

ACHIEVER



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New Flexible Policies Help Teachers Achieve Highly Qualified Rating

The U.S. Department of Education is providing three new areas of flexibility for teachers to achieve a “highly qualified” rating under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). These new policies address the particular challenges of teachers in rural districts, those who teach more than one subject, and the shortage of science teachers. Under NCLB, highly qualified teachers must have at least a bachelor’s degree, demonstrated competence in each core academic subject taught and full state certification.

The first new policy affects teachers in rural school districts that are eligible to receive funds under the Small Rural School Achievement Program. Those current teachers who are highly qualified in at least one subject will have until the end of the 2006-07 school year to demonstrate competence in the additional subjects they teach; newly hired teachers in these districts

will have three years from their hiring date.

Second, for current teachers who teach multiple subjects, particularly those in middle schools and those teaching students with special needs, states may streamline their processes for the high objective uniform state standard of evaluation (HOSSE) to allow teachers to demonstrate subject-matter knowledge through one procedure for all the subjects they teach. The HOSSE may include a teacher’s years of experience, high-quality professional development success as measured by students’ test scores, continuing education and other objective means of evaluating a teacher’s subject-matter knowledge.

Third, for science teachers, states may use their own certification standards to determine a teacher’s subject-matter competency through a “broad field” test, rather than determining it for each science subject taught.

For more information, visit www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2004/03/03152004.html.

Former computer programmer Cara Francis, who was recruited through the Transition to Teaching program, teaches math at a high school located on an Indian reservation.

Transition to Teaching

Recruitment Program at Montana State University Focuses on Placing Highly Qualified Educators in High-Need Areas

By Maggie Riechers

For Cara Francis and Ashley Lambeth, teaching is truly a calling. Both held non-teaching positions for a number of years before realizing that standing in front of a classroom was what they really wanted to do. Today, with their alternative teaching licenses, they are teaching math full-time while earning credits toward master’s degrees in education.

Ashley and Cara are enrolled in an alternative certification program run by Montana State University and funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Transition to Teaching program. The program focuses on recruiting potential educators to become secondary school teachers in the high-need areas of Montana, South Dakota and Wyoming, where schools have difficulty attracting qualified teachers because of their isolated rural settings. Engaged to be married, they work in close proximity. Both teach in South Dakota, Ashley at Mobridge Middle and High School, and Cara at Wakpala Public School on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

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Department of Education (ED). Rod Paige, Secretary.

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“We both felt this is what we’re meant to do,” says Ashley, 28, a former chemical engineer who also trained as a nuclear engineer while a naval officer on the USS Nimitz. “I’m really glad I’m doing this, glad I can put my math background to good use.”

The couple met while Ashley was still in the Navy and Cara, who received a degree in math from the University of Michigan, was working as a computer programmer for a mathematical consulting firm. They got to know each other while volunteering in the evenings at a tutoring program in Norfolk, Virginia, helping students prepare for the SATs. “We both enjoyed the tutoring a lot more than what we were getting paid to do,” says Ashley. “We decided then to switch to teaching.”

Once Ashley’s Navy hitch was up, he and Cara signed on to teach in South Korea at a language institute that did not require certification. The experience convinced them more than ever that teach-

ing was where they were meant to be. “It was an incredible experience,” says Cara. “We taught English, seven classes a day, 40 minutes each, to kindergartners through junior high schoolers.” When their visas expired they returned to the U.S. and began searching for a program that would give them credit for their education and experience.

That is when they found out about the Montana State University program. “We looked at every single alternative program,” says Cara, 30. “This one provides certification, credits towards a master’s and allows you to teach in the first year. And we found two schools close to each other.”

The Transition to Teaching grant program encourages non-teaching professionals, whether mid-career changers (including qualified paraprofessionals), former members of the military or recent college grads, to enter the field and helps them to become certified classroom teachers in high-need schools of high-need districts through quality alternative programs. “This is a genuine alternative program,” says Robert MacDonald, director of the project at Montana State. “It gives credit for background, experience and education.” The program started in January 2003 and had 28 of its students qualified and ready to teach by August.

Currently, 103 are enrolled in the program, out of a field of 300 applicants.

Once accepted, students take courses

over the Internet. “We tell them, ‘here’s the content you need to teach this subject.’ Some need content courses, some have degrees in the content,” says MacDonald. Thus, Ashley and Cara qualified to teach math because both had a solid background based on their education and experience. The students are required to take three education courses to be eligible for employment. Three more courses complete the program; two more complete requirements for a master’s degree.

The new teachers are not sent out to fend for themselves alone. An extensive mentoring program has been set up, pairing senior and retired teachers with the novice teachers.

In the beginning, Cara and Ashley found their new careers in their new surroundings difficult. Cara teaches in a Title I school that goes from pre-kindergarten through high school. The high school has been identified as “needing improvement.” Cara is already on the school improvement committee, although this is her first year of teaching.

“I love the students, all of them,” she says. “I can tell I’m really making a difference by being happy about being there everyday.”

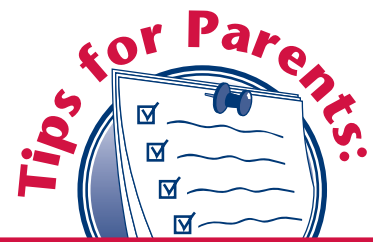
For more information about the Transition to Teaching grant program, visit www.ed.gov/programs/transitionteach. A competition for new grant awards will be held this summer. To learn more about the program at Montana State University, visit www.montana.edu/nppt or call 406-994-5662.



Cara instructs her eighth-grade pre-Algebra class.

“No area of our lives is untouched by the march of science. ... We must expand educational opportunities to strengthen our economic future. It is my hope that our nation will respond with even more enthusiasm than it did following the 1957 launch of Sputnik. Our response then prepared our nation to put a man on the moon. In many ways, it shaped the world we live in today.”

Remarks by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige at the U.S. Department of Education’s first summit on science in Washington, D.C., March 16, 2004.



Using literature is one of the ways that parents and other adults can teach children about strong character and good citizenship. In fact, people in stories, poems and plays can influence children almost as much as the real people who read with them. In talking with children about the books they read, use questions such as the following to help them think about the values of stories:

Motivation

- How did the people in the story act?
- Did they have good or bad motives?
- Who were the heroes? Why were they heroes?
- Were there villains? Why were they villains?

Judgment

- Did the people make good decisions? Why or why not?

Action

- How did the people carry out their decisions? What kinds of steps did they take?
- Were there obstacles? How did they respond to the obstacles?

Sensitivity

- Did the people think about the welfare of others?
- Did the story have a good or bad ending? For whom was it good? For whom was it bad?
- How could the story have turned out better for everyone?

Source: Adapted from *Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen*, U.S. Department of Education, 2003.

Close-Up:



No Child Left Behind State Guidance

To further help states implement the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the U.S. Department of Education has added a new page to its Web site that provides links to policy information, including a number of policy letters to states and others on various issues that range from public school choice to school lunch programs. Designed to help state education agencies, districts, federal program directors and others implement the two-year-old law, any member of the public can visit the site at www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/stateletters/index.html.

Included are policy letters about:

- Decisions on state accountability plans,
- Questions about determining adequate yearly progress,
- Local and state flexibility issues,
- Plans for improving teacher quality, and
- Identification of schools for school improvement.

In addition to the policy letters, the site includes links to the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, regulations, updated guidance, grant competitions and more.

No Child Left Behind represents the most sweeping overhaul of K-12 education since passage of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*. It provides more options for parents through public school choice and supplemental educational services; requires more rigorous accountability measures; promotes educational practices based on scientific research; and gives states more flexibility in using federal funds to meet local needs.

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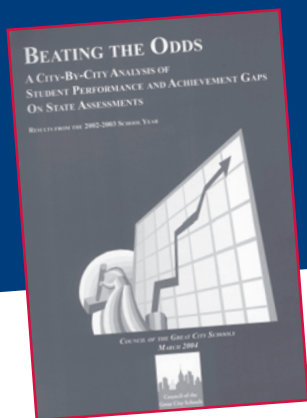
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“When it comes to the education of our children ... failure is not an option.”

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



BEATING THE ODDS! Report Reveals Substantial Progress in Urban Schools

In the first year of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, students in urban schools made significant gains in reading and math, according to a report released last month by the Council of the Great City Schools. The report *Beating the Odds* shows improvement of public school students from 61 urban school districts in 37 states in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math assessments.

The annual study compares 2003 state test scores with those in 2002—the first year of *No Child Left Behind*, which requires school districts to regularly assess student achievement in reading and math and report the percentage of students who score at “proficient” or higher levels.

Data reveal that 47.8 percent of urban school students in the study scored at or above the proficient level in fourth-grade reading in 2003, a 4.9 percent increase from 42.9 percent in 2002. In fourth-grade math, the percentage of students jumped to 51 percent in 2003 from 44.2 percent in 2002, a 6.8 percent gain in those scoring at or above the proficient level.

Students improved in eighth-grade reading and math but at much lower rates. In 2003, 37.9 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above proficiency in reading compared with 36.8 percent in 2002, a rise of 1.1 percent. In math, 39.4 percent reached those levels, a 3-percent gain from 36.4 percent.

“Clearly, this report demonstrates that if you challenge students, they will rise to the occasion,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige. The report’s data, he pointed out, are consistent with recent findings by the National Assessment of Educational Progress’ Trial Urban District Assessment in Reading and Math 2002-03.

The Council of the Great City Schools is a national coalition representing more than 60 of the largest urban public school systems in the United States. An online copy of the report is available at www.cgcs.org/reports/beat_the_oddsIV.html.

Increases in Percentages of 4th and 8th Grade Urban Students Scoring at or Above Proficiency in Reading and Math

| | 2002 | 2003 | Change |
|-------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| 4th Grade Reading | 42.9% | 47.8% | +4.9 |
| 4th Grade Math | 44.2 | 51.0 | +6.8 |
| 8th Grade Reading | 36.8 | 37.9 | +1.1 |
| 8th Grade Math | 36.4 | 39.4 | +3.0 |

*Percentages based on differing state proficiency levels, enrollment counts and districts using identical tests for both years.