

NEW DIRECTIONS IN TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS

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No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 has forced states to hire “highly qualified” teachers and many states had added additional requirements for certification. In addition, some states are incorporating specific license renewal requirement. The need for teachers has created a proliferation of alternative certification programs in the past two decades but research raises concern about alternative certification programs.

The National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences (NATEFCS) lead a collaborative effort in the development of the National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences (NSTFCS). The standards provide a model for new Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teachers (Fox, Stewart & Erickson, 2007). The standards identify knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of an initial teacher. However, the implementation of these standards will be left to states and many states have revised teacher preparation requirements in response to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This article will highlight some recent changes in teacher preparation programs, the surge of alternative certification programs, and the impact of these changes on teacher preparation.

Teacher certification is the way in which individual states evaluate the credentials of individuals to ensure they meet the professional standards as identified by the state education agency. Some states have developed their own standards for approval of teacher preparation programs; however, many states look to standards developed by other organizations such as the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) or the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) to develop standards for teacher programs.

Most of us acknowledge that quality teaching is one of the cornerstones of a solid educational experience and many of us can identify teachers that had positive influence on our lives. Unfortunately, one ineffective teacher may jeopardize the entire educational process for a young child (Wright, Horn & Sanders, 1997). Darling-Hammond (1999) identified that teacher quality accounts for 67 to 87 percents of total variance in student achievement. Teacher quality has been an on-going issue for parents, educators, policy makers, and the American public. Fifty-five percent of Americans identified that the quality of teachers as the greatest influence on student learning (NEA, 1999).

Congress addressed the issue of teacher preparation in the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Section 207n of the Higher Education Act requires colleges and state governments to report the passing rate on licensure examinations and the number of teachers holding emergency or alternative certificates. Additional scrutiny regarding teacher quality was adopted on the 2001 NCLB Act that called for schools to hire “highly qualified” teachers. The NCLB Act defines highly qualified teacher as

One who has full state certification as a teacher (including certification through alternative routes); or passed state teacher licensing exam and holds a license in that state; and has not received a certification/licensure waiver on an emergency, temporary or provisional basis. (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/tb-qual-teachers.pdf>)

Requiring teacher preparation programs to be held accountable for the quality of their graduates is not necessarily a bad idea nor is the hiring of certified teachers but the reliance on typically one or two test; most often the Pre-Professional Skills tests (PRAXIS I) and PRAXIS II tests forces high stakes testing. Teacher preparation programs may lose funding if they have unacceptable passing rates on licensure examinations. Students must pass the test often time to secure student teaching placement or prior to apply for a teacher license. The fairness of the tests comes into question as teachers from historically black colleges and universities score lower on these tests (Wakefield, 2003).

The Center on Education Policy (2005), reported that 88% of school districts will have met the NCLB definition of “highly qualified” teachers of core academic subject by the new of the 2005-06 school year. Subject areas of concern include special education teachers, high school math and science teachers and teacher in rural area who teach multiple subjects. In spite of this achievement, most district expressed doubts that this compliance will improve the quality of teaching and many states have include additional requirements.

Changes in Teacher Preparation Programs

Many teacher preparation programs have redesigned their traditional programs by moving to a system based on meeting benchmarks and standards rather than simply requiring students to complete courses. The changes resulted from state departments of education /public instruction requiring students to meet specific standards of performance on standardized test prior to obtaining a teaching license. The pre-license requirements (see Table 1) vary from state to state but the vast majority of the states require the passing of PRAXIS I, and/or PRAXIS II or a specific state test prior to obtaining a teaching license.

The PRAXIS I tests measure basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics and is available in two formats, paper-based or computer-based. The test consists of four separately timed sections: reading (multiple-choice questions), mathematics (multiple-choice questions), writing (multiple-choice questions), and writing (essay questions). Individual scores are reported for reading, mathematics, and writing and test takers receive a score regardless of the number of questions answered and no penalty is incurred for answering a question incorrectly. Twenty-nine states currently use the Praxis I as part of the pre-license requirements. States determine the passing scores and these scores vary from state to state. Passing reading scores range from a high of 178 to 170 on the paper-based format; math scores range from 176 to 169 on the paper-based test and the writing scores range from 178-170 on the paper based test.

Table 1.

States' Pre-license Requirements

State	Praxis I	Praxis II (Subject)	Praxis II (other)	State Test(s)
Alabama		x		
Alaska	x	x*		
Arizona				x
Arkansas	x	x		
California				x
Colorado		x**		x
Connecticut	x	x		
Delaware	x		x	
Florida				x
Georgia	x			
Hawaii	x	x	x	

Idaho		X		
Illinois		X		X
Indiana	X	X		
Iowa	approved program***			
Kansas		X	X	
Kentucky	X	X	X	
Louisiana	X	X		
Maine	X	X	X	
Maryland	X	X	X	
Massachusetts				X
Michigan				X
Minnesota	X	X	X	
Mississippi	X	X	X	
Missouri		X	X	
Montana	approved program			
Nebraska	X			
Nevada	X	X	X	
New Hampshire	X			
New Mexico				X
New Jersey		X		
New York		X**		X
North Carolina	X	X		
North Dakota	X	X		
Ohio	X	X**	X	
Oklahoma	X			
Oregon	X	X		
Pennsylvania	X	X		
Rhode Island		X	X	
South Carolina	X	X		
South Dakota		X		
Tennessee	X	X		
Texas			X	X
Utah		X	X	
Vermont	X			
Virginia	X	X		
Washington		X		
West Virginia	X	X		
Wisconsin	X	X		
Wyoming			X	

* if not from approved program **depend on license sought

***beginning in 2006-07 elementary teacher required to take tests

Data for the table was generated by visiting each state's education department in the summer of 2006 and revisited spring of 2007

The *PRAXIS II: Subject Assessment Tests* measure knowledge of specific subjects that K-12 educators will teach, as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills and knowledge. Tests included are *Subject Assessment Tests*, *Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT)* tests and *Teaching Foundation Tests*. The *Subject Assessment Tests* measure general and subject-specific teaching skills and knowledge and include both multiple-choice and constructed response test items. The *Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT)* tests measure general pedagogical knowledge at four grade levels, early childhood, K-6, 5-9, and 7-12. The tests use a

case study approach and feature constructed-response and multiple-choice items. The *Teaching Foundations Tests* measure pedagogy in five areas: multi-subject (elementary), English, language arts, mathematics, science and social science and feature constructed-response and multiple-choice items. As with the PRAXIS I tests, states determine the passing score rates on the PRAXIS II tests. For example, the family and consumer subject assessment paper-based test is used by 34 states and passing scores range from 440 to 630.

Alternative Certification Programs

Traditionally, future teachers completed teacher preparation programs at an institution of higher education but the demand for teachers and the need to “fast track” individuals through the process has forced some states to provide legislation that allows different ways to become a teacher. Language in the California legislation S.B. 57 includes “by successfully completing tests and classroom observations in lieu of traditional teacher preparation coursework and student teaching” Alternative certification programs have significantly increased over the past two decades from the eight states offering programs in 1983 to 43 states offering alternative certification programs for 200,000 students in 2003 (Humphrey, 2007).

Baines (2006) identified two of the most common types of alternative certification routes; a) those delivered by agencies not affiliated with an institution of higher education or b) a scaled-down version offered over the internet by an institution of higher education or a for-profit corporation. Those programs not affiliated with a higher education institution are sometimes called NUCPs –non-university certification programs. Baines (2006) identified a great variation in requirements for programs with some programs with some programs have rigorous admissions requirements while others have more lenient requirements. In California approximately one in five new teachers enter the professions through an alternative route, in Texas and New Jersey one in four (Baines, 2006).

Changes in License Renewal Requirements

Table 2 identifies what beginning teachers must do to renew their initial teaching license. Most often a new teacher is granted a 5-year license and then must meet requirements to renew this license, typically an additional 5 years, but states do vary on the length of renewal time. Historically, the majority of states have required teachers to obtain additional college credits, continuing education credits/ clock hours or a combination to renew a license. More states are identifying specific course requirements or specific programs as part of the renewal process. Three states offer National Board Certification as an option for renewal and five states have incorporated professional developments plans as part of the renewal process.

Table 2
State Requirements for License Renewal

State	Requirements
Alabama	combination of college credits, CEUs, teaching or National Board Certification.
Alaska	6 credits (3 upper division /graduate) may include CEUs
Arizona	180 clock hours, 12 credits or combination
Arkansas	teach (2 years) 6 credits, 60 clock hours
California	teach (1 semester), 150 clock hours, professional plan
Colorado	6 credits or 90 clock hours & induction program
Connecticut	90 hours - strict guidelines
Delaware	90 clock hours
Florida	6 credits or 60 in-service points

Georgia	6 credits or 10 Georgia Professional Learning Units or 10 CEUs
Hawaii	Professional Development Plan
Idaho	pass required test and 6 credits
Illinois	8 credits
Indiana	6 credits, Professional Development Plan
Iowa	6 credits & child abuse training
Kansas	8 credits
Kentucky	15 graduate hours
Louisiana	150 CLU
Maine	6 credits and approved plan
Maryland	6 credits
Massachusetts	150 Professional development points
Michigan	6 credits
Minnesota	125 clock hours
Mississippi	10 CEU or 5 CEU and 3 credits or 6 credits
Missouri	varies by license. min. 39 hours
Montana	3 credits and 15 Office of Public Instruction hours.
Nebraska	6 credits
Nevada	credits required
New Hampshire	75 CEUs
New Mexico	superintendent's recommendation
New Jersey	employed & enrolled in state approved training program
New York	175 clock hours
North Carolina	10 credits or 15 units of renewal credit
North Dakota	teaching experience plus 4 credits
Ohio	6 credits
Oklahoma	Professional Development Points
Oregon	125 PDU & professional plan
Pennsylvania	induction program, 24 hours
Rhode Island	I-plans - individual professional plan
South Carolina	120 renewal credits
South Dakota	6 credits or 90 CEU
Tennessee	90 renewal points
Texas	150 clock hours
Utah	EYE - Early Years Program, Praxis II, portfolio, evaluations
Vermont	combination of college credits CEUs, teaching or National Board Certification
Virginia	10 options -credits, experience, write book, etc.
Washington	150 clock hours
West Virginia	combination of college credits, CEUs, teaching or National Board Certification
Wisconsin	6 credits/ as of 2004 Professional Development Plans
Wyoming	recertification workshops

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National Board Certification

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization that began in 1987. The goal of the organizations is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for teaching. This is a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet standards in five core principles: a) commitment to student learning, b) knowledge of subjects they teach and how to

teach subjects to students, c) responsibility for managing and monitoring student learning, d) think systematically about experiences and learn from experiences, and e) members of learning community. Cost include a \$65.00 nonrefundable processing fee and a \$500.00 non refundable initial fee that is applied to the \$2500 assessment fee.

Professional Development Plans

Some states such as Hawaii, Indiana and Wisconsin now require a professional development plan as a means to renew licenses. These plans typically involve the initial teacher outlining a professional plan in conjunction with school and individual goals and objectives. The professional development plans typically include a time line, evaluative measures, and personal reflection. Various professional critique and approve the plans and checkout as the plan is completed. Professional development plan toolkits and information can be found at http://www.doe.state.in.us/dps/renewal/growth/docs/teacher_renewal.pdfnt, <http://dpi.state.wi.us/tepd/pdp.html>, and <http://www.htsb.org/licensing/relicense/elements.html>.

Impact of Changes on Teacher Preparation Programs

Now that NCLB forces school districts to meet benchmarks, states must support teacher programs that help prepare future teachers for the various standardized testing requirements. Hopefully, teacher preparation programs will not focus on “teaching to the test(s)” but will provide a broad curriculum. Supervision of alternative certification programs must be addressed by states as Wenglinsky (2000) found that students from alternative certification programs were significantly outperformed by students from traditional preparation programs, and Darling-Hammond (2005) found that teachers graduating from alternative certification programs had negative effects on student achievement.

States have invested significant resources into the development of student academic standards and for these standards to be effective, teacher preparation and certification must be aligned with them (Murphy, 2006). Licensure and certification requirements must reflect individual state standards for states to feel confident that teachers in their state can help students be successful and meet benchmarks. State may be challenged to persuade colleges and universities to align teacher preparation programs with state standards for these institutions traditionally have a history of academic freedom and curricular autonomy.

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