



AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

**TRANSITION TO TEACHING  
GRANT PROGRAM:  
2002 COHORT CASE STUDIES**

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## Transition to Teaching Case Study Summary and Emerging Themes

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### Overview of the Transition to Teaching Program and the Current Evaluation

The Transition to Teaching (TTT) program is described in Part C, Innovations for Teacher Quality, Subpart 1, Chapter B of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act. Its purposes are “(a) to recruit and retain highly qualified mid-career professionals (including highly qualified paraprofessionals) and recent graduates of an institution of higher education (IHE), as teachers in high need schools, including recruiting teachers through alternative routes to certification; and (b) to encourage the development and expansion of alternative routes to certification under state-approved programs that enable individuals to be eligible for teacher certification within a reduced period of time, relying on the experience, expertise, and academic qualifications of an individual, or other factors in lieu of traditional course work in the field of education.” TTT participants are required to teach in high need schools in high need school districts for at least 3 years.

There have been three cohorts of TTT grantees: 2001<sup>\*</sup>, 2002, and 2004. Grantees represent the diverse institutional entities involved in teacher preparation, including state certification authorities, school districts, and IHEs. For some grantees, there are collaborating entities providing resources, training, or other support to participants. Participants in TTT projects are seeking the same certification as students in traditional teacher preparation programs. Both traditional and alternative route programs include components of recruitment, selection, training, placement, and retention. Because of program flexibility, TTT projects address these common preparation components in different ways. As a result of this variation, there is much to be learned about what works in state-approved alternative routes to certification (also called alternate routes or alt cert programs) by studying TTT grantees.

A 3-year evaluation based on the activities and participants in the fiscal year (FY) 2002 grantees was begun in fall 2003. The evaluation focuses on three overarching questions:

1. What are the features (recruitment, selection, training, placement, and support) of TTT grantee programs that lead to increasing the pool of qualified teachers and placing them in high need schools?
2. What are the characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, education level, and work backgrounds) of participants in TTT grantee programs, and how do these characteristics relate to someone’s participation in these programs and success in becoming fully qualified?
3. How does the relationship between the program features and the characteristics of participants influence their retention (retention goal of 3 years is specified in the program application guidelines) in high need schools?

The evaluation will provide data to address the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) objectives:

- Percentage of all participants who become highly qualified teachers and teach in high need schools in high need Local Education Agencies (LEAs) will increase.

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<sup>\*</sup> The 2001 grants were funded prior to NCLB and subject to some different requirements than the 2002 and 2004 grants, though the overall purpose of the grants is the same.

- Percentage of all participants who become highly qualified math or science teachers will increase.
- Percentage of new, highly qualified teachers who teach in high need schools in high need LEAs for at least 3 years will increase.
- Percentage of teachers receiving full certification/licensure will increase.

To meet the analysis and reporting goals of the TTT program and the evaluation, two survey instruments are being developed and administered to gather data on program features and participant characteristics: (1) an annual performance report that collects project-level information and (2) a participant survey that gathers self-reported project experience from prospective teachers who are working toward full teacher certification in high need subject areas. In addition, visits to eight distinctive sites were conducted during the fall and winter of 2004–05 to obtain a micro-level view of the development and implementation of individual projects. The site visits provided insights into the design and day-to-day implementation of the components of TTT projects.

This report delivers an overview of the site visit component of the TTT evaluation. Specifically, it does the following:

- Describes the process that was used to select the eight sites and provides a snapshot of each;
- Discusses major themes that emerged from the data and relates them to the literature on alternative certification programs; and
- Presents case studies of the sites that highlight the distinctive approaches used across the United States.

## **Site Visits**

*Selection process.* Eight TTT projects were selected for review as part of the TTT program evaluation. Using information available in the TTT project database, the evaluation staff developed selection criteria and filtering procedures for projects that varied according to the type of sponsoring institutions, program reach, types of participants, size, and geographic location. The goal in this selection process was to identify a purposive sample of projects successfully implementing activities and meeting the program objectives and that would be generally representative of the variety that existed among the 94 FY 2002 grantees.

*Data collection.* During site visits, data were collected through a variety of methods that included observations of project activities and classrooms, interviews with personnel and participants, focus group discussions with participants, and document reviews. A series of five interview and focus group protocols was created to guide discussions with TTT project directors and/or coordinators, partners, participants, school-level administrators and/or mentors, and district-level administrators. On occasion, researchers were granted opportunities to interview additional individuals or groups of individuals who were also considered important TTT stakeholders (e.g., advisory board members, TTT counselors, TTT instructors, and technology coordinators). In these cases, researchers selected the most appropriate protocol to facilitate the discussions. The protocols were designed to solicit information on seven broad areas of interest: participant characteristics, recruitment, selection, placement, approach, support, and monitoring.

Exhibit 1 provides a snapshot of each site visited.

## Exhibit 1

### Snapshots of the Eight TTT Sites Visited

TTT Grantee Name	Program Characteristics
<p><b>California: Baldwin Park Unified School District (BPUSD)—Project ACE (Accelerating Credentialed Educators)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> BPUSD, Azusa Pacific University (APU), California State University-LA, California Polytechnic University.</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Participants are “classified employees” who serve as paraprofessionals within schools or who had “emergency credentials” under state of California rules, including recent college graduates that already work as either instructional aides or long-term substitute teachers in the district.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> Formally presented at California School Employee Association (CSEA) meetings, flyers posted in schools, word of mouth.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Bilingual and special education.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> Varies by partner delivering the training.</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> All applicants must have already completed 60 credit hours of postsecondary course units with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> Students over the age of 25 may attend the accelerated 18-month bachelor of arts program in Human Development offered at APU. Those under age 25 complete coursework at California Polytechnic University or California State University. Upon completion of all coursework, participants can serve as teachers of record (1st year as interns). All participants must pass the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) and other credentialing exams by the end of their 2nd year of teaching.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure “highly qualified?”:</b> All participants must complete the CBEST in addition to the content exams. All courses offered at APU and other participating institutions are designed to align with the state standards for teacher certification.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> Schools within the BPUSD. Participants apply through normal channels and receive no special treatment.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> APU hires a group of mentors to work with each cohort of students. Project ACE seeks mentors from schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Florida: Orange County Public Schools (OCPS)—Alternative Certification Program (ACP)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> OCPS, NOVA Southeastern University, University of Central Florida, Barry College.</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Participants may be mid-career professionals, recent college graduates, or paraprofessionals with experiences assisting teachers.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> Word of mouth, e-mail, Web site, OCPS teacher recruitment fair, flyers.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Training paraprofessionals to be teachers and serving urban or Title I schools.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> TTT candidates take courses at participating universities and at OCPS. The courses are taught by university professors, ACP staff, and training specialists.</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> Professional teachers of record must hold at least a bachelor’s degree to participate, and paraprofessionals must have at least an associate degree or have taken equivalent college coursework.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> Participants are required to commit to teaching 3 years in an urban cohort school or an OCPS Title I school. Participants must pass the College Level Academic Skills Test or the Florida Professional Education Exam, and the Florida Subject Area Exam, as well as meet other requirements as designated by law. In addition, as part of their certification requirement, TTT paraprofessionals must complete a 16-week internship or clinical, where they are observed by professors and coaches, and where they shadow a teacher, gradually taking over responsibilities. TTT teachers are given 3 years to complete the TTT program and can progress through the program by taking courses at their own pace while teaching. Some participants have completed the program in less than a year. In addition to taking the required ACP courses, TTT paraprofessionals must complete course requirements needed to obtain a bachelor’s degree, a process which can last between 3 and 4 years.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure “highly qualified?”:</b> Participants must pass the General Knowledge exam. Participants are highly qualified because they either have degree majors with the requisite course content or they have passed the subject area exam.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> TTT participants are required to follow the same applicant procedures as other teachers in the district. In this case, all of the participants are already placed in schools and most have been teaching for at least a year, but less than 2 years, before entering the ACP/TTT program.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> Participants are assigned a mentor provided by the district. Mentors are required to visit classrooms nine times over the duration of the program.</li> </ul>

## Snapshots of the Eight TTT Sites Visited (Continued)

TTT Grantee Name	Program Characteristics
<p>Kentucky: Green River Regional Education Cooperative (GRREC) Alternative Route to Certification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> GRREC, 18 eligible local school districts, Western Kentucky University (WKU).</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Participants are recent college graduates or mid-career professionals interested in receiving teacher certification and a master of arts degree in education (M.Ed.).</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> District referrals, brochures, word of mouth, personal contact, newspaper, posters/flyers, TV, Public Service Announcements, Job Fair, flyers on WKU's campus, Office of Employment and Training resources, regional public informational meeting. Program staff provides comprehensive recruitment materials to participating districts.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Special education, high need areas.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> Entering as a cohort group, participants can choose from two different tracks: (1) middle/high school curriculum &amp; instruction (C &amp; I) or (2) special education. Entering participants take summer (or fall) courses at WKU and begin teaching in the fall at the school where they were recruited and hired. Participants take additional courses throughout the year and the following summer (and fall, if necessary). All courses are offered on campus, through regional hubs, or online, where possible. Special education teachers take 8 of 10 courses online and C&amp;I teachers take at least 2 of 10 courses online. The program staff also offers periodic professional development sessions for the participants. After completing their comprehensive exams and certification, participants receive both their certification and an M.Ed.</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> All content area certifications require passing PRAXIS and PRAXIS II exams, a passing GRE score, a bachelor of arts degree in their content area prior to enrollment, and an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.5</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> Course requirements are specific to the WKU M.Ed. pathways. PRAXIS is not required prior to enrollment for special education participants but it must be completed before graduation. Also, applicants are not accepted into the TTT program until they are guaranteed employment by a participating district, and commit to at least 3 years of teaching.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure "highly qualified?":</b> Participants are subject to rigorous screening prior to enrolling in the program and must successfully complete the WKU M.Ed. program. They are not fully certified until they successfully pass comprehensive exams, and complete the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP), the state-mandated induction and certification program.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> A TTT selection and placement committee from among the participating districts selects the TTT participants they would like to hire after the nonqualifying candidates have been eliminated. Districts select candidates; candidate rate their choices. Each district is awarded a position and there are at-large positions based on total funded positions.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> TTT participants are assigned a mentor by their local district/school during the first semester, who often becomes the state-designated KTIP mentor for the remainder of the induction period. TTT resources cover the cost of the first semester and additional hours above the state-sponsored mentoring. As part of KTIP, TTT teachers take a 1-hour professional development course four times during the semester and a 3-hour content course. A TTT mentor continues to work with participants for an additional 12 semester hours after they receive their master's degree. Only during their 3rd year, after they sign a letter of commitment, does the TTT program allow the district to assume more responsibility for the participants. WKU professors also provide field-based mentoring during the first semester. KTIP has a prescribed set of performance objectives that all new teachers must meet.</li> </ul>

## Snapshots of the Eight TTT Sites Visited (Continued)

TTT Grantee Name	Program Characteristics
<p><b>Maryland: Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)—Alternative Routes to Certification Options (MARCO)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> MSDE, University of Maryland University College (UMUC), Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), Bowie State University.</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Career changers, both recent college graduates and individuals changing careers at mid-life. They may or may not be residents of Prince George's County.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> Internet postings; newspaper advertisements; attendance at area job fairs; word of mouth.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Elementary education; science, math, and foreign languages at the secondary level.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> Distance education model: all courses completed online. Although course completion is self paced, MARCO uses the cohort model whereby individuals must start and complete the course series at the same time.</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> Entry into the MARCO program requires a bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher in the content area in which they seek certification. Candidates must also pass the PRAXIS I and II exams prior to admission. Once their eligibility is verified by PGCPS, candidates must also complete UMUC's graduate application.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> Participant coursework consists of 9 hours of online graduate courses and a 4-week summer internship in summer school classes under the supervision of mentors and facilitators. During the 1st year of teaching, MARCO teachers, like all MD teachers, are also required to complete additional course units in reading studies.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure "highly qualified?":</b> All participants must pass the PRAXIS I and II exams prior to admission into the program.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> Elementary and secondary schools located in PGCPS. Participants are interviewed by PGCPS following participation in the summer internship. They are interviewed and selected by principals of schools, Title I for elementary placement, where vacancies exist once they complete all coursework and the summer inservice.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> The district assigned mentors in the 1st year of the program. Now, Bowie State University provides trained mentors to each participant. Mentors work with participants during their first 2 years of teaching and are required to meet with mentees at least twice monthly. Participants are also still assigned an in-school mentor by the district during their 1st year of teaching.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Montana: Montana State University, Bozeman—Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> WY Professional Teaching Standards Board, South Dakota Department of Education and cultural affairs, Troops-to-Teachers, MT Office of Public Instruction, MT Board of Public Education, MT School Boards Association, MT Education Association-MT Federation of Teachers.</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Mid-career professionals including military service members; seeks Native Americans interested in teaching particularly in these rural areas.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> News publicity, aggressive marketing via local media outlets, NPTT Web site, attendance at regional conferences, face-to-face meetings, Military News magazine.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Science, math, English, and other areas of need in rural schools served.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> Distance education model: all courses completed online.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> In total: 8 courses, 24 credit hours. Breaks down into 18 credits in coursework (qualifications and internship courses), and 6 credits of resident teaching internship and 6 credit hours of continuing preparation courses. Participants are eligible for the 1-year mandatory teaching internship after 9 credits are completed.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure "highly qualified?":</b> Participants must pass content test and complete all requirements for state licensure and certification. NPTT assists in developing participant's professional portfolio used to verify eligibility for full licensure.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> NPTT assists by "getting the word out" about eligible cohorts to high need school districts, but ultimately the participants are responsible for locating vacancies, submitting applications, and procuring employment.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> NPTT seeks recommendations from its partner districts, schools, state departments and the University Student Teaching Office for master teachers that are fully licensed, have at least 5 years teaching experience, and are familiar with both the site and subject of participants to act as mentors. Attempts are made to identify, interview, and match up mentors. However, this is difficult due to the small size of the schools and the rural nature of the district. Meanwhile, other support is provided through online advising. The program is putting in place a mentor training component.</li> </ul>

<p><b>South Carolina: South Carolina State Department of Education (SCSDE) Program for Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> SCSDE, Center for Education Recruitment, Retention, &amp; Advancement (CERRA), school districts throughout the state of South Carolina.</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Career changers mostly, though some recent college graduates.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> Includes information sessions conducted by SCSDE and CERRA in geographic areas that have high teacher turnover rates; as well as monthly sessions at the SCSDE; newspaper ads posted in local newspapers in geographic areas that have high teacher turnover rates; word of mouth, SCSDE and CERRA Web site, program brochures; partnership with state employment agency.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Twelve critical subject areas identified statewide and geographic areas experiencing teacher shortages and high teacher turnover.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> With participants passing through the program as a cohort, the program content, which consists primarily of SCSDE-developed instructional modules, is administered simultaneously by SCSDE instructors at five regional locations throughout the state. The program consists of a preliminary 10-day summer (or winter) institute and follow-up 10-day summer institute during the 1st year and six Saturday seminars during the first 2 years. During the 3rd year, participants also take three graduate courses (pre-approved by the SCSDE) from any authorized institution of higher education (IHE).</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> PACE is open to any individual who is seeking to meet South Carolina's certification requirements and currently holds a bachelor's degree or above in the content area in which they wish to teach. They must also have 2 years of prior work experience in any field prior to enrollment.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> After application materials are reviewed by certification analysts, applicants are notified of their PACE qualification area and are then required to pass the appropriate PRAXIS II content exam. Upon completion of this test, participants are issued a "statement of eligibility" which is forwarded to potential school districts, who then hire them after a 3-year commitment is made.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure "highly qualified?":</b> Participants must pass the state exam: Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT). They must pass the Praxis II subject exam before being admitted into the program. All TTT teachers must complete the regular state evaluation process (ADEPT) before becoming fully certified. Assessment is integrated into every phase of PACE training as participants are tested at each training session.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> To enter the program participants must be employed and already placed in a South Carolina public school district.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> Induction varies by school district and is the responsibility of each local district.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) Texas-Teacher Excellence for All Students (T-TEXAS)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> University of Texas Pan American (UTPA), Texas State University (TSU), University of St. Thomas, University of Texas at Brownsville, Austin Independent School District (ISD), Harlingen ISD, Houston ISD, Los Fresnos ISD, Brownsville ISD, San Antonio ISD.</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Mid-career professionals and recent college graduates, including those with BA degrees from universities outside of the United States.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> Postings on the IDRA Web site, newspaper announcements, radio and television ads (in both English and Spanish), university recruitment fairs and interest meetings, word of mouth, referrals from Austin and Houston ISD personnel directors, university faculty advising, school district recruitment fairs.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> Bilingual and ESL teacher shortages.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> Adheres to the "cohort model," whereby a group of participants enters the program and completes it together. Coursework is completed at the IHEs located within the participating school districts, and varies by site.</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> Prior to being admitted to the program, applicants must pass the Texas Academic Skills Program, must have satisfactory written and spoken English and Spanish skills, and at least a 4-year college degree. For applicants whose degrees were obtained outside the U.S., IDRA reviews all credentials to ensure that they are equivalent to US requirements</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> Applicants must interview with school districts and receive a letter of intent to hire prior to starting T-TEXAS training. Actual course requirements vary by TTT site, however, in general, program participants must complete the required coursework, professional development training, platicas, required exams, and a mandatory internship teaching bilingual education and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) in high need districts.</li> </ul>



<p>Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) Texas-Teacher Excellence for All Students (T-TEAS) (Continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>How ensure “highly qualified?”:</b> All participants are required to complete coursework and must complete the Texas Examination of Educator Standards, in addition to the content exams. Spanish-proficient, foreign educated candidates must pass English-based exams to be certified.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> Most are hired by districts as part of the IDRA partnership agreement when fully certified, though placement strategies vary by district. Candidates are interviewed, hired, and placed through the combined efforts of the school and district, with the district office working to meet the needs of the principals. While most stay in their internship schools or districts, some are placed elsewhere. Across all sites, participants are responsible for following the school districts’ normal hiring procedures.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> Across all sites, support comes from the university, district, and schools in assisting 1st-year teachers with mentors. The New Teacher Support and Mentoring Program, mandated by the state of Texas, requires districts to provide assistance to all 1st-year teachers. IDRA also offers supplementary mentors who observe classrooms and assist with classroom planning or management issues. IDRA also offers monthly group discussions focused on issues of primary importance to the 1st-year teachers.</li> </ul>
<p>Virginia: Newport News Public Schools (NNPS)—Old Dominion University (ODU) Partnership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Partners:</b> NNPS, ODU</li> <li>❖ <b>Participants:</b> Participants in the current TTT cohorts include career changers, substitutes, paraprofessionals with classroom experience, recent college graduates, and military personnel. First cohort was certifying in math and science and second cohort is certifying in English, mathematics, social studies, science, and special education/content (K–12) with a master’s degree in either literacy or special education; and a third cohort certifying in English, mathematics, social studies, science, and special education/content (pre-K–12) with a master’s degree in either literacy or special education.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Methods:</b> The most successful recruitment methods used are the Internet and the TTT Web site. Informational flyers are also sent to human resource agencies, state job fairs, NNPS and ODU job fairs, various other career fairs sponsored by Troops-to-Teachers, and higher education offices across the state. NNPS and the TTT program also recruit teachers at the NNPS annual teacher recruitment fair.</li> <li>❖ <b>Recruitment Focus:</b> High need areas (particularly in math, science, social studies, English, and special education).</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Delivery:</b> Participants, prior to becoming teachers of record, matriculate through a 5-week face-to-face summer institute. Participants are required to choose and complete the master of special education program or master of education in literacy education.</li> <li>❖ <b>Admissions Requirements:</b> Participants must hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, have a 2.5 minimum GPA, and pass the PRAXIS I and PRAXIS II exams.</li> <li>❖ <b>Program Requirements:</b> While TTT participants do not participate in field placements before becoming teachers of record, they must have a teaching placement prior to entering the program, and make a 3-year commitment to NNPS. In the 5-week summer institute, participants take education coursework in pedagogy, human growth and development, curriculum and instruction in their content area, organizing and developing portfolios, and behavior management techniques for students with disabilities. TTT participants then have the option of obtaining a master’s degree in literacy education or a master’s degree in special education.</li> <li>❖ <b>How ensure “highly qualified?”:</b> Participants must pass the required PRAXIS exams depending on their area of specialization, and are required to pursue a graduate degree as part of their training (if they have not already attained a master’s degree). Participants meet with content area specialists during the summer institute. Participants are monitored by the TTT program and their assigned school-based and university-based mentors.</li> <li>❖ <b>Placement:</b> Subsequent to completion of the summer institute, TTT teachers are required to go through the same placement procedures as other prospective NNPS teachers. TTT teachers participate in the NNPS recruitment fair or apply through the human resources office. Interested principals call and interview teachers they are interested in hiring. TTT teachers must have a position before they can be admitted to the TTT program.</li> <li>❖ <b>Induction:</b> First-year teachers are part of a mentoring triad: Pathwise mentor (from the school district) and an ODU university liaison (partnership coach). TTT participants meet on a regular basis with content specialists, resource teachers, the program coordinator and participate in formal professional development. All 3 years, TTT participants have ODU-TTT support.</li> </ul>

## Studying the Features of Alternative Certification Programs

This site visit report focuses more on the features of alternate route programs than the participants themselves. (A final report in 2006 will provide descriptive data on the participants as well as the features.) One of the abiding questions in the research on alternative programs pertains to the distinctions between traditional and alternative delivery models. The compelling nature of this question is clear: If distinctions could be made about these two approaches to teacher preparation, then researchers could design studies that would investigate which approach yields effective teachers, as measured by the achievement levels of the students they teach. Further, policy makers would have guidance, emerging from the research, about how to structure programs. Finally, policy makers and educators would be able to study the relationship between preparation approach and retention of highly qualified and effective teachers. However, research on alternative models has been neither plentiful enough nor designed to answer these questions conclusively; most research is descriptive and small in scale (i.e., the number of participants studied). Three recent reports that do provide important insights about program features are by Allen (2003), Seftor and Mayer (2003), and Mayer et al. (2003). These reports lend credibility to the idea that there is a set of features of alternative programs that may “contribute to better teaching by program graduates.”<sup>1</sup>

All three research reviews examined studies on the types and characteristics of alternative certification programs that might prove to be effective in teaching and for student learning. Seftor and Mayer identified distinctions between traditional and alternative certification programs in these areas: type of candidates, sequencing of program components, the training provider, the training emphasis, and the nature and amount of support received during the 1st year of teaching.<sup>2</sup>

Allen’s literature review generated a set of principles regarding program features which he found to be indicated for successful programs. The principles are as follows:

- Strong partnership between preparation programs and school districts;
- Good participant screening and selection process;
- Strong supervision and mentoring for participants during their teaching;
- Solid curriculum that includes coursework in classroom basics and teaching methods; and
- As much training and coursework as possible prior to the assignments of participants to full-time teaching.<sup>3</sup>

The TTT site visits sought further clarification about features and principles emerging from the literature by comparing research findings with the reality of implementation. When the visits were concluded, the data from interviews and focus groups indicated that the variability so often noted in studies of alternative preparation delivery has a purpose—to meet the ever changing

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, M. B. (2003). *Eight questions on teacher preparation: What does the research say?* Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

<sup>2</sup> Seftor, N. S., & Mayer, D. P. (2003). *The effect of alternative certification on student achievement: A literature review, final report.* Cambridge, MA: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

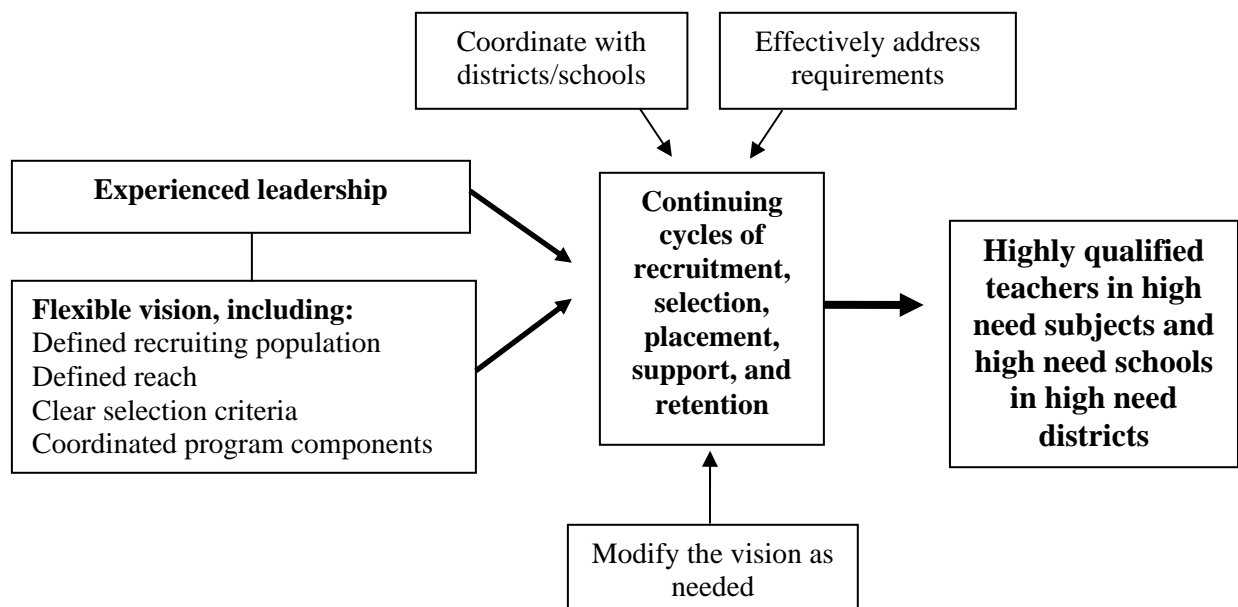
<sup>3</sup> Allen, 2003. pp. 59–60.

requirements of districts and the needs of participants. At the same time, some key lessons learned about challenges of this flexibility emerged from the experiences of diverse TTT grantees.

Using the patterns observed in the field, an explanatory model (depicted below) was designed to clarify the process by which TTT projects enter and sustain cycles of recruitment, selection, placement, support, and retention. Building and maintaining capacity to produce “certifiable candidates” (as they are sometimes called by program developers) is essential for an alternative certification project to address the needs of the state, district, or schools that it serves. The relative success of projects in attaining their goals and the TTT program goals varies, however, even when these elements exist. This demonstrates that more understanding is needed about the conditions related to flexibility before we can determine why flexibility itself may not be enough or could even be a barrier to effectiveness or success.

## Exhibit 2

### Explanatory Model of TTT Process



As depicted in the graphic, two elements are described by project directors and coordinators as necessary precursors of project implementation—experienced leadership and flexible vision—and the two are connected. Alternative certification projects tend to have leaders with experience in teacher education, K–12 schooling, and previous alternative certification programs, and these leaders bring this expertise to bear on the development of a flexible vision for the project. This vision includes several components that reflect the targeted nature of alternative certification programs. As such, projects are often designed to fit a specific population of teacher candidates or the specific needs of a particular community. These components include a defined recruitment population (in this case, some combination of recent college graduates, mid-career professionals, and paraprofessionals), a defined reach (ranging from schools in a single district to schools across several states), clear selection criteria (enabling the project to choose qualified

candidates), and a coordinated set of program components (e.g., coursework, fieldwork, and mentoring). Although these elements seem to indicate the development of a coherent, well-organized project, it's important to note that they are part of a *flexible* vision. The ability to modify a project's vision according to circumstances is an important characteristic of alternative certification programs.

The work of project leadership in establishing this flexible vision leads to continuing cycles of recruitment, selection, placement, support, and retention, as several cohorts of candidates make their way through the program. The graphic indicates three conditions that support these cycles:

1. Alternative certification programs must coordinate with schools and districts, which proves especially important in terms of placing and supporting program candidates. This may manifest in several ways. For example, some schools provide detailed information about projected job openings and alter their hiring schedules to accommodate candidates from alternate certification programs, and some districts provide induction programs or mentors to support such candidates.
2. Effectively addressing program-specific requirements also supports program cycles, particularly the component of achieving teacher certification. For example, projects may help candidates meet requirements by counseling them on the necessary credits to earn and/or courses to take or by coaching them in preparation for teacher certification tests.
3. The project's ability to modify its original vision—in response to either policy-related circumstances or the needs of individual candidates—is another condition that supports the cycles. For example, a project may expand its scope to address a community need for paraprofessionals who want to be teachers; it may also accept applicants in a specific field newly identified as high need by a school district.

Ultimately, as the graphic depicts, these coordinated factors lead to highly qualified teachers who teach high need subject areas in high need schools in high need districts.

## **TTT Project Variation: A Summary of Findings**

Examples of TTT grantee responses to the challenges of organizational sponsorship; recruitment, selection, and placement; preparation of content and sequencing and delivery; and mentoring and other supports are provided below. This summary also places the TTT approaches in the context of the literature on alternate route features.

### **Organizational sponsorship**

Mayer et al. reported that in the universe of alternative certification programs, multiple approaches to sponsorship are typical. Sponsorship refers to the administrative “parent” of the project or program: school district human resource or professional development division; college or university teacher education department; or state department of teacher certification. The literature on alternative certification programs provides no guidance on which type of sponsorship is most effective, nor does it identify the problems associated with each, except for the issue of the preparation of content. Mayer et al. report that there is some evidence that the

type of sponsor is not “a key factor behind variation in program content.”<sup>4</sup> From the TTT project perspective, this finding makes sense. Across all types of sponsoring entities, participants have options for completing their certification requirements. Where sponsors vary is in their monitoring of the quality of these options.

It is helpful to look at the importance of sponsorship through the lens of project goals. TTT projects face similar challenges, regardless of sponsorship, in terms of adapting content, planning the sequencing, and monitoring a mentoring component. Effective projects have found a way to coordinate and collaborate with partner organizations and institutions and especially manage leadership challenges, thus mitigating the differences in partner goals that could be barriers.

As organizational sponsors of alternative certification programs, State Departments of Education tend to have the broadest view and the authority to bring overall flexibility to the certification eligibility process. State-based programs may also have the kind of leverage to both tap the provider interests of IHEs and to use state mentoring programs in support of alternative certification participants. They can set the standards for course content, training requirements, and license eligibility.

South Carolina’s Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) and the TTT grant managed by the Maryland State Department of Education are two examples of state-administered sites. PACE, coordinated and administered by the South Carolina State Department of Education (SCSDE), uses TTT grant funds to enhance and deliver an alternative certification program to individuals throughout the state. The location of PACE in the SCSDE permits the preparation and certification of candidates to be centrally administered. The SCSDE draws on the expertise of national board teachers throughout the state to develop and deliver a single body of content through modules at university and school sites in the state.

The Maryland Alternative Routes to Certification Options (MARCO), which is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education, proposed to build on an existing alternative certification program: the Resident Teacher Certificate program. The new TTT grant was designed to infuse more resources into the recruitment process and create the type of links within a centralized system that permit the coordination of the additional professional development and certification processes that teachers need.

School district-sponsored programs—such as Orange County (Florida) Public Schools (OCPS), Baldwin Park (California) Unified School District (BPUSD), and Newport News (Virginia) Public Schools (NNPS)—have a local reach. District-initiated programs tend to focus specifically on (a) mid-career or recent college graduates, helping them become credentialed teachers who will remain in the district and (b) paraprofessionals, who already work in its schools, and need support to move into credentialed status. District-based programs also seek to fill vacancies in hard-to-fill subject areas. When acting as the sponsor, districts generally assume responsibility for participant selection and oversight.

The conditions of the teaching workforce (i.e., adequate distribution of highly qualified teachers, fulfillment of vacancies in high need subject areas) primarily drive state and district alternative

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<sup>4</sup> Mayer, D. P., Decker, P. T., Glazerman, S., & Silva, T. W. (2003). *Identifying alternative certification programs for an impact evaluation of teacher preparation*. Cambridge, MA: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

certification initiatives. With this focus, it is not surprising to find that many state departments of education and school districts administer multiple programs and each may be funded from different sources and have its own unique features. Many TTT sites are benefiting from prior history in administering alternate route programs.

Institutionally based projects (Montana State University) and nonprofit partnerships with universities (Green River Regional Education Cooperative with Western Kentucky University [GRREC-WKU] and the Intercultural Development Research Association [IDRA]) tend to focus on regional needs and draw on strong involvement of faculty from the IHEs' traditional programs, adapting course requirements to the sequencing needs of participants. Montana's Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT) project developed an online program to facilitate a regional partnership among Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota and brought each state department of education together around a common goal. With the collaboration established and the project running, NPTT can explore the possibility of scaling up to a larger region and even using additional platforms.

GRREC, a regional service center for school districts, involves a collaborative and longstanding relationship with WKU. WKU's model of teacher preparation serves as the source for preparing all GRREC's TTT participants; consequently, there is greater consistency in training provided to all participants.

IDRA, which administers the Texas-Teacher Excellence for All Students (T-TEExAS) and administered Project BECA (Bilingual Education Collaborating Alliance) from 2001 to 2004, is a nonprofit organization with a record of experience in bilingual education and English as a Second Language (ESL)—two content areas in which T-TEExAS focuses on preparing highly qualified teachers. While serving as the primary fiscal agent that provides general leadership and program oversight, IDRA relies on school districts to place candidates and on individual IHEs to prepare participants with the course delivery system of their choice. Thus, in T-TEExAS, all participants are not exposed to the same training experiences or systems of teacher support. In both IDRA TTT projects, course requirements vary at each participating institution. For example, IDRA provides needed support in the "platica" (i.e., informal discussion group) sessions for T-TEExAS program participants.

### **Recruitment, selection, and placement**

Alternative certification programs tend to begin with a goal of recruiting from a specific target population. The eight TTT sites, following grant program requirements, targeted a variety of populations, including mid-career professionals, retired military personnel, paraprofessionals, recent college graduates, and Spanish-proficient foreign-educated professionals. Assessing the needs of participating high needs districts is an essential first step in identifying a target group. Project sponsorship also plays a role in determining the targeted population. For example, paraprofessionals in two TTT sites—BPUSD and OCPS—were recruited by projects that were sponsored by local school districts.

TTT projects are expected to have recruitment goals that reflect the teacher supply needs of its school and district partners. Accomplishing these goals requires using multiple strategies and making effective use of community resources and resources of partner institutions and official

agencies. Having a pool of individuals who have a strong incentive to take advantage of the TTT project (such as in Newport News and Orange County) is advantageous to projects in meeting these goals. Such projects as NPTT have to work hard to call attention to its unique online approach and to recruit individuals who want to be certified to teach in the cooperating states.

During the past 20 years, entrance to teacher education programs, in general, has become more selective. Selectivity is defined not by the entrance requirements alone but also by the process used to establish the requirements, recruit and review applications, and make selection decisions. Rigorous eligibility requirements and performance standards are believed to effectively screen out candidates who may not succeed in the programs. In fact, some policymakers are in favor of frontloading teacher education programs with individuals who have already shown extraordinary dedication to the mission of public schools.

Alternative certification programs have adapted some of these selection standards and practices, especially those that are university based. Still, there is more of a range of selectivity in alternative certification programs than in traditional programs, and the TTT sites reinforce this finding.<sup>5</sup> In addition, because TTT projects have a limited focus based on the subjects defined as high need, they sometimes have to turn away or counsel out individuals who apply and are not interested in specified subject areas. For example, NPTT is recruiting individuals to teach math, music, and science; BPUSD is recruiting individuals who are seeking elementary, bilingual, or special education certification.

Less selective programs establish no requirement for grade point average (GPA)<sup>6</sup> and require a simple application and interview and submission of state assessment passing scores. The most selective programs require a relatively high GPA (3.0 or greater), fulfillment or validation of course content, and an extensive interview process that includes the program administrator, representatives from the district human resource division, and/or the school principal who is, in effect, hiring the teacher. For teacher preparation in general, few empirically tested selection instruments predict the success of candidates in the program and in teaching. Some TTT programs and alternative certification programs, in general, are attracted to the Haberman Star Teachers instrument, but most teacher education programs use a variety of selection techniques, such as interviews with groups of faculty and recommendations.

Among most of the eight sites, candidates were found to be selected and admitted into programs primarily based on reviews by selection committees or panels. This is a hallmark of being more selective. At some sites, the selection and placement committee is also actively involved in planning the program's recruitment strategies. BPUSD relied on the project coordinator and the credentials specialist within the district office who assumed primary responsibility for reviewing applications and selecting eligible candidates to participate in the program. In addition, principals were interviewed to learn about paraprofessional performance at their schools. This selection method may work best for BPUSD because it focuses on recruiting currently employed BPUSD paraprofessionals.

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<sup>5</sup> Mayer et al., 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Mayer et al., 2003.

In addition to academic requirements, the majority of TTT sites seek explicit evidence of maturity and long-term commitments to teaching from applicants. TTT administrators, program partners, and school-district personnel believe, for example, that long-term teacher retention can be increased by recruiting mid-career professionals who bring relevant and successful life experience (e.g., volunteering) and prior work history and who are certain about their choice of teaching as a career.

All sites appeared to have developed filtering and selection criteria that reflect the highly qualified teacher and paraprofessional requirements of NCLB. BPUSD requires paraprofessionals to have at least 60 completed credit hours of postsecondary course units with a cumulative GPA of 2.5. OCPS requires that its paraprofessional candidates already hold an associate's degree or equivalent college credits and submit a portfolio. Eligibility requirements for other sites include a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a specific content area; a 2.5 GPA or higher; and passing PRAXIS I and II exams, with qualifying scores that will allow participants to secure employment as a teacher of record in a partnering school district.

Some programs—NNPS, GRREC, South Carolina, and T-TEXAS—require employment or placement, as a teacher of record in a participating school district, as a precondition for acceptance into its TTT programs. Many TTT sites, such as South Carolina, Montana, BPUSD, Newport News and OCPS, require participants to complete at least some preservice training before being hired as teachers of record. Still, others require candidates to complete all academic training before entering the classroom. Preservice training that is offered in the summer, or any time before candidates enter the classroom, is viewed favorably by candidates.

GRREC's TTT program uses an extensive selection and placement process. Participating superintendents and education faculty from WKU meet to plan the process for each cohort of participants. The selection and placement committee is led by the project coordinator. All materials, including position allocations and program qualifications, are provided to each committee member. Applicants desiring special education certification must submit additional information, such as a portfolio, letters of reference, a personal statement about their strengths, a growth plan, and a statement of their philosophy of teaching and education. Local school districts conduct their own screening of applicant materials, which they receive from the program coordinator, and select applicants whom they want to interview. The administrators involved with this process believe that it is very selective and effectively screens out candidates who would not meet expectations.

When sponsors are managing multiple projects, the selection process may be left up to either the participating schools or the training providers. BPUSD's TTT program is unique in that one of the training institution has exceptionally high criteria.

In Texas, T-TEXAS and Project BECA, which focus on both bilingual education and ESL, coexist in IDRA and offer participants different incentives and support different certification areas. This fulfills a preselection function. For example, T-TEXAS reimburses students for tuition, textbook, and exam and certification fees up to a pre-approved limit. Applicants must interview with local schools, and this has resulted in nearly all T-TEXAS teachers being placed in classrooms. On the other hand, BECA participants paid the nonreimbursable program fee.



Each TTT project visited used a combination of recruitment activities and reported that disseminating information about the program through word of mouth was most beneficial for recruitment purposes. The experience of participants was one of the most powerful recruitment tools. IDRA, seeking to attract foreign-educated parents, involved a local elementary school principal, which was unique among methods reported.

### **Preparation of content and sequencing and delivery**

Mayer et al. note that the required curriculum in alternative certification programs generally tends to track the standard content and pedagogy studies for all new teachers, which can roughly be categorized into pedagogy, child development, and classroom management. The amount of content varies among programs but is roughly equivalent to 12–15 university courses.<sup>7</sup>

TTT training programs try to provide a balance of educational theory and practical knowledge in the areas of classroom management, lesson planning, and curriculum design. The degree to which such a balance is achieved appears to depend on who is responsible for training participants.

TTT sites that rely on IHEs to prepare candidates generally accept the IHEs' teacher training curricula, which can be described as a modified 5th year master of arts in teaching (MAT) curriculum. In these projects, participants complete similar coursework as full-time students, with only minor variations in the number of courses and course sequencing to accommodate their work schedules or to provide more applied and survival-skills courses prior to, or in some cases during, early teaching stages. Because many of the projects require participants to begin teaching while they are still completing course requirements, courses covering such topics as classroom management, multiple learning styles, collaborative teaching, curriculum development and planning, and other applied courses are given a higher priority than courses that focus on educational theory to increase candidates' chances of success in the classroom.

Paraprofessional candidates must fulfill their degree requirements and their pedagogy and administrative training. Thus, their program can be extended by as much as 2 years. BPUSD and OCPS's paraprofessional candidates, who are prepared at partnering IHEs, must complete the content courses required of anyone obtaining a bachelor's degree in the desired discipline.

Because TTT projects exist within a larger context of accountability for teacher certification, they must also ensure that the content is aligned with state and national standards. TTT sites reportedly designed or supported curricula that ensured that candidates receive adequate training and coursework to prepare them to pass all state certification exams. Several project directors and coordinators, in fact, described planning their curriculum by sitting down with the state standards in front of them. The TTT project in Montana designed its online program to address the standards and requirements for its tri-state partnership with South Dakota and Wyoming.

The training delivery formats selected by TTT projects appear to provide a certain flexibility to accommodate the unique or specific needs of particular sites and participant groups. For example, Montana's tri-state project, a rural and regional program, selected an online delivery

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<sup>7</sup> Mayer et al., 2003.

format that allowed NPTT to reach a large number of candidates in sparsely populated areas throughout the tri-state region. Implementing an in-person, face-to-face content delivery format would have placed significant travel demands on most participants, and realistically, the majority of the program's current participants would not have been able to participate in the program. This delivery format could certainly be considered feasible for similar rural or regional programs that are attempting to meet the needs of schools and districts in large regional or densely populated areas. Maryland's online program was offered by the UMUC—a campus well-known in the state for specializing in the delivery of online degree programs.

South Carolina organized a team of educators and curriculum designers to develop 105 lessons for TTT participants. The lessons are divided into two parts: preservice and inservice. Each lesson is aligned with South Carolina's teaching standards and standards of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. The preservice component is delivered for 10 days prior to or as soon after becoming a teacher of record. The inservice component is held during the summer after the 1st year of teaching. Participants from across the state can attend 1 of 5 regional centers: 3 are located at IHEs, and 2 are located at high school sites. Seminars and graduate courses are also required of participants and can be taken throughout the 3 years of participation.

Flexibility in sequencing is not as easy to achieve as it sounds. If the content is being delivered by university faculty in traditional university surroundings and with traditional resources, then faculty must agree to teach in the evening and on weekends and work together to create a map that carefully matches program philosophy and standards to the needs of participants. Furthermore, when participants seek to specialize in such areas as bilingual education or special education, they cannot forgo the more technical content that teachers in those subject areas need. One way to address the course sequencing issue is to create modules and allow participants to control their own pathways through content studies, with an advisor who monitors their progress. Another approach is to divide the course sequence into portions that reflect the needs of new teachers and to carry the cohort together through the same sequence.

For the most part, however, TTT programs use the traditional in-class, face-to-face method for delivering the curriculum. This format was favored by school districts and community-based organizations and cooperatives that relied on partnerships with IHEs to prepare candidates academically. The cohort approach was embraced by most sites to promote support in both the project courses and seminars and in school among colleagues. Sites that implemented traditional, face-to-face delivery formats varied the scheduling options to accommodate participants (e.g. greater use of Saturday and summer sessions, regional hubs, etc.).

Regardless of sponsorship, in alternate routes where individuals select their own training sites, there is much variation in the quality control exerted over content delivered. Some entities attempt to ensure that curricular content and pedagogy studies are aligned with state standards. Others provide professional development seminars offered on-site to participants to make up for differences in content and sequence in IHEs. A further implication of this flexibility is pressure on the mentoring component to sustain new teachers and to identify areas in which participants may need different kinds of professional development and support. TTT projects have approached these challenges in different ways: by standardizing the content and delivering the

same content at different sites; by adding professional development sessions; and by adding mentors to an existing mentorship system supported by district or state.

### **Mentoring and other supports**

TTT projects' success is being measured by the extent to which they are able to achieve a 3-year retention rate for their participants. While not required to create and offer a mentorship component, the projects recognize the importance of support for participants and have explored a variety of options towards mentoring or other supports.

Based on a literature review on induction and mentoring programs (the authors note that mentoring is such a key component of induction programs for new teachers that the terms have become synonymous) by Ingersoll and Kralik<sup>8</sup> and an analysis of data of the Schools and Staffing Survey by Smith and Ingersoll,<sup>9</sup> we know that teachers' experiences with some kind of support while in their first 3 years of teaching have increased greatly since 1990. Smith and Ingersoll chart this change from 4 in 10 teachers to 8 in 10 teachers. State initiatives for induction support are one of the driving forces of this increased activity.<sup>10</sup>

As with other components of alternative certification programs, a valuable literature base exists that describes the elements of mentoring, but little scientific research indicates its effectiveness. Per Mayer et al.<sup>11</sup> and confirmed through the site visits, mentoring is the alternative certification component implemented with the least consistency. One reason is that it can be managed in multiple ways: participants may avail themselves of a mentoring initiative in their home school; through the TTT sponsor; or university partners may provide mentors. The frequency of mentoring activity may also be "beyond the control" of an alternative certification program.<sup>12</sup> Mentors may be full or part time; paid or volunteer; classroom teachers, retired school personnel, or education faculty; or may be even the project director.

SRI conducted a review of experimental and quasi-experimental research on induction programs.<sup>13</sup> The research included descriptions of induction programs and model developers. A number of methodological problems identified in the studies hampered the analysis regarding the impact of induction. Still, by reviewing evaluations primarily on large-scale mentoring programs, SRI was able to examine research on outcomes of retention and teacher quality, finding no conclusive evidence from the studies that it reviewed. It is important to note that Smith and Ingersoll found that the likelihood of teacher retention increases when mentoring is combined with other supports, such as embedded professional development, time to network, etc.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ingersoll, R. M., & Kralik, J. M. (2004). *The impact of mentoring on teacher retention: What the research says*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004, fall). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal* 41(3), 681–714.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Mayer et al., 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> SRI International. (2004, January 16). *Review of research on the impact of beginning teacher induction on teacher quality and retention*. Prepared for Melanie Rogers, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. 2004.

In a separate report, SRI later identified features of induction programs that were commonly referenced by experts in the field, including the use of veteran teachers and training that includes how to work with adults, how to conduct classroom observations, how to give feedback, and how to help teachers create professional development plans.<sup>15</sup> Experts agreed that mentors should be compensated, and they also recommended frequent interactions with mentees but didn't provide any benchmarks in terms of frequency. Other kinds of support are also recommended for new teachers. For example, assistance with assessment is a central role for a mentor. Finally, the experts agreed that mentoring benefits are likely to reach students when the mentoring process focuses on instructional practice.

Two examples illustrate the variation in arrangements and services for participants in TTT projects.

IDRA has a longstanding relationship with its partnering school districts through other projects and a previous TTT program. The districts participating in IDRA's TTT programs allow outside entities to provide mentoring in collaboration with the districts. IDRA extends the new teacher services of the districts by using retired bilingual education practitioners. However, mentors are allowed a significant amount of latitude in terms of the frequency of meetings and type of support activities.

When GRREC-WKU participants are teachers of record, they become eligible for a statewide mentoring program that includes a 1-hour professional development course that is held 4 times during the semester and a 3-hour content course. Participants must complete the mentoring program to earn their permanent certificates. The GRREC project underwrites and augments the mentoring time supported by the state funding, and a TTT mentor continues to work with program participants for an additional 12 semester hours after they receive their master of arts degrees.

Because many state departments of education mandate that induction programs be provided for 1st-year teachers, some TTT grantees "hand off" participants to local schools and districts where these programs are to be realized. Unfortunately, both content and quality of induction programs in schools vary dramatically. Some participants reported that their district's programs felt more like a "checklist," whereas others described their induction programs as simply an assigned time to learn district policies and procedures. Because districts have some flexibility in planning programs, some are designed to meet once a week and others may be designed to meet once a month. Consequently, for TTT participants enrolled in state or regional programs or in programs that serve multiple districts, it is much more difficult to ensure that they receive adequate amounts of support at the district and school levels. Many sites also instituted inservice seminars throughout the school year to augment traditional IHE curricular offerings and/or to further promote teamwork and cohort cohesion.

Site visitors found a surprising lack of understanding in districts about the content of preparation that is delivered to TTT participants, such that some participants report that they are required to sit through the same classes, seminars, or presentations during induction that have already been

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<sup>15</sup> SRI International. (2004, May 10). Identification and description of promising models of teacher induction. Paper prepared for Melanie Rogers, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences.

offered through their TTT training. At several of the sites, participants also reported that information or practices taught in their induction sessions contradicted what was taught in their TTT training. As a result, participants described being torn between the philosophy of their TTT training and that offered by the mentoring program. This disconnect could be remedied if TTT sites have detailed conversations with districts about program content.

## **Benefits and Challenges of Implementing TTT Projects**

Policymakers have looked at alternative certification programs for more than 20 years to address capacity concerns. This focus has intensified as schools and districts seek to fill vacancies or transform uncertified teachers into highly qualified teachers. TTT projects, similar to other alternative certification approaches, continue to struggle to meet these expectations because of (a) the small number of participants who complete their respective programs and (b) the system of support and preparation needed to place, prepare, and retain participants in high need schools in high need districts. The distinguishing features of TTT projects that are appealing—that is, flexibility and collaboration—also turn out to be somewhat limiting. Thus, ironically, these features are the sources of challenges as well.

Project directors and participants articulated three important benefits of implementing TTT grants in their communities:

1. TTT has served a “catalytic role” in helping sites to launch or enhance their alternative certification programs. Many sites described moribund or “drawing board” programs that are now active because of TTT funding.
2. The TTT projects are forging new collaborations between IHEs and school districts and community organizations. Some longstanding partnerships have found new life because of TTT grants. BPUSD and GRREC described longstanding relationships with partnering IHEs that existed prior to TTT. BPUSD established a partnership with Azusa Pacific University more than 20 years ago, and that relationship has carried over from its original alternative certification program to the new TTT program. GRREC’s partnership with WKU was described as a “natural evolution” because of the nature of their ongoing relationship throughout the years. In another example, IDRA, well-respected in Texas for its work in bilingual education and ESL, has maintained strong relationships with partnering local school districts and IHEs for more than three decades through various projects, including an earlier TTT program. Consequently, through maintaining preexisting relationships and forging new partnerships, TTT administrators have opened up lines of communication to facilitate ongoing dialog, sharing, and support among IHEs, state departments of education, and school districts.
3. TTT grants may help some institutions see the potential of co-existence of traditional and alternative certification programs. Montana’s NPTT coordinator described an initial lack of support from other universities and school districts in the state. Because the need for teachers continues to increase and because NPTT is training and placing highly qualified teachers in the classroom in a relatively short period of time, many districts are now choosing to support the program, although some IHEs remain reluctant to get on board. South Carolina’s PACE program came to an agreement with

local IHEs in an effort to maintain support and positive relationships. The agreement requires PACE's TTT applicants to have at least 2 years of work experience before entering the program. The work experience requirement illustrates to applicants that PACE supports a thoughtful, planned approach to entering the profession.

The TTT programs in this study identified five implementation challenges that seem to be consistent with reviews of research and program descriptions in the literature of alternative certification programs:

1. **Tracking and reporting participant activities and outcomes.** TTT projects have overlapping cohorts that are recruited in one season and start in another. This practice does not mesh well with federal reporting needs and is challenging the effective use of resources, which are tracked by federal project year. Assigning participants, except for paraprofessionals, to categories is not always administered clearly. Movement of participants from district to district compounds problems of reporting. Finally, participants are at different stages in certification eligibility. All these circumstances pose challenges to evaluating outcomes at the project level.
2. **Creating a coherent preparation component.** Multiple providers of preparation, variable mentoring programs, and variability in participant education and experience provide the ultimate challenge in equipping participants for instruction and curricular exigencies as new teachers of record.
3. **Competing alternative certification programs.** In some states, such as Florida and Texas, districts may operate multiple alternative certification programs, each with its own level of selectivity, type of participant, and subject area focus. In this situation, participants may experience some confusion if there is a lack of coordination and inconsistent requirements.
4. **Variable mentoring and support.** TTT programs plan for a mentoring component for the benefit of participants. However, the reality is that participants are subject to the inconsistencies in the implementation of mentoring programs at the district level. Thus, although participants can take advantage of these programs, the benefits to them may be minimal because of a lack of training and monitoring of the mentors themselves.
5. **Targeting paraprofessionals.** TTT projects targeting paraprofessionals in schools have an even more challenging task and perhaps need additional resources to achieve success. Paraprofessionals may need more time to complete course requirements and may be ill-equipped to pay for these additional years of study. Recruitment must be school-based to directly address individuals' concerns about opportunities for success. In some communities, many capable paraprofessionals may be an important stable source of support for schools; therefore, it may be worth the additional investment to recruit and prepare them to be highly qualified teachers.

## California: Baldwin Park Unified School District—Accelerating Credentialed Educators Program

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### Background and Program Rationale

Located in the San Gabriel Valley, 25 miles east of Los Angeles, CA, Baldwin Park Unified School District (BPUSD) has a culturally diverse population of more than 17,800 students. The majority of students are from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and Hispanics comprise approximately 88% of the student population and 35% of the district's teaching staff. Hispanics also comprise 72% of the district's classified, nonprofessional employees.

Historically, BPUSD has been one of the poorest school districts in California. A needs assessment authorized by the state's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team in 2002 identified BPUSD as a low performing district with a high number of emergency teachers who were not fully credentialed; at that time approximately 28% of the district's teachers were on emergency credential status. In 2002, the majority of schools in BPUSD scored in the lower half of the California Academic Performance Index (API), which measures school performance annually and is now aligned with the Adequate Yearly Progress requirements of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act. The state's insistence that school districts address these shortcomings was intensified when NCLB was enacted because it forced the district to address its credentialed teacher shortage and poor API standing.

In 2002, BPUSD also experienced a shortage of credentialed bilingual teachers, who were fluent in Spanish and who could provide instruction to the large number of Spanish-speaking English Language Learners (ELL) enrolled in its schools, and of teachers credentialed to teach special education. Thus, in its application for the Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant program, BPUSD described its primary needs as (a) filling bilingual classrooms with teachers holding the Cross-cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate and the Bilingual, Cross-cultural Language and Academic (BCLAD) Certificate required of all bilingual teachers by the state of California; and (b) filling vacancies in special education classrooms with highly qualified and certified special education teachers.

Prior to 2002, the district implemented an Alternative Certification Program (ACP) designed to address the demands for more credentialed teachers. The initial ACP was developed with foundation support by the former assistant superintendent of BPUSD, who as a teacher, principal, and assistant principal with 32 years of experience in BPUSD, discovered that many of his paraprofessional instructional aides were even more effective in working with the community and the students than were new teachers or teachers hired from outside the community. He decided to "help his instructional aides get an education, so they could legally (meeting the highly qualified requirements) do what they did well." The district's initial efforts to facilitate licensure for paraprofessionals were supported by a grant from the Annenberg Foundation. Through this program, 12 instructional aides entered a program at Azusa Pacific University (APU) and went on to become teachers in the district. Thus, the Annenberg grant was a forerunner for the current TTT Accelerating Credentialed Educators (ACE) Program.

Recommendations from a needs assessment encouraged the district to continue its practice of identifying current paraprofessionals within BPUSD who demonstrated the qualities necessary to move into the teaching ranks. The U.S. Department of Education's TTT grant allowed BPUSD to continue the work it had implemented through its initial ACP. A full-time position was created for the coordination of the APU accelerated 18-month teacher certification program in which most ACE students participate.

Through the TTT grant program, BPUSD has also developed partnerships with California Polytechnic University (Cal Poly), and California State University Los Angeles (CSULA). TTT/ACE participants who enroll at these institutions do not complete an accelerated program. Instead, they are integrated into courses with students who are completing the traditional teacher training program.

### **Program Leadership**

The TTT/ACE proposal was written by the current program coordinator, with input from math, special education, and science teachers; members of the BPUSD California School Employee Association (CSEA), who represented the subject areas for which teachers would be recruited; and the employee union for classified employees, including paraprofessionals. Although the TTT/ACE is based on the district's earlier ACP and because this new effort would recruit a larger cadre of teachers and draw more heavily from the pool of paraprofessionals already working in the school system, the proposal development committee felt it was necessary to do the following:

- Expand the number of institutional partners that would provide instruction.
- Define and articulate clearer statements of the selection requirements for program applicants, recruitment procedures, curricular offerings to be provided by each of the partnering institutions, and responsibilities and obligations associated with program participation.

Some members of the proposal development team subsequently became members of the ACE steering committee that was tasked with implementing the program, its policies, and procedures when the grant was awarded by the U.S. Department of Education. The steering committee was composed of the associate superintendent; assistant superintendent of human resources; director of APU's Accelerated Program; director of extended educational services for BPUSD; an elementary school principal; the director of beginning teacher support assessment/staff development; and three representatives of CSEA, including its president and first vice president.

According to members of the committee interviewed for this study, during the early phases of the program, the steering committee was particularly concerned with developing fair human resource policies that would govern the pay structure and benefits for program participants who would be transferring from a classified employee status to the professional status, once they became teachers of record in the schools. The committee wanted to ensure that persons who had already provided many years of service to the school district would be allowed to carry over credits for years of service once they transferred from one employee status to another. The steering committee also developed a system of support for program participants that would provide them with priority access to the professional development opportunities already available in the school



district and to workshops designed to familiarize program participants with the requirements of the California teacher credentialing process and the required examinations. According to one steering committee member, the committee's tasks have been accomplished; therefore, its current role in the project is minimal.

The day-to-day management and oversight of the ACE program is provided by a full-time coordinator who was instrumental in writing the program proposal and has served as the program's coordinator since its inception in 2002. The coordinator works closely with school sites to recruit participants and mentors, market the program, and monitor the progress of current students, during both the course-taking phase and the 1st year of teaching (i.e., the internship year). The coordinator also advises students on both academic and professional matters, conducts information sessions, coordinates test preparatory workshops, and works with university partners to guarantee that program curricula remain aligned with California and NCLB standards. Additionally, the coordinator works closely with the district's personnel and credential specialist who is responsible for ensuring that all teachers, including ACE participants, are aware of their credential status and the steps that they must take to become NCLB compliant.

## **Participants**

At the time of this site visit, women comprised 91% ( $n = 50$ ) of ACE participants. Overall, 60% of ACE participants were seeking an endorsement in elementary education, 15% in middle school education, and 11% in secondary education. The remaining 14% of ACE participants were seeking endorsements in various grade levels (e.g., all grade levels, middle and high school). Twenty-nine percent of ACE participants were seeking endorsements in CLAD or BCLAD, 20% in special education, 15% in mathematics, and 36% in various subjects (e.g., science, English, speech).

Participants identified some of the incentives for participating in this TTT program as individual support and monitoring of progress that lead to their success. When asked whether they felt the program met their expectations, participants unanimously agreed that the program had met their expectations, and one participant summed it up for many, when she exclaimed that the program had actually "exceeded" her expectations. "I'd still be at the community college if it weren't for ACE," remarked a participant. "Me too," concurred another.

Participants were hopeful that they would be able to secure teaching positions in BPUSD when they completed the program and obtained their degrees and credentials. Some considered the fact that participants are required to give back to the district in exchange for receiving the financial incentive as an indication that there would be a job for them somewhere in the district. Participants interviewed were interested in teaching at a mixture of elementary and secondary school levels. Some were given the opportunity to teach new grade levels as instructional aides, interns, and as teachers of record.

Members of the steering committee, the APU program director, the TTT coordinator, and school administrators unanimously agreed that because of their prior experience in the classroom and familiarity with the district and school culture, instructional aides were best suited to pursue an accelerated teaching program. Another factor believed to contribute to the instructional aides' success was that many of the district's instructional aides were home grown—that is, raised in

the Baldwin Park community—and therefore committed to the students and their families. In addition, many of the instructional aides who applied for the program had already completed substantial postsecondary coursework but simply had not had the opportunity to complete their degrees. Thus, instructional aides entered the ACE program already highly motivated to succeed.

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

The TTT/ACE project expanded the scope of the district’s earlier ACP and developed a three-tier recruitment approach that targeted paraprofessionals and members of the BPUSD classified staff, first; recent college graduates, second; and mid-career professionals, third. To attract a relatively large but highly qualified pool of potential program participants, the district required all applicants to have already completed 60 credit hours of postsecondary course units with a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5.

The TTT/ACE was initially advertised in flyers that were placed in the teachers’ lounges and through formal presentations made at CSEA meetings. Although applications were encouraged from all classified employees, during the recruitment process, classroom instructional aides quickly became the most interested and sought after group of paraprofessionals to participate in the program. The program also currently includes participants who are recent college graduates that already work as either instructional aides or long-term substitute teachers in the district.

In the current recruitment process, interested parties attend an information session where detailed program information is shared. Next, individuals schedule a follow-up meeting with the TTT/ACE coordinator. At that meeting, the coordinator reviews potential applicants’ transcripts and relevant documents to determine their eligibility or to advise them on what steps to take to become eligible. Those who qualify are asked to complete an application. The TTT/ACE coordinator and the district’s personnel and credential specialist review all applications. The coordinator also conducts interviews with principals of the schools in which the paraprofessionals work to gather information related to the applicant’s performance in the classroom. According to participants, after the application is submitted, they are contacted and accepted within a reasonable timeframe.

Interview data revealed that flyers posted at school sites and word of mouth advertising, were the most effective recruitment strategies used by ACE. Some participants noted that recruitment might be more effective if the coordinator visited sites and spoke in person to instructional aides. Some participants described friends and colleagues who lacked the confidence to inquire about the program or who assumed that the application process would be highly competitive and rigorous, limiting the likelihood that they would be accepted. These participants felt that if someone came out and talked to paraprofessionals directly, then they would be able to answer some of the questions that people have and possibly calm their fears.

The TTT/ACE coordinator described recruiting mid-career professionals as one of the biggest challenges. She believes this challenge is due in large part to the 60% loss in social security benefits that mid-career professionals would sustain. Thinking ahead to likely recruitment populations, the coordinator reported that she has met with corporate officials at two companies and has knowledge that 2,000 employees at the one company are expected to retire within the

next year. The coordinator was overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the opportunity to recruit this population. The coordinator reported that she has researched social security issues and has made recommendations to the state to address this, but she inevitably sees this as a major deterrent for many mid-career professionals who may have otherwise considered pursuing a career in teaching.

### **Training/coursework**

ACE participants have the option to attend several colleges and universities; however, APU is the only ACE partner that offers an accelerated 18-month program that grants students a degree in Human Development. ACE students who choose to attend APU, a prestigious Christian school, must be 25 years of age and attend classes once a week for 18 months.<sup>16</sup> The director indicated that the program has set this age requirement because, from years of experience, it has found that a certain level of maturity is a prerequisite for becoming a teacher. It believes that by age 25 most individuals have clear career goals, and the experience of working as paraprofessionals provides realistic knowledge about and expectations of schools and student behavior in the classroom.

The director of APU's Accelerated Program described ACE as "unique because it is a delivery model" designed specifically to ease the college-going experience and to address the life circumstances of adults who already have many family and work commitments. Students enroll one time, and at that time they are given a schedule that delineates the sequence in which courses will be offered. The director stated, "It [the schedule] will show that they have classes every Tuesday night for the next 2 years. All they have to worry about is coming to class." Courses are provided sequentially in blocks that allow students to focus on only one subject matter at one time. Instructors who teach APU's Accelerated Program provide all materials and textbooks directly to students; during the last night of each course, students are given the required textbooks and syllabus for the next course. The program director commented, "It's a full-speed-ahead program. That's a little unique. They don't have to stand in line to register or go to the bookstore to buy books." The program also allows the BPUSD ACE participants to develop a network of support by isolating them into a cohort that includes only BPUSD ACE participants.

Courses offered at APU are aligned with state standards for teacher certification, which have been determined by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). The APU program director remarked, "We spent a year and a half developing the syllabi. We can show you where every single assignment ties into the requirements on the state framework." The close alignment between APU's curricula and the state's standards appeared to facilitate TTT/ACE participants' completion of certification requirements. Students who had taken the state certification exam informed the APU program director that they felt they had been tested directly on the courses they took. Other features of the TTT approach that were lauded by participants were the "rigor" of the program at APU, its addressing of cultural diversity, and emphasis on collaboration.

ACE students younger than age 25 may choose to attend CSULA, Cal Poly, or other programs. However, these institutions do not appear to offer the flexibility that the TTT/ACE program

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<sup>16</sup> This requirement has recently been lowered to age 22, which the program believes will result in increased applications.

requires.<sup>17</sup> For example, several TTT/ACE participants reported that they had had difficulties enrolling in the courses required by the college or university. Consequently, it was anticipated that the program would be attenuated for them, while participants waited to take certain classes when they are offered again. The difference between attending the APU program and earning required credits through other participating universities was highlighted in interviews with two program participants attending CSULA who were younger than age 25 and were in a blended program where they earned both bachelor's and master's degrees. These participants reported that participation in the TTT/ACE program provides financial assistance, the test preparatory courses, and professional development workshops that they would not have received by simply going through the traditional program at CSULA. However, after listening to other participants describe the APU program, both CSULA participants stated that they wished they were old enough to get into APU's program.

Regardless of the institution that they choose to attend, all TTT program participants continue in their regular positions as paraprofessionals while working on their teaching degrees. Each participant receives a \$5,000 stipend that is paid directly to the institution of higher education (IHE) to help cover tuition and other costs related to the program.

It is evident that care has been taken to ensure that APU's 18-month program will be consistent with California teacher certification standards. When asked how she ensured that the courses taught at other programs were aligned with the state standards, the TTT coordinator commented that as a member of the board at Cal Poly and CSULA, she was familiar with their programs and was able to have influence over the development of their regular teacher certification curricula. But she also reported that she had a bit more concern about the curricula provided at some of the other schools that a few of the ACE participants choose to attend because she was not as familiar with their alignment process.

### **Internship**

The California Pre-Intern program policy allows TTT/ACE participants who complete all college/university course requirements to teach for up to 2 years while they are completing the examinations required for credentialing. Thus at BPUSD, TTT/ACE participants are eligible to serve as teachers of record after they complete all BA courses. During the 1st year of teaching they are classified as teacher interns and are provided with additional professional development and mentoring that are designed to facilitate their transition into the profession.

### **Placement**

According to interviews with the TTT coordinator, steering committee representatives, school administrators, and the professional development service provider, ACE participants receive no special privileges during the job search process. Although prior experiences and familiarity with the school district make TTT/ACE participants very attractive to principals who are hiring, they must "complete the district application and go through the interview process like anyone else." According to a member of the steering committee, "We just want to have the best teachers. We don't want to just give them the job. It's hard to justify hiring someone just because they went through the program." The TTT coordinator reported it was important to avoid special

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<sup>17</sup> Recently, more universities are switching to an accelerated plan.

placements showing preferential treatment. She reported, however, that she does make all principals aware of which applicants have completed the ACE program, which “is a bonus for the applicants.”

In terms of program success, at the time the site visit was conducted during fall 2004, ACE reported that it was serving 55 paraprofessional, mid-career, or newly graduated participants. Eleven TTT participants were reportedly teaching in the district as teachers of record.<sup>18</sup> The TTT coordinator reported that three participants were also hired from outside of the district. Data regarding participants’ success in achieving state certification were not available at the time this report was written; however, the TTT coordinator stated that ACE participants have done well on subject matter exams, which are required by the state.

### **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

The BPUSD TTT/ACE programs attempt to provide participants with mentoring throughout every phase of the program. For example, APU hires a group of mentors to work with each cohort of students. A mentor (e.g., an experienced elementary school teacher) meets with students before each class to assist them in whatever way necessary. Some students may need tutoring, so the mentor helps facilitate access to tutoring services. A large part of the mentor’s role is to ensure that the cohort is familiar with campus resources that are typically available to students who are on campus during the day. Because ACE students attend evening classes 1 day a week, they are generally not aware of resources available on campus.

The TTT/ACE intern mentoring component is somewhat ambiguous in terms of its structure and potential benefits. The mentors interviewed reported that they received a small stipend for their participation in the program and that they mentored one to three teachers. A common sentiment among those interviewed was that the ACE program did not provide training, guidelines, or expectations for the mentoring relationships. One mentor commented, “Perhaps they could also give a little more definition to our role. It was a little too open-ended.” All of those interviewed, however, reported that they had mentored teachers through other district programs and felt that the TTT coordinator specifically sought them out for that reason. As a result, they felt comfortable in their roles as mentors, despite not having guided expectations. Mentors expressed some concerns about the late timing of the beginning of the mentoring component. Mentors reported that they were not assigned a mentee(s) until April, which left them very little time to work together. One mentor recommended that ACE match the mentoring component with the start of the school year so that they can work with the mentees throughout the year. In spite of the short time frame in which they had to work with their mentees, a majority of the mentors felt that they were able to support and encourage their mentees. One mentor commented, “I think if I had them for the whole year I could have had a stronger impact.”

The TTT coordinator reported that recruiting mentors was a challenge initially. She sent out a request for mentors to the school sites and received only three responses. When she attended a resource teachers meeting, however, she was able to recruit 11 additional mentors. The coordinator felt that she would have had better success recruiting mentors if she had visited the school sites to talk to teachers face-to-face. According to the coordinator, “Actively, what works

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<sup>18</sup> Baldwin Park Unified School District Transition to Teaching Program Abstract 2004–2005.

is if I talk to the people personally. They'll do it if I do that. I've got to do that." The coordinator would eventually like for every ACE participant, preservice and inservice, to have a mentor. Presently, because of the low number of available mentors, the coordinator assigns mentors to inservice teachers first. Consequently, some preservice ACE participants do not have mentors.

## **Challenges**

As noted in the report, the TTT coordinator described the recruitment of mid-career participants and the recruitment of seasoned mentors as two of the biggest program challenges to date. Although the coordinator discussed a plan for reaching more mentors (i.e., active, face-to-face recruiting efforts), the challenge of reaching mid-career participants remains certain because of issues regarding pay structure and human resource benefits. It will be important for ACE to determine how it will address these issues if it intends to actively recruit mid-career participants for its program.

A note of particular interest that may or may not present a challenge in the future is that both the TTT coordinator and the APU Accelerated Program director reported that they will retire next year, leaving the program in the hands of new administrators. However, planning with the Associate Superintendent generated ideas for an experienced leader, who has accepted the offer.

## **Key Differences Between BPUSD and Other TTT Sites**

The recruitment and training of paraprofessionals is facilitated by two factors: (1) the accelerated 18-month program provided by APU and (2) the district's human resource policies that give TTT teachers credit for prior years of service as paraprofessionals. For example, at a TTT program operated in another district, paraprofessionals are not credited for prior years of service when they become part of the professional teacher staff. Furthermore, at that site, participants must complete a 3-year program that is indistinguishable from traditional teacher certification programs. Consequently, that program has had difficulties recruiting paraprofessionals. By providing an accelerated program and by devising human resource policies that protect paraprofessionals' benefits, the BPUSD TTT/ACE steering committee has ensured the appeal and success of the program.

# Florida: Orange County Public Schools—Alternative Certification Program

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## Background and Program Rationale

Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) in Orlando, Florida, is one of the fastest growing districts in the country. At the time of this site visit, more than 174,000 students were enrolled in the district's growing 155 schools: the district was reportedly adding nearly 5,000 new students each year. Demographically, OCPS's student population is approximately 38% White, 28% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 6% other (predominately Asian Pacific).

Similar to other fast growing districts across the nation, OCPS has a continual need for certified teachers, with an instructional personnel workforce of 11,866. The district noted more than 1,500 teacher vacancies each year. The need for highly qualified teachers is particularly great in 28 of OCPS's urban cohort schools and in 11 Title I elementary schools that have been identified as their highest needs schools because of high numbers of (a) students eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch, (b) students scoring below level 3 on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, (c) teacher vacancies and (d) high incidence of out-of-field teaching.

As a result of teacher shortages and the need to comply with the teacher quality provisions of the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*, Florida has mandated all districts in the state offer an alternative route to teacher certification program, either through the state's Web-based alternative certification program (ACP) or by developing its own ACP. In 2000, OCPS chose to develop its own approach to provide alternative certification opportunities to any qualified individual holding a bachelor's degree in a discipline outside of education.

Through the award of the Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant, an additional ACP was developed to specifically address the needs of the urban cohort and the identified Title I schools by offering teaching and certification opportunities to, not only those holding bachelor's degrees, but also to OCPS's paraprofessionals with at least an associate of arts (AA) degree and an interest in becoming an educator. As a result, OCPS currently administers two alternative certification programs: its original ACP and the new TTT ACP.

## Program Leadership

OCPS's TTT program is a district initiative housed in the central educational leadership building. A project director and a project coordinator, supported by clerical staff, manage the grant program. The project coordinator is responsible for managing the day-to-day tasks of the TTT program, in addition to teaching courses for the program, and the project director and OCPS's director of curriculum and instruction provided oversight for the TTT program.

OCPS's TTT program was created in partnership with three universities: Nova Southeastern University (NSU), University of Central Florida, and Barry University. NSU, however, is the primary university partner and provides instructors and handles financial aid support. The school district provides mentors for the TTT program.

## Participants

At the time of the site visit, 132 candidates were participating in OCPS's TTT program. Of the 132 candidates, females comprise the majority (90) of participants. Mid-career professionals (83) make up the largest segment of the TTT population, with recent college graduates comprising almost 40 % of the remaining TTT participants. The majority of TTT candidates (73) are pursuing a middle school endorsement, whereas 35 are pursuing a high school endorsement and 24 are seeking an elementary school endorsement.

The OCPS partners reported a number of accomplishments for their participants and continued annual growth of the program. For example, one TTT participant currently serves as department chair at her school site, and three TTT participants were nominated by their school sites as Teachers of the Year. The TTT coordinators also reported that a graduate of their earlier ACP is now a nationally board certified teacher and mentors TTT participants and graduates.

The OCPS approach for mid-career professionals in particular seemed to satisfy the balance participants desired between acquired content knowledge and the need for training on real-life classroom skills. One participant described OCPS's ACP as "the best way to become a good teacher. You have your subject matter. Everything you are taught is very valuable." Another participant remarked, "I have been to many training sessions that are nothing like the real job. The teachers in this program provide real-life scenarios and real solutions." Interestingly, the only recommendation for change in the TTT approach, made by both TTT teachers of record and the paraprofessionals, was that they are now ready for the next step: a TTT-sponsored master's program. The reported retention rates for participants were: for current teachers of record 100%, and 90% for the program's paraprofessionals.

## Program Structure

### Recruitment and Selection

Individuals with bachelor's degrees who are interested in participating in OCPS's ACP project can apply to either OCPS's ACP or TTT. The two are virtually synonymous for current teachers who hold at least a bachelor's degree in a content area field. Participants in both complete the same requirements and same curriculum. The difference between the two is that participants in OCPS's TTT project agree to teach in an urban cohort school or 1 of 11 identified Title I elementary schools. In turn, TTT teachers receive tuition assistance and textbook incentives.

Paraprofessionals who hold at least an associate's degree and an interest in teaching are also eligible to apply to OCPS's TTT project. Unique to only a handful of TTT programs across the country, OCPS has a fairly large paraprofessional ACP component integrated into its TTT project.

The following admission and program requirements apply to each of the groups targeted for recruitment:

**Professional teachers of record.** To be considered for admission, candidates must meet all application guidelines required by the OCPS's original ACP, including the following:



- Being paid teachers of record in OCPS;
- Holding at least a bachelor's degree;
- Holding or being eligible for a 3-year temporary teaching certificate from the Florida Department of Education;
- Obtaining the signature of the hiring principal; and
- Signing the ACP application as an agreement of participation.

**Paraprofessionals.** To be considered for admission into the TTT program, candidates must do the following:

- Be employed by OCPS as paraprofessionals;
- Submit an online application;
- Submit a portfolio; and
- Have at least an associate's degree or taken equivalent college coursework.

When selected, TTT paraprofessionals participate in a 3–4 year program of study with the partnering universities and OCPS. Completion of the program results in a bachelor's degree and a teaching certificate. In OCPS, paraprofessionals are not given credit for time served teaching; therefore, even if a paraprofessional has long experience in OCPS as a paraprofessional, when he/she becomes a fully certified teacher of record, he/she will be listed on the lowest OCPS teaching and pay scale (i.e., 0 years of teaching).

Both groups of TTT participants were recruited through flyers, e-mail messages, and/or word of mouth. The partnering universities also used posted flyers and posters as a way to attract potential TTT candidates to the program. NSU, in particular, was identified as being instrumental in helping to identify potential TTT candidates.

### **Training/coursework**

In contrast to the state of Florida's ACP, OCPS's TTT program is designed primarily as a face-to-face program. TTT paraprofessional candidates take courses at participating universities and at OCPS (the Leadership Center Building). In addition to taking the courses required for ACP, which are generally taught by ACP staff and training specialists, paraprofessionals have to complete course requirements that are needed to obtain a bachelor's degree. These courses are taught by university professors. Because many associate's degree courses are not accepted by several of the participating universities, it can take TTT paraprofessionals between 3 and 4 years to complete their preparation requirements because they have to retake or fulfill additional course requirements to obtain their bachelor's degrees.

TTT teachers have up to 3 years to complete their coursework and complete the program. Some teachers can finish the program in as little as 1 year.

Professional teachers of record in the TTT program are required to take the following courses, taught within the district by ACP staff and training specialists. These courses vary in duration and some of the courses are based on traditional preparation and pedagogy content. Others, such

as Domains and Beyond, are unique to requirements of the state of Florida for teacher evaluation:

- Alternative certification program seminar (I and II);
- Classroom management and instructional strategies;
- Domains and beyond;
- First days of school;
- English for speakers of other languages strategies;
- Instructional technology;
- Professionalism through integrity; and
- The role of the K–12 educator.

Current participants interviewed reported being satisfied with the program’s training, especially about how they were being prepared to address the state’s evaluation measures. Equipped to handle teaching responsibilities and the statewide expectations regarding teacher performance, TTT participants were acknowledged by school personnel as successful in the classroom and also in passing required certification assessments.

### **Internship**

As part of the certification process, each TTT paraprofessional is required to participate in a 16-week supervised internship, referred to as clinicals. During the internship, the paraprofessional shadows a classroom teacher and gradually takes on more responsibilities in the class (i.e., similar to a student teaching experience). Instructional coaches and ACP staff monitor and evaluate the paraprofessional. After the paraprofessional demonstrates that he/she can take on most of the classroom teaching responsibilities, the classroom is gradually turned back over to the classroom teacher. Paraprofessionals were pleased about this requirement, saying the supervised internship puts them at a distinct advantage because (a) they can fulfill their internship requirements by shadowing a teacher in the school in which they currently teach and (b) they do not have to lose time and money from being absent from their work.

TTT teachers of record do not participate in a supervised internship; however, they are observed by mentors, instructional coaches, and ACP staff, and their performance is evaluated using various tools.

### **Placement**

Participants are placed in OCPS using the same procedures that a regular teaching applicant would use. Participants are interviewed by a principal or a panel of individuals. If the applicant is a good match for the school, then the principal extends an offer. The candidate can select a school that is best suited for him/her, considering the offer(s) that he/she receives. However, in the case of the OCPS’s TTT program, all of the participants must already be paid employees in OCPS. Therefore, placement is not an issue for OCPS’s TTT or ACP programs.

## **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

All TTT participants are assigned a mentor. The overwhelming majority of the participants interviewed (i.e., paraprofessionals and teachers of record) reported that their experiences with the mentoring component of the TTT program have been positive. In fact, one participant stated that he would have left the TTT program and the teaching field if it were not for the encouragement of his mentor. Another participant described his mentor as providing him with positive constructive criticism and sharing many ideas that have helped him in his class. In only one case did a TTT teacher suggest that there was minimal contact with a mentor and felt that the mentors needed more training in their role.

The TTT program requires that mentors visit the classrooms of their assigned TTT teacher(s) nine times during the length of the program. Mentors are paid a minimal stipend for their contributions to the program. Additionally, efforts are made to pair TTT teachers with mentors in their school with the same content area. This was reportedly not always possible, but an attempt was being made.

The project coordinator stepped up to serve as an unassigned mentor for several of the participants, observing the teaching of TTT participants in their classrooms. The coordinator helped out, as well, with the development of portfolios when gaps in support were identified.

## **Challenges**

Three of the major challenges of OCPS's TTT project involve the paraprofessional participants. The program coordinator and TTT/ACP personnel have found it to be increasingly difficult to recruit paraprofessionals. Several reasons were articulated. First, although TTT paraprofessionals receive some tuition assistance, participants stated that based on their limited salaries, it was still very difficult to afford the tuition bill. They felt that if grantees were provided with complete tuition remission, then more paraprofessionals would enter the program. Second, many of the courses that the paraprofessionals completed to obtain their AA degrees would not transfer into their program of study at the participating universities. Therefore, TTT paraprofessionals have to retake courses or take additional courses to complete their programs, thus extending their length of time in the TTT program. This can deter paraprofessionals from obtaining certification through the program.

Lastly, several paraprofessionals stated that they had served as paraprofessionals in OCPS for 9–24 years. In all cases, the teachers felt that once they are certified and become teachers of record, they should be granted full or partial credit for their years served teaching in OCPS. Currently, regardless of the number of years paraprofessionals have worked in OCPS, they are still listed on the lowest end of the pay and teaching scale. This discrepancy was cited as a possible deterrent for some paraprofessionals; thus, it may have a deleterious effect on attracting some of the best candidates to the program.

The continuing growth of the TTT project in general—given the short timeframe—was also mentioned as a challenge. As the project continues to grow, more resources and support may be needed. It was also mentioned that more information needs to be disseminated throughout the schools, school system, and universities.

## **Key Differences Between OCPS and Other TTT Sites**

One of the most notable differences between OCPS's ACP and other TTT sites visited has more to do with alternative certification in Florida, in general, than with OCPS's ACP specifically. The state of Florida requires every school district to offer an alternative route to teacher certification to address teacher shortages in the state. As a result, OCPS is already mandated to provide an alternative certification program to potential candidates. What is unique is that districts have the option of implementing the state's alternative certification program, which is administered online through Web-based instruction and support, or districts may elect to develop and implement their own alternative certification program. OCPS, through the use of TTT grant funds, opted to develop and deliver its own ACP.

Another distinct program characteristic is that OCPS's ACP focuses its recruitment efforts on individuals already employed in education and already in the classroom. Although this is similar to the Baldwin Park (California) Unified School District (BPUSD), which also recruits paraprofessionals from within the district, OCPS's ACP recruits from two tracks: (1) paraprofessionals in the district and (2) teachers of record without degrees in education. Furthermore, these two groups are integrated in the program.

## **Kentucky: The Green River Regional Education Cooperative— Alternative Route to Certification**

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### **Background and Program Rationale**

The state of Kentucky contains 176 school districts and 1,271 schools, many of which experience challenges in recruitment, training, and retention of certified teachers—particularly in the more remote, rural regions and in the area of special education. In response to the need for qualified teachers, the Kentucky legislature passed a mandate in September 2000 that offers financial support for institutions of higher education (IHEs)—for example, Western Kentucky University (WKU)—to develop an Alternative Route to Certification (ARC) program that trains and places qualified individuals in Kentucky’s classrooms. Using nontraditional recruitment and training methods, the ARC program allows qualified individuals to teach in Kentucky’s schools as paid teachers of record while they simultaneously complete the coursework necessary to obtain full teacher certification.

During the initial stages of developing the ARC program, WKU began a close collaboration with the Green River Regional Education Cooperative (GRREC) of Bowling Green, Kentucky, to help accelerate ARC program efforts and to expand outreach efforts to school districts that surround WKU’s campus. GRREC has served as a regional service center for 29 regional school districts in central and southern Kentucky since 1968 and strives to provide quality learning through the training and professional development of local area educators. Over time, GRREC has expanded the scope of its regional support services to include procurement and curriculum development services and has become a vital partner to its member districts, many of which have limited resources because of size; remote, rural location; and/or high poverty levels of surrounding communities.

Because of the strong and established working relationship between WKU and GRREC (e.g., the WKU School of Education houses the GRREC program staff), their decision to apply for a Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant was a natural evolution of their previous collaborative efforts. The TTT grant potentially served as a catalyst for accelerating the development of WKU’s ARC program, and it helped GRREC more aggressively address certified teacher shortages in GRREC member districts, especially in the area of special education. The TTT proposal was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by the GRREC, in partnership with WKU and GRREC member school districts that met federal eligibility requirements. The proposed program sought to revise the content, sequence, and delivery of the existing WKU graduate teacher education programs (to accommodate the needs of the participating teachers of record) with recruitment and ongoing support (including additional professional development and mentoring/induction) and multidistrict coordination of services provided through GRREC.

### **Program Leadership**

After funds were awarded, a TTT project coordinator was hired in December 2002. The coordinator, a former high school principal and lifelong educator from one of the GRREC member districts, developed an interest in the TTT project through his experience in K–12

education and through a strong belief that the TTT project provides a great opportunity for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession. As coordinator, he serves many roles:

- Maintaining relationships with university and project partners;
- Overseeing the day-to-day management of the TTT program;
- Working closely with school sites to market the program, recruit participants and mentors, and monitor students' progress during their coursework phase and their teaching internship year;
- Advising students, coordinates test workshops, conducts information sessions, and monitors alignment of the TTT program curricula; and
- Serving as the primary liaison between the program partners, GRREC, and WKU, all of which play instrumental roles in leading the program.

Twice a year, the coordinator facilitates a meeting with the TTT selection and placement committee that consists of senior and/or human resource administrators from eligible GRREC member districts, TTT project staff, and professors and staff from WKU's School of Education. Due to federal regulations regarding the qualifying definition of "high need districts," only 18 of GRREC's member districts are currently eligible to participate in the TTT project and in TTT selection and placement committee meetings. During these meetings, each participant receives a comprehensive packet of materials, either for marketing and recruitment of potential TTT candidates or for the selection of prescreened finalists, that includes timelines, document templates, selection criteria, etc. Several participants at the fall meeting in 2004 commented on the thoroughness and usefulness of the information and materials that are shared during these meetings.

The consensus that the TTT project coordinator provides the "glue that holds the program together" emerged from GRREC and WKU leadership, representatives from the selection and placement committee, and from several TTT participants. Building on lifelong ties to the surrounding communities and long-term relationships with many administrators and teachers from the GRREC member districts, the coordinator provides a high level of support for and collaboration with all stakeholders. These efforts have strongly enhanced the project's credibility and effectiveness. The high regard for the coordinator was repeatedly mentioned by stakeholders, pointing to his role in screening and counseling prospective participants and his attention to details, including the supporting materials provided to the selection and placement committee members and purchasing and mailing textbooks and course materials to individual participants. A member of the selection and placement committee commented that, "the direct contact that [the TTT project coordinator] provides [with districts] is much better than the contact found with another alternative certification program [that our] district works with."

## **Participants**

At the time of this site visit, the average age of TTT project participants was 31 years. Of the 45 participants, 18 were male and 27 were female, and all identified their ethnicity as White/Caucasian. Twenty participants (56%) were recent college graduates, and 25 (44%) were mid-career professionals. All participants were recruited and placed in 16 high need school

districts and work in 8 high need subject areas. The program has a 93% retention rate, having lost three participants who are no longer teaching.

During interviews, several participants expressed satisfaction with project components and with the training that they received. Participants described the support offered as a major bonus, “We have a lot of professional development with TTT. It creates a forum for discussion.” Another participant added, “This program provides a good support network and I have received nothing but praise.” Others described, “Cohesiveness of the cohort was extremely helpful,” and still others added that the provision of teaching tools by the project is commendable.

Several participants echoed similar sentiments regarding the coordinator, whom they consider “very supportive.” Participants also felt that the principals at their schools have been “very supportive,” and their school districts were also credited with providing “good support.” One participant shared that although the content of the program is good, she would offer one suggestion, “I would probably extend it to a 2-year program with two classes per semester except in the summer.” Of those interviewed, only one participant reported that the program did not completely meet his expectations. “The TTT program has not met my expectations 100%. [The program] was not as focused in the beginning but they have made changes to make it better and now some of the professors who were not as supportive are either no longer there or are more knowledgeable and supportive now.”

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

The TTT GRREC approach works to achieve long-term recruitment success through dual targeting of mid-career professionals and recent college graduates. The recruitment strategy uses a “shop locally” perspective and attempts to take advantage of nearby resources. Therefore, the coordinator works closely with district superintendents and private, public, and nonprofit groups. GRREC, WKU, and TTT staff and individual school districts use multiple recruitment strategies to attract candidates to the TTT project, including the following:

- District referrals;
- Recruitment brochures;
- Personal contact/word of mouth;
- Press releases;
- Classified ads (in district newspapers);
- Poster/flyer distribution on WKU’s campus;
- TV/community calendar public service announcements;
- Job fairs;
- Office of Employment and Training/Career Center resources; and
- Regional public informational meetings.

Each fall, the TTT selection and placement committee meets to begin planning the recruitment, selection, and placement of the next cadre of potential TTT candidates. Led by the project coordinator, the committee is provided with materials and relevant documents, including a copy of the application, the selection and placement timeline, the overall project timeline, recruitment strategies, recruitment brochures, TTT teacher position allocations, and copies of the master's degree program qualification and course requirements. Following the meeting, each district, in conjunction with GRREC and WKU's recruiting team, uses the various methods listed previously to actively recruit potential candidates for the program.

The TTT selection and placement committee found that word of mouth is the most effective recruitment method. They initially felt that the \$5,000 incentive provided by the grant was effective in drawing potential candidates to the program, but members reported that the incentive has become less effective as tuition and outside costs continue to increase. One committee member shared, "[The incentive] limit of \$5,000 needs to be increased because the tuition at WKU has gone up at least 10% each year. To attract quality teachers, it needs to increase \$7,500–8,000. Web-based courses are more expensive." According to the program coordinator, candidates pay approximately \$4,000 on average for tuition, books, and assessment fees; some participants pay more and others pay less. Participants described this incentive as helpful but acknowledged that it generally paid for only half of their tuition. Based on current semester tuition costs, the 30-hour master's degree program ranges from \$7,800 to \$9,360, depending on mode of delivery. A recommendation to increase the incentive for program participants to \$7,500 was suggested and is believed to be capable of improving recruiting efforts. Other program incentives include up to \$750 for books and up to \$400 for required assessment fees (i.e., GRE, teacher assessments).

Applicants must meet WKU's strict eligibility requirements for graduate school, including having a passing score on the GRE, a bachelor's degree in their chosen content area from an accredited institution, and an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. With the exception of those applying to the special education program, applicants must also take and pass the PRAXIS II exam in their desired content area prior to being admitted to the program. Because the special education PRAXIS exam contains test items regarding laws and policies with which new teachers may not be familiar, those applying to the special education degree program are not required to take the PRAXIS exam until after they have been participating for a designated period of time. In lieu of PRAXIS and in addition to submitting the general application and official college transcripts, special education applicants must submit a portfolio, letters of reference, and a personal statement that addresses professional areas of strength, a growth plan, and their philosophy of education, which are reviewed by the admissions committee in special education program. Special education applicants must also pass a criminal background check.

When applicants have been identified as potential TTT candidates, the selection process begins and their application materials are reviewed and screened, using an established rubric, by the program coordinator. For those who meet the minimum criteria, copies of their application materials are forwarded to participating school districts' human resource directors and to WKU's Department of Special Instruction Programs and Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Eligible applicants are notified of their status and instructed to begin completing required testing (e.g., GRE, PRAXIS II) if necessary. The coordinator also reviews and screens the portfolios



submitted by applicants of the special education program. The transcripts of eligible applicants are forwarded to school districts and university officials.

Applicants are not accepted into the GRREC TTT project until they are guaranteed employment by a participating district. Local school districts conduct their own screening of applicant materials, which they receive from the program coordinator, and select applicants whom they want to interview. All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications and who are offered employment by a participating district are admitted and notified via letter. Participants sign an agreement contract during each of the 3 years that they participate in the TTT project.

Members of the selection and placement committee reported that the project's recruitment strategies were effective. One member noted that the GRREC TTT has admission standards that are higher than those of other training programs in the state. She commented, "Recruitment is very effective. Sometimes candidates who are not qualified for TTT will enter other programs at WKU after attending a TTT meeting and learning that they are not qualified for TTT." Selection committee members also felt that the project does a good job of screening applicants and selecting those with a high likelihood of remaining in TTT and the teaching profession long-term. For example, a committee member remarked, "Our [TTT] candidates are different for special education. [Some used to say] I want to do special [education] because I can't get a job. TTT teachers are coming in wanting to do special [education] and wanting to stay. I'm not sure if it is the good screening [that is at work]."

### **Training/coursework**

TTT is one of two alternative routes to teacher certification/master of arts in education programs at WKU: (1) WKU-State of Kentucky sponsored ARC program and (2) the TTT program sponsored by the TTT grant (U.S. Department of Education), WKU, and GRREC. Both ARC program curricula were developed by WKU and are facilitated by WKU's professors. Students in both ARC programs may choose a content-focused track (in the Curriculum and Instruction Department) or a special education track (in the Special Education Department). Although both ARC programs offer similar curricula, they differ in funding sources, program structure, leadership, process of selection and placement, recruitment strategies, incentives, and support networks.

Candidates generally enter the TTT project during the summer semester in June and begin teaching in the fall at the school where they were recruited and hired. During the fall semester, participants from the summer cohort take approximately 6 credit hours (two courses) in WKU's graduate program, including at least one online course. In the fall, a separate cohort, composed of applicants who were selected too late or were otherwise unable to begin the summer coursework, must take 9 credit hours (three courses) during the fall semester, unless special circumstances exist. For those participants focusing in special education, 8 out of 10 of their courses are taught online. Students who pursue curriculum and instruction studies take 8 out of 10 courses on campus and the other two courses online. Participants also take a course that provides a supervised teacher internship in which they are observed and mentored by professors in the classroom setting.

Curriculum and Instruction TTT participants take 9 credit hours during their second summer semester and 2 credit hours of professional development in the fall. TTT participants who focus in special education take 6 hours in their second summer semester. Both groups take comprehensive exams after they have completed their courses. When they pass their comprehensive exams, the teachers receive their certification and master of arts degree in education.

At the start of the initiative, TTT participants, who were also full-time teachers of record, took the exact same coursework as that taken by full-time graduate students, with only minor variations in course content and sequencing to accommodate their work schedules. This approach enabled the project to be implemented quickly, but it failed to accommodate the classroom survival skills needed by new teachers. To address this problem, GRREC augments WKU's coursework by providing participants with a survival skills toolkit that consists of topical how-to publications and special professional development sessions that focus on applied skills, such as effective classroom management techniques. Recognizing this problem, WKU leadership and faculty have begun working with GRREC to make adjustments to the summer and fall introductory coursework to include more survival skill topics and to extend the timeline for course completion an additional semester for those participants who want to lighten their course load during the fall semester.

WKU, as an institution, was complimentary of the program and the training offered to its participants. In fact, the chair of the Curriculum and Instruction Department offered the view that the TTT preparation program was "cutting edge." She suggested that the ARC project at WKU has been improved by the new TTT approach and mentioned that some of the modules used by the TTT preparation program are now being used at WKU.

### **Internship**

TTT candidates begin teaching in the fall and enter the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program (KTIP) in January of the following year, approximately 3–4 months later. KTIP, a statewide induction program, includes a 1-year, supervised, paid internship in which candidates teach in their content areas.

### **Placement**

Placement is a contingency for full admission to the project. TTT candidates are not fully accepted until they are guaranteed employment by one of the partnering school districts. Each of the 18 participating districts is awarded one TTT position, and there are at-large positions based on total funded positions available and awarded on a first needs/first request basis. School districts may release their position allotment if they do not have a need. Other districts may use those released positions if their needs are greater than their original allotment. The goal for the grant project in the 2005–06 school year is to place 25 teachers.

When applicants are deemed eligible, their applications are forwarded to the school districts for review. From the pool of eligible applicants, districts select the candidates in whom they are most interested. Applicants are able to rate districts on their applications in the order in which they would most prefer to teach. Districts are aware of those who have indicated an interest in their district and use this information to select whom they wish to call, interview, and extend

offers. When selected by multiple districts, a candidate may choose the district in which he/she would be most interested in working. To be officially admitted to the TTT project, candidates must be guaranteed employment by a district. TTT and the hiring school district require a 3-year teaching commitment from program participants. GRREC also requires final candidates to sign an agreement stipulating that all costs of the program will be repaid to GRREC should the candidate choose to leave the district prior to completion of the 3-year commitment.

## **Mentoring**

As indicated above, the Kentucky Department of Education requires that all new teachers participate in KTIP, which is administered by local districts and implemented at the school level, to obtain permanent certification. KTIP evaluates all new teachers and provides the opportunity for participants to teach for a semester under the close supervision of a mentor teacher.

All TTT participants are assigned a mentor beginning in the fall semester. Oftentimes, the same mentor also serves as the KTIP mentor teacher beginning in January. During the formal KTIP process, GRREC also underwrites and augments the mentoring time that is supported by state funding. As part of KTIP, TTT teachers take a 1-hour professional development course four times during the semester and a 3-hour content course.

A TTT mentor continues to work with program participants for an additional 12 semester hours after they receive their master of arts degrees. The TTT project allows the districts to gradually assume more responsibility for the teachers, specifically in the areas of professional development and mentoring. Also in the 3rd year, as districts become more involved, the university becomes significantly less involved. However, TTT still provides support to 3rd-year participants, when needed. A selection and placement committee member expressed some concern that TTT participants may still not receive enough mentor support at the school level, “The TTT teachers don’t appear to have the advantage of having a school-based mentor through TTT.”

Like many other sites, the mentoring and induction components of the GRREC-WKU TTT program are coordinated and implemented by the participating districts and schools into which the program participants are assigned. Consequently, this part of the program has the widest variation because of such local contextual factors as the availability of mentor teachers, variations in content and frequency of district induction programs, district resources, and school-level commitment.

## **Challenges**

Although the GRREC TTT project approach has demonstrated success, administrators and implementers have cited numerous challenges. One challenge is that the transformation from a traditional curriculum to a more flexible curricular program has been slow to happen. There was concern that the attempt by the university to condense the traditional courses would not meet the needs of TTT teachers who are often new to the classroom and still adjusting to requirements and curricular structures. The WKU professors and GRREC leaders noted that the addition of more “survival” courses (i.e., first day of school, classroom management) to the curriculum would be useful and that research methods coursework should be moved to a later point in the sequence so that the survival courses would be available to be taken earlier in the sequence by teachers already starting in the classroom. Both university professors and GRREC leaders felt that while

progress is being made to develop a more effective and better sequenced curriculum, additional adjustments are still necessary.

Another salient challenge involves incentives. Many participants stated there was a need to increase the federally mandated monetary incentive provided to participants. The consensus among these participants and representatives of the grantee was that the allocation of \$5,000 as an incentive is no longer attractive to potential applicants because of increases in out-of-pocket expenses that candidates incur during the program. A stipend of \$7,500 was suggested as optimal for attracting a larger pool of applicants.

The third challenge faced by the GRREC-WKU cooperative is that it must turn away school districts that fall even slightly below the federally stipulated poverty level. According to WKU professors and GRREC leaders, only 18 of the approximately 30 GRREC school districts qualify for the TTT grant, despite the fact that several GRREC districts—including Warren County, in which Bowling Green is located—fall 1–3% above the specified poverty level. The project partners believe these counties are just as in need of teachers as the 18 counties that qualify for the grant. GRREC would like to be able to provide teachers to other high-poverty and high need districts in GRREC that currently do not qualify for the grant.

### **Key Differences Between GRREC-WKU and Other TTT Sites**

This TTT project is a regional initiative. Unlike TTT initiatives that are typically single district programs, the GRREC-WKU TTT project partners with 18 school districts. The project has the capacity to fill at least one, and in many cases several, high need area positions in 18 school districts during each year of the grant.

GRREC-WKU has been extremely successful with the TTT approach in terms of level of commitment, coordination, and buy-in from the community. TTT partners—WKU and GRREC—are actively involved with each cohort through all phases of their involvement. The commitment of these partners is further evidenced by the high retention rate; since its inception, the project has lost only three teachers.

## Maryland: Maryland State Department of Education Alternative Routes to Certification Options

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### Background and Program Rationale

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has a long history of providing alternative routes to teacher certification for highly qualified career changers and individuals who choose to become teachers shortly after completing their undergraduate degrees in a discipline other than education. Since 1990, the state has had a regulation known as the Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC) regulation that authorizes local school districts to recruit, prepare and employ teachers who have not completed teacher education programs. Districts can conduct the training themselves or work with higher education or non-higher education programs to provide the training. Requirements to enter pre-employment training include an undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher in the major or academic concentration and passing scores on Praxis I and Praxis II content tests. Because this route to a certificate was not widely used, MSDE sought to develop an innovative online approach with the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) to pre-employment training. The Maryland Transition to Teaching grant (2002) was developed to meet the state's need for creating an approach to alternative preparation and certification that would have the capacity for widespread use in the state. The core of the 2002 TTT plan was a set of online training modules to be completed during a spring semester, which would be followed by a mentored teaching internship during summer school and subsequent hiring on the RTC in the fall semester. Completion of RTC requirements while serving as teacher of record would lead participating career changers to their Standard Professional Certificate at the end of their first or second year of practice on the RTC.

In applying for the U.S. Department of Education's Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant, MSDE noted that despite its successes, the RTC program has been underused because (a) insufficient resources have made it difficult to recruit and train the ever-increasing number of teachers who are needed by school districts, (b) the program has not been linked to a centralized system for coordinating the additional professional development and certification processes that teachers need and that will ultimately help to relieve the teacher shortages, and (c) the program has offered inflexible PRAXIS testing dates.<sup>19</sup> The Maryland Alternative Routes to Certification Options (MARCO) was designed to maximize the potential of the RTC program by linking individuals, who complete the courses offered by UMUC, to a well-coordinated yet flexible support system through which they can complete the PRAXIS exams and receive the additional professional development training and mentoring required to become long-term, successful teachers in high need schools. Thus, the TTT grant program has allowed MSDE to customize the procedures of an already approved alternative certification program to meet the pressing requirements for highly qualified teachers, per the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act*, by training and certifying eligible candidates more rapidly and efficiently. Through MARCO, teacher candidates receive financial support to complete all required coursework in 14 weeks and are ready to begin working as teachers 6 months into their training.

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<sup>19</sup> Application for the TTT grant program submitted by MSDE.

According to the state coordinator of the MARCO program, when the TTT grant application was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, only two school districts in the state—Baltimore City Schools (BCS) and Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS)—were eligible for grant funding. MSDE decided to implement MARCO in PGCPS because (a) BCS high need schools are well-served by other institutions of higher education (IHEs) and other alternative certification programs and (b) PGCPS has limited access to such programs. The selection of PGCPS as a TTT implementation site was also seen as beneficial because MSDE already had a partnership with the district aimed at improving teacher quality.

PGCPS is the largest school district in Maryland, and the 18th largest in the United States, with 196 schools serving an ethnically diverse population of more than 135,700 students in grades K–12. In 2003, nearly 78% of PGCPS’s students were African American, 9% were White, more than 9% were Hispanic, more than 3% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and approximately 0.5% were American Indian. The school district employs approximately 9,000 teachers in core academic areas; however, in 2002, the year for which the latest figures are available, only 54% of all PGCPS’s core academic classrooms were led by a teacher of record who was state certified. Additionally, more than 25% of the teaching staff had 3 or fewer years of experience.<sup>20</sup> The critical need for certified teachers in PGCPS has increased during the past 3 years because of (a) a 15% attrition rate among the 1st-year teachers, who are new to the profession, and the retirement of tenured teachers; (b) a systemic effort in the school district to lower the teacher–student ratio; (c) the expansion of full-day kindergarten; and (d) the overall increase in student enrollment in the district.

Forty-one percent of schools in the PGCPS district have been designated as high need by the state of Maryland, and 19% of these schools are eligible for state takeover because they have consistently failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress, as defined by the NCLB. The problem of attrition is particularly grave in high need schools in PGCPS, where 60% of teachers resign within their first 2 years. MSDE expects that career changers trained through the MARCO program will become highly qualified teachers and will choose to remain in the school district well beyond the 3 years of service that they are required to commit in exchange for their participation in the program.

## **Program Leadership**

MARCO is operated through a partnership between MSDE, UMUC, PGCPS, and BSU. MSDE serves as the program’s fiscal agent and monitors the quality of program services to ensure that they meet state standards for teacher certification. MSDE also oversees the evaluation of the program, which is being conducted by an independent evaluator who was awarded a contract through a competitive bid process. PGCPS is responsible for recruiting, selecting, and placing participants; providing a summer internship for participants; linking MARCO’s participants to mentors; and overseeing the continued professional development of participants. UMUC serves as the provider of the online courses that MARCO’s participants must complete to be eligible for certification. BSU, which began its affiliation with MARCO during the 2nd year of the program, provides mentors who are assigned to work with MARCO’s participants during their first 2 years as teachers.

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<sup>20</sup> Data presented in Prince George’s County Public Schools Quality Schools Program Strategic Plan 2003–2008.

Although each partner has well-defined and differentiated responsibilities, they work together on all aspects of the program. For example, according to MARCO's program coordinator, he works very closely with the RTC program coordinator at UMUC to recruit applicants and process their applications for the MARCO and RTC programs and the UMUC graduate school. Furthermore, PGCPs's teacher recruitment coordinator works closely with BSU's mentor coordinator to identify teachers who have many years of service in the district and who can be trained to serve as mentors for MARCO's participants. All partners also attend quarterly meetings hosted by PGCPs.

## **Participants**

During year 1 of the program, MARCO recruited 33 participants. Twenty-two percent of the participants were male, 42% were from ethnically diverse backgrounds, and the majority of participants were career changers. On average, participants exceeded the educational requirements for admission to the program, with an average 3.2 GPA and 28% having advanced degrees beyond a bachelor's. All of the cohort 1 participants received their Maryland teacher certification and are still teaching in PGCPs.

For the 2nd year of the program, 15 participants were recruited, trained, and placed in PGCPs. The majority of 2nd-year participants were career changers and had been placed in elementary schools.

Because MARCO did not reach its recruitment goals during the fall of 2004, the program recruited 20 additional participants for cohort 2. Cohort 2 is completing coursework at UMUC and will be ready to enter the classroom during the fall of 2005.

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

MARCO recruits and selects program participants who are interested in teaching in elementary schools and math and/or science and foreign languages in secondary schools. Although MARCO is particularly interested in recruiting career changers who are long-time residents of Prince George's County and are likely to remain in the district longer than the traditional new teacher, the program also recruits recent college graduates who have limited or no prior training in teaching. For example, some of MARCO's participants have participated in the Teach for America program.

Recruitment occurs during the fall and winter months and includes a variety of strategies, such as Internet postings, advertisements in newspapers in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, and informational booths at job fairs. However, the majority of participants interviewed for this study stated that they learned about the program through the Internet and word of mouth, suggesting that these are the recruitment strategies that have been most effective. In particular, the Internet allows potential applicants to gather information from a variety of sources. For example, individuals who were originally only interested in the RTC program at UMUC learned about MARCO because RTC's Web site refers to the MARCO program as a source of funding for those interested in teaching in PGCPs and links them to PGCPs's Web site, where more information and an application are provided.

Entry into the MARCO program requires that candidates have a bachelor's degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher in the content area in which they seek certification. Candidates must also complete and pass the PRAXIS I and II exams prior to admission into the program. The application process is initially managed by PGCPs, which reviews potential candidates' applications, written essays, transcripts, and Praxis scores. When PGCPs verifies eligibility, candidates must complete UMUC's graduate application to gain entry into the RTC program; however, UMUC's application process is viewed as a formality. According to RTC and PGCPs's program coordinators, "RTC pretty much accepts everyone we [PGCPs] have approved because we make sure that they already meet their qualifications."

Candidates accepted into the MARCO program receive a stipend that covers 50% of the costs associated with taking the courses offered through RTC. Additionally, although placement does not occur until after all coursework and the summer internship experience are completed, all candidates are guaranteed employment as teachers of record with PGCPs. Teachers who complete the MARCO program are immediately deemed to be highly qualified and are issued the Maryland Standard Professional Certificate. Furthermore, MARCO's participants can use credit earned from having completed the RTC coursework toward completing a master's in teaching degree through UMUC, BSU, and other University System of Maryland institutions.

### **Training/coursework**

All individuals admitted into the MARCO program begin the online courses offered through UMUC's RTC program in the spring. Although the program includes 9 hours of self-paced coursework, MARCO uses a cohort approach, whereby all participants must start and complete the course series at the same time. The majority of the coursework is offered online; however, face-to-face contact among participants and faculty members does occur during the final stages of the program.

Coursework is divided into six modules that are designed to familiarize participants with educational theory and practical issues relevant to teaching in contemporary classrooms.

- **Module 1** provides participants with an overview of state and national standards for teachers, expectations for teacher professional development, and issues that impact K–12 educational systems nationally and locally (such as the impact of NCLB and school reform).
- **Module 2** reviews major concepts and theories related to child and adolescent social and cognitive development and is designed to create an awareness of the impact of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and socioeconomic status on teaching and learning.
- **Module 3** exposes participants to models of curriculum design, methods for classroom planning and instruction, and student evaluation.
- **Module 4** pairs participants online with an expert in the content area in which they intend to teach, so that they may share information about the types of resources and materials that are available in the subject area.
- **Module 5** provides an overview of language development, strategies for developing and improving reading skills and comprehension, and techniques for assessing reading abilities and diagnosing reading problems.



- **Module 6** requires participants to use the knowledge and skills that they have developed during the previous modules to design teaching units that are then assessed by the instructors. During this module, participants are paired with teacher mentors and provided with opportunities to present the teaching lessons that they have designed. The lessons are videotaped and assessed by faculty members and current teachers.

Instructors for the online courses include faculty from UMUC and from other University System of Maryland institutions, as well as master and national board certified teachers from Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools and other school systems across the United States. All RTC instructors must receive training in the delivery of online courses to qualify to teach the program.

Because many of MARCO's participants complete the coursework while they are still employed, the majority of them report that they like the flexibility and independence of the online instruction format. One of the participants remarked, "The courses provide what you need without the frills." Both career changers and recent college graduates indicated that it was stimulating to obtain the additional skills and background that they needed to "put what [they] know" to work in the classroom without having to spend too much time covering irrelevant material or "stuff [we] already know."

The state of Maryland requires all teachers to complete additional course units in reading during their 1st year of teaching. UMUC offers online reading courses for elementary and secondary schoolteachers that many of MARCO's participants complete to fulfill reading requirements.

### **Internship**

Maryland teachers who graduate from traditional schools of education are required to complete a 1-year structured internship in an elementary or secondary school. Internships occur in what the state terms as "professional development schools" (PDS)—a rigorous and systematic training curriculum designed collaboratively by school districts and partnering IHEs to provide interns with experiences in effective teaching and learning pedagogy. Although each school district and partnering institution is free to design a PDS curriculum that is tailored to meet the particular needs of their teacher recruits and that reflects particular pedagogical emphases, school improvement efforts, or student populations served by the individual school districts, the MSDE must approve all PDS curricula before they are implemented.

Exceptions to the 1-year internship requirement are provided based on the characteristics of newly hired teachers. For example, teachers who have taught in other states, but are new to Maryland, may complete internships that are shorter in duration. Individuals who receive their Maryland teacher certification through alternative programs also complete shorter internships. For MARCO, Prince George's County has developed an abbreviated PDS training that emphasizes strategies for teaching in urban, multicultural classrooms and is designed to expose participants to PGCPS's curriculum, the creation of lesson plans, classroom management strategies, and students enrolled in the grades in which they will serve as teachers of record. MARCO's participants complete the PDS curriculum during a 4-week period within the elementary and secondary schools that offer summer sessions prior to the academic year in which they will start teaching. During the summer PDS experience, MARCO's participants

attend seminars offered by faculty members from UMUC, develop lesson plans, and serve as teachers under the guidance of district teachers and mentors provided by BSU. Faculty members conduct classroom observations, review lesson plans and classroom management strategies with participants, model effective strategies, and provide suggestions for improvements.

The PGCPs's MARCO administrator interviewed for this study described the summer internship as a "critical experience that exposes MARCO's participants to the realities of the schools and the students we serve." According to this administrator, "Recruits who find that they can not handle the types of situations we confront every day in the classroom simply will not make it." For this reason, successful completion of the 4-week summer internship is required before MARCO participants are placed as teachers of record in PGCPs. The summer PDS training is structured to allow participants to work in the classrooms in the morning, while mentors are observing them, and to spend the afternoons reviewing issues that arose during their teaching sessions or attending seminars that focus on practical classroom management issues.

The majority of MARCO's participants view the summer PDS training as the "most valuable" component of the program. Not only does it allow participants to put into practice what they learn through coursework, but it also "gives hands-on experience with the challenges of working with kids. It really tells you if you can do this."

Another intent of the summer PDS training is to foster a sense of cohort cohesion among MARCO's participants. Although several participants mentioned that they enjoyed being able to discuss their classroom experiences with others who were "in the same boat," their responses do not suggest that they feel part of a greater group of peers. For many, MARCO is a way of fulfilling individual goals and desires to teach. Participants appear to receive support primarily from their assigned mentors and other teachers in the schools in which they are placed, not necessarily from each other.

## **Placement**

MARCO's participants interview for teaching positions during the summer following the summer PDS training. The process for applying for a teaching position in PGCPs is coordinated at the district level by the local MARCO coordinator, who serves as the certification coordinator for the district. He stated that his job is to help the teacher candidates complete the district's application and to link them to the principals of schools that have vacancies. Ultimately, it's the principals who interview and hire participants from the MARCO program.

In 2002, the MARCO program secured teaching positions for all of its 33 participants. Twenty-four of the participants were placed as elementary school teachers, and 9 were placed as secondary-level school teachers: 4 in science, 1 in foreign languages, 1 in language arts, and 3 in various specialty areas in high need schools in PGCPs.

## **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

During the 1st year of the MARCO program, participants were assigned a mentor by the PGCPs district office during the summer PDS training. The mentor was supposed to continue to provide support during the school year. However, many participants reported that mentoring was sporadic and that they often relied on other teachers in their schools for support and advice. For

the current, 2nd year of the program, MARCO has partnered with BSU to develop a comprehensive system of mentoring that is designed to provide participants with expert guidance and support during their first 2 years of teaching. In addition to BSU's mentors, PGCPS also provides all 1st-year teachers with a mentor who is located in the same school.

PGCPS's program coordinator identifies retired teachers and administrators in the district who are then trained by BSU to serve as mentors to MARCO's participants during the summer PDS training and for the first 2 years of teaching. Each mentor is assigned four or five participants and is required to meet with them at least twice monthly. During their meetings, mentors typically observe classrooms taught by MARCO's participants, review classroom lesson plans, and provide general advice on classroom management and other issues. BSU also monitors mentors to ensure that they are meeting regularly with their mentees and to review the issues that they are confronting during their mentoring sessions.

This improved mentoring system appears to be working. Individuals who participated in MARCO during the 1st year report that they now have someone they can talk to regularly in person or by phone. One participant reported that her BSU mentor has met with her in-school mentor and together they made sure that she implemented some strategies in the classroom that helped her teach more effectively.

## **Challenges**

Recruiting participants has been MARCO's greatest challenge. The program expected to recruit 50 participants in its 1st year and 75 in its 2nd year, but it has fallen short of its goals. During the 2nd year, the shortfall in recruitment was said to be due primarily to the resignation of the recruiter. RTC's coordinator believes that to require participants to complete the PRAXIS I and II exams prior to admission is one of the factors that may be hindering MARCO's attempts to meet its recruitment goals. MARCO has specifically targeted career changers. Because many of these individuals have been away from the content area in which they intend to teach, it may be more difficult for them to pass the exams prior to admission. According to the RTC coordinator, recent college graduates are more likely to pass the exams because the content is still fresh.

In the future, MARCO's coordinators at the state and local levels intend to address the recruitment challenges by broadening their recruitment strategies to include presentations to recent retirees and by considering offering PRAXIS study sessions to potential candidates.

## **Key Differences Between MARCO and Other TTT Sites**

Implementing a well-coordinated system for mentoring participants has been one of the greatest challenges for many TTT sites. MARCO, on the other hand, appears to have recovered from a 1st year when mentoring was less than optimal: It now implements mentoring services that ensure that all participants receive consistent and ongoing support from highly qualified, experienced teachers during the first 2 years of teaching. MARCO's mentors receive training prior to working with mentees, and their work is monitored to ensure that 1st-year teachers are properly served. Furthermore, the strong partnership between the district and BSU ensures that participants receive the same message from both the BSU mentor and the in-school mentor that is assigned by the district.

# Montana: Montana State University, Bozeman—Northern Plains Transition to Teaching

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## Background and Program Rationale

Montana State University (MSU) in Bozeman, MT, initiated the formation of the Northern Plains Transition to Teaching (NPTT) project, a tri-state partnership between Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. All three states participating in NPTT have similar needs and have experienced difficulties with recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. For example, in the 2001–02 school year, Montana had 991 teaching vacancies, but only 300 were filled by recent college graduates from Montana institutions. The state education agencies from the three partnering states attribute some of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining newly trained teachers to low beginning salaries. In a survey conducted in 2001 among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, all 3 states were rated as having some of the lowest teacher salaries: Wyoming ranked 42nd, South Dakota ranked 49th, and Montana ranked 50th.

The states' inability to attract and retain certified teachers from traditional certification programs has resulted in a reliance on emergency, provisional, or temporary certifications to fill teaching positions. Even with such provisions, teaching positions in some schools in these states remain vacant. The need to address the states' teacher shortages resulted in the creation of a collaborative alternative route to teacher certification that attracts mid-career professionals who are interested in living in rural areas.

The NPTT partnership includes the Montana Office of Public Instruction, the South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, and the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board. Troops-to-Teachers, established in 1994 to assist retiring military personnel interested in pursuing careers in education, is also an NPTT partner. It is primarily aligned with the Montana Office of Public Instruction and MSU. With the partnership's office located at MSU, NPTT can recruit from MSU's pool of retired military personnel. NPTT has secured a memorandum of understanding with the area's National Guard and reserve units and high need local education agencies (LEAs) and schools to ensure that participants in the Troops-to-Teachers program receive appropriate training and classroom placements. Additionally, several other organizations assist NPTT with candidate recruitment and placement, including the Montana Board of Public Education, the Montana School Boards Association, and the Montana Education Association-Montana Federation of Teachers.

## Program Leadership

NPTT is managed and operated by a team of professional educators at MSU's College of Education. The team consists primarily of a principal investigator (PI), project director, assistant project director, and program coordinator. The PI remarked that his role as dean of the College of Education allows him to exercise a considerable amount of decision-making authority over the program and to confer NPTT with visibility and credibility. During site visits, the project director, who was instrumental in writing the Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant and in designing the program of instruction, was referred to as the project's "chief architect." Prior to joining NPTT, he was at the forefront of the alternative certification movement in the state of

Virginia, where he also worked closely with local and national Troops-to-Teachers programs. His many years of involvement with the design and management of alternative certification programs and his national reputation as an expert in the field motivated the PI to hire the project director and to ask him to relocate to Montana.

In describing his role, the assistant project director reported that he did “a little bit of everything.” His role included identifying potential faculty members, scheduling courses, coordinating with partners and the telecommunications center, and serving on the selection committee. The program coordinator provides general support for NPTT participants and was praised by the participants for serving as the “backbone of [the] program.”

Although the South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Wyoming Professional Standards Board partner with MSU on this project, they reportedly play a minimal role in the program’s overall management and operation. The representatives of these state partners described their biggest role as assisting MSU in recruiting qualified applicants for the program. One state partner reported, “I present a lot around the state, like at a superintendent’s conference. I did a session on alternative certification at a school board meeting.” The partners reported that they are not involved in the selection of candidates, and they reported different levels of involvement in assisting in the program’s overall design. One state partner remarked, “I have no involvement in [the program’s] design or delivery. If the information within those courses meets our standards, it’s up to the institutions. I have looked at them.” The other partner, however, reported, “We did review the list of courses. [That’s] one of the first things we did.” The partner also added that her state requires certification candidates to take human relations and Indian studies, to which she remarked, “NPTT was flexible and worked that into the program.” The Troops-to-Teachers program also plays a role in the program’s operations. As partners, NPTT offers a viable training option for Troops-to-Teachers participants and in turn, Troops-to-Teachers pays its NPTT participants a \$5,000 incentive, allowing NPTT to conserve its funding to support nonmilitary participants.

The project director reported that a handful of MSU faculty and staff outside of the management team also work with the project, namely the technology coordinator, certification specialist, and online course instructors—many of whom play dual roles (e.g., technology coordinator and online course instructor, director of certification and mentoring coordinator) through their involvement in the project.

## **Participants**

As of September 2004, 98 candidates were actively involved in or had recently completed the NPTT program. Ninety-five percent ( $n = 93$ ) of participants are White (51 males and 47 females), and American Indian/Alaska Natives (4%) and Asian Americans (1%) together comprised the remaining 5% of the program’s population. One candidate described his/her ethnicity as Hispanic.

The average NPTT candidate is 37 years of age. Twenty-one percent hold a master’s degree or higher, and 66% reported that they intended to pursue a master’s degree after receiving their state teaching licensure. Participants pursued endorsements in 13 subject areas, including agricultural education, library science, and technology education. Nearly 30% of participants pursued an

endorsement in science, and 21% of participants pursued endorsements in each of the following subjects: English, mathematics, and social science.

Forty NPTT participants had been placed as of September 2004, as either interns or fully certified/licensed teachers: 25 participants were placed in Montana schools, 12 in Wyoming schools, and 3 in South Dakota schools.

Overall, participants reported that NPTT met their expectations and adequately prepared them to enter the classroom. One participant remarked, “Hands down, it meets my expectations.” Another added, “This has been a great experience for me. I wouldn’t be a teacher today if it wasn’t for this program.” One participant credited the program with providing the foundation for how he teaches, “The program did prepare me for teaching these kids, even K–8. In the courses, learning child development has been key. I’m really interested in and use some of what I learned about Montessori. I like the philosophical approach. . . . The content has been designed well, beginning with human development and Montessori. They are the foundation for the way I teach.” Another participant described the program as an “amazing and exciting experience” that provided “exactly what I wanted out of it.” In terms of teaching in general, one candidate exclaimed, “I’ve never loved a job so much.”

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

NPTT engaged in an aggressive marketing and recruitment campaign at the local, regional, and national levels during the 1st year of the program’s operation. News stories about NPTT appeared in regional and national media, including *The Washington Post*, *The Seattle Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Arizona Republican*, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, Associated Press wire service, and CNN. Local, regional, and tribal newspapers in all three partnering states carried advertisements that promoted NPTT, and promotional information was sent to local ABC, NBC, and CBS television affiliates that explained the need that NPTT would fulfill and the types of candidates that the program was attempting to recruit. Additionally, NPTT representatives promoted the program through presentations at numerous local, state, regional, and national professional conferences and meetings. The NPTT Web site also continues to be a primary source of information about the program. The program’s marketing efforts were reportedly responsible for approximately 5,000 telephone and e-mail inquiries.

According to NPTT administrators, the most successful promotional activity was NPTT’s story on CNN’s Education Web sitelet. The story was reportedly the second most frequently visited page on the Web sitelet for 2 weeks in February 2003. A teacher participant shared that he learned about the program through CNN. “I was reading the news on cnn.com and learned about the program. There was an article explaining how the program worked and it included their Web site.” The project director, however, still credits face-to-face visits as the program’s most effective method of recruitment. The director added, “I’d say that me going to visit face-to-face with people has been a very effective tool. No other method puts a face behind the program, which is key.” The director shared, “I meet with district people, state officials, union people, and even people from other universities. I try to see them as often as I can. The goal is to generate

interest and applicants, indirectly, and school districts willing to take candidates. Being “on good terms” with key officials helped head off opposition to the program.

NPTT’s recruitment targets mid-career professionals who hold at least a bachelor’s degree in a teachable subject area, who have prior work experience, and who are interested in living in rural areas. According to NPTT’s project director, “The program targets career switchers, Troops-to-Teachers participants, and Native Americans with an interest in teaching. We generally want individuals who have subject matter backgrounds and who have a record of work showing that they have some coherence to their career path.”

Additional evidence of applicant interest and suitability were required by submitting the following:

- Autobiographical essays;
- Personal education statement;
- Required grade point average (GPA);
- Appropriate results on graduate exams and PRAXIS tests; and
- Telephone interviews.

Three times each year, an NPTT selection committee selects candidates for the program. The committee is comprised of the chairperson and faculty of MSU’s Curriculum Department; a certification representative; and NPTT’s director, assistant director, and advisor. The selection process entails four levels of screenings. During the first screening, members of the selection committee review each applicant’s folder. The second screening involves a candidate review meeting between NPTT personnel and MSU faculty. From that meeting, likely candidates are referred to the selection committee’s certification representative, who examines applicants’ potential teaching content background and previous general academic preparation. The final screening involves a meeting of the entire selection committee, where consensus is reached about candidate eligibility and acceptance. Telephone interviews are conducted with potential applicants as the last step in the selection and admission process.

According to program participants, the program’s delivery format, design and structure, and promised financial assistance served as incentives, convincing them to apply to the program. Participants remarked, “It was important to me that I could take courses while I was still working in California,” and “The opportunity to get my teaching certificate without getting another bachelor’s degree,” and “It gave me the ability to get into the high school classroom without waiting. I could get right in and start working,” and “The \$5,000 grant covering all tuition cost was everything. We’re still paying off my wife’s education. . . . The fact that it was a grant meant the world and helped me take it more seriously.” The project director confirmed, “The financial incentives are definitely important. We offer \$5,000 which covers all costs of the program for the participant. That reflects a very good tuition rate for 24 credits, but we deliberately negotiated that low rate for this program.” The PI shared that in many ways and because of the negotiated low rate, MSU is providing an in-kind contribution to support the program.

## Training/coursework

The NPTT program is designed to move new teachers into high need, rural secondary classrooms as quickly as possible, without sacrificing teacher quality or preparation.<sup>21</sup> NPTT's structure allows candidates to complete the program and become fully certified in less than 2 years. Candidates are eligible to serve as teachers of record in classrooms while participating in the rigorous teacher preparation program.

The NPTT curriculum is delivered to students online using a nationally recognized, asynchronous distance-delivery model previously used by MSU's National Teachers Enhancement Network (NTEN).<sup>22</sup> NTEN used the model to deliver standards-based professional development to inservice teachers of science. NPTT's Web-based delivery format allows the program to reach participants regardless of their location. Because much of the tri-state region is sparsely populated, the distance between participants' homes, the LEAs in which they are placed, and MSU makes the online delivery system a successful format. Participants were satisfied with the format for many reasons: "It's all online. You can take the courses from anywhere. The only disadvantage is that I'm a people person. Sending e-mail and waiting for responses is hard, but I like the convenience and you are not limited in what you can say through e-mail the way you are in the classroom. I could write as much as I wanted and not get cut off for talking too much. Through e-mail and chatrooms, you can also cover a greater diversity of topics that you couldn't necessarily cover in the classroom." Another participant concurred, "It's all online, which is good because I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise. I just couldn't take off work to go back to school full time to become a teacher. . . . I'm sure there would have been more of a dynamic offline, being in the same classroom with other students, but we were still able to exchange information and serve as support for each other through e-mail and online chats."

A curriculum design team was organized in January 2003 to develop NPTT's training curriculum. The team consisted of MSU faculty, adjunct faculty, and telecommunications specialists. Because none of the partnering states had a formal alternative certification program in place, the design team relied on elements of each states' newly revised certification standards to develop a training program that met the licensure eligibility needs of each partnering state. The curriculum includes an eight-course, sequenced curriculum of 24 credit hours: 18 credits in coursework and 6 credits of resident teaching internship. Each course is a graduate-level, research-based course. The curriculum, approved by MSU and the state partners, was implemented in May 2003 and is assessed and modified, as necessary, on an ongoing basis.

The course sequence is as follows:

- Qualification courses (9 credits);
- Inservice/internship courses (9 credits); and
- Continuing preparation courses (6 credits).

Participants are required to complete the first three classes (9 credits) in the eight-course sequence to become eligible for the mandatory teaching internship. The first three classes,

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<sup>21</sup> NPTT Program Summary.

<sup>22</sup> NPTT Proposal Project Narrative, Part VII.



referred to as the “qualification courses,” qualify NPTT students to teach. The qualification courses include: human development and the psychology of learning; diversity, special needs, and classroom discipline; and curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment.

The next three classes (9 credits) are referred to as the “inservice/internship courses.” These are the courses in which students enroll during the 1-year resident teaching internship. The courses include: technology, instructional design, and learner success; internship I—methods of teaching; and internship II—equity, special needs, and diversity.

The last two courses (6 credits) are sequenced so that participants take the courses in the summer following their 1st year of teaching. The courses are referred to as “continuing preparation courses” and include the legal, social, and practical basis of schooling; and brain science, educational research, and teaching. NPTT will soon add a diversity course in Native American studies to address the gap in its training that was identified through discussions with partnering LEAs and mentors. The course will be designed to assist students in understanding the history and culture of Native Americans, who are largely represented in the areas serviced by NPTT, and to meet the certification requirements of one of the partnering states.

MSU’s faculty and staff currently teach NPTT online courses. Assignments stimulate discussions. The instructors pose questions to students and encourage them to respond to each other and connect their life experience to the material being covered. Instructors described the online delivery as different, but interesting. “[I] thought I would hate it because I’m a people person, but it has been interesting because it has forced me to develop new ways of connecting with students.” Another instructor described her online class as “almost a mentoring type thing.” She stated, “It keeps the teacher very mindful. I get a window into the classroom through the weekly assignments as well as through the discussion threads.” An adjunct instructor added that the course is well-defined: “We inherit what they want us to teach. I receive a pretty prescriptive syllabus.”

NPTT reported that it intends to implement an aggressive effort to recruit course instructors to facilitate its online training curriculum. Recruiting activities will target master teachers, such as national board certified teachers, curriculum, and instruction doctoral students. NPTT plans to conduct interviews and selection meetings at local, regional, and national professional meetings, as appropriate. Consistent with its investment in online delivery, NPTT expects that the majority of training for NPTT instructors will take place online.<sup>23</sup>

The final step in the NPTT alternative certification process is the development of participants’ professional portfolios that are used to verify candidates’ eligibility for full licensure as teachers. NPTT provides direct assistance to participants in organizing their portfolios through an on-campus symposium. Portfolio materials include the following:

- Journal entries;
- Monthly video tapes of teaching with commentary;
- Lesson and unit plans;

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<sup>23</sup> NPTT Proposal, Executive Summary, July 28, 2003.

- Work samples;
- Supervisors' evaluations;
- Evidence of professional growth; and
- Evidence of student learning.

Separate from the NPTT program and following the completion of all requirements for state licensure and certification, participants are offered the opportunity to complete two additional graduate-level courses (6 credits), at their own expense, to earn a master's degree in education. Like NPTT's required coursework, these additional classes are offered online and support NPTT's encouragement of professional development among its candidates. Of those who have participated in the program, 66% indicated interest in pursuing the master's degree.

### **Internship**

After completing the program's first three required classes (i.e., the qualifying courses), NPTT participants are eligible to be placed in high need or other rural secondary schools to complete a mandatory 1-year supervised internship. The internship allows participants to enter into full-time, salaried teaching positions under alternative or temporary licensure as part of their teacher training and preparation. NPTT's internship design is based on a resident teaching model that includes mentoring, supervision, and a sustained helpline to the program.<sup>24</sup> Supervision is provided by a corps of itinerant university supervisors that visit participants periodically in their schools.

### **Placement**

According to the assistant project director, NPTT participants are "ultimately responsible for finding their own jobs." Every spring, NPTT creates a CD-ROM containing the names and background profiles of eligible cohort participants that is distributed to all of the high need school districts located in the partnering states. Fifty high need LEAs and other rural schools have agreed to partner with NPTT to place and train its alternative certification candidates. (Thirty-one LEAs in Montana, 13 in South Dakota, and 6 in Wyoming have formally agreed to partner with NPTT.) These high need agencies and schools were identified from the U.S. Department of Education's list of high need school districts and schools in the Montana region. NPTT contacted the schools, sent them information about the program, held meetings, and solicited their participation.

Interns confirmed their role in the placement process using the resource of the Office of Professional Instruction's Web site: "[OPI has] a listing of all available jobs. I filled out an application for the places I was interested in [and] went through interviews with principals and teachers. . . . I wish that [NPTT] would handle placement, but at least [it] facilitated things. People didn't know very much about the program, so the program would call and let the schools know what NPTT was all about."

From the program's inception to September 2004, 40 participants have been placed as teachers of record in partnering districts and schools. This number includes those who are actively

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<sup>24</sup> NPTT Program Summary.

engaged in the 1st year of teaching as paid interns and those who have completed the NPTT program.

### **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

Mentoring is considered an important program component, and NPTT has made strides to formalize and structure it in a way that is beneficial to participants. NPTT's mentoring program has been designed and shaped based on the experience and success of MSU's teaching intern program. NPTT seeks master teachers that are fully licensed, have at least 5 years teaching experience, and are familiar with the interns' school site and subject matter to serve as mentors. NPTT, however, acknowledged that identifying mentors for its participants has been a challenge. According to the program's mentoring coordinator, "In rural districts it is often difficult to identify mentors with the same content background [as the interns]," particularly in the same school. A compromise solution implemented by NPTT has been to identify mentors in the school with different content backgrounds than the interns.

Mentors are identified and selected through a variety of methods. First, all LEAs partnering with NPTT sign a memorandum of understanding acknowledging that they will assist in the mentoring process. Schools and collaborating state departments of education are solicited to recommend mentors, and once interns are hired, they may nominate a potential mentor. The University Student Teaching Office at MSU is asked to provide names of potential mentors.

Once a mentor has been identified, NPTT contacts the mentor for an interest interview. If interested, a letter of agreement is sent to the potential mentor and his/her vita is added to the NPTT mentor database. NPTT sends a copy of the training manual to the mentor, and a follow-up interview is conducted.<sup>25</sup> The NPTT *Mentor Teacher's Handbook* outlines the roles and responsibilities of the mentor and expectations regarding the mentor-mentee relationship. At present, no formal mentor training is offered to new mentors; however, NPTT intends to develop this component. Mentors are paid an honorarium of \$500 each semester, for a total of \$1,000 per year.

NPTT participants described varying mentor-mentee experiences that underscore the challenges identified by the coordinator. Two participants described meaningful mentoring experiences. One participant described her mentor as accessible and supportive, "I've been very happy with her. I can go to her for anything, and she is very helpful and supportive." Another participant reported, "My mentor takes an interest and works well with me. We communicate well and are compatible. I think that's the most important thing. He isn't in my content area but that doesn't matter." Other participants, however, felt that having a mentor in the same content area was critical. As one participant expressed, "I had a mentor, but it just wasn't beneficial. He wasn't in the same academic discipline, so he wasn't much of a mentor. . . . I think you need to have a mentor who is in the same academic discipline." Another participant described an unsatisfactory mentor-mentee relationship but reported that he was able to find support elsewhere. "I had a poor mentor. He wasn't very helpful, but I have a great principal and other teachers who help mentor. I can go to them with questions." Several participants felt that NPTT should do a better job of

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<sup>25</sup> NPTT, *The Mentor Teacher's Handbook*.

screening and selecting mentors. One participant suggested, “There needs to be some kind of training or coursework for mentors so they know what to do.”

The mentoring coordinator reported that NPTT was moving toward having two mentors for each participant—an online mentor and a school-based mentor. In addition to mentoring, NPTT participants are offered support through the program’s online advising component. Online course instructors, as well as the designated NPTT advisor, are available via Web and telephone to assist NPTT students with questions about the program, placement, and certification. Support is also offered to participants through organized support groups that are offered in each partnering state. South Dakota was the last of the three participating states to organize its support group for its candidates.

## **Challenges**

NPTT administrators acknowledged that the program’s ability to recruit master teachers who will serve as mentors to interns is an obvious challenge. NPTT’s faculty advisors currently supervise interns, and as such, make visits to participating schools to observe interns and offer support. However, as the program continues to grow, the absence of qualified onsite mentors could place considerable hardship on the advisors’ abilities to meet the professional development needs of all program participants. Establishing onsite mentoring relationships is the most advantageous situation for interns, especially considering the rural locations and distances between the participating LEAs and MSU.

## **Key Differences Between NPTT and Other TTT Sites**

Several differences set NPTT apart from other TTT sites visited. The program’s regional partnership between three states (Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming) is one of the most significant. Most of the other sites visited for this study had implemented statewide or district-specific TTT programs that were self-contained. Through the tri-state collaboration, NPTT ensures that the preparation participants receive meets the licensure requirements in each state. In turn, participants are offered reciprocity, allowing them to teach in any of the three states.

The program’s delivery format and structure represents another key difference between it and other TTT sites visited for this study. NPTT delivers its training online using an asynchronous distance-delivery model. Because of the region’s rural demographics and the distant locations of the rural high need LEAs in which participants are placed, Web-based training and support appears to be a successful method for helping these rural states address their teacher shortages. Participants like its flexibility and faculty are exploring its utility. The use of Web-based technology as the sole means of providing teacher preparation coursework is quite different from the instructional delivery format of other TTT sites visited, which relied primarily on in-person, face-to-face training, or a combination of the two approaches.

## **South Carolina: South Carolina State Department of Education Program of Alternative Certification for Educators**

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### **Background and Program Rationale**

The South Carolina Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE) represents the culmination of more than 2 decades of efforts in the state to address the problem of teacher shortages. Since 1984, South Carolina has conducted annual surveys of school district personnel to identify the subject areas in which they have difficulty filling vacancies. This information is then combined with the vacancies reported by each district to compile the overall critical needs list that identifies critical subject areas and geographic areas experiencing teacher shortages.<sup>26</sup> During the past 20 years, South Carolina has seen a significant increase in the need for highly qualified instructors to teach in critical subject areas. In 1984, the critical needs list included only two critical subject areas, but in 2003, 12 critical subject areas were identified. The Critical Needs Program—South Carolina’s initial alternative route to teacher certification program—was developed in 1984 in response to the identified shortages.

The Critical Needs Program was originally administered through Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. During the early years of the program, the South Carolina State Department of Education (SCSDE) played a minimal role in the alternative certification process. Instead, SCSDE’s primary responsibility was to certify participants after they completed the program. Over time it became apparent to SCSDE that the Critical Needs Program was not keeping pace with the state’s increasing shortage of highly qualified teachers. Administering the program through a single university (and additional satellites) ultimately placed limitations on the number of teachers that could pursue alternative certification at a given time. For example, the Winthrop University program admitted only 30 students annually and only 240 teachers completed the program and received alternative certification during a 10-year period. Such limitations resulted in South Carolina’s inability to adequately address its teacher shortage in a timely manner.

As a result of the shortcomings of the Critical Needs Program, SCSDE partnered with the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention & Advancement (CERRA), formerly known as the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment (SCCTR), to improve South Carolina’s alternative teacher certification process. Through the U.S. Department of Education’s Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant program, SCSDE assumed full responsibility for implementing the state’s alternative certification training program. Before receiving TTT funding, SCSDE changed the name from the Critical Needs Program to PACE. After the grant was received, SCSDE developed its own statewide teacher training curriculum, hired its own PACE instructional staff, and expanded the program to make it available to teachers throughout South Carolina by offering courses at convenient training facilities in six regions of the state. This state-driven program, with virtually no involvement or partnerships with institutions of higher education (IHEs), provides a uniquely designed approach for addressing South Carolina’s teacher shortages in critical needs districts. At the start of the grant, SCSDE anticipated that during the 5-year TTT

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<sup>26</sup> A subject area is considered critical if 20 percent or more of the teaching positions available are vacant or filled with individuals not fully certified in that subject (PACE Transition to Teaching Grant Proposal Abstract, Part V, pages 23–24).

grant period, PACE could provide a complete alternative certification program to three cohorts of 500–750 participants each.<sup>27</sup> However, this goal was reassessed after recognizing the requirements of placing teachers in districts that meet the federal program’s definition of “high need.”

In transforming the Critical Needs Program into the PACE program, SCSDE set out to do the following:

- Expand the partnership between SCSDE and CERRA to improve the quality of participants and the quality of the training in alternative certification programs;
- Recruit, train, and retain highly qualified teachers;
- Produce an alternative certification curriculum that includes continuous assessments and evaluations of participants and training for instructors and reflects the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) and state teacher standards;
- Provide appropriate counseling and placement services to those who are interested in applying to and participating in PACE;
- Provide training programs at locations and times to allow participants to meet their training requirements prior to entering the classroom or shortly thereafter;
- Reduce the personal hardships and expenses often experienced by participants in the previous distant, residential program; and
- Provide state-funded training programs at locations and times to meet the needs of all participants in all areas of the state.

## **Program Leadership**

PACE is operated and managed by the SCSDE Office of Teacher Certification, which is housed in the Division of Teacher Quality. In the Office of Teacher Certification, staff members who were involved in the former Critical Needs alternative certification program were instrumental in restructuring the Critical Needs Program into PACE. They wrote the TTT proposal that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education and are actively involved in the operations of PACE, including the PACE program operations in critical needs districts that do not qualify for the TTT services. Currently, the staff responsible for administering PACE includes the director of the Office of Teacher Certification, an alternative certification coordinator and PACE project director, a counselor, two certification analysts, and a part-time administrative assistant. Individuals interviewed during the site visit credit the program’s success to the PACE project director and the counselor. According to the director of the Office of Teacher Certification, “I don’t think you’ll find two people who have been as committed. They’ve done a great job. They’ve monitored [the program]. The project director keeps me updated. I credit her for insisting on integrity. We have had pleasant disagreements about who gets [into the program]. I am a little more flexible, but she holds the line and it has played out well.”

The PACE counselor and administrative assistant positions were created in the Office of Teacher Certification as a result of having obtained TTT funding from the U.S. Department of Education.

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<sup>27</sup> PACE Transition to Teaching Grant Proposal Abstract, Part V, page 12.

This added staffing is believed to be crucial to the project’s overall functioning and ability to serve participants. But during site visits, PACE staff, who were responsible for the day-to-day operations, commented that even more staffing was required. The program coordinator stated, “We need more help. [The counselor’s] role was originally created to be a counselor but she’s doing program administration and coordination, but we need her as a counselor for participants.” The director of the Office of Teacher Certification also reported that additional staff would allow the current alternative certification coordinator to focus more on coordinating and managing the certification process for program participants.

The PACE staff works closely with CERRA, which is primarily responsible for recruiting PACE participants and for working closely with SCSDE to ensure that the state retains its newly trained teachers. The partnership between SCSDE and CERRA is longstanding. The current senior director of SCSDE’s Division of Teacher Quality<sup>28</sup> was the founder of SCCTR. Prior to joining SCSDE, she worked at SCCTR for 10 years, and the relationship between SCCTR and SCSDE was established during the early days of the Critical Needs Program. Both SCSDE and CERRA share a common mission of ensuring that the state has highly qualified teachers in all schools across the state. Additionally, because the PACE recruiter hired by CERRA is a product of the former program, he has first-hand knowledge of and experience with the alternative certification process. Therefore, she is able to provide potential applicants with credible and practical information about the PACE program requirements and demands.

A statewide advisory committee—composed of representatives from district personnel offices, colleges of education, current and former program participants, and representatives from SCSDE and CERRA—provides overall guidance to the program. The advisory committee meets at least four times each year and is specifically tasked with reviewing PACE guidelines, assessing the training program’s progress, and determining whether the alternative route to certification is meeting the teaching needs of South Carolina’s high need local education agencies (LEAs).<sup>29</sup>

## Participants

Currently, the average age of PACE participants is 35 years. The smallest percentage of participants (3.5%) falls in the 18- to 24-year age group. Females comprise 66% of PACE participants. Regarding race/ethnicity, 54% of participants are White; 42% are African American; and together Asian American, American Indian, and Hispanic Americans comprise less than 4%. Science and language arts are the content areas taught by the majority of PACE participants (19 and 18%, respectively).<sup>30</sup> When the PACE TTT proposal was written, more than 1,200 participants were reportedly in various stages of South Carolina’s alternative certification program.<sup>31</sup> The program credited itself with being successful in attracting underrepresented populations. Males comprised 30% and minorities comprised 32% of the state’s alternative certification participants.<sup>32</sup> These percentages have increased since that time.

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<sup>28</sup> The Division of Teacher Quality oversees the Office of Teacher Certification that administers the PACE program.

<sup>29</sup> PACE Transition to Teaching Grant Proposal Abstract, Part V, page 58.

<sup>30</sup> All participant data retrieved from the PACE program coordinator.

<sup>31</sup> Of the 1,200 participants, 400–500 were PACE TTT participants. The remaining number represents state-funded PACE participants who were not teaching in high need districts, as defined by the federal government.

<sup>32</sup> PACE Transition to Teaching Grant Proposal Abstract, Part V, page 23.

The first PACE cohort, Cohort 1, recently completed the preservice and inservice training components and all six PACE seminars. During their 2nd year, cohort members will complete 9 credits of graduate study.

Cohort 1 participants expressed confidence in the training that they received and in the quality of their instructors. As one participant remarked, “This program really does prepare you for your other professional obligations, and I’m able to stand up against others who went through regular programs.” Another participant added, “My friend and I compared what I learned in 26 days and what she learned in her master’s program. It floored her.” Other participants commended the program for giving them what they needed to begin teaching. “You learn how to teach—it’s hands on,” remarked one participant, while another added, “They taught us only the necessary information, which I thought was so helpful.” When asked to describe what they received from PACE compared with the support that they received through their district induction, one participant stated, “Figuratively [speaking], PACE gave me \$100 and my district induction gave me a penny.”

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

As part of the SCSDE-CERRA partnership, CERRA assumes primary responsibility for recruiting participants to the PACE program. CERRA was the first teacher recruitment program established in the United States. The center is credited with having served as a model for nearly one-third of all teacher recruitment programs in the country.<sup>33</sup> CERRA works closely with SCSDE to identify, attract, and retain well-qualified individuals for alternative certification training and teaching in the state. According to CERRA’s director, “Our mission is to recruit and retain a qualified teaching workforce for our K–12 schools. We have an established continuum of recruitment and retention programs that start as early as the middle school and go through retirement and the area of advancement, like national board certification and Teacher of the Year. The charge we have from the state to work on recruiting teachers and retaining them in the classroom is part of where our interest and logical partnership with the [TTT] grant came in.”

Regarding the actual recruitment activities, CERRA’s PACE recruiter reported, “We use a number of techniques. One is the informational sessions where we target different areas of the state, which would be those areas considered critical geographic districts with critical teacher shortages [because of high turnover rates]. We do general workshops there, after we’ve advertised in the paper.” Recruitment efforts are also targeted in geographic areas in the state that contain a concentrated number of high need districts and schools. The recruiter added, “We provide a 30-minute standardized presentation designed to inform recruits about the components and requirements of the program. We give them the information and then stay around to answer questions they may have. Even though the program has been around about 20 years, we still find that a lot of folk don’t know about it, even with all of your best efforts. We count heavily on the word being spread by word of mouth.”

CERRA also uses its Web site and program brochures as recruitment tools. CERRA representatives concluded, however, that the personal element of talking to people is the most

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<sup>33</sup> PACE Transition to Teaching Grant Proposal Abstract, Part V, page 20.



critical component of their recruitment efforts. As the recruiter explained, “. . . what they’ll say to us is, ‘I’ve read the brochure, checked out the Web site, I’ve taken the test, and now I have more questions’ and then they want to talk to someone. The marketing materials get them hooked and then they have more questions they need answered.” CERRA reported that a great deal of recruitment time is invested in actually speaking to individuals about their backgrounds, looking at their documentation, and helping potential participants make decisions.

According to the PACE coordinator, PACE has not engaged heavily in recruitment activities because of CERRA’s work and the existence of the Web site and other recruitment tools. She noted, “We didn’t have to recruit for this program for years. People have come to us. What we’re trying to do is recruit the ones we need and ones who would stay.” As one participant confirmed, “There was no recruitment. I found them through the Internet.” Direct recruitment was not part of PACE’s budget until the TTT grant. As admission requirements increased, the need for direct recruitment was recognized.

PACE is open to any individual who does not yet meet South Carolina’s certification requirements, but who holds a bachelor’s degree or above (with appropriate coursework) in the content area in which he/she intends to teach. PACE participants may be mid-career professionals or recent college graduates. To apply to PACE, applicants submit a PACE application, official college transcripts, and verification of 2 years of previous work experience. To balance the state’s need for highly qualified teachers, the interest of recent college graduates in fast track programs, and the existence of current university preparation programs, the 2-year rule was enacted. The coordinator maintains that SCSDE stands behind the new rule because it believes that more mature participants of a high caliber are joining the program as a result. The coordinator further added, “We want to maintain our relationship with higher [education].”

The selection process is managed by the Office of Teacher Certification. When application materials are received, applicants’ files are reviewed by a PACE certification analyst. Following a review, applicants are notified of their PACE qualification area (i.e., the content area in which they are eligible to teach) and are required to take and pass the appropriate PRAXIS II subject area examination and to submit their passing scores to PACE. Upon passing the examination, applicants are issued a “statement of eligibility” for participation in the program. Applicants present the statement of eligibility to potential school district employers who in turn, forward to PACE a “confirmation of employment” verifying that an applicant has been hired by a school district to teach the appropriate content area. PACE participants are expected to teach in high need districts or in schools identified by the state or in a content area that is on the state’s critical needs list. When applicants are hired as teachers of record in a qualified school district, they are scheduled to participate in the next PACE training cycle. PACE does not interview participants as part of the application or selection process, in part, because applicants are interviewed by hiring school administrators prior to being accepted into the program. All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications and secure approved employment are admitted into the program.

PACE participants do not receive any special financial incentives through the TTT grant, even for the required graduate-level courses during the second part of the program, because they receive regular teacher salaries from their respective school districts. However, forgivable loans are available through another state agency. When asked about the lack of TTT-funded incentives

during a focus group of participants, several persons commented that the opportunity to receive a regular salary while going through the program was “all the incentive that was required.”

### **Training/coursework**

Consistent with the program’s objective to provide access to high quality training throughout the entire state of South Carolina, PACE offers participants a sequenced curriculum that is provided simultaneously at five training locations that are dispersed geographically in five regions of the state. Training sites were selected through a request-for-proposal process, whereby school districts and IHEs were invited to apply and were then selected based on their location, classroom space, and ability to meet instructional needs. The selected sites include three IHEs (University of South Carolina–Spartanburg, University of South Carolina–Lancaster, and Francis Marion University) and two high schools (South Aiken High School and Fort Dorchester High School). It is important to note that of the five sites that were selected, the training location in one region alternates between an IHE and a local high school.

The PACE training program is comprised of the following components:

- On-the-job training;
- Preservice and inservice training—referred to as PACE 1 and PACE 2, respectively;
- PACE seminars; and
- Graduate courses.

To be admitted to PACE, a participant must be employed as a teacher of record in a qualifying South Carolina school district or teach in an approved content area. As such, participants serve as full-time teachers of record while completing PACE’s program requirements. PACE requires participants to make a 3-year commitment to teach in South Carolina. The 1st year begins as soon as participants enter PACE.

PACE 1 requires participants to attend a 10-day preservice training that, ideally, is offered before participants enter the classroom. The preservice training is offered twice each year, which allows two new cohorts to begin the program during an academic year. The first PACE 1 training is offered in July and participants attend full time for 2 weeks, Monday through Friday. The second PACE 1 training is offered in the winter over weekends and holidays throughout December, January, and February. The winter training is available to participants who are admitted to the program after July. Consequently, although PACE 1 is designed as a preservice training, it is possible that participants who begin the program in the winter have already entered the classroom before participating in PACE 1.

PACE 2 involves 10 days of inservice training that takes place during the summer after participants complete their 1st academic year of teaching. Like the preservice training, participants attend the inservice training full time in July for 2 weeks, Monday through Friday. Participants who took PACE 1 in July of the previous year and those who completed PACE 1 during the winter ultimately complete PACE 2 together.

Participants must also complete six PACE seminars during the first 2 years of the program. Four seminars are offered during the 1st year of the program (two seminars in the fall and two seminars in the spring.) The final two seminars are required during the fall of the 2nd year of the program. Seminars are held on Saturdays, and each year the last fall seminar is offered in November. According to the PACE coordinator, “We chose November [for the last of the cohort seminars] because research says teachers generally get discouraged by November—in the fall—so we kept that in mind. We wanted to get them back together as a cohort for peer support.” The summer sessions and Saturday seminars are viewed as critical training experiences for PACE participants; therefore, attendance is mandatory at all sessions and is strictly enforced by the local instructors and the SCSDE program staff.

During the 2nd and/or 3rd year of the program, following the completion of all preservice and inservice training and PACE seminars, participants must also complete three graduate courses (9 credits). According to the PACE coordinator, “They must be pedagogy courses. We generally do not approve content courses. They should already have [taken these].” The original alternative certification program required all participants to take the same three courses. The PACE program, however, modified the requirement by asking administrators of the schools in which participants are employed to conduct classroom observations and identify areas in which they believe teachers are in need of strengthening and improvement. Based on the administrators’ recommendations, participants are required to choose three graduate courses from an extended list of approved courses. The PACE coordinator explained, “We have learned that it’s [the list] too extended now, so we’re bringing it down. The district makes a recommendation, the participant signs it, and we give final approval.”

PACE created its own statewide curriculum that was developed by a team of South Carolina educators, who were known for their previous work developing curricula for other South Carolina programs. PACE administrators met with the writers and described the need for a curriculum that would enable PACE participants to pass the Principles of Learning and Teaching examination, a required exam for teacher certification in South Carolina. The resulting PACE curriculum included 105 lessons. The time spent on each lesson ranges from 30 minutes to more than 90 minutes, and each lesson is aligned with two South Carolina teaching standards: INTASC and South Carolina’s performance dimensions designed for assisting, developing, and evaluating professional teaching (ADEPT). Both INTASC and ADEPT address 10 separate standards and performance dimensions.

The 105 lessons that comprise the PACE curriculum are taught during PACE 1 and PACE 2. PACE I training covers the first 57 lessons, and PACE 2 covers the remaining 48 lessons. One curriculum writer described the PACE 1 training content as more of a classroom teacher’s “tool kit.” PACE 1 includes lessons on topics such as classroom organization, lesson plan development, student assessment, and the mechanics of teaching. PACE 2 was described as “much more demanding” and includes lessons on topics such as the development and sequencing of curriculum units.<sup>34</sup> The developer noted that, “Some of the lessons in PACE 1 are short and can be completed in 30 minutes. In PACE 2, a lot of the lessons are much more time consuming, extended, involved, and independent, so [participants] can delve into their own subject matter. We wanted to see how teachers can become more of a specialist in their area. We kept in mind

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<sup>34</sup> See the PACE program binder, section 6, for a list of PACE 1 and 2 lessons.

scaffolding—what makes a good teacher—but by PACE 2, we get into heavy-duty theory and other stuff.”

Assessment is integrated into each phase of PACE training, unlike the original Critical Needs Program, which incorporated relatively little assessment of student progress.<sup>35</sup> As the coordinator explained, “The old alternative program had a reputation of seat time: You come in and sit down. Our 1st year, you don’t come in and sit; you will be assessed.” Daily, major, and large projects are assigned and assessed during each phase of PACE training. Participants who score 70% or above on the daily, major, and large projects during each phase of PACE training are categorized as “passing.” During PACE 1, those who score below 70% on the daily and major projects are assessed as “failing” but have the option of retaking the training in an attempt to receive a passing score. Because the large project carries such significant weight in the PACE 1 assessment, participants who score between 60 and 69% on the large project are not failed immediately. Instead, they are placed on probation, with the opportunity to redo the large project alone. PACE 2, on the other hand, offers no retakes, and participants who score below 70% on any of the three projects are assessed as “failing” and are dismissed from the program. Each of the six PACE seminars are assessed separately and participants who score below 70% have one attempt to retake the failed seminar to earn a passing score. The coordinator reported that, to date, no one has been dismissed from the program because of failing any of the PACE seminars.

Currently the program has a 15% attrition rate that the PACE counselor and coordinator attribute to dropping out of or failing the PACE 1 or PACE 2 portions of the training, despite having completed the allowable retakes. The coordinator reported that, “Participants can do the training portion twice and after the second time, maybe they need to realize that alternative certification is not for them.” Participants who are dismissed from PACE are reportedly handled differently at the district level. According to the PACE coordinator, some districts elect to release the PACE teacher from his or her contract, whereas other districts that are in a tight crunch for teachers may choose to keep the teacher. The PACE coordinator reported that “failing” participants retained by the districts do not receive an alternative teaching certificate from PACE and must find another route to earn full teacher certification.

The PACE curriculum is implemented by 25 cohort instructors who are selected each term and are assigned to the regional training sites to form teaching teams of five members. Each team is composed of a lead instructor and four master teachers. All PACE instructors must be certified and have a master’s degree or national board certification. Additionally, all lead instructors must have a minimum of 5 years of P–16 experience (i.e., preschool, K–12, and postsecondary levels) and have some experience with adult education. Master teachers are required to have a minimum of 3 years of P–16 experience and preferably have experience with adult education. Lead instructors receive remuneration of \$500 per day, and master teachers receive \$400 per day.

To date, SCSDE has been able to hire PACE instructors from a pool of 200-plus applicants annually. Most of those who are selected are national board certified teachers and/or former state and district Teacher of the Year award recipients. PACE instructors have varied certification areas; thus, they offer participants expertise in a variety of subjects. Instructors must apply for each term they are interested in teaching. An application and information about PACE teaching

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<sup>35</sup> See the PACE program binder, section 6, for PACE 1 and 2 Assessment Guides.

opportunities is available on the SCSDE Web site. SCSDE also solicits instructors by sending information about PACE teaching opportunities to current and former South Carolina district and state Teachers of the Year and current alternative certification instructors. Information is also sent to all national board certified teachers of South Carolina. All PACE instructors must participate in training on the use of the PACE materials and the PACE instructional team approach prior to assuming their roles.

PACE instructors interviewed during the site visit unanimously acknowledged that the PACE curriculum is intensive, research based, and covers a lot of material that has been helpful to them in their own classrooms. One instructor reported, “I feel like every teacher should have this. I’ve taken it back to my 1st-year teachers in Richland 2 [school district]. I’m the mentor for all 1st-year language arts teachers, [and] I think all induction programs could be enriched by using a generous chunk of what’s in this [PACE] curriculum.” One PACE instructor who graduated from a traditional master of arts in teaching (MAT) program commented, “If I had the materials they have when I graduated from my MAT program, I think I would have been a better teacher.” The overall consensus is that while the program is intense, the curriculum thoroughly offers participants what they need as beginning teachers. Instructors are regularly required to rate and provide feedback on the course materials, and their recommendations are incorporated as part of the revisions for the next instructional cohort.

### **Internship**

PACE does not require an internship as part of its training program because of the requirement that all eligible PACE participants be employed as full-time teachers of record throughout the training program.

### **Placement**

As mentioned previously, to be eligible for participation in PACE, all participants must be employed as a teacher of record in a South Carolina school district. Specifically, PACE participants are required to teach either in a high need school district that is experiencing significant teacher turnover, or to teach a subject area identified on the state’s critical needs list. Participants are responsible for finding and securing their own teaching positions. Obtaining employment in a school district may occur in several ways. For example, a school district may find an applicant that it likes and refer the individual to PACE as a contingency for hire. Also, some teachers may already be employed in a district on a provisional certification and elect to participate in PACE. In most cases, however, participants apply to PACE first and when they are deemed eligible for the program, they go out and secure a teaching position in a qualified school.

For certification, teachers must demonstrate 3 years of teaching experience in South Carolina. Completing PACE, which is a 3-year program, allows participants to fulfill the 3-year requirement. As long as the previously mentioned conditions are met, participants may complete the teaching requirement in any district in the state.

### **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

PACE does not include a stand-alone mentoring component. According to state education statutes, mentoring is supposed to be offered to all new teachers, including PACE participants, at

the school and district level through each district's induction program. In most cases, this mentoring occurs at the school level, and school principals have the responsibility to identify and assign mentors to the new teachers. As a result, PACE participants receive different levels of mentoring support. The majority of PACE participants interviewed during the site visit reported that mentoring at the school and district levels ranges from sporadic to nonexistent and that it is generally unorganized when it does occur. One participant remarked, "At our school the [mentoring] program was on paper only. I was told that I had one, and the mentor got a stipend [but] I went and found my own mentor." Another participant reported, "I didn't know I was supposed to have a mentor until a year later." Even in situations where an active mentor was involved with a PACE participant, there was very little evidence that the mentor knew about the PACE curriculum or its operations.

CERRA's director and recruiter also expressed concern over the quality of mentoring that is provided to PACE participants. CERRA's director remarked, "Well, that's an area we've been working on intensively for 4 years now. The biggest disadvantage is that there is no funding at the state level. Mentoring in a lot of ways is getting squeezed out at the district level." CERRA's director described mentoring as a challenge for all 1st-year teachers, which includes PACE participants, but acknowledged that the ideal situation would be to have a separate mentoring program for PACE participants. Although CERRA offers mentoring and retention help free of charge to districts across the state, CERRA's director pointed out further that, "Obviously the major concern now is the output side of it. We're having a tough time convincing districts that an investment in mentoring is an investment in recruitment and retention. The best way to recruit teachers is to keep the ones you have." The PACE recruiter echoed similar sentiments and added, "Some we're going to lose regardless, but there are also a significant number we could keep if we did something more with mentoring."

One mentor interviewed for the study described a positive mentoring relationship with her mentee. When asked how she became a mentor, the teacher reported that she was asked by her principal to mentor a PACE participant because every new teacher in the district is assigned a mentor. In terms of how the mentor relationship is structured, the mentor reported, "I don't sit in everyone's classrooms as much because I'm a classroom teacher too, but in addition to observing classes and the lesson plans, we have collegial meetings every week where lesson plans are examined by the administrator. We share them, and we write together."

The PACE coordinator and counselor indicated that they would like to see structured mentoring support offered to PACE participants; however, PACE has no immediate plans to incorporate a mentoring component. SCSDE and CERRA will continue to work with districts across the state to improve and enhance the current mentoring components included in the new teacher induction program.

## **Challenges**

As noted in the report, the PACE coordinator and director of the Office of Teacher Certification described the need for additional staff to effectively administer the program as it continues to grow at a rapid pace. Both the PACE coordinator and the PACE counselor are finding that their time is not being used effectively. As the program continues to grow, the necessity for additional staff is likely to intensify.

Although not presented as a challenge, interview data revealed that increased communication between PACE and the schools in which participants are teaching could enhance participants' experiences during the 1st year. Administrators and PACE instructors and participants interviewed for the study agreed that sharing the PACE curriculum with school principals, and particularly with mentors, could benefit all involved. If principals and mentors have knowledge of what PACE participants are learning, then they may be able to better tailor specific support services at the district and school levels.

Like other TTT projects, sustainability is the biggest challenge for the future. As noted by both SCSDE and PACE leadership, the TTT grant has provided critical support for the development of the PACE curriculum materials, for course instructional training and delivery, and for greatly increasing the number of participants. Because the program evolved out of previous alternative certification programs in the state and SCSDE continues to operate a state-funded component for districts that do not meet the TTT eligibility requirements, continuation of PACE beyond the TTT funding cycle will be contingent on the availability of state funds.

### **Key Differences Between PACE and Other TTT Sites**

Several differences distinguish PACE from other TTT sites included in this report. First, the program is fully administered by SCSDE. SCSDE was previously responsible only for certifying teachers when they completed an alternative certification program, but now it is responsible for recruiting participants, providing instruction, and certifying participants.

Other TTT sites visited rely on partnerships with colleges and universities to provide instruction to participants. In contrast, PACE offers a customized statewide curriculum developed by SCSDE, taught by experienced and highly qualified public school teachers, and offered simultaneously to participants in five regions of the state. The PACE recruiter acknowledged, "People who are in the classroom are doing the vast majority of the [PACE TTT] training. They are truly embedded in what is going on in the classroom. They know what it's like to be in the classroom everyday, as opposed to what can happen in higher education when someone has been out for awhile—they are not in the classroom. One of the real advantages is having practitioners who do what you do."

Finally, PACE does not include a mentoring component. PACE relies on mentoring to occur at the district level and to be supported by other means and has no immediate plans to incorporate a mentoring component into the current program structure.

## **Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association— Texas-Teacher Excellence for All Students**

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### **Background and Program Rationale**

During the 2001–02 academic year, a study commissioned by the Texas Education Agency revealed that Texas was in the midst of a significant teacher shortage in critical content areas such as bilingual education, English as a Second Language (ESL), mathematics, science, and special education. The shortage would require hiring approximately 37,000 new teachers to fill vacancies in districts throughout the state.<sup>36</sup> In response to the study’s findings, Texas recruited and hired 37,000 new teachers to provide instruction to its increasingly diverse student population; however, 40% of the elementary and 35% of the secondary teachers that were hired for bilingual education were not fully certified to teach it.<sup>37</sup> Because Texas law mandates that bilingual education and ESL programs be provided for all limited English proficient (LEP) students, districts with high percentages of uncertified teachers were in direct violation of the law.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), located in San Antonio, TX, has a history of involvement in Texas’s alternative certification programs. A nonprofit organization with a record of experience in bilingual education and ESL teacher recruitment, training, induction, and support, IDRA has been addressing specifically the state’s teacher shortage in the areas of bilingual education and ESL. Through a variety of federal and state-sponsored grants and partnerships with school districts and collaborating universities, IDRA has offered accelerated alternative routes to teacher preparation and certification for nearly 2 decades.

Project BECA (Bilingual Education Collaborating Alliance), and Project T-TEXAS (Texas-Teacher Excellence for All Students) are two U.S. Department of Education Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant projects currently administered by IDRA. BECA, a 3-year project administered from 2001 to 2004, received a 1-year extension in September 2004 and will be completed in September 2005. Through collaborations with the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA); Texas State University (TSU), formerly Southwest Texas State University; and four school districts—Donna Independent School District (ISD), Hidalgo ISD, La Joya ISD, and Austin ISD—BECA provides lessons learned that inform and enhance the design of IDRA’s T-TEXAS program.

Project T-TEXAS was implemented in 2003–04 and is slated as a 5-year project. A continuation of BECA, T-TEXAS has expanded its partnerships to include two additional higher education institutions and five new partnering school districts that replace four of BECA’s partnering districts. T-TEXAS partnerships and collaborations now include four universities—UTPA, TSU, University of St. Thomas (UST), and University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB)—and six high need school districts—Austin ISD, Harlingen ISD, Houston ISD, Los Fresnos ISD, Brownsville ISD, and San Antonio ISD. Comprising parts of south, central, and southeast Texas, the six school districts are located in regions with significant numbers of LEP students; thus, they

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<sup>36</sup> T-TEXAS Project Narrative, page 2.

<sup>37</sup> T-TEXAS Project Narrative, page 2.



require a large number of qualified bilingual education teachers. These particular school districts chose to partner with IDRA to address the shortage of highly qualified bilingual and ESL teachers in their districts. As such, the districts have committed to hiring individuals trained by T-TEExAS during and after program completion.

A distinct objective of IDRA is to provide specialized support to teacher candidates during their preparation program and 1 year beyond the completion of the certification program.<sup>38</sup> The support is designed specifically to influence the retention of bilingual and ESL teachers in the high need districts.

During site visits conducted for this study, researchers interviewed the T-TEExAS principal investigator, local evaluator, and program director and the program coordinator at the IDRA office. Researchers also visited schools and district administrative offices at the Austin and Houston sites, where they observed classrooms led by T-TEExAS participants and conducted interviews with district administrators, directors of ESL programs, certification directors, principals, mentors, and program participants.

### **Program Leadership**

Each set of partners in the T-TEExAS program has its own well-defined responsibilities. IDRA serves as the project's fiscal agent and provides management of all project activities, including administration, research, evaluation, and product development. IDRA is also responsible for providing support services and professional development to BECA and T-TEExAS participants. The collaborating universities are responsible for participants' academic preparation and support at the university level. The partnering school districts are responsible for hiring participants and providing support at the district and school levels.

The BECA and T-TEExAS leadership/management team is comprised of a group of well-qualified IDRA employees. The team includes a program director, two program coordinators, a training specialist, and eight staff members who provide services to the project, including mentoring and support services for T-TEExAS participants. A program evaluator from IDRA serves as the evaluator for the T-TEExAS project. IDRA's director of professional development provides oversight for both projects. However, because of the overlap in funding periods for the BECA and T-TEExAS grants, separate coordinators have been assigned to each program. The BECA coordinator has been in her position since the inception of the project. At the time of the site visit, the T-TEExAS coordinator had been in place for approximately 8 months, but her years of serving as a program director at IDRA had already made her familiar with many of the districts and universities involved in T-TEExAS. The coordinator's responsibilities are to familiarize herself with the mechanics of the project at each of the districts, to develop supplemental supports for project participants, and to continue to foster the relationships among partners.

### **Participants**

According to an IDRA representative, the BECA and T-TEExAS populations differ from site to site, but all participants are either "second career changers or [recent] college grads." BECA originally recruited and enrolled 87 participants: 26 were males, and 61 were females. Mid-

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<sup>38</sup> IDRA Transition to Teaching binder, Support and Mentoring Services section.

career professionals (44) and recent college graduates (43) were almost evenly represented. The majority of the participants (54) completed their coursework at UTPA, and the remaining 33 completed courses at TSU.<sup>39</sup> Twelve participants withdrew from the program at different stages of the process for various undisclosed reasons.

Females comprise the majority of T-TEXAS participants (93). There are 27 male participants. Houston ISD has the largest enrollment of participants (49) who are taking courses at UST. The second largest group of participants is in Austin, where 45 of Austin ISD participants are enrolled in classes at TSU. There are 14 participants located in the Rio Grande Valley and enrolled at UTPA, and the remaining participants are completing coursework at UTB.

In the T-TEXAS program, the number of foreign-educated participants is lower than it had been in the BECA program. The decision to limit the number of foreign-educated participants was based on previous challenges experienced in helping these candidates complete credentialing requirements. An IDRA representative commented, “What we experienced with them [foreign-educated participants] was that they were having problems with the exams at the end, because of the language. So we provided some intensive English classes, identified some consultants who are excellent at preparing them for the exam. Some of the consultants work with them one-on-one and that has proven successful because after a few tries, they pass the test. That was all they [the students] lacked.”

T-TEXAS participants described positive experiences with the program and found the program’s structure and support activities expressly beneficial to their professional development. One teacher intern reported, “Right now I am taking courses at St. Thomas. I like them [the courses]. I think it was important for me to get the training before starting this job. You need to have that, plus one of the most valuable things is the networking, talking to the other teachers about their practice, what are the things that work for them.” In describing the program’s structure, the participant added, “I started with ACP training (the preservice sessions offered by the HISD) and then we have the classes at St. Thomas, so it is like joint training. One of the other things I have gotten is lots of ideas from the platicas (informal discussion groups held on Saturdays to support supplement university courses). What I enjoy the most is the informal conversations in the classroom with other teachers. That’s what I enjoy, when they give me their point of view in the platicas.”

Participants elaborated on the ways the T-TEXAS components met their needs for classroom practice. One participant remarked, “Actually a lot of things that I do in the classroom come from the platicas, from the classes. Not only because trainers provide ideas but also because the other teachers are also helpful.” The school districts were also credited with providing support and training that was considered extremely helpful. Specifically, “We had wonderful training provided by [the] Early Childhood Education Department at the district about work stations. We also have training on social skills, on class management. We want kids to be able to communicate and socialize with others.”

Participants were confident that the professional development component would be a foundation upon they could build their teaching practice: “The missing parts, you are going to get them from

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<sup>39</sup> IDRA Transition to Teaching binder, Participant section.

experience. For example, they can teach you a hundred ways to talk to parents but each person is different, so I guess, to me, the training is pretty complete.”

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

Several strategies have been used by the BECA and T-TEXAS projects to recruit qualified participants. Typically, recruitment activities have engaged all program partners and collaborators. For example, BECA recruitment strategies included the following:

- Posting information on the IDRA Web site;
- Placing announcements in a local newspaper;
- Making appearances at recruitment fairs on TSU and UTPA campuses;
- Having school district personnel directors inform qualified applicants about BECA;
- Having a local elementary school principal recruit foreign-educated parents from Mexico;
- Spreading information by word of mouth;
- Distributing informational fliers on TSU and UTPA campuses;
- Having a partnering school district post a classified newspaper ad;
- Distributing internal office memos from IDRA staff to their family and friends;
- Having TSU and UTPA faculty advise students about the program; and
- Making districts announce information at various staff development sessions.

The BECA 2001-02 Annual Performance Report identified recruiting fairs as the least successful means of recruiting participants to the program.

Similarly, Project T-TEXAS recruitment strategies included the following:

- Posting information on the IDRA Web site;
- Announcing information about the program, in both English and Spanish, on television and radio media outlets;
- Accepting referrals from Austin and Houston ISD personnel directors;
- Spreading information by word of mouth;
- Holding interest meetings on school and university campuses; and
- Having faculty of collaborating universities advise students about the program.

Thirteen interest meetings attracted more than 400 potential candidates and were reportedly held during the initial T-TEXAS recruitment process.<sup>40</sup> An IDRA representative also acknowledged that because IDRA wants participants to start teaching right away, he/she generally works

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<sup>40</sup> *T-TEXAS 2003–2004 Annual Performance Report*, page 3.

through the regular recruitment processes of each school district. For example, recruitment for the T-TEXAS project is integrated into the teacher recruitment fairs held annually by the school districts.

IDRA credited its “aggressive recruiting program” with yielding very positive results. In fact, the projects’ multifaceted recruitment strategies have yielded more applicants than can be placed in both TTT programs. As one interviewee pointed out, however, recruiting differs by location. “In Brownsville, that district needs a lot of teachers but there we work with a very small number, only 10, and the district will absorb them immediately. There is no issue with recruiting because the need is there. Most of them there [in Brownsville] are career changers.”

Certain populations are targeted for recruitment across all T-TEXAS sites:

- Mid-career professionals in diverse fields, such as business, industry, and retired military;
- Spanish-proficient, foreign-educated professionals who are legal U.S. residents and can work in the United States; and
- Recent college graduates with degrees in fields other than education.

Some districts, such as Houston ISD, have their own alternative certification programs that have been in existence for nearly 2 decades. As a result, these districts generally take an active role in the TTT recruitment process, simultaneously recruiting for BECA and T-TEXAS and their own alternative certification programs. Houston ISD, for example, will refer applicants to BECA and T-TEXAS who are interested in pursuing elementary bilingual education or ESL positions.

In Texas, there are a variety of other alternative teacher certification programs in place, in addition to district-sponsored programs and the U.S. Department of Education-sponsored TTT program. Consequently, programs seem to intersect in districts in many ways because of the ongoing partnerships among districts, universities, and community organizations. In the case of Houston ISD, the content areas in which participants may seek certification and the costs associated with program participation are what ultimately distinguish its alternative certification program from BECA and T-TEXAS. Through Houston ISD, participants may pursue certification in a variety of content areas. BECA and T-TEXAS, on the other hand, prepares participants for certification only in bilingual education and/or ESL. Additionally, Houston ISD participants pay a nonreimbursable program fee of \$3,750, which includes tuition, exam fees, and certifications. T-TEXAS participants, however, are reimbursed for tuition, exam fees, textbooks, and certifications, up to a pre-approved limit. Thus, the financial incentive is a benefit received by T-TEXAS candidates that is not available to candidates in the Houston ISD program.

To apply for the BECA and T-TEXAS projects, applicants must complete a pre-application form that is screened by an IDRA committee to determine whether or not the applicant meets the programs’ admissions criteria. The criteria include a passing score on the Texas Academic Skills Program, satisfactory written and spoken English and Spanish skills, a 4-year college degree or above, and U.S. citizenship or permission to work in the United States. IDRA also reviews the academic records of applicants who received their bachelor’s degrees in other countries to ensure compatibility with U.S. degree requirements.

Applicants who meet the criteria are invited to complete BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS applications and the university admission application. Other materials requested as part of the application packet are a statement of purpose, letters of recommendation, and college transcripts.<sup>41</sup> Application materials are reviewed by the IDRA selection committee and prioritized based on qualifications. Selected candidates must sign a Teacher Candidate Commitment Form that describes expectations of the BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS programs.

Because T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS candidates are in classrooms almost immediately as teacher interns, IDRA involves the local schools and districts in the final selection of candidates. Applicants must interview with school districts and receive a letter of intent to hire from a participating school district prior to starting the T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS training.<sup>42</sup> An IDRA representative commented that recruiting in partnership with the local districts makes sense to IDRA because, “if the district already sees some potential in that individual, we know they are going to be placed. They go through the district, and then we know they are going to be placed. So the district refers them to us. If they do not meet our criteria, then we say, ‘well this individual does not meet criteria of our project.’ The district may still want to employ them, although they usually don’t (if we don’t recommend they be hired). In most cases, they agree with us.” According to T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS program administrators, involving the districts in the selection process has proven to be successful, as evidenced by the fact that virtually all T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS teachers are ultimately placed in classrooms.

### **Training/coursework**

Four components prepare participants of BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS for teaching:

1. Field placement/internship (discussed later);
2. University courses;
3. District- and school-level support (e.g., mentoring and professional development, also discussed later); and
4. IDRA-delivered support, such as platicas (informal discussion group sessions) or professional discussion group sessions.

BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS programs are designed to prepare participants to meet teacher certification and bilingual endorsement requirements in approximately 1 year (12–15 months). During that time, program participants complete required coursework, professional development training, platicas, required exams, and a mandatory internship teaching bilingual education and/or ESL in a participating high need school district in Texas. Through the internship, participants serve as teachers of record while completing the rigorous program requirements.

BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS adhere to the cohort model, whereby a group of participants enters and completes the program together. Coursework is completed at 1 of 4 collaborating Texas institutions: TSU, UTPA, UST, or UTB. According to an IDRA representative, “The coursework for TTT students is drawn from the curriculum that is already provided by [the collaborating] Texas universities and it varies a lot.” The number of semester hours required to complete the

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<sup>41</sup> Information retrieved from the T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS Selection Committee Review of Application Form.

<sup>42</sup> Participants may be selected without a letter of intent to hire.

program is also determined at the institutional level. An interview with a faculty member from UST revealed that course content decisions are made with an eye toward what the state requires for the various certifications. For example, BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS participants enrolled at TSU are required to complete 24 semester hours that include 18 hours in curriculum and instruction courses—such as human growth and development; elementary school curriculum; and teaching elementary school-level mathematics, science, and social studies—focusing on curriculum problems and methods and materials for teaching ESL and bilingual education. TSU students must also complete 3 semester hours of early childhood education that focuses on the kindergarten curriculum, and 3 semester hours of reading and literacy methods for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

UTPA students complete 12 semester hours in courses such as introduction to teaching, process of reading, research on early childhood education, foundations of bilingual education, and bilingual curriculum in content areas.

BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS participants enrolled in UST's program are required to complete 12–15 semester hours that vary based on the specific content area in which the participants will teach. UST courses in bilingual education include theories of second language acquisition, Spanish language arts for the Spanish-dominant child, techniques for teaching ESL, instructional strategies for the content areas in bilingual education, and instructional methods for the young child or intermediate/middle school. AT UST, coursework in ESL is similar to the coursework in bilingual education except that students replace Spanish language arts, the young child, and intermediate/middle school methods with courses focused on the structure of the English language and applied linguistics. No information on UTB course offerings was provided.

Aware that program participants are receiving different levels of instruction at the various institutions, IDRA takes steps through its *platicas* to cover issues and topics related to bilingual and/or ESL teaching that may not be covered well in university programs. *Platica* topics have included bilingual education/theory and language acquisition, integration of multicultural pedagogy in the classroom, use of technology in the classroom, creating academic portfolios, effective assessment practices, and interviewing skills (for those waiting placement). *Platicas* are generally held on Saturdays and are structured as informal discussion groups.

### **Internship**

BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS candidates are required to complete a 1-year teaching internship as part of the alternative certification program. The internship is a 6-credit course that is offered during two semesters (3 credits in the fall and 3 credits in the spring). During the first semester of enrollment in BECA or T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS, candidates are hired on emergency certificates as 1st-year bilingual educators or ESL teachers in participating districts. Interns are paid 1st-year salaries and are required to maintain a minimum 2.5 grade point average (GPA) in the internship course. Interns attend weekly meetings with university supervisors and mentors throughout the internship year.

### **Placement**

Most BECA and T-TE<sub>x</sub>AS participants, when fully certified, are hired by school districts as part of the IDRA partnership agreement. However, according to one of the participants interviewed, placement strategies vary by district. She commented that, “In the Rio Grande Valley, many

students come into the program already attached to a school but this is not necessarily the case in the other districts.” In some districts, for both the internship and permanent placement following certification, candidates are interviewed, hired, and placed in schools through the combined efforts of the district and the school. The district office works to meet requests from the principals. The majority of program participants remain in their internship schools and districts, but some move on to other schools or districts.

BECA was successful in placing 100% of its (75) retained participants as teachers of record in high need school districts. Of the 75 participants, 53 have been fully certified as bilingual/ESL teachers and are currently teaching in Texas classrooms. The remaining 22 participants are near completion of certification and are teaching in bilingual education/ESL classrooms on state-issued probationary certificates.

According to an IDRA representative, 65 of the participants in Cohort 1 of the T-TEXAS program have already been placed in schools as teacher interns and teachers of record. Reinforcing the district’s role in participant placement, the IDRA representative added, “We have a few who are not placed. If the district does not want them, there is a reason they don’t want them, and we don’t need them in our project. Why take them if they are not ready to become teachers? Obviously they [the district] detected something in the interview that told them that person would not be a good teacher. So we don’t want to use money to train people who probably will leave.”

### **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

Mentoring and support occurs at the university, district, and school levels. The New Teacher Support and Mentoring Program, mandated by the state of Texas, requires Texas school districts to provide support services to all 1st-year teachers, regardless of the type of certification held (e.g., traditional, emergency, probationary). Mentors are expected to provide support by assisting new teachers in lesson planning, classroom management, and activities that promote professional development and by observing in-class instruction and providing formative feedback. According to an IDRA representative, “In reality this [mentoring] does not always happen, so we help them. For example, in Austin, not all the 1st-year teachers were observed, so TTT teachers were lucky because they got help from us.”

In fact, in Texas, districts permit outside entities, such as supervisors, university teacher preparation faculty, or alternative certification program coordinators, to provide mentoring, as long as the mentoring activities align with the district goals and initiatives geared toward new teachers. Thus, to supplement what is available, BECA and T-TEXAS provide mentoring for its participants that extends the new teacher services of the districts and promotes the goals of the TTT projects, specifically bilingual education and ESL teaching. Retired bilingual education practitioners or instructional leaders are often used as mentors. An IDRA representative reported that mentors are responsible for observing the participants; providing written reports of those observations (and these written observations become part of the participants’ folders that are submitted for certification); and working with the individual participants, including providing assistance with lesson planning, classroom management, and preparation for the certification tests.

An IDRA mentor described his interaction with a teacher intern: “I used to come monthly and then I started easing off. The first time I came, I just did observations of [the intern]. That took pretty much half a day. I would have lunch with the children and then during naptime, we [the teacher intern and mentor] would debrief and I would tell her what she was doing right. She was having trouble with classroom management, so I was a teacher for 18 years and a preschool teacher for 6 and could help her think about what to do. We started working on centers (how to set up and manage the various learning centers in the room).”

One participant interviewed described the helpful stance of her mentor: “My mentor is wonderful. I am able to do what I can do because she took me by the hand. She is very giving in the sense that she likes to share ideas. I can go to her and say, ‘I need help with this’ and I am 100% sure she is going to help me. We meet all the time, like every 5 minutes. We have a lot of formal conversations too and we have a log for all the times we are supposed to meet. But we meet often just to talk about things that happen in my classroom or I ask her for suggestions.”

Additional interviews conducted with program participants and mentors suggest that mentoring requirements and guidelines exist but their implementation varies at the district level. Mentoring processes at Houston ISD are guided by a handbook that specifies the monthly series of activities and evaluations that must be completed by the mentor with teachers during their 1st year of teaching. At other districts, mentors have greater latitude in determining how often they meet with their mentees and what support activities they provide. Some mentors reported that they meet with their mentee less than once a month. On the other hand, at some sites, T-TEExAS participants reported that they meet with their mentors daily or often, either formally or informally, but “whenever I need help.”

There are other kinds of support offered to participants in the two projects. For example, tutoring in English is provided for Spanish-speaking, foreign-educated participants at one of the collaborating universities. Another university offers tutoring for English-speaking participants who need to strengthen their Spanish skills. BECA and T-TEExAS candidates also participate in a series of sessions designed to prepare them for the Texas Examination of Educator Standards, the state’s primary teacher certification exam.

## **Challenges**

One continuing challenge is whether Spanish-proficient, foreign-educated candidates will be able to succeed in the goal of passing the English-based exams that are required for certification. The most recent group of foreign-educated candidates trained through T-TEExAS completed exams in October 2004 and at the time this report was prepared, IDRA was waiting for the results. IDRA currently has in place a strong system of preservice and inservice support; however, as the program continues to recruit from this population, IDRA must be prepared to meet the needs of a potentially growing target group.

IDRA reported that during summer 2004, TSU decided that it would no longer participate in T-TEExAS. TSU has proven to be the most inflexible of all the university partners with regard to adapting the regular teacher training curriculum to meet the needs of the alternative certification program. Although the university has agreed to continue to work with the cohort currently completing courses, it will not take any new TTT candidates. Unless program administrators are



able to collaborate with another university in the same region of the state, the loss of TSU may result in the program's inability to serve the number of participants specified in the grant application.

### **Key Differences Between IDRA and Other TTT Sites**

The focus on the recruitment of bilingual teachers makes the BECA and T-TEExAS programs distinct from the other TTT programs visited for this study. Although other TTT sites also recruit participants for ESL and bilingual instruction, none focus exclusively on this content area.

In striving to meet the state's critical need for ESL and bilingual teachers, T-TEExAS has been extremely successful at forging partnerships with districts and universities that are flexible and sensitive to the individual needs and operational styles of the districts and universities. These partnerships have allowed the TTT program to (a) integrate resources that were already available for new teachers in the districts and universities and (b) use TTT grant dollars and resources efficiently to provide the supplemental services that were not available specifically for ESL and bilingual teachers.

T-TEExAS has also been relatively successful at providing all of its participants with access to mentoring and support during their 1st year as teachers. Although mentoring of new teachers is required by Texas education statutes, T-TEExAS has supplemented the system instead of trying to develop its own mentoring component.

## **Virginia: The Newport News Public Schools— Old Dominion University Partnership**

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### **Background and Program Rationale**

Newport News (Virginia) Public Schools (NNPS) is an urban school system educating approximately 34,000 pre-K–12 students. It, like other urban high need school districts, faces many challenges, namely filling teacher vacancies with highly qualified teachers. At the time of the submission of the TTT grant proposal, NNPS faced a high teacher turnover rate for several years, with approximately 300–400 teachers retiring or resigning each year.<sup>43</sup> Through a systemwide needs assessment process, NNPS learned that severe challenges existed in the recruitment of science and math teachers, specifically in the areas of algebra I and earth science. More people were retiring than could be hired for those particular areas. In 2002, 36% of NNPS’s teachers were teaching with provisional or conditional licenses.

In an attempt to confront these staffing challenges, NNPS leaders and local higher education partners began to explore alternative routes to teacher hiring and licensure. These efforts led to the establishment of the Newport News Public Schools-Old Dominion University (NNPS-ODU) partnership. The partnership applied for and received a 5-year Transition to Teaching (TTT) grant to address the district’s staffing crisis in high need schools. Similar to other alternative routes to certification offered by ODU (e.g., Career Switchers and Troops-to-Teachers), TTT was developed to meet state and local district needs.

This partnership seemed well within the historical relationship between the two entities. Their work together on the TTT project epitomizes 1 of the 5 core values of ODU’s College of Education—building bridges and forging relationships with local school districts. TTT further strengthens ODU’s relationship with NNPS and creates another opportunity for the university to ensure that its teachers are the first choice among local area school districts when system recruiters search for qualified teachers.

### **Program Leadership**

The NNPS-ODU TTT project has three project leaders who work in concert: The TTT project director (director of professional development for NNPS) and the project coordinator (a coordinator of staff development) are employed by the school district, and the principal investigator (PI) is a faculty member at ODU. The TTT project coordinator acts as a liaison between NNPS and ODU and facilitates and promotes collaboration between higher education and the school system. The project director and coordinator work together on a regular basis and involve curriculum and professional development specialists, as necessary, from NNPS and ODU in designing and implementing the TTT program. The coordinator was described by one TTT participant as “very effective,” noting her advocacy and involvement as an observer.

Additional staffing that is needed to support the TTT project comes from personnel from NNPS’s Departments of Staff Development, Human Resources, Accountability, and Special

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<sup>43</sup> Project Narrative, page 12.

Education, as well as from ODU's professors, who undertake research for the project and who teach required TTT courses. TTT is also supported by a science resource teacher, who, through a National Science Foundation grant, provides direct assistance to TTT participants via classroom observations, individual coaching, and workshops and seminars. The PI of the project holds the position of graduate program director—elementary/middle school education. The PI works very closely with the project coordinator and provides faculty and in-kind support for the program. Although no advisory board was created for the project, the superintendent of NNPS and the dean of the College of Education supported the request to apply for the TTT grant. As such, both continue to support the TTT project in its operational status.

## **Participants**

Sixty-five participants were taking part in the NNPS-ODU TTT project, at the time of this visit. Among the participants were engineers, recent college graduates, option traders on Wall Street, active military personnel, stay-at-home moms, substitute teachers, and various other roles in corporate America. The majority are White and range in age from 30 to 55 years. Twenty-four percent are African American and Latino teachers. In most cases, participants reported they were encouraged to join the program after finding their previous jobs unfulfilling: the participants decided that they would like to become teachers and were seeking ways to accomplish this goal without creating a financial hardship for themselves. TTT participants found this program attractive because, unlike some other alternative certification programs, it not only provides relevant coursework through a summer institute and ensures that each participant receives a teaching license, but it also provides each participant with significant funding that is applied to a master's degree in literacy education or special education from an accredited and recognized IHE—ODU.

TTT candidates reported that they were satisfied with their decisions to become teachers and felt that the TTT at NNPS had met or exceeded their expectations. They described the TTT project approach as “a shortcut” and “an absolutely awesome avenue to teaching” and stated that TTT made “the process to certification so much easier and less stressful.” When asked to discuss their experiences, one TTT teacher spoke on behalf of peers and stated that, “Without this program, so many of us would not have been teachers,” and many of the other participants agreed. Similarly, the ODU faculty and staff, university liaisons, resource teachers, school principals, TTT program researchers, and NNPS staff all commented that the TTT project effectively provides NNPS with highly qualified teachers in the critical content areas.

## **Program Structure**

### **Recruitment and Selection**

The TTT recruitment process is strategically planned by the project coordinator. Populations targeted for recruitment generally have the background to match the school system's needs in the specific content areas of math, science, social studies, language arts and English, and special education. Current TTT participants include mid-career professionals, former substitute teachers and paraprofessionals who have classroom experience, recent college graduates, and military personnel. Targeted individuals are those who have demonstrated success in their previous work

experiences, have expressed a desire to assist students in becoming successful learners, and see themselves as becoming successful change agents in the school system.

Prospective participants document that the Internet and the TTT Web site are the most successful recruitment tools and generate the greatest interest in the project. Both NNPS and ODU share equally in recruitment efforts. The TTT project's coordinator works closely with ODU's recruitment office to identify potential TTT candidates, and NNPS advertises TTT opportunities through its regular district recruitment procedures. Informational flyers were distributed at state job fairs, NNPS and ODU job fairs, and various other career fairs or career days sponsored by Troops-to-Teachers. Flyers were also sent to IHEs across the state of Virginia.

Mirroring most of the requirements for highly qualified teachers, per the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act*, TTT candidates must meet the following qualifications to participate in the program:

- Hold a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university, with courses in and work experience related to English, math, social studies, and science;
- Have a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) or better in all college-level work;
- Pass the PRAXIS I series of tests, with qualifying scores that meet Virginia's licensure requirements;
- Pass the PRAXIS II content test(s), with a Virginia teaching license qualifying score(s); and
- Meet the requirements for employment as a public school teacher in Virginia.

The TTT selection process is a joint effort that involves individuals from Career Switchers and Troops-to-Teachers. Representatives from these entities review applicants' transcripts to determine what courses, if any, an applicant needs to complete to meet the Virginia Department of Education's requirements for certification. The committee also analyzes applicants' work experience to determine their competency for teaching specific content. Administrators of ODU's Career Switchers program are specifically responsible for providing oversight of the Virginia Department of Education's licensure application process for TTT participants pursuing endorsements in secondary math or earth science. The first cohort of participants pursued endorsements in math and science, and the district's needs were met in these subject areas. The second cohort has been focused on the areas of special education and literacy, two other high need areas in the district. The TTT program coordinator is responsible for providing feedback to applicants about their status. TTT candidates who fulfill all requirements are then invited to interview with NNPS's school-based administrators at the biannual teacher recruitment fair.

### **Training/coursework**

TTT participants enter the program with a range of preliminary teaching experiences. Some participants have already served as short- and/or long-term substitute teachers, while other participants enter without any prior classroom teaching experience. TTT training for all participants, regardless of previous experience, begins with participation in a mandatory 5-week summer institute in which participants take courses in pedagogy, human growth and development, curriculum and instruction in their specific content area, student organization,

portfolio development, and behavior management techniques for students with disabilities (for the master of special education program). During the 5-week institute, participants meet regularly with content specialists and the TTT project coordinator. The courses are held at a particular NNPS high school, and some meetings and workshops are held throughout the year in the NNPS Professional Training Room.

TTT participants also have the option of obtaining a master's degree in literacy education or a master's degree in special education. The literacy education program addresses strategies to meet the needs of children of diverse backgrounds, assists teachers in the implementation of reading and writing strategies in content-area classrooms, and trains teachers to analyze and use data when making instructional decisions. The total program requires 34 credit hours. Course selections include the following:

- Introduction to literacy;
- Teaching comprehension through direct instruction;
- Writing to learn in the content areas;
- Vocabulary and word attack strategies for struggling readers and writers;
- Human growth and development;
- Reading to learn across the curriculum;
- Literacy curriculum principles and practices I;
- Literacy curriculum principles and practices II;
- Using technology to teach reading and writing;
- Using literacy and writing to teach study skills;
- Inquiry-based classroom research; and
- Paper on reading.

TTT participants matriculating for a master's degree in special education are obligated to take another 10 courses, designed for their areas of specialization (early childhood or mild to moderate disabilities). Basic courses required for a master's degree in special education include the following:

- Foundations/legal/ethical aspects in general and special education;
- Human growth and development;
- Instruction/service delivery for educating students with mild disabilities;
- Behavior management techniques for students with disabilities;
- The family and child with special needs: Lifespan transitions;
- Collaboration and consultation for students with special needs; and
- Characteristics and assessment of learning disabilities.

The courses taught during the summer institute and master's degree programs are related to the standards-based, competency-driven curriculum approved for NNPS. NNPS and ODU teacher educators (i.e., the TTT curriculum team) analyzed the competency-driven professional experience requirements for a secondary Virginia teaching license, devised a draft proposal, negotiated a final curriculum, and constructed content teaching teams to plan syllabi. The curriculum was developed around standards for graduate coursework from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

The curriculum is implemented by TTT teaching teams, either as whole group instruction or in small groups based on content areas (English, math, science, social studies, or special education). The TTT teaching teams consist of professors from ODU's College of Education, veteran NNPS teachers, and other content specialists. During the TTT summer institute, each participant creates and presents a performance and Web-based developmental portfolio that is assessed to meet the teaching competencies.

### **Internship**

TTT participants do not participate in field placements before becoming teachers of record; however, all TTT participants must have a teaching placement before entering the program. Several TTT participants and university liaisons recommended expanding the summer institute by at least 1 week to provide participants with opportunities to work directly with students in a controlled setting before the start of the normal school year.

### **Placement**

All TTT participants are required to go through the same placement procedures as other prospective NNPS teachers. TTT participants, along with other prospective teachers, participate in the NNPS teacher recruitment fair. At the fair, schools in the district provide information about their schools, talk with interested prospective teachers, and put interested teachers in contact with the appropriate school principals. Principals conduct interviews with participants who express an interest in their schools. Although the recruitment fair has been extremely successful in recruiting the majority of TTT teachers, NNPS's Department of Human Resources also puts participants in direct contact with a school principal when a need is identified in a particular school. Principals make the final hiring selections and offers to teachers whom they feel have the necessary qualifications and experience to be successful in their schools. Therefore, TTT teachers who receive multiple offers have the option to select the school in which they are most interested.

Over time, the TTT program has seen increases in two areas: (1) the number of schools that have hired TTT teachers and (2) principals' acceptance of the program, based on principal observations of TTT participants in their schools and positive feedback from their colleagues who have worked with TTT teachers in their schools. Thus, more principals are actively recruiting TTT teachers at the recruitment fair and requesting referrals of TTT teachers who may be interested in teaching in their schools. TTT participants are required to have a teaching placement before they can participate in the TTT summer institute and become official participants in the TTT program.

## **Teacher Support Through Mentoring**

In partnership with the Educational Testing Service, NNPS adopted the Pathwise mentoring model in 1999 for use with all 1st-year teachers. The intensive mentoring is supported by a school-based Pathwise mentor teacher. TTT participants are also provided mentoring during their entire 3-year tenure, thus first-year teachers actually become members of a mentoring triad that includes the Pathwise mentor and, in the case of TTT participants, an ODU university liaison. As part of the induction program, TTT participants meet on a regular basis with content specialists, resource teachers, other TTT participants, and the NNPS-ODU coordinator to learn more educational strategies and techniques proven to be successful in the classroom. Participants also attend conferences, seminars, and professional development workshops. The support system offered through the program was a major attraction for many of the current TTT participants. Through participation in the various induction activities, participants' areas of strength and needs for improvement are also identified as topics for study and provide a foundation for the creation of individual electronic portfolios that document professional growth. Participants also attend the district's New Teacher Academy as part of the induction program.

Every effort is made by TTT personnel and school staff to assign new teachers to mentors in their content areas so that the mentoring experience can be the most beneficial for those involved. The university liaisons, typically retired NNPS teachers, believed that they often had more time than the school-based Pathwise mentors to work closely with TTT participants and developed particularly close relationships with them. TTT participants attributed their relationships with both their Pathwise mentor and their university liaison as a significant factor in their individual success and in the overall success of the TTT program. NNPS-ODU partners also described the mentoring component as an "invaluable" part of the TTT program.

Mentors and liaisons are required to meet regularly with their TTT mentees; however, the actual amount of time that mentors and liaisons spend with TTT teachers reportedly varied, adjusted for the needs and with the liaisons involved. TTT participants work with the same mentor teacher during the 2nd year of the program when they become engaged in research projects. During the final year (i.e., the 3rd year) of mentoring, TTT participants are encouraged to seek opportunities for self-directed professional growth and development with guidance from the mentoring triad.

## **Challenges**

Like many externally funded programs, one of the major challenges for the TTT project is sustainability. Key to that sustainability is ensuring that the district's principals, teachers, and other stakeholders are knowledgeable about and supportive of the program. Several participants recommended that increased communications and information about the program in their schools and among fellow teachers, would lead to more knowledgeable principals, as well. One principal reported that early concerns about the capabilities of the participants had led her to recruit only one TTT participant in her building but that she now has three additional recruits because of the success of the first placement.

## **Key Differences Between NNPS-ODU and Other TTT Sites**

Participants at the NNPS-ODU site work toward both a teaching license and a graduate degree. Participants who successfully complete the program earn a master's degree in special education or literacy education.