

Testimony of Emily Feistritzer
President, National Center for Alternative Certification and the National Center for
Education Information

**Committee on Education and Labor
U. S. House of Representatives**

Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness

*“Preparing Teachers for the Classroom:
The Role of the Higher Education Act and No Child Left Behind”*

MAY 17, 2007

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today on the critical topic of preparing teachers for the classroom. My name is Emily Feistritzer and I am the president of the National Center for Alternative Certification which was created in 2003 with a discretionary grant awarded to the National Center for Education Information to serve as a comprehensive clearinghouse for information about alternative routes to teacher certification.

The Center’s web site, www.teach-now.org, is used by tens of thousands of individuals *per day*, including policy makers and individuals seeking to become teachers.

In addition to collecting, analyzing and disseminating information about teacher preparation and certification since 1979, the National Center for Education Information has been documenting what is going on in the development of alternatives to college-based undergraduate teacher education program routes to certification since 1983 and publishing descriptions of alternative routes in an annual publication, *ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION: A State-by-State Analysis*. I have made the 2007 edition of this 346-page document available to you, as well as *Alternate Routes to Teaching*, a book I co-authored with Charlene K. Haar which was published by Pearson Education, Inc. in April of this year.

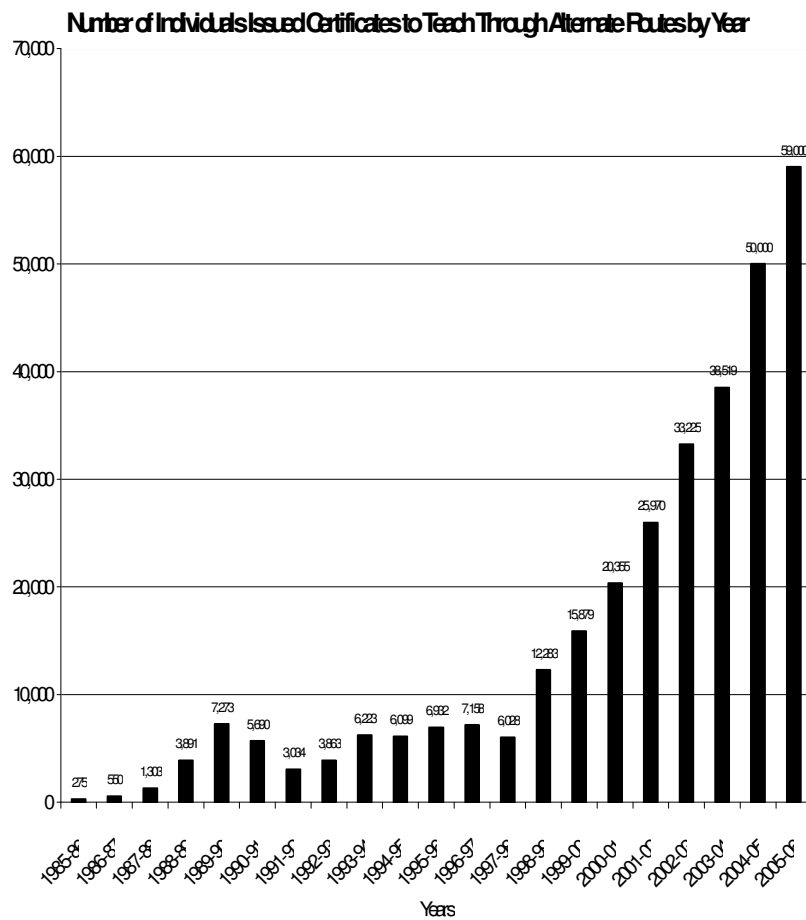
I would like to discuss with you data and information about these alternative routes to teaching and their impact on the preparation of all teachers going forward.

Alternate routes to teacher certification are having a profound impact on the who, what, when, where and how of K-12 teaching. What began in the early 1980s as a way to ward off projected shortages of teachers and replace emergency certification has evolved into a sophisticated model for recruiting, training and certifying people who already have at least a bachelor’s degree and want to become teachers.

When the National Center for Education Information (NCEI) first began in 1983 asking state certification officials the question, “What is your state’s status regarding alternatives to the traditional college teacher education program route for certifying teachers?” eight states said they were implementing some type of alternative route to teacher certification.

Now, in 2007, all 50 states and the District of Columbia report they have at least some type of alternate route to teacher certification. All toll, 130 alternate routes to teacher certification now exist in these 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition, these states report that approximately 485 alternate routes programs are implementing the alternative routes to teacher certification they established.

Based on data submitted by the states, NCEI estimates that approximately 59,000 individuals were issued teaching certificates through alternative routes in 2005-06, up from approximately 50,000 in 2004-05 and 39,000 in 2003-04. As shown in the figure below, the numbers of teachers obtaining certification through alternative routes have increased substantially since the late 1990s. Nationally, approximately one-third of new teachers being hired are coming through alternative routes to teacher certification.



Furthermore, an analysis of the NCLB Title II reports the states re-submitted to the U.S. Department of Education last summer after none of the original reports showed that any state had met the highly qualified teacher requirement, revealed that 38 states specifically stated they intend to utilize alternate routes to ensure that all of their teachers meet the highly qualified teacher requirements. This illustrates, further, the market-driven, solution-oriented role these effective programs are having in meeting the demand for qualified teachers.

A hallmark of alternative routes is that they are market-driven. Alternate routes to teaching are created for the explicit purpose of filling a demand for teachers in specific subject areas in specific schools in specific geographic regions. They are designed for individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree – many of whom have experience in other careers – who want to teach the subjects in areas where there is a demand for teachers.

Why Alternate Routes?

Since the mid 1960s, reforming teacher education and certification was the focus of solving teacher quantity *and* quality issues. Having enough qualified teachers has been at the root of most reform efforts concerning teachers.

For decades, teacher education and certification have been identified as both the cause and solution of many of the problems regarding teachers. The 1,300 or so Colleges of Education have taken the brunt of criticism for not adequately preparing qualified teachers. Additionally, state agencies responsible for licensing (certifying) teachers have been targets for an array of attacks - from the complicated certification processes to weak assessments that fail to measure competencies for teaching.

In 1983, the state of New Jersey grabbed national headlines with its out-of-the-box solution. New Jersey created an alternative route to teacher certification specifically to attract a new market for teaching - liberal arts graduates – and transition them into elementary and secondary teaching without going through a traditional college teacher education program.

This solution to teacher quantity and quality began the alternative teacher certification movement and the nation took notice. Significant changes in alternative routes to teacher certification have occurred since the mid-1990s. In addition to the development of alternative routes at the state level, an evolving consensus of essential characteristics shows that most alternate routes:

- are specifically designed to recruit, prepare and license individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree – and often other careers.
- require rigorous screening processes, such as passing tests, interviews, and demonstrated mastery of subject matter content.
- provide on-the-job training.
- include coursework or equivalent experiences in professional education studies before and while teaching.
- involve work with mentor teachers and/or other support personnel.
- set high performance standards for completion of the programs.

What do we know about preparing teachers through alternate routes?

1. There is wide variation in preparation programs – from about a third that require 31 or more college credit hours of education courses to a third that require none for which a candidate pays college tuition.
2. About half of alternate route programs now are being administered by higher education institutions, a fourth by school districts and a fourth by collaborations, states, or private entities.
3. Nearly all alternate route programs are field-based teacher preparation programs that include mentoring and learning experiences directly related to classroom teaching.
4. More than half of alternate route teachers came into the profession with experience from a professional career outside of education.
5. Only one-fourth a teachers who have entered teaching through alternate routes say they would have become a teacher if the program had not been available.

What does the research say about the effectiveness of various teacher preparation routes?

Most of the research conducted concerning alternative routes to teacher certification shows that alternate routes do what they are designed to do: bring people into teaching who would not otherwise have become teachers. The research also indicates that the route one goes through does not seem to matter all that much as far as effective teaching goes. Experience and effective mentoring seem to be the most important variables for becoming a competent teacher.

A growing body of research shows that after a couple of years' experience, differences in teacher performance measures and/or student achievement disappear regardless of what kind of route a teacher comes into teaching through.

A scientifically designed study still underway shows similar results. *How Changes in Entry Requirements Alter the Teacher Workforce and Affect Student Achievement* reported findings from this study being conducted by Donald Boyd, Pamela Grossman, Hamilton Lankford, Susanna Loeb, and James Wyckoff. The researchers focused their study on pathways into teaching in New York City and the “effects of such programs on the teacher workforce and on student achievement” (1). The study’s basic findings indicate that, after two years, the small differences among the groups at the beginning of teaching disappear (Boyd, *et al*, 2005).

In 2005, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) released *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education* (2005).

The compendium’s findings regarding alternate routes included:

- The studies provided some evidence that alternatively certified teachers may be “more willing than traditionally certified teachers to teach in low-SES urban schools, but these data may reflect more where teachers can get jobs than actual teacher preferences” (663).

- “there were no differences between alternatively and traditionally certified teachers in terms of teacher efficacy or in teaching competence as measured by classroom observations” (663).
- The research showed “very little difference between alternatively and traditionally certified teachers” (670).
- “The studies of the alternative certification programs in Houston, Dallas, and Milwaukee school districts indicate inconclusive results” (674). Anticipated retention was higher in Milwaukee in alternative programs. In Houston there were no significant differences between traditionally certified and alternatively certified teachers’ “perception of the problems they faced in the classroom,” at the end of the first academic year (674).
- The studies that “compared the impact of multiple teacher education programs on various dimensions of teacher quality have suggested that alternatively certified teachers may in some circumstances have higher expectations for the learning of students of color living in poverty than teachers who have been traditionally certified” (689).

More targeted research needs to be done to find out what it is that makes for effective teachers. The research conducted thus far seems to indicate that preparation route does not matter.

I would like to conclude my statement with some statistics from the U.S. Department of Education that shed light on who actually is being prepared to teach and who actually become teachers, as well as the structure of K-12 education which illustrates the realities of teacher demand.

A. Are Bachelor Degree Recipients a Reliable Market for Teachers?

Getting clarity about college graduates who are qualified to teach upon receiving their bachelor’s degree and who go into teaching, as well as those who do not, is not easy. The U.S. Department of Education’s *Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Studies* are often cited for these data which are based on samples, so NCES does not report these findings in numbers of individuals, but rather in percentages.

The latest published *Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Studies* show that 12.2 percent of baccalaureate degree recipients in 1999-2000 had taught as regular teachers “in a K-12 school at some point between receiving the 1999-2000 bachelor’s degree and the 2001 interview” (USDoe, 2000/01, 5).

Given that NCES data show that 1,237,875 bachelor’s degrees were awarded by degree-granting institutions in 1999-2000, one could estimate that 151,000 new graduates were teaching *at some point* within a year of receiving their baccalaureate degree.

The data indicate that, of those 151,000 who received a bachelor’s degree in 1999-2000 and were teaching in 2001, 21 percent were neither certified nor had prepared to teach as part of

their undergraduate program. It is conceivable that some of these individuals were becoming certified to teach through alternate route programs.

NCES data also show that more than one-third (35 percent) of Education Bachelor's Degree recipients in 1999-2000 were not teaching the following year. Furthermore, the data indicate that one-fourth (25 percent) of education bachelors' degree recipients in 1999-2000 had not even prepared to teach and/or were not certified to teach.

Fewer than half (47.5 percent) of graduates with education degrees in 1992-93 were teaching in 1994.

Furthermore, of the B.A. recipients who *were* certified and/or had prepared to teach as part of their undergraduate program, 23 percent were not teaching within a year of graduating.

A follow-up survey in 1997 of 1992-93 baccalaureate degree recipients indicated that 13 percent of those graduates had taught by 1997. However, the B&B follow-up report also stated that "8 percent expected to teach full-time in three years and 7 percent expected to teach in the longer term. Thus, it appears that many graduates who teach soon after college do not expect to spend much time teaching, let alone make it a career" (USDoe, 2000-152, x).

These statistics lead one to question the efficiency of the model for teacher production. The problem is further compounded by NCES data that show that about one-third of these new teachers leave within the first three years of teaching, and about half of them have left teaching after five years.

Alternative routes to teacher certification programs, on the other hand, accept only individuals who not only already have a bachelor's degree, but come into a program because *they want to teach*. In most alternate route programs, the participants fill particular existing teacher vacancies. Alternative routes exist to recruit, train and certify baccalaureate degree holders to meet the demand for specific teachers to teach specific subjects at specific grade levels in specific schools.

The retention rate for alternate route teachers in California and other large teacher-production states is 85-90 percent after five years.

B. School District Size and Student Enrollment.

The sizes of school districts and where students are enrolled vary greatly and bear directly on teacher demand.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data indicate there were 14,383 regular public school districts in 2003-04. *Fewer than 2 percent of these school districts enrolled one-third of all the students enrolled in the United States.* These are the 256 school districts that enroll 25,000 or more students. When the next category of school districts by size is added – those that enroll between 10,000 and 24,999 – 587 additional school districts enter the count, taking the number of school districts that enroll 10,000 or more students to 843; these school

districts represent just 6 percent of all school districts that enroll more than half (52.1 percent) of all the public elementary and secondary students.

At the other end of the spectrum, more than one-fifth (2,994) of all school districts enroll between 1 and 299 students each and account for less than 1 percent of all students enrolled. *Nearly half of all school districts (6,703 or 46.6 percent) enroll fewer than 1,000 students each, and collectively account for only 5.5 percent of total public elementary and secondary school enrollment across the nation.*

Since these local school districts are responsible for hiring and placing teachers, it is obvious that the needs and demands for teachers in a metropolitan school district with a diverse population that includes several hundred schools, each of which likely enrolls anywhere from fewer than 100 students to more than 3,000 are different from a school district that has a handful of small schools in a rural predominantly white community.

Alternate routes, again, by their very nature, address such disparities. Alternate routes are created to meet specific needs for specific teachers in specific areas.

C. Public School Size and Student Enrollment

NCES data indicate that *more than one in 10 (11.02 percent) of all schools and nearly 17 percent of secondary schools enroll fewer than 100 students each.*

Furthermore, *more than one-third (35.89 percent) of public secondary schools enroll fewer than 300 students each.* These statistics are crucial in any discussion about out-of-field teaching or having a teacher with a major or minor teaching every class in every school in the country. In these small schools, generally there is no more than one physics class, one chemistry class and one biology class per day. The chances that a teacher with a major or minor in each of these sciences will be teaching each of those three classes per day in each of these schools are slim to none.

Many alternative routes to teacher certification meet the needs for highly qualified teachers in these and other high demand subjects, such as special education, in small schools by targeting programs that ensure that teachers have – or obtain – content and pedagogical mastery in the subjects they are teaching. Alternate routes that utilize technology and distance learning opportunities are likely to appeal to the needs of small schools.

D. Teacher Vacancies (Demand)

The 2003-04 SASS data (2006-313) also show that the demand for teachers, as indicated by vacancies in schools and subjects, is greatest:

In schools

- at the secondary level,
- in central cities and urban fringe/large towns,

- that enroll 750 or more students;

In subjects of

- Special education,
- English/language arts,
- Mathematics,
- Sciences, and
- Foreign languages.

All of these statistics are important in understanding the context in which teachers are recruited, prepared and hired.

Alternate route programs, by their very nature, are established to meet specific needs for specific teachers in specific subject areas in specific schools.

The targeted nature of alternate routes is the reason they are proliferating at a rapid rate, why thousands of people who would not otherwise have done so are choosing to become teachers.

Recommendations

I urge the Congress in its reauthorization of Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and of Title II of No child Left Behind (NCLB) to make changes that reflect the significant and growing role alternate routes have in bringing high quality individuals into the teaching profession who – without them – would not otherwise become teachers. As I have documented earlier in this statement, these competent teachers make a commitment to teach in classrooms where teachers are most needed. They now constitute one-third of all new teachers being hired.

The Federal government needs to target the nation’s resources so that the most qualified individuals who intend to teach can do so in high-quality efficient programs that meet the need for specific teachers in specific subjects in specific schools across this nation. Both HEA and NCLB are the very vehicles to ensure that programs of preparation are created and/or enhanced to attract highly qualified, experienced adults who know their subject matter and are eager to use their life experiences and practical knowledge to – as they report themselves – “help young people learn and develop.”

Specific recommendations in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and No Child Left Behind are:

1. Shift the focus in the preparation of teachers from institutions of higher education exclusively to a wide variety of providers of recruitment and preparation programs that are targeted to actually producing effective teachers in the classrooms where they are needed.

2. Encourage school districts and state departments to collect and disseminate data about their teachers, including their preparation to teach and their effectiveness.
3. Encourage research that could be utilized by the public as well as researchers and policymakers that would yield answers to such critical questions as, “What makes for truly effective teachers and how do they come by those qualities?”
4. Funding should be more market-driven and flow to programs that are proving their effectiveness in recruiting and preparing competent teachers where they are needed.
5. One of the chief contributions of alternate routes to teaching has been infusing the teacher workforce with experienced adults that have earned valuable life skill equity. The federal government should encourage initiatives that help transition more of these people into teaching, particularly in high schools, where there is a need for their applied knowledge. With their real world experience base and maturity, alternate route teachers can do much to accelerate the development of skills high school students need to excel in college and the workforce.
6. The federal government should create incentives for states and school districts to expand alternate routes to solve particular shortfalls in highly qualified areas. Alternate routes have been a wonderful incubator for innovation in addressing niche teaching shortages with highly qualified teachers. A market driven environment needs to be encouraged not stifled by attempts to standardize or develop regulations constricting experimentation with alternate routes.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.