. They also take education courses during their internships that build on that foundation. These commonalities are present in the Transition to Teaching (TTT) alternative certification program for secondary math and science teachers developed as a collaborative venture of Concordia University, St. Xavier University, and Elmhurst College in partnership with the Golden Apple Foundation, the Chicago Public Schools and the Associated Colleges of Illinois.

The collaboration began in 2001 under the auspices of ACI, which had launched a teacher education initiative to address growing teacher shortages in the state. Concordia University agreed to serve as the lead institution in the partnership and sponsored the certification proposal presented to the Teacher Certification Board of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). It was designed as a TTT program because it focuses on individuals already in the workplace who are interested in changing careers and becoming high school teachers.

ACI's ability to foster collaboration among its member colleges and universities and other partners has the potential to promote nontraditional approaches that the partners might not undertake alone. Although the sometimes conflicting priorities of collaborating institutions can slow the process of program development and implementation, the opportunity to engage faculty from more than one institution for this program, overall, has been a positive experience.

The approved program is a post-baccalaureate program, taught by full-time faculty at the participating ACI member institutions, leading to certification in secondary teaching, but not to a degree. With the addition of a course in Research in Education, however, candidates in the program may opt to complete the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree. Golden Apple administers the admissions process and provides mentors for the interns in the program. Courses are offered at Chicago Public School sites. The scope and sequence of the courses are listed in Table A.

**Table A: Scope and Sequence of TTT Courses**

Semester	Course	Credit Hours	Responsible Institution
Spring	Advanced Educational Psychology	3	St. Xavier University
	Teaching Exceptional Learners	3	Elmhurst College
Summer	Curriculum, Assessment, and Management	3	Concordia University
	Content Pedagogical Methods	3	
	Field Experience	6	St. Xavier University
Fall	Learning and Literacy for Diverse Learners	3	St. Xavier University

Internship: Secondary School Teaching			
Spring		4	Various Chicago Public Secondary Schools
	Foundations of Education	3	Concordia University
	Transitions to Teaching Professional Teaching Portfolio	3	
	Ethics of Educational Leadership	1	
	Internship: Secondary School Teaching	4	St. Xavier University
Summer			Various Chicago Public Secondary Schools
	Optional: Research in Education	3	Concordia University

Because of the high need for secondary teachers in mathematics and science, the first two cohorts have been in math and science. To be considered for the program, individuals must have a baccalaureate degree in either math or science and a grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) in that major, and must have passed both the Illinois Test of Basic Skills and the appropriate Illinois content area test in math or science. In addition, suitability for teaching in high-need urban schools is assessed through the Haberman assessment interview.

To date, two TTT cohorts in Chicago have been implemented. Seventeen applicants — 13 males and four females — were accepted in the first cohort. Fourteen of those completed the academic work and are teaching in classrooms of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). In terms of diversity, the female interns consisted of one Hispanic, one Asian, and two African Americans; the males consisted of 12 white s and one Hispanic. Mathematics was the content teaching area for 13 applicants (11 males and two females), while four (two females and two males) chose science. Three members of the cohort began but did not complete the program: Two dropped out for personal reasons, and one was dropped for academic reasons.

Ten interns comprise the second cohort, and nine will complete their program in May, 2006. The initial group consisted of four males and six females. Of these candidates, four females are teaching mathematics, one female is teaching science, and four males are teaching science. All are interning at CPS high-need high schools.

The program consists of the teacher education courses required for teacher certification in Illinois plus content area test courses in math or science (see Table A). In addition, the first summer of classes includes six weeks of morning classroom observation and supervised teaching experience in summer programs at CPS high schools. The summer practicum also includes extensive mentoring by Golden Apple mentors. The summer afternoons are spent completing a 12-credit block of teaching methods and classroom management coursework. The summer experience is designed to prepare interns for full-time classroom work during the year of supervised internship. Following completion of the summer experience, interns are awarded provisional teaching certificates, and, following interviews, they are selected for internships in CPS schools as first-year classroom teachers of record.

Transition from one career to another is difficult. Being a chemist, biologist or engineer is entirely different from teaching. The general public often views teaching as they first experienced it — as students. They do not realize all of subtleties involved in successful and skilled teaching. That is the challenge of appropriately guiding teacher candidates through the TTT program.

TTT candidates, typically, already are successful professionals who have decided to transition into teaching because they want to make a difference for the next generation. The opportunity to teach in a high-need school often is very attractive to them. Still, placement in high-need schools adds significantly to the challenge of career transition. Students in the classrooms of TTT candidates often are both ill-prepared for the curriculum they are expected to master and unmotivated to do so. In addition, these students may have learning challenges that have not been diagnosed or addressed adequately. These challenges are added to the reality of being a novice professional who, after six short weeks of classroom experience in a supported setting with a teacher/mentor, is placed in a classroom to fly solo — albeit with continuing mentor support and periodic classroom visits from a university faculty member.

The structure of the alternative program is different than that of the traditional teacher preparation program. Because TTT students have had a previous career in science, math or engineering and already have passed the Illinois content knowledge tests, they have the content knowledge but not the pedagogical knowledge. Their coursework is varied to support their understanding of the praxis of teaching. The content involves learning the ethos of school from the view of the teacher. Courses in content methods, learning theory, students with special learning needs, classroom management, and assessment provide a basic foundation for pedagogy. The culmination of these courses leads to a six-week period that provides students with some classroom teaching experience. Educational foundations and ethics provide a historical perspective of teaching. Workshops and speakers on topics such as teaching children living in poverty, provide an introduction to the cultural setting facing them as novice teachers.

To bring the pedagogical knowledge from an understanding of theory to practice is daunting in both traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs. In the TTT program, the nine-month internship provides such an opportunity. TTT candidates interview for teaching positions rather than being placed in particular schools. The interview process often is very different from that of their previous careers. They agonize over not having a job weeks in advance so that they can make preparations, or they find that they will teach classes different from the positions for which they interviewed.

However, they enter the classroom with high expectations of themselves and their ability to teach. This is evident in their classroom evaluations, which often yield such comments as:

- “Your classroom control is characteristic of an experienced teacher.”
- “[The candidate] works hard at presenting the curriculum and is very creatively inventive in doing so.”
- “The conversations between you and the students [is] very low key and natural. You speak to them with respect and they answer with respect.”

Learning to teach while flying solo is not easy, and TTT interns encounter difficulties similar to those of traditional novice teachers. They have trouble with classroom management, as these observational comments suggest:

- “Despite your planning I note that you have run out of lessons to teach with 10-15 minutes [left] in the class period.”
- “The assigned work of converting the sentences into equations and converting equations into sentences is very effective [but] could be more effective if you were to do a few examples...so you can check that they have understood the process and use it.”

They agonize over the pace of their teaching and what their students can accomplish, e.g., “We discussed your concern about this being the ninth week of school, and you find that you are just completing the third week of the curriculum. Your response was that the students were definitely learning, but much of the vocabulary and scientific concepts were unfamiliar to them.” TTT interns, like traditional novice teachers, may “fall back” on teaching strategies in which they feel they have more control, such as employing more lecturing and less inquiry strategies, e.g., “The creativity I saw in the first month or so has been replaced by ‘the lecture.’”

Despite the many obstacles TTT interns face on a daily basis, they are making a difference. Evaluation comments, such as the following, strongly suggest that the interns' decision to teach in a high-need school is proving both personally and professionally rewarding:

- “An oasis in the desert – that is what your room is. Your room is a science oasis in the midst of [name of high school] desert. What you are doing is amazing.”
- “More than a few of the departing students steered their way by you so that they could bid you goodbye....those farewells tell me....that you are getting through to your students in a meaningful way.”
- “I am also taken aback by the administration's offer to you to teach night school for GEDs...I am aware that these rather highly paid positions are reserved to the senior member of the faculty.”

One of the concerns about TTT candidates is that their initial teaching experiences are in secondary schools where they encounter high rates of absenteeism and students who have special needs or are struggling readers or unmotivated at learning. Because the TTT candidates in their accelerated program did not have a broad array of coursework that includes classroom management and teaching methods (see Table A), they lack a strong foundation in pedagogy. For example, they had no courses in urban teaching strategies because the required science workshop was taught by high school teachers who teach in districts that are not high need. Future considerations for coursework should include a stronger component of course content that focuses on teaching strategies for students who live in large urban areas with a low socio-economic base.

When TTT students finish their year-long internship, they receive their initial teacher certification. Even though university faculty and Golden Apple mentors serve as co-pilots for the initial year of almost-solo flight for TTT teachers, their work has been intense and intensive. They are at times skilled novices, at times budding professionals, and almost always creative practitioners who have learned that they can make the differences that their vision and altruism led them to believe was possible for these struggling students in high-need urban schools.

### **McKendree College Metro East Cohort Program**

The McKendree College TTT cohort program in science and mathematics is modeled after the TTT program developed at Concordia University, in collaboration with Elmhurst College and St. Xavier University, and approved by the ISBE in May 2004. Stan Burcham, a retired high-need district superintendent, joined the McKendree faculty as TTT coordinator in January 2004. The program was marketed throughout the St. Louis Metro East area via newspaper articles, radio interviews, and newspaper advertisements. In addition, the regional offices of education in the area cooperated by disseminating information to area school districts and substitute teachers. On January 17, a cold, rainy day, some 40 potential candidates attended the cohort's initial recruitment fair. About one-half of them met the TTT program admissions requirements of an undergraduate major in science or mathematics and five years' work experience related to their field of study. Twelve candidates made initial application for the program and indicated that they would take the Illinois Test of Basic Skills and the appropriate content area test.

Initially, based on assurances of state Board of Education staff, it was believed that the McKendree TTT program had been approved by the Illinois State Board of Education as part of the Concordia program approval. However, just prior

to the recruitment fair, ISBE staff indicated that the Concordia approval did not extend to McKendree, even though the two programs were identical, and both institutions are ACI members. Consequently, McKendree was required to submit a separate program application and to receive ISBE approval before students could be enrolled, a delay that may have reduced the number of applications for the initial cohort. Following proposal submission, ISBE staff review, and a number of edits, ISBE approved the McKendree program in April 2004, just in time to enroll candidates for a 2004-05 cohort.

During the program approval process, recruitment and selection of candidates for the program was finalized. Eight qualified candidates submitted complete applications and passed the two required state tests. These candidates were further assessed using the Haberman interview process during February 2004 and were accepted into the McKendree College program. The initial McKendree TTT classes began in April, 2004, immediately following program approval by the ISBE.

Perhaps reflecting some of the problems associated with a new program for career-changers, four qualified candidates withdrew their applications, either because they were unable to find adequate financial resources or felt they needed more time to make such an important life decision. Four candidates finalized enrollment in the initial cohort. These candidates represented a high level of diversity. One candidate was an African American woman, another was a male from India, and the other two candidates were a Caucasian man and woman. The candidates ranged in age from 30 to 50 years old. One candidate was preparing to teach mathematics, and the rest were preparing for science teaching.

Because the program approval process delayed the starting date of the two courses that introduce the TTT program, these four candidates were required to complete two classes of three semester hours each in about six weeks while still employed full-time in the jobs they would soon leave. This proved to be both challenging and stressful for the candidates at a time when McKendree also was seeking summer student-teaching placements for them. Because schools in the Illinois Metro East had scheduled only three-week summer school sessions, while the TTT program called for six to eight weeks of student teaching, candidates were given student-teaching placements for the month of June in East St. Louis School District 189, a high-need school. Thereafter, they were moved to summer school sponsored by the St. Louis Public Schools for four additional weeks of student teaching. During their student teaching, the candidates completed a 12-credit block of classes on classroom management skills, content methods, instructional strategies, philosophy, and diversity issues.

After successfully completing student teaching, the candidates were issued provisional teaching certificates. All were placed as interns in the East St. Louis District for the 2004-2005 school year. A science intern and a mathematics intern were employed by the district and placed at a high school; two science interns were placed at a middle school. The interns were regarded as first-year teachers by the school district and teachers of record in their classrooms. The district arranged for retired teachers to serve as their mentors. During the fall semester, the candidates were enrolled at McKendree College in their teaching internship and completed a course in diversity and literacy. During the spring semester, the candidates continued the internship and enrolled in ethics and foundations classes. In April 2005, all candidates took the Assessment of Professional Teaching that is required for individuals seeking the initial teaching certificate. All four passed the assessment and were issued initial teaching certificates. After certification, three candidates remained teachers in the East St. Louis School District, and one candidate became a teacher in a high-need school in Alton, Illinois.

The small size of the cohort provided many opportunities to observe candidates during the program and considerable time for the coordinator to interview the candidates and assess their reactions to the program. Evaluation of the program resulted in these program changes for the second cohort, beginning in spring 2005 and continuing through



May 2006:

- The 12-semester summer block was changed to provide a two-week intensive teacher preparation seminar prior to a six-week block of student teaching and classes. The two-week intensive seminar consisted of focused field experiences in the mornings and afternoon classes devoted to classroom management, diversity, instructional strategies, and high-need schools.
- The curriculum for the summer block classes was changed to a more practical approach to teaching. A greater emphasis was placed on the effects of poverty, instructional strategies, and the culture of schools.
- Teachers in the schools in which interns were assigned were employed as mentors for the candidates. The district still provided retired teachers as mentors, but it was determined that the interns needed mentors who were at their workplace on a regular basis.
- Reported shortages of language arts teachers in high-need schools resulted in a decision to include this content area in the second year of the program.

A broader scope of content areas and more time to recruit potential candidates and market the program resulted in ten candidates enrolling in the McKendree College TTT program for 2005-2006. Five candidates are teaching science; four are teaching mathematics; and one is interning as a language arts teacher. Five are women, and five are men. All of the candidates are Caucasian.

The 2005-2006 cohort began its program with the two-week intensive program in mid-May 2005. All ten members of the cohort had student teaching experiences during summer school at East St. Louis School District 189. One candidate had additional student teaching experiences in a school district closer to her home. The candidates were successful in the summer school block and student teaching, and they were issued provisional teaching certificates in August 2005. Each of the candidates now is employed in a local high-need school district as a first-year teacher. Three candidates are employed in the East St. Louis high school; one candidate is employed in the East St. Louis school district alternative secondary level school; and four candidates are employed in East St. Louis school district middle schools. One candidate is employed at the East Alton Wood River high school.

The experiences of the 2005-2006 TTT cohort have resulted in these questions relating to beginning teachers in high-need schools:

- How can candidates be better prepared for classroom management issues in high- need schools?
- How can candidates be better prepared for addressing the needs of students in generational poverty?
- How can candidates be prepared for a relationship with a building principal who is under pressure from requirements of No Child Left Behind?

In a 2005 paper, Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, and Wykoff report on the effects of changes in entry requirements for teaching on the teacher workforce and student achievement in New York City Schools. Alternative routes to certification similar to McKendree College's TTT program have resulted in a reduced number of uncertified and unqualified teachers in New York City schools. Additionally, they report that mathematics teachers certified via alternate routes affect student achievement in a manner equivalent to college-recommended teachers in their second year of teaching. In their third year of teaching mathematics, it appears that teachers from alternative routes to certification perform better than college-recommended teachers and temporary license teachers. McKendree's program has provided 12 highly qualified mathematics, science, and language arts teachers for high schools and middle schools in East St. Louis School District 189, a district that has traditionally experienced difficulty in recruiting teachers in these content areas. Second-year teachers from the TTT program report a much higher level of confidence and success than they experienced in their first year. It seems likely that McKendree College's alternative certification



program is having the same effect on East St. Louis Schools that alternative certification programs have had on New York City Schools.

The ACI TTT partnership experience in Chicago and East St. Louis reveals the challenges of recruiting highly qualified candidates for teaching mathematics and science in high-need schools and issues such as financial, personal, and professional adjustments in transitioning to teaching. Both the Concordia and McKendree TTT programs made adjustments with their second cohorts that have strengthened program effectiveness. Their track record of preparing effective and highly qualified teachers and the impressive retention rates of these new teachers in high-need schools bodes well for the future. Equally important, ACI is developing a highly visible program of recruitment fairs and media publicity that shows promise for attracting larger numbers of applicants who will increase the financial viability of offering future cohorts.

### References

Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., and Wyckoff, J. (2005). *How changes in entry requirements alter the teacher workforce and affect student achievement*. Retrieved February 16, 2006 from [http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/how\\_changes\\_in\\_entry\\_requirements\\_alter\\_the\\_teacher\\_workforce.pdf](http://www.teacherpolicyresearch.org/portals/1/pdfs/how_changes_in_entry_requirements_alter_the_teacher_workforce.pdf)

## Triumphant Teachers: Origins and Markers of Excellence of Alternative Routes to Standard Teacher Certification in Illinois, *by Dominic Belmonte*

### Author Bio



Dominic Belmonte is Director of Teacher Preparation for the Golden Apple Foundation. A Golden Apple Award recipient and past chairman of the Golden Apple Academy of Educators, he co-created the Golden Apple Scholars of Illinois program in 1989 and the Golden Apple Teacher Education program in 1996. He is the author of two books on teaching: *Teaching from the Deep End* and *Teaching on Solid Ground* (Corwin Press: CA). At York Community High School in Elmhurst, where he was a faculty member for 20 years, Belmonte taught English and was Chairman of the English Department. He earned his B.A. and M.A. in English at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

### Abstract

A decade ago, the Golden Apple Foundation pioneered development of legislation authorizing alternative teacher certification in Illinois. In the years since, Golden Apple has partnered with the Chicago Public Schools and institutions of higher education in offering alternative certification programs at the elementary and secondary levels. These institutions include Northwestern University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and three members of the Associated Colleges of Illinois: Concordia University, Elmhurst College, and St. Xavier University. This article focuses on alternative certification program models in mathematics and science — hard-to-staff subjects that have attracted to teaching a significant number of career changers. To date, teachers certified through these programs have continued teaching at impressive rates.

### Triumphant Teachers: Origins and Markers of Excellence of Alternate Routes to Standard Teacher Certification in Illinois

Ten years ago the Golden Apple Foundation, Northwestern University, and the Inner-City Teaching Corps pioneered the introduction of alternative certification in Illinois. Its inception was an exhausting but proud achievement for those who structured the concept, defended it against criticism, and worked to pass legislation authorizing teacher licenses. Since then, Golden Apple has partnered with five other universities: University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Associated College of Illinois (ACI) coalition of Concordia University, St. Xavier University, and Elmhurst College. Our experience bringing almost 400 mid-career adults to teaching in the Chicago Public Schools through these partnerships provides a useful perspective on the strengths and potential of these programs. In essence, what matters most in alternative certification programs is the trust established between partners, the "who and how" of intern selection, and the quality of internship experiences. These ingredients have resulted in significant numbers of talented and accomplished people launching new careers as outstanding Chicago teachers.

My colleague and dear friend, Peg Cain, president of Golden Apple from 1995-2000, first broached the idea to me in a phone conversation during the winter holidays in 1995. We both believed there was a stratum of adults who were equipped to teach, especially mathematics and science, and who would be interested in a career change, but were discouraged from doing so because of the obstacles inherent in the lengthy road to teacher preparation and licensure. We believed that traditional teacher education would not be as necessary for these individuals as it was for younger students because these older people already possess considerable life experience, maturity, parenting skills, and a

working knowledge of their field. Influenced by the writings of Martin Haberman, a well-known advocate of alternative certification, we believed that, by carefully selecting adult candidates and putting them through a program that melded theory and practice, we could accelerate their transition to teaching. After studying comparable programs in California, Texas and New Jersey, we realized that mentoring by skilled practitioners was an essential part of the process.

Golden Apple's partners at Northwestern University were enthusiastic about adapting and condensing their traditional graduate education courses to fit a 13-month time frame. The four-quarter course sequence and courses that were waived for the Northwestern University program (NU-Teach) are listed in Table A.

**Table A**

Course #	Title	Credits
Summer		
ALT_CERT 380-1	Alternative Certification Pre-Practicum: Understanding Theories and Building Practice in Pedagogical and Content Knowledge	1
ALT_CERT 380-2	Alternative Certification Pre-Practicum: Building Pedagogical and Content Knowledge in Action in the Classroom	1
Fall		
ALT_CERT 385-1	Alternative Certification Practicum: Building Pedagogical Theory and Content Knowledge in Action in Your Own Classroom	1
ALT_CERT 386-1	Integrating Theory and Practice in Teaching and Student Learning: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner	1
Winter		
ALT_CERT 385-2	Alternative Certification Practicum: Building Pedagogical Theory and Content Knowledge in Action in Your Own Classroom	1
ALT_CERT 386-2	Integrating Theory and Practice in Teaching and Student Learning: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner	1

## Spring

ALT_CERT 385-3	Alternative Certification Practicum: Building Pedagogical Theory and Content Knowledge in Action in Your Own Classroom	1
ALT_CERT 390-1	Alternative Certification Post-Practicum and Evaluation: Reflecting on Readings, Writings and Teaching	1

Total Credits: 8

Completion of the NU-TEACH program is equivalent to having completed the following Master of Science in Education courses (for degree) and these courses are waived:

Course #	Title
Elementary	
MS_ED 477	Practicum seminar: Elementary
MS_ED 487-1	Student Teaching: Elementary
MS_ED 487-2	Student Teaching: Elementary
MS_ED 453	Methods and Techniques: Elementary
MS_ED 402	Social Context of Education
MS_ED 403	Early and Middle Child Development and Learning
MS_ED 423	Foundations of Reading and Language Acquisition: Elementary
MS_ED 426	Mathematics in the Elementary School
Secondary	
MS_ED 479	Practicum Seminar: Math / Science

MS_ED 489-1	Student Teaching: Math / Science
MS_ED 489-2	Student Teaching: Math / Science
MS_ED 457 or 458	Methods and Techniques: Math /Science
MS_ED 402	Social Context of Education
MS_ED 404	Adolescent Development in Social Context
MS_ED 431	Using Video to Study Teaching and Learning
LRN_SCI 435	New Approaches to Math / Science Education

### Next Step

After creating a curriculum for accelerated study, the next step was changing the teacher licensing laws. In 1996, Golden Apple and Northwestern joined forces in what became a two-year collaboration to craft and gain eventual passage of Illinois School Code 21-5b. Enacted on Valentine's Day, 1998, this new law brought alternative certification to Illinois. In the years after this pioneering effort and with other university partners, especially the Associated Colleges of Illinois triumvirate of Concordia, Saint Xavier, and Elmhurst, the Illinois Teacher Certification Board has become much more receptive to alternate program routes. Ten years later, the single, most satisfying postscript to our efforts is that a dozen alternative certification programs have been approved in Illinois.

The story of bringing alternative certification to Illinois is incomplete, however, without mentioning the role of Penelope Peterson, dean of the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern. Although Golden Apple approached several universities to partner in an alternative certification legislative initiative, she alone responded positively. In the face of criticism from her dean colleagues, as well as the skepticism of the press, Dean Peterson forged a partnership with Golden Apple to develop the program template that became a model for subsequent programs. Because no alternative certification program could be approved without a university partner, Penelope Peterson's vision and courage were the pivotal contribution that has enabled 400 career-changers to complete the Golden Apple Teacher Education Program (GATE) and to become Chicago Public School (CPS) teachers, primarily in the high-need areas of mathematics and science. She also set a standard for the high degree of trust among the partners that has been a key to our success.

The completion-to-teaching record of the eight-year GATE intern program is summarized in Table B. Table C shows the record for NU-Teach program graduates; D and E show the NU-Teach program disaggregated by elementary and secondary strands.

### Tables B-E

Table B: All GATE partnership programs, 1998-2005

Cohort	Number chosen	Completed program / entered teaching	% of original cohort	Taught 3 yrs. In CPS	%	Taught in CPS in 2004	%	Teaching in CPS Today	% of original cohort
1998	16	15	94	13	87	11 in 7th yr. (4 taught for 7 years)	73	7 in 8th year	44
1999	24	23	96	14	61	8 in 6th yr (2 taught for 6 yrs.)	35	6 in 7th year	25
2000	26	25	96	24	96	19 in 5th yr. (2 taught for 5yrs.)	73	17 in 6th year	65
2001	46	46	100	35	76	30 in 4th yr.(5 taught for 4yrs.)	65	25 in 5th year	54
2002	56	53	94	45	85	45 in 3rd yr. (11 taught for 3 years)	85	34 in 4th year	61
2003	52	49	94	49 in 2nd yr.	94	49 in 2nd yr. (6 taught for 2 yrs.)	94	43 in 3rd year	83
2004	61	54	88	n/a	---	54 in 1st yr. (12 taught only 1 yr.)	88	42 in 2nd year	>69
2005	41	36	88	n/a	---	n/a	---	35 in 1st year	85
Total	322	301	93%	174/211	82%	216/265	82%	209/322	65%

Table C: 2005 GATE census for the NU-Teach Program.

Cohort	Number chosen	Completed program / entered teaching	% of original cohort	Taught 3 yrs. In CPS	%	Taught in CPS in 2004	%	Teaching in CPS Today	% of original cohort
1998	16	15	94	13	87	6	38	7 in 8th year	43
1999	24	23	96	14	61	11	46	6 in 7th year	25
2000	26	25	96	24	96	18	69	16 in 6th year	61
2001	33	33	100	25	78	19	57	17 in 5th year	51
2002	36	33	92	29	81	21	58	22 in 4th year	61
2003	34	33	97	28	84	28	82	28 in 3rd year	82
2004	47	45	95	n/a	---	41	87	39 in 2nd year	82
2005	26	25	96	n/a	---	n/a	---	25 in 1st year	96
Total	242	232	96%	133/169	79%	144/216	67%	160/242	66%

Table D: NU-Teach Elementary Strand

Cohort	Number chosen	Completed program / entered teaching	% of original cohort	Taught 3 yrs. In CPS	%	Taught in CPS in 2004	%	Teaching in CPS Today	% of original cohort
1998	10	9	90	7	70	2	20	2	20
1999	13	12	92	5	38	4	30	3	23

2000	15	14	93	13	86	11	73	10	66
2001	17	17	100	13	76	11	64	8	47
2002	13	11	85	10	76	8	61	5	38
2003	15	15	100	15	100	15	100	15	100
2004	21	16	76	n/a	---	41	76	14	66
2005	15	15	100	n/a	---	n/a	---	15	100
Total	119	100	84%	63/83	75%	67/104	64%	72/119	60%

Table E: NU-Teach Secondary Strand

Cohort	Number chosen	Completed program / entered teaching	% of original cohort
--------	---------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------

**Tables G & F**

The intern record in more recent partnership programs is summarized in Tables F and G. The specific curriculum of these programs is not the subject of this article, but each follows the NU-Teach program's focus on an intensive summer coursework/practicum resulting in provisional certification prior to placement in a CPS classroom. As with NU-Teach, Golden Apple provides extensive mentoring support to the interns in these programs. ACI's Math/Science program with Concordia, Saint Xavier, and Elmhurst starts in April, rather than in June, in order to provide interns with more coursework and classroom observation and practicum experience prior to their year-long internship.

Table F: UIC/GATE Completion-to-Teaching Record

Cohort	Number chosen	Completed program / entered teaching	% of original cohort	Taught 3 yrs. In CPS	%	Taught in CPS in 2004	%	Teaching in CPS Today	% of original cohort
2001	13	13	100	10	77	10	77	8	62
2002	20	20	100	16	80	16	80	11	55
2003	18	16	89	15	83	16	89	15	83



Total	51	49	96%	41/51	80%	42/51	82%	34/51	67%
-------	----	----	-----	-------	-----	-------	-----	-------	-----

Table G: ACI Math/Science Completion-to-Teaching Record

Cohort	Number chosen	Completed program / entered teaching	% of original cohort	Taught 3 yrs. In CPS	%	Taught in CPS in 2004	%	Teaching in CPS Today	% of original cohort
2004	13	13	100	n/a	---	13	100	11	84
2005	10	10	100	n/a	---	n/a	---	9	90
Total	23	23	100%	n/a	---	13	100%	34/51	87%

### Conclusions

Because we were concerned that the attrition rate of GATE completers was 15% of the original cohorts after the 2004-2005 school year, Golden Apple contacted almost half of these graduates for an explanation. We were pleased to discover that more than three-quarters of them were still teaching — some out of CPS, but often teaching elsewhere in Illinois or in other parts of the nation. Continuation of mentoring following the program might improve the retention rate for GATE completers, although the rate is still much higher than the Illinois average, especially in high-need schools. And CPS CEO Arne Duncan often has publicly praised the GATE program, declaring that Golden Apple's effort in alternative certification is the preferred method for CPS.

The following perspectives on what makes alternative certification work are the result of our two-year legislative effort and eight years of offering GATE programs in bringing nearly 400 career changers to teaching:

1. Trust between partners: The program cannot work without it. University partners must wholeheartedly value master practitioners in teacher preparation. Not-for-profit partners must respect and be patient with their university partners in the laborious process of conceiving and developing programs and gaining faculty approval. Likewise, partners must be steadfast in their support of their school partner efforts. Golden Apple has taken pains to demonstrate our commitment to assist CEO Arne Duncan and Mayor Richard Daley in achieving their goal of increasing the pool of talented teachers in Chicago. Alternative certification partnerships have to trust the merits of the idea and the people chosen to implement it. Where trust is mutual, programs flourish.
2. Mentoring – the alpha and omega of alternative certification programs: Mentoring is essential to successfully integrating coursework and teaching experience. Golden Apple insists that each intern's mentor visit 15-25 times during the year and that the university faculty supervisor visit the intern's classroom at least four times annually. Interns must be seen as entering into a career-long continuum of reflection and learning that cannot be developed in isolation.

Mentoring at Golden Apple is unique in that it follows the "it takes a village" approach. In some circles, especially in the suburbs, mentoring is considered a confidential arrangement between mentor and new teacher, where secrets and faults are kept hidden. By contrast, the Golden Apple approach shares the mentor's observation with school and

university partners. I might send a letter of encouragement, thanks, or warning to an intern based on a comment in a mentor's observation report. We want the interns to know many eyes are on them, many voices are cheering them onward, and many people are invested in their success.

3. Intern Selection: Selecting well-qualified candidates is more important than meeting cohort-size targets. Golden Apple even has taken the step of turning down increased funding when it meant the size of our cohort would be artificially inflated. The rigors of teaching, especially high-need subjects in urban schools, demand interns who exhibit specific knowledge and have the disposition to achieve high levels of success.

Another kernel of wisdom is to scrutinize candidates closely and realize that little things can mean a great deal. Partners must use the summer phase to scrutinize how the interns interact with students and react to situations. Equally important is the need to provide honest, direct, and complete feedback, including the judgment that an intern should be dropped from the program. My mantra to my colleagues is that we cannot add ineffective teaching to the obstacles that so many Chicago school children already face.

4. Program challenges: Just about every teacher's student-teaching experience, whether positive or awful, reflects the inherent challenges in becoming responsible for a classroom. This summer session for those seeking alternative certification is even more intense and can be truly staggering to the intern. There should be constant reminders to interns that they face a steep learning curve.

We assist interns in following CPS procedures and keeping up with the impressive amount of paperwork, but nothing prepares them for the "set adrift" feeling of classroom command. Interns thirst for management skills — an essential element of effective teaching that guarantees program dysfunction if ignored. Interns who feel shaky about those skills may become demoralized if they feel that all they are doing is crisis management. There are many other aspects that lead to successful programs: The centrality of the portfolio interns compile, the quality of administrative paperwork (application, interview observation form, assignments) and program staff, and attention to detail increase the odds of a successful alternative certification program.

There are now more than ten programs in Illinois that have followed the path pioneered by Golden Apple, Northwestern University, and the Inner-City Teaching Corps. Many of these programs are designed for mid-career adults interested in teaching math and science. Programs have been developed in critical teacher shortage areas, especially special education, and the landscape in Illinois has changed significantly during the past decade. National organizations, such as Teach for America and The New Teacher Project, have appeared in Chicago offering variations of alternative route.

Understandably, Golden Apple looks with satisfaction on what has been achieved with its university partners. In our first seven years of operation, 75% of interns selected in these programs continue to teach in CPS. Of those who leave, a large number stay in teaching in other cities or suburbs. Because of the appearance of new programs, Golden Apple's future focus may morph from cohort-driven alternative certification preparation to mentoring, due to the limited supply of well-qualified mentors for this function critical to program success and high teacher retention. All told, Golden Apple programs, when Golden Apple Fellows and Golden Apple Scholars are included, have placed more than 1,300 persons in classrooms, either as teachers or candidates preparing to become teachers.

## Partnering for Alternative Certification: A Collaboration Between Dominican University and Teach for America, *by Sr. Colleen McNicholas*

### Author Bio



Sr. Colleen McNicholas, OP., Ph.D. is Dean of the School of Education at Dominican University and Assistant Professor of Educational Administration. Her research interests focus on preparing teacher and administrative leadership for public and private schools with at-risk student populations. She has experience in secondary-school leadership as well as both elementary and secondary teaching in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and New Jersey. She served as Assistant Superintendent for Catholic schools in an Illinois Catholic diocese as well as Director of Education for the Sinsinawa Dominican Congregation. Prior to her appointment at Dominican University, she was an adjunct professor for two years at Fordham University in New York.

### Abstract

During the past 20 years, alternative routes to teacher certification have evolved as a response to real and perceived shortages of qualified teachers (Simmons, 2005). Studies have been published for and against this form of teacher certification. This article describes the shortage of qualified teachers in the Chicago school system and an alternative certification program designed to address this shortage. The program was developed through a partnership between Teach for America, a national teacher recruitment program, and Dominican University of Chicago.

### Teacher Shortage in High Need Schools

The demand for increased numbers of qualified teachers for urban schools continues to be a major challenge nationwide (Ilmer et al., 2005). A recent policy analysis attributed the national shortage of teachers to the approaching retirement of an experienced teacher population and a 46% rate of attrition among teachers with less than five years experience (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). The Chicago Public School system recruits between 1,500 and 2,000 new teachers annually to meet its personnel needs. Highly qualified minority candidates are greatly needed to represent a student body that, in September 2004, was 49.8% African American, 38% Hispanic, 3.2% Asian and 8.8% Caucasian (Chicago Public Schools, 2006). In addition, these new teachers need to be willing to work at low-performing or at-risk schools. To address both the shortage of minority faculty and of teachers willing to serve at high-need schools, the School of Education of Dominican University formed a partnership with Teach for America (TFA) in spring 2004. The purpose of this partnership is to offer an elementary and secondary alternative certification program to a selected group of professionals who are recruited into teaching by TFA. These individuals serve as full-time teachers in low-performing Chicago schools while pursuing initial alternative certification through Dominican University's School of Education.

### The Partnership Institutions

Dominican University, which was founded to train Dominican nuns, traces its origins to the charter granted in 1848 by the State of Wisconsin to St. Clara Academy, a frontier school for young women founded by the Very Reverend Samuel Mazzuchelli, OP, founder of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. In 1922, the sisters moved the institution to its current location in River Forest, Illinois, and renamed it Rosary College. The curriculum was broadened to include undergraduate liberal arts programs. In the 1970s, Rosary College became a co-ed institution offering graduate degrees. In May 1997, the college changed its name to Dominican University to acknowledge the institution's five

graduate schools and to reaffirm the university's commitment to its Dominican mission and heritage. Today, the university's enrollment is 3,250. The School of Education's enrollment is approximately 1,110 with 990 graduate education students and 120 undergraduate education students.

The School of Education's mission is to prepare graduate and undergraduate education students to make a difference in the lives of children and young people by fostering the values of scholarship, leadership and service. The School of Education's seven graduate degree programs, one undergraduate degree program and two undergraduate certification programs are predicated on a Conceptual Framework that reflects these three values (Dominican University Conceptual Framework, 2001, p.6).

The School of Education has significant experience in preparing qualified teachers for Chicago's high-risk inner-city schools. The university was one of the original participants in the eight-year Teachers for Chicago program—partnership between nine higher education institutions, Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Teachers Union, and the Golden Apple Foundation aimed at attracting qualified minority candidates to teaching (Feistritzer & Chester, 2000 ). In addition, within the last six years, the university has prepared cohorts of teachers for Chicago Public Schools in elementary and secondary education, bilingual education, and special education.

The concept of Teach for America was developed by founder and president Wendy Kopp in 1989 while she was still a senior at Princeton University. Troubled by the educational inequities facing children in low-income communities across the United States, Kopp wrote a proposal for the program as her senior thesis and later secured a seed grant from Mobil Corporation for its inception. Additional small grants followed, allowing her to hire a few recent college graduates as staff. In 1990, Ross Perot provided a challenge grant of \$500,000 to provide funding necessary for the first year of the program. Of the 2,500 initial applicants, 500 were selected to become charter corps members. After participating in a TFA summer institute, the first group of teacher candidates was placed in six regions across the country. TFA currently has more than 22 placement sites. Since its inception in 1990, TFA has recruited approximately 14,000 young people to teach at-risk children.

As of 2005, Chicago has a cohort of 65 corps members. Its make-up is 75% female, 25% male, 87% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic, 5% Asian and 3% other racial designations. The corps members commit two years to teach in urban or rural public schools while they matriculate in an alternative certification program. Their ultimate goal is to become leaders in the effort to expand educational opportunity for all children and young people.

### **Evolution of the Partnership Alternative Certification Program**

Dominican University became involved with TFA in January 2004, when the university president received an inquiry from the organization's Chicago office. TFA wished to explore the possibility of developing a partnership for an alternative elementary and secondary certification program. Meetings ensued, and a partnership was established. A second round of meetings addressed admission procedures, policies, finances, faculty and a teaching site. Dominican's School of Education developed the alternative certification curriculum from its courses for traditional graduate certification programs in coordination with the Illinois policy for alternative certification (Illinois Administrative Code, Section 25.65). The alternative certification program was presented to the Illinois State Certification Board and received approval in early Spring 2004. The initial cohort began coursework in the 2004-05 academic year.

Collaboration is a significant part of the partnership. TFA staff and personnel from the School of Education work together in the selection and admission of potential candidates for the program. An intensive screening process is designed to ensure the selection of individuals who are competent in their academic field and motivated to work with at-risk children and young people. Pre-screening begins with the initial written application for the program. The most promising candidates are invited to a preview day during which they participate in a personal interview, teach a mini-

lesson and engage in a brief writing exercise. During the interview, each candidate is apprised of the personal and professional dispositions expected by both TFA and the School of Education. Following the interview, a corps of potential candidates is invited to enter the university graduate admissions process.

### **The Alternative Certification Program**

Alternative certification is a term that describes nontraditional avenues leading to teacher certification (Mikulecky, Shkodriani, & Wilner, 2004). The alternative certification program at Dominican University is organized into three phases: an intensive year-long academic study, a summer teaching practicum, and an academic year of clinical practice and continuous comprehensive assessment of teaching performance (Alternative Teacher Certification, Illinois School Code: 105 ILCS 5/21-5b).

#### **Phase One**

During Phase One, the selected corps members successfully complete the Illinois Basic Skills Test and appropriate Illinois Content Area Tests, and proceed to participate in a five-week summer institute in Los Angeles with their TFA peers from other sites. The institute curriculum includes academic coursework that focuses on teaching as leadership, instructional planning and delivery, reading and learning theory, and classroom management. (Teach For America Institute Curriculum, 2004). Corps members also attend grade-level workshops while assuming full teaching responsibility for a class of summer school students. Following the summer institute, certification candidates attend sessions at Dominican University; these include an introduction to the Unit's Conceptual Framework values (scholarship, leadership and service) as well as a study of all Illinois standards. Corps members then apply for an Illinois provisional alternative certificate.

A number of assessment structures are used to ensure that this phase of the alternative program prepares the corps members for their initial year of classroom teaching. Candidates reflect upon their personal philosophy of education and their beliefs about children and young people. Dialogue with university faculty and ongoing coaching encourage candidates to assess themselves as teachers and to see their strengths and discover the areas in which they need additional work. Corps members receive a recommendation to enter Phase Two on the basis of their academic work during and after the institute and the final assessment of the teaching practicum. This recommendation outlines any academic knowledge, pedagogical skills or dispositions that will need to be addressed during the next phase of the program.

#### **Phase Two**

Chicago Public School staff and TFA staff determine the appropriate classroom placement for corps members' initial teaching assignments. The schools in which they are placed have a student body that is primarily low-performing and at-risk. Corps members receive a provisional alternative teaching certificate and must complete a full year of full-time teaching responsibilities to earn an initial alternative certificate.

During Phase Two, several School of Education faculties teach graduate education courses to corps members either on the Dominican campus or at a site in the Chicago Public Schools. The program follows the state-approved School of Education programs for elementary and secondary certification. The elementary program is 24 semester credit hours and the secondary program has 23 semester credit hours. All state standards are integrated into the courses. Each semester, corps members take two courses on the same evening. They have a specific School of Education faculty advisor who works with them to assess academic performance and to provide a supportive relationship throughout their program.

In order to offer coaching and assure quality preparation, School of Education supervisors observe candidates in their classrooms monthly during the year-long clinical practice. Supervisors conduct a pre-conference prior to the visit and

complete the Assessment/Evaluation of Clinical Practice Performance instrument (School of Education Clinical Practice Handbook) during each observation. A post-conference discusses the assessment findings and identifies competencies that still must be addressed. The candidates receive additional supervision from TFA personnel who visit the classrooms and provide support to the corps members.

Throughout this phase, corps members attend two seminars each month. One seminar is conducted by a School of Education faculty member who focuses on areas that appear to be of general concern, such as classroom management. During this seminar, corps members also develop their professional portfolio following the School of Education criteria for all certification portfolios. The second seminar is conducted by TFA personnel and focuses on issues related to educational reform and the corps members' responsibilities. The university supervisors, the faculty advisor, and TFA staff meet regularly with candidates to handle any difficulties and to ensure that the corps members are successful both in their classroom teaching and their academic coursework.

### **Phase Three**

This phase of the program focuses on a comprehensive assessment of the corps members' knowledge, professional disposition, and teaching performance. The process of assessment is integrated into every aspect of the program from the initial contact to the final day of the program. Corps members complete the alternative certification program when they have demonstrated proficiency in the program performance outcomes, completed the required course work with a 3.0 GPA, and successfully completed their classroom teaching with a "3" (Exceeds) or "2" (Demonstrates) in all categories of the Assessment/Evaluation of Internship Performance instrument. In addition, they must receive a "Target" or "Acceptable" assessment of their final professional portfolio from university reviewers and successfully pass the appropriate Illinois Assessment of Professional Teaching Test. The university supervisor, the faculty advisor and TFA staff then decide whether or not to recommend each corps member to the university Entitlement Officer for initial certification.

### **Option for a Master's Degree**

After completing the certification program, corps members may continue at Dominican University to complete a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. Because the courses taken in the alternative certification program mirror those in the School of Education certification section of the MAT program, corps members need only complete the final three master-level MAT courses during the next academic year to receive their graduate degree.

Forty-one of the original corps members in 2004 chose to earn an MAT degree through this option. All of these members have matriculated in courses during the 2005-06 academic year. More than 98% of them will graduate with their MAT degree at the end of the 2005-06 academic year.

### **Lessons Learned**

**Time of courses:** During the 2004-05 academic year, courses were scheduled to begin at 4:00 or 4:30 pm to allow corps members to come directly from school to class. This schedule did not take into account the distances that corps members needed to travel in heavy city traffic. Some corps members are teaching at schools where the dismissal time is 3:00 or 3:30. Thus, corps members were late for class consistently. They were frustrated, and so was the faculty.

During the 2005-06 academic year, the course schedule begins at 5:00 or 5:30 pm. This allows corps members to arrive on time after a change of clothing and some nourishment. Corps members and faculty find the new schedule more conducive to learning.

**Time management:** Corps members experienced difficulty finding sufficient time for classroom preparation and completion of academic assignments. Because the majority of them are coming directly from undergraduate studies,



they are not used to juggling daily class preparation with academic course work. Although both TFA staff and School of Education faculty advise corps members on this issue, time management remains an ongoing concern; however, great improvement is seen by the second semester when corps members have a clearer idea of academic expectations and are more comfortable in their classroom.

The 2005-06 corps member cohort appears to be managing better than the previous cohort because both TFA staff and School of Education faculty addressed the time management issue in the very first meeting. Organization of materials and time planning are discussed during monthly seminars, and faculty members also address specific time management problems of corps members who request assistance or are seen to need it.

**Classroom Management:** Most of the corps members are new to the Chicago Public School system. Few have grown up in Chicago and attended school here. They are idealistic, intelligent, and new to teaching. Although they understand that they are working with children and young people who find learning very difficult, they still are unprepared for this fact and assume they can remedy academic deficiencies quickly. Like most first-year teachers, they are inexperienced at classroom management.

TFA staff and university supervisors work closely, in and out of the classroom, to provide assistance in the area of classroom management. They offer solutions, do follow-up in the classroom and provide feedback. The consistent help of experienced supervisors does not solve all problems but does provide support, encouragement and often better management of student activities. In addition, corps members often contact faculty to solicit lesson planning ideas or borrow resources from the School of Education Curriculum Library. Some of the 2004-05 corps members contacted their methods faculty and asked if they might meet on a few Saturday mornings to receive assistance with specific instructional problems. This practice was beneficial because it focused on certain teaching issues that were chosen by a small group of the corps members.

During the program's initial year, School of Education faculty discovered that corps members in elementary education appear to have greater need for assistance than those who teach in secondary schools. The chief problem is the variety of curriculum areas that the elementary teacher must address. Secondary teachers teach the academic subjects in which they majored at college. That is not necessarily true for elementary teachers who may teach a wide variety of subjects. To remedy this problem, School of Education faculty who teach elementary methods courses also review content to assist corps members in selecting developmentally appropriate content in specific disciplines.

### Conclusion

Dominican University and TFA are committed to a common mission—providing excellent educational opportunities for children and young people. Through a supervised teaching experience that includes a full-year of academic study and a comprehensive system of assessment, the program provides these teachers with a background and set of experiences that prepare them to offer educational leadership as teachers, administrators, and in other roles related to school reform.

### References

- Alliance for Excellent Education. (2005). *Teacher attrition: a costly loss to the nation and to the states*. Retrieved May 20, 2005 from <http://www.all4ed.org/publications/TeacherAttrition.pdf>.
- Chicago Public Schools. (2006). *CPS at a glance*. Retrieved May 20, 2005 from <http://www.cps.k12.il.us/AtAGlance.html>

- Dominican University School of Education. (2001). *Conceptual Framework*. River Forest, IL.
- Feistritz, E., & Chester, D. (2000). *Alternative teacher certification: A state-by-state analysis*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information.
- Illinois Association of School Boards. (2004). *2004 Illinois School Code: 105 ILCS 5/21-5b*. Springfield, IL: LexisNexis Press.
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2004). *Illinois Administrative Code, Section 25.65*. Springfield, IL.
- Ilmer, S., Elliott, S., Snyder, J., Nahan, N., & Columbo, M. (2005). Analysis of urban teachers' first experiences in an alternative certification program. *Action in Teacher Education*, 27(1), 3-14.
- Mickulecky, M., Shkodriani, G., & Wilner, A. (2004). Alternative certification: A growing trend to address the teacher shortage. *Education Commission of the States*. Retrieved on May 20, 2006 from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/57/12/5712.pdf>
- Simmons, S. (2005). Shortcuts to a Meaningful Career. *Action in Teacher Education*, 27(1) 36-44.
- Zirkle, C. (2005). Web-Enhanced Alternative Teacher Licensure. *The Teacher Educator*, 40(3) 208-219.



## Why Chicago Public Schools Invests in Alternative Certification for Teachers, by Nancy Slavin

### Author Bio

As a teacher, school administrator, and Central Office Director, Nancy Slavin has been successful in a variety of roles in Chicago Public Schools. In her current position as Director of Recruitment and Workforce Planning, she manages the recruitment of all CPS employees, key HR services to school principals, Substitute Services, and pipeline programs designed to bring high quality employees to Chicago Public Schools. Building relationships with University and community partners is an important function of her current position. Using a background in technology and school leadership, Nancy has focused on continuous improvement and implementing best practices to assure the success of processes and programs in her unit.

### Abstract

The Director of Recruitment and Workforce Planning for the Chicago Public Schools discusses the value of alternative certification as a tool for recruiting teachers in high-need subjects.

### Why Chicago Public Schools Invests in Alternative Certification for Teachers

In the past several years, thinking about school change has shifted. Educational leaders have realized that school change occurs not at the district level but at the level of individual schools. I would take that line of thinking one step further to say that true change occurs in the classroom and that the change agent is the teacher. As such, my role in fostering positive change in our city's more than 600 schools is to attract bright, motivated, and capable individuals to the classroom. A powerful tool for accomplishing this goal is alternative certification.

The Chicago Public Schools is a strong supporter of alternative education because it provides a pathway for outstanding individuals from a wide variety of careers to teach in our system. These individuals, who bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and practical experiences to the classroom, might not otherwise be able to make a career change to teaching.

Alternative certification programs, like those administered by the Associate College of Illinois, address more than the need for high-quality teachers — they also help us address shortages in high-need schools and subject areas. We've found that drawing from careers that are not normally associated with teaching helps us meet our need in critical shortage subjects. For example, recruitment efforts in industries like engineering and healthcare often yield high quality alternative certification teachers in math and science. Alternative certification programs also are able to effectively recruit and select individuals who are committed to raising academic achievement in our city's most challenged schools. These outstanding individuals are motivated and inspired to make a difference where they are needed most.

Our university partners prepare our alternative certification teachers for the challenges of our urban classrooms. These teacher candidates may require different approaches to coursework, instruction, and strategies than those enrolled in traditional programs. Working together, we can set a rigorous standard for preparing the next generation of teachers. Alternative certification programs can become our laboratory for testing and validating new teacher preparation models.

I expect to see alternative certification programs expand greatly in the coming years. As the baby boomer generation enters retirement, we face a significant change in the composition of our workforce. I view this development as both a loss and an opportunity. We will lose the experience and leadership of our veteran teachers. We stand to gain, however, a new generation of educators who are inspired to effect change in urban classrooms. I am eager to bring

these educators to our classrooms because I know they will help more than 400,000 Chicago children reach their extraordinary potential and achieve their personal best.

## Academic Rigor is Not Enough, *by Jan Fitzsimmons*

ACI first focused on high-need schools in 2000, when our Task Force on Teacher Education and Certification examined the key challenge of the teacher shortage: preparing greater numbers of effective teachers more quickly for critical shortage areas and providing them with support services that keep them in the profession longer. ACI's Teacher Development Initiative evolved from this discussion.

Launched in 2002 with a \$2.2 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's (USDOE) Transition to Teaching Program, the initial phase of the Teacher Development Initiative was designed to recruit college-educated adults to begin new careers in teaching in high-need schools. With our first USDOE grant, ACI developed a series of Transition to Teaching Partnerships -- alternative certification programs delivered through collaborations among ACI, member colleges and school districts. Successful programs emerged at Aurora University, Concordia University, Elmhurst College, McKendree College, Rockford College, St. Xavier University and Dominican University AS more than 200 enthusiastic, talented individuals accepting the challenge to become teachers in high-need schools will be placed by September 2006.

Five years later, one of the lessons learned is that teacher selection is critical to candidate success in high-need schools. Good intentions do not always translate into good teaching. If our candidates are going to be effective, we have to refine the manner in which we select teacher candidates and identify more specifically the factors that enable a potential candidate to become a truly great teacher who will flourish in high-need schools.

By its very nature, certification through alternative and accelerated means is intense and rigorous. Thus candidate selection has traditionally focused on career accomplishments and academic success. While we continue to strive to bring the best and the brightest candidates to our most needy students, we have discovered that academic ability, rigor and strong content knowledge are not enough. We have learned that it is not just knowledge and skills, but knowledge, skills and arguably most importantly, disposition, "moral and ethical virtue," that is the key to success in and after an alternative certification program.

What are those dispositions, how do we measure them, can they be taught and learned or are they innate or acquired through classroom experience? Though our data are highly anecdotal and qualitative, we have identified three common dispositions that are characteristic of our most successful alternative/accelerated certified teachers. Like Haberman, we identify persistence-that quality that brings a teacher back to the teaching/ learning experience to perfect the outcome-and fallibility-the teacher's ability to see mistakes and admit mistakes as a critical component of learning to be a master teacher, as two key dispositions. The third disposition we'd identify as an almost "missionary faith" in both children and the teacher's abilities to make a positive difference to all children.

The question on whether these can be taught or acquired through some other means remains to be seen. Many colleges in our network are reworking teacher preparation programs to provide early and ongoing field experiences, interaction with exemplary teachers, and on-site meaningful interactions in high poverty schools to assure that all candidates see how these dispositions complement their knowledge and skills and lead to success.

Knowledge and skills, much less academic ability and rigor, are not enough for any teacher to succeed in a challenging environment. Identifying and/or strengthening key dispositions holds tremendous promise.