District-Based Teacher Certification Model

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Executive Summary

This paper addresses the need for highly trained teachers, particularly for teaching at-risk students. The first section addresses the problems with the ideology and practices of current colleges of education. The conclusion this part draws is that the philosophy behind dominant teacher-training practices is at odds with practices that would produce the kind of technically proficient teachers needed to serve at-risk populations. The implication is that convincing colleges of education to make needed changes is unlikely. Furthermore, such changes would require considerable time, which is a serious drawback.

The next section of the paper provides a detailed outline of how district-based licensure might be an efficient solution. The solution would provide all teacher training in high-performing at-risk schools. All teacher trainers in the school would have demonstrated consistent acceleration of children's performance. The teacher trainees would go through rigorous, data-based training that would have a heavy emphasis on working with children from the first day of instruction. Although there are alternative certification programs, there is relatively little evidence that any of them have the capacity to prepare teachers who have demonstrated the ability to work effectively with lower-performing students.

The final section addresses a number of issues related to implementing the proposed district-based model. These include:

- Licensing issues
- Cooperation with colleges of education
- Recognition of certification by other districts
- Union requirements.

Section 1
PROBLEMS WITH CURRENT TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS

David Imig, President and CEO of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, wrote the following about the assumed roles and responsibilities of the teacher in June 2003:

> **Implications for Ed Schools**
> . . . Support for technician teachers and a diminished role for professional teachers is the clear intent of the Bush administration. Preparing technician teachers to implement learning packages, to ensure that all students learn, and to get high scores on measures of student performance is the goal. It could result in the undermining of the concept of a profession of teaching and seriously erode the role of collegiate or professional preparation programs. (p. 23)

This statement summarizes the gulf between what colleges of education should be and what they are. Imig's appeal is for the recognition that "technician teachers" are of inferior status to "professional teachers." The statement implies that the difference between the two has something to do with learning packages, the goal of ensuring that all children learn, and referring to measures of performance to document whether children are learning.

The suggested problems with the technician teacher raises questions about the professional teacher. Do professional teachers reject the "technical formula" because of philosophical problems or because they assume a role that has some other objectives?

It is difficult to determine what the philosophical problems could be, considering that the definition of teachers is that they are supposed to teach to change the performance of children in specific ways—teaching them to read, to learn math, to learn facts and relationships about the world, and to express themselves in speech and writing. In a broader sense, the teacher's role is to prepare children for "the world of work," as some state constitutions express it. This means that if preparation is adequate, students are not preempted from choices about further learning and life occupations. A person who does not understand math is preempted from even considering going into engineering. For the student to study to become a doctor, lawyer, accountant, computer programmer, or even a technician teacher, the student would have to meet performance requirements that are assumed to be addressed by medical schools, law schools, and other institutions designated to prepare the student.

In this light, a professional teacher should have no problem accepting learning packages, teaching so all children learn, or evaluating instruction with objective measures.

Learning packages are either successful or they are not. If they are, they will be tools that lead to better student learning and performance on standardized measures. The professional teacher should have no more problem with successful packages than a surgeon would with a "packaged" procedure for performing successful by-pass surgery. An implication of Imig's definitions is that surgeons might be properly classified as mere "technicians" not some higher form of "medical professional." At one time, there was such a distinction between the field practitioner and the medieval physician of the long robe. It's difficult to identify a parallel distinction in modern medical practices. The most renowned surgeons are not necessarily known for their innovation, but for their great technical skill. If packaged procedures that are effective are good enough for professionals who are capable of saving life, they should be welcomed by the professional who has the responsibility of teaching particular subjects effectively. The test is simple. If the packaged program is more effective than what the teachers are doing now, a reasonable professional would use the more effective alternative.

Ensuring that all students learn is an assumed goal of constitutions and laws that define public schools and their practices. Segregation was assumed to be an evil practice because it was thought to cause limited access to a quality education, which translates roughly into an education that induces better student performance. It is difficult to find any humanitarian appeal for some children not being taught to read or perform in math if it is possible to provide instruction that will ensure learning. What standard would the professional teacher use to decide who should learn and who should not? It would be highly discriminatory to teach only those children who were "ready" by traditional standards. Large segments of the urban population would not qualify. No respectable college of education should have problems with the goal of ensuring that all students learn. After all, the less they learn, the more limited their life options and the greater the probability that they will engage in antisocial activities and become a burden to society.

Elevated performances on measures of student achievement are rough indicators of what students have learned. If different learning inputs produce different levels of student performance, it follows that those selected for use should be the ones that produce the highest percentage of success, the more consistent elevation in performance. To argue that these measures are not good indicators of performance is to argue in a circle. Standardized measures are routinely used to identify problems of student performance. The NAEP, the SAT and standardized achievement tests have been used to document performance problems of students, including the poor showing of U.S. students in comparisons with their international peers.

Standardized measures are routinely used to screen students, which means to identify those who are below an expected standard. Students who do not attain a minimum score on the GRE, for instance, are deprived of the opportunity to learn what is required for certain life pursuits. For these students, the performance on the test is clearly considered to be a valid indicator of how they would perform in the graduate program. Even to enter a prestigious college of education, the standardized measures used to test candidates are assumed to predict who is qualified and who isn't.

If we rely on standardized measures to identify problems of inadequate student performance, it follows that we have to use the same measures to identify success or improvement. Some have argued that we should not use standardized measures as the basis for determining whether a particular approach succeeds. (The tests are assumed not to measure the benefits the program provides.) This argument is contradictory. If performance measures are used to identify the problem at time 1, they are capable of identifying the effects of an intervention at time 2.

In summary, any teacher who is a true professional would have to accept all the objectives that Imig assigns to the technician teacher. Viewed another way, if the colleges of education were not interested in training teachers techniques that permit them to use research-based techniques and programs, teach skills to all children, and provide evidence of improvement on relevant standardized measures, what priorities and purpose would teacher training have? Imig's scheme rejects the fundamental reasons for providing teacher training and, therefore, focuses on secondary issues that are not directly related to what the teacher does in the classroom to change student behavior.

The Performance of "Professional Teachers"

Imig's label of "professional" for teachers trained through traditional methods is gratuitous. The teacher may be legally accountable for following certain "procedures" but there is no assumption of accountability for producing particular learning outcomes. If all the children in the school failed to learn to read by the third grade, no teacher or administrator could be held liable for the performance. Given that all recognized professionals in fields like engineering and medicine may be held liable for the results of their performance, "professional teachers" are unique.

The facts of student failure on the NAEP and other standardized measures show clearly that professional teachers are not trained to teach well. Any failed, inner-city school provides clear evidence of how inept the teachers are. The fact that the average third grader is performing on first-grade level in both math and reading (performance around the 15th percentile on standardized measures) is incontestable evidence that the teachers failed. If we look at the performance achieved by every teacher in that failed school, we will probably not identify one who achieves as much as a year's growth in student performance for a year's worth of teaching. Whatever the teachers are doing is

not effective. Our observations of many failed schools would also disclose that most teachers either completely fail to manage children or rule through intimidation (yelling at children, issuing demeaning comments, but rarely praising children). The instruction that we see is technically unsound according to all the evidence on how to communicate effectively, how to achieve mastery, and how to reinforce and manage children effectively.

Teachers lecture for long periods of time. What “tasks” the teacher presents occur at a very low rate. There are no systematic correction procedures, no attempts to repeat parts that are difficult for the children, and no serious concern with whether children master the material. The pacing of the presentation is laborious. The material the teacher uses is far too difficult for the skill level of the children. Most of the students’ time is often spent on pointless “worksheet” activities. The students don’t like reading, math, or any other academic activity.

The classroom of the well implemented technician teacher in a school with the same demography is completely different. During highly structured periods, there are usually no incidents of misbehavior. The children are on task possibly 90% of the time. The presentation is fast paced; children respond frequently. All the tasks the teacher presents are appropriate for the children’s skill level, which means that they produce a high percentage of correct responses. The teacher issues praise at a high rate. When children do make mistakes, the teacher uses research-based correction procedures that give children practice performing on tasks after they have received the correction. Children master the material in a reasonable period of time, performing much closer to grade level than children in the failed school. And they tend to like academic work, or at least feel confident that they can do it.

There is research on the various procedures and techniques that the technician teacher uses—research on pacing, corrections, oral responses, and so forth. This research supports the details of what the technician teacher does. There’s also research on the extent to which the teachers in failed schools must be retrained to perform at a level of the technician teacher. The research shows that the average teacher requires at least 2 years of training to become proficient with lower-performing students.

The training consists of intensive preservice for possibly 5 days and regularly scheduled program-specific inservice training throughout the year. All training follows the same format that the effective teacher delivers to the children. The sessions place a strong emphasis on practice in which teachers practice the behaviors they will use in the classroom. Their performance is monitored, and they receive corrections for those details they have not mastered. When they later apply what they have learned in the classroom, their performance is monitored periodically by a coordinator or proficient teacher who provides feedback and models of presenting activities on which the teacher needs help.

Implications for Curricular Change in Colleges of Education

Imig's naiveté about the skill level of graduates of most teacher-training institutions and about what they have to learn to become effective with lower performers implies the unlikelihood of "certified" colleges of education being a useful resource for training teachers who are able to work effectively with at-risk children. If the CEO of the certifying organization fails to understand the role of the training institutions, the organization is largely at odds with the objectives of public education and the ethics of providing children with a brighter future through education.

1. A campaign to change the colleges would require extensive retraining and reorganization. The colleges (and Imig) are unprepared to train technician teachers and lack instructors who have the skills required for such training. A large segment of the current faculty would either need to be retrained or replaced with technicians. The courses and priorities would have to change to provide extensive teacher-trainee practice, starting with the freshman year, and a central focus on teaching effectively.

2. The transformation of the colleges would require time—probably more than 5 years. Procedures for training technically proficient teachers are needed now. Without these teachers the children in the failed school will continue to fail. It is therefore impractical to wait for an evolution in the colleges of education to provide these teachers.

Options for Training Teachers

The conclusion about not trying to work primarily through colleges of education does not suggest that attempts to promote change in the colleges are futile. The conclusion implies that the most efficient way to shape the logic and priorities of the colleges is to provide them with a model of how to train and retrain teachers. The participation of the colleges in delivering services that are consistent with this model would be welcomed. Without the model of how to do it, however, the colleges would not have a clear idea of how radically their curricula would need to change.

The most practical solution would be to provide districts with an alternative teacher-training and teacher-certification model that would relieve the immediate problem and would serve as a model for colleges of education. Possibly this model could be developed with the collaboration of some colleges of education. In any case the model must address six major issues:

1. What is the form of credentialing or licensing that is provided to assure that the "graduate" of the alternative training is able to teach well?

2. How would the license be transferred to various schools and districts?

3. How many years will the training entail?

4. How will the teachers who go through the training learn
   a) general knowledge about children and teaching effectively;
   b) specific subject matter knowledge;
   c) proficiency in teaching skills?

5. How will the trainees be evaluated in a, b, and c?

6. How will the training process be funded?

Unrealistic Licensing Practices

One reason that a traditional teaching credential does not guarantee that the holder has been well trained has to do with the scope of the credential. The credential may span a number of grades, possibly K through 8 or K through 5. A candidate who receives an elementary certification becomes licensed to teach in all grades, from K through 8 or K through 5.

Two questions are implied by this situation:

1. How much time would it realistically take to provide teacher trainees with the necessary skills to teach in all the grades?

2. Is it practical to attempt to teach teacher trainees the detailed skills that would permit them to perform well in all the elementary grades?

If we are serious about making institutions that train teachers effective, the credentialing would either have to change or the training period would have to be extended considerably. Changing the credentialing would be the most practical solution.

Content

One problem with trying to teach the skills and knowledge needed for all elementary grades is that different grades require different knowledge of content and different presentation-monitoring skills. Training teachers to be proficient enough to perform at all grades would have to include extensive training in grade-level content and how to teach it. This issue is particularly relevant for teachers who teach math in Grades 4–5. If the teachers cannot do the math and solve most of the problems the students are expected to solve during the school year, the teacher is ill prepared to teach the content to the students. An observation of many teachers of at-risk schools in Grades 4–5 is that less than half of them would be able to solve even 75% of the problems their students will be expected to work. This problem is even more conspicuous in at-risk schools that have

accelerated student performance, so at least some of the fourth graders are working on sixth-grade curriculum.

A certificate is hollow unless the training program seriously teaches all the content for all the subjects on all grade levels. The graduate would have to be well versed in elementary math, grammar, writing, and science on all seven grade levels. A rough estimate is any 4-year college program would have to be extended to a 5-year program if it seriously attempted to teach the content taught in K–5.

Presentation Skill

In addition to content knowledge, the teacher needs presentation and interaction skills that are appropriate for Grades K–5. One size does not fit all grades. The lower the overall performance of the children, the greater the amount of presentation skill the teacher must have to be effective. Lower performers exhibit more off-task behavior and make more mistakes than higher performers. Low performing kindergartners do not patiently attend as the teacher gives explanations that may last a minute. If the teacher is to be effective, she has to know how to reduce the 1-minute presentation to bits that command attention.

Older students who are appropriately placed in more sophisticated content do not demand the same level of presentation skill; however, the effective sixth-grade teacher needs skills to present effectively to the whole class, respond to the students' performance, and provide timely correction and work-checks. If all teachers were required to learn all the presentation skills for all the grades K–6, the 5-year training program would have to be 6 years.

The final problem with certification is that "student teaching" doesn't provide the trainee with practice teaching in all grades, or at least in the three major divisions, K–2, 3–4, and 5–6. Furthermore, the practice trainees currently receive is inadequate for any grade level. Teacher trainees may do practice teaching for only 6 weeks. They don't always practice in the grade or grade range to which they will later be assigned as a professional teacher. Even if students do practice in the grade in which they will later teach, they may work with higher performers and be unprepared for working with at-risk children.

Grade Range

In summary, current licensing of elementary teachers is suspect. The instruction provided does not adequately address either the content or the teaching practice the candidate would need to become proficient. Furthermore, it seems unwise to lengthen the teacher-training program to provide the additional time needed to adequately prepare the teacher trainee for *all* grades. An alternative, described later, would provide three strands, K–2, 3–4, 5–7. With this alternative, it would at least be possible to

provide teacher trainees with the content knowledge and skill needed to present, manage, and accelerate their students within their selected strand. The training required to prepare the teacher trainee for one strand is substantially less than that required for K–6 or K–7.

District-Adopted Standards

The grade–range licensing would not have to be adopted by the state. Instead, it could simply be an option for those districts that recognize the need for specialists. The district tests applicants; those who do not pass a practicum and written exam for the specified grade range are rejected by the district. (See page 24, requirement #2 and page 26, option 1 for further detail.) With this perspective, reform would not have to wait while the state considered the grade–range issue. Instead, the school district, which is a professional organization, could simply require applicants to pass the test.

States generally have a variety of licenses for special application, and it may not be too difficult to add a license for high-risk teachers, which indicates that the teacher is qualified to teach in a grade or a grade range. (See pages 27–30 for more detail on licensing.) In other words, instead of revamping all the state's licensing requirements, an option is presented for districts that recognize the need for grade-range specialists who have demonstrated skill. (Precedence has already been established for licenses that apply to limited grade ranges, specialized subjects, and specific preparation requirements.) Furthermore, the state could accept the districts' evaluation of the applicant for issuing a license. This license for high-risk populations would not affect any other license specified by the state. It would largely be a district decision about whether it sees a need for issuing this license option. Over the long term, the basic state license would be modified to specify a grade range, but for the short term, the "optional license" would serve the districts' needs for specialists.

Section 2
TEACHER TRAINING BASED IN HIGH-PERFORMANCE AT-RISK SCHOOLS

Many of the problems confronting the teacher-training institution that serves at-risk children could be solved by basing the training in the field, not on a college campus. The teacher-training unit would provide all the training for teacher trainees both with regard to the information they need, and daily practice with children. The effective teacher-training facilities would be something like a teaching hospital. In a teaching hospital, medical students learn and receive extensive practical experience. A teacher-training parallel unit would be a modified high-performance school. The school would serve an at-risk population and would have demonstrated substantial acceleration of student performance.

Some of the classrooms of the school would be used for training trainees. The students would spend possibly 2 hours a day in classroom study and spend at least 2 hours a day in practica.

Table 1 outlines a three-training-unit format that would process about 624 teachers per year. The training would require 2 years for the teacher trainee to be licensed, 3 years for the teacher to become a certified coach, and 4 years for the teacher to be a certified teacher-trainer. Most students would go through only the first 2 years and then take a teaching assignment within the district.

Table 1. Model for Training Technical Teachers

	Duration of:	**K–2 School**	**3, 4 School**	**5–7 School**
1st Year	1. Formal Classroom Instruction on teaching practices and subject-matter content	1st school year 2 hours per day	1st school year 2 hours per day	1st school year 2 hours per day
	2. Practica	1st school year 2 hours per day	1st school year 2 hours per day	1/2 of 1st school year 2 hours per day
2nd Year	3. Internship	2nd school year full day	2nd school year full day	2nd 1/2 of 1st school year and all 2nd year full day with weekly inservice
	Teacher Licensing after 2 years			
3rd Year Coach Option	4. Intern coach	3rd school year full day	3rd school year full day	3rd school year full day
	Coach Certification after 3 years			
	Staffing for:			
	5. Practica Teachers	Expert K–7 Classroom Teachers		
	6. Intern Coaches	3rd Year Students (licensed teachers—no longer trainees)		
4th Year Option	7. Formal Classroom Instructors	4th Year Students and experienced formal Classroom Teachers		
	Teacher-trainer certification after 4 years			
	Capacity based on:			
	8. Size of Schools	728 Children	728 Children	728 Children
	9. Number of Classrooms	26	26	26
	10. Number of Practica teacher trainees per year	208	208	208

The first four rows summarize the duration of the training.

All 1st-year teacher trainees would receive daily formal classroom instruction 2 hours a day for 1 school year on both teaching practices and subject-area content. Teacher trainees for Grades K–2 and 3, 4 would simultaneously spend the 1st year in daily practica (2 hours per day). Teacher trainees for Grades 5–7 require less training and therefore would be in practica for only one-half year, after which they would begin their internship at a school in the community. (They would receive inservice training once a week.) The trainers for all practica would be K–2, 3–4, or 5–6 classroom teachers who have achieved accelerated student performance in their grades.

The second year of the program for all teacher trainees would be an internship at a designated high-performing school in the community. Following the internship, the trainees would take (a) a practicum test and (b) a written examination on general knowledge of education and specific items on the grade–range content and practices in which they have been working. Teacher trainees who pass the test would be licensed to teach the grade–range in which they specialized.

Once licensed, the teacher could take a teaching assignment or become an intern coach. The responsibilities of the intern coach are to monitor the teacher trainees who are in their 2nd year and to spend at least 1 day a week working in the 1st-year unit (either in the practica sessions or the formal instruction sessions).

After being an intern coach for 1 year and passing both a written exam and practicum evaluation, the coach would be eligible (as a Year-4 activity) to be a formal classroom instructor who trains 1st-year teacher trainees. Instructors would also supervise and monitor intern coaches (spending at least 8 hours a week in the field).

Rows 5–7 of the table show the personnel for the training. The practica teachers are K–7 classroom teachers who have achieved significant mastery of teaching techniques. The intern coaches are 3rd–year students who complete their intern year and choose to remain in school.

The formal classroom instructors include 4th–year students who have demonstrated skill in coaching teacher trainees and clearly communicating with children.

Rows 8–10 of the table show the number of children, classrooms, and 1st-year trainees in each 1st-year training unit for K–2, 3, 4, and 5–7.

The student population of each school shown is 728. With 28 children per classroom, there would be 26 classrooms. For the K–2 and 3, 4 schools, each classroom would have 4 small groups of 7 children each. The 5–7 school would have 2 groups of 14 children.

Each classroom in K–2 and 3, 4 would accommodate 8 practicum students (4 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon). The classrooms for the 5–7 training unit would have 2 practicum students in the morning and 2 in the afternoon. Students would teach some subjects in smaller groups and some to the whole class.

Each of the units would process 208 student teachers per year, for a total of 624 student teachers. Note that the grade 5–7 classroom has only four practicum students (2 in the morning and 2 in the afternoon), but the students are in the practica for only half of the school year before beginning their internship.

Some details of this model are arbitrary, and certainly procedures and curricula need to be identified in great detail. The design, however, could be very attractive for school districts. Instead of relying on teachers from colleges of education, they could create their hierarchy of trainers and provide for systematic replacement of teachers who leave the district. They could also require a passing score on the practica test and the written exam for any certified teacher who wanted to transfer into the district (or possibly only those that were to transfer into district schools that serve at-risk students).

First-Year Instruction

For the model described above, none of the work that teacher trainees do during their training is assumed to carry college credit. It is simply a district requirement for assessing skills and knowledge needed to obtain a teaching license. Also, the knowledge that trainees learn would permit them to pass written tests. A variation of the model could be designed so that trainees receive college credit. This variation would be conducted in conjunction with a college. It would reduce the amount of formal classroom instruction time in the district-based unit from 2 to 1 hour per day.

Preservice: The year would begin with 5 days of class work during which teacher trainees learn the rationale for the basic procedures that they will use in the classroom and practice the presentation skills in mock-teaching sessions. Teachers take turns playing the role of teacher and child. The “teachers” present tasks, correct mistakes, and reinforce “children.”

In-service: The rest of the school year would be split between formal classroom work and practica. Two hours a day would be devoted to practica; two hours would be devoted to professional classroom work.

The curricula for the professional study would consist of two strands: (1) the *general information strand,* which would present all the information that would describe any highly successful program; and (2) the *specific program information,* an ongoing inservice that addressed grade–range-specific issues and specific information about teaching practices like correcting, teaching to mastery, and so forth. The instructors would provide information about the four subjects that the teacher trainees would teach

during the year. For the K–2 trainees the subjects would be reading, language, writing–spelling, and math. For the 3, 4 training unit, the subjects would be reading, language/writing, and world information (science and cultural–literacy facts).

The general information strand would provide teacher trainees with the rationale for why particular things are done by all high-performing programs. The specific strand would address what the teacher trainees will do in the practicum on the following days and what they need to know to be successful.

The general strand would have three specific objectives:

1. to make the teacher literate about "buzz words," trends, history, and information on the various kinds of instructional programs that are in use and about why some of the programs are too poorly designed to be effective with at-risk students;

2. to identify the critical teaching behaviors that characterize any high-performing elementary school teacher and to provide rationale for why each practice is critical (why the teacher's performance is diminished without each behavior);

3. to familiarize students with the research foundation that the field of education has about teacher behaviors and instructional approaches.

The specific strand would address:

1. the content of the programs they are teaching in the classroom;
2. training and rehearsals on those content or skill areas that present particular problems for lower performers;
3. specific procedures for summarizing and using data on children's performance;
4. designing extensions for what they will cover in the classroom.

Funding

Different funding arrangements are possible. If the training is provided by a school district, a possible funding pattern would be as follows:

- 1st-year tuition fee: $2000
- 2nd-year stipend: aide salary (see below for explanation)
- 3rd-year stipend: teacher salary (beginning scale)
- 4th-year: teacher salary (upper half of scale).

The format would make the training and certification process inexpensive. Given that most of the candidates would complete only 2 years and take an assignment as a classroom teacher (not a coach or instructor) the training would cost the district very little.

1. In the 1st-year, the elementary classroom has only one paid teacher. The role of the expert teacher is to supervise, demonstrate, and make sure that all children are being taught effectively by trainees. Therefore, the cost of these classrooms is only slightly more than it would be in any school. The $2000 tuition fee would probably offset whatever additional expenses the training incurred.

2. In the 2nd year, elementary classroom there is only one "teacher," the teacher trainee who is in the intern year. The trainee is paid the salary of a full time instructional aide, which means the district employs effective "1st-year" teachers who cost far less than 1st-year certified teachers. These 2nd-year trainees are far more highly trained than the average teacher in most districts; therefore, the fact that interns have not been licensed as teachers does not imply that the children receive inferior instruction. An intern coach monitors the teacher trainee regularly and collects data to document that the children are being taught well. The coach responds immediately to problems of inadequate performance.

3. The cost of coaches for intern trainees is relatively small. The coach is paid at the salary of a beginning teacher, which is the same salary the coach would receive as a classroom teacher. One coach would be able to supervise 12 teacher trainees who were in schools that were close to each other (or in the same school). The cost of the coaches' salaries should be offset by the savings created by the fact that 2nd-year students are paid the salary of aides.

4. The instructor's cost would be that of an experienced classroom teacher. Not many instructors are needed, however. The ratio of instructors to teacher trainees would be about 1 to 80, which means that only about five instructors would be needed to teach the general and specific strands to 208 1st-year students. There are several reasons this number is sufficient:

    a. The instructors for the general strand would teach the same content to groups in the morning and the afternoon sessions, which means that an "average" class size taught only by the instructor would be 40.

    b. Work on the specific strand requires more instructors so that trainees can receive sufficient feedback on their role playing. Two classroom teachers would assist the instructor so that the group of 40 could be divided into

smaller practice groups of 13 or 14 trainees. This number would be adequate for both group-work on presentation skills and for individual work with each student.

c. The practice sessions would occur daily; however, they would be only about 30-minutes long.

d. During sessions that focus on the specific strand and that require demonstrations, an instructor could use one of the classroom teachers or the coaches assigned to the training unit for that day. The teacher or coach would teach a group of children in front of the trainees while the instructor points out what the trainees are to attend to.

e. For sessions that require lectures augmented with videotapes showing teachers and students performing, the instructor would work with the group of 40.

5. If the difference in salary between the teacher's salary and that of a full-time classroom aide is $12,000 ($33,000 for beginning teacher and $21,000 for full time classroom aide), 208 2nd-year trainees would generate a saving to the district of $2,496,000. In addition the 1st-year tuitions for 208 students would generate another $416,000. The total generated by each training unit that processed 208 teacher trainees would be $2,912,000. This amount should be sufficient to offset the costs incurred by the instructors, coaches and supervisors needed to staff and administer the unit. The sum generated by all three units would be over $8,700,000 per year.

Transition

During the first 2 years of the implementation, the district would need professional trainers to serve as instructors. During this time, the instructors would train several coordinators or coaches from the model school to be instructors. (Some of them may choose to continue as instructors even after postgraduates of the program are available.)

Strategies

A district goal would be to replace or retrain all teachers of at-risk students who did not:

(1) go through the technical-teacher training sequence; or
(2) pass the practicum and written exam; or
(3) show an above-average gain for the types of children in the school.

For the third possibility, the district could use historical norms to determine what average is for the various neighborhoods of the city. Teachers whose students performed at least 10% above the neighborhood (or school) norm would not be required to demonstrate proficiency. Teachers whose students performed at or below the average would have to be retrained.

The district would allow teachers who go through the program and wish to teach in a grade range not covered by their license to take an abbreviated version of the certification test to assure that the teachers are familiar with the content and have the skills necessary to teach effectively. As a rule, the test required for a teacher going from a lower grade range to a higher one would be less detailed than the test required for going from a higher grade range to a lower one.

The district would test graduates of colleges and schools of education before awarding district certification. Those that failed would not be employed by the district. If less than 50% of the students from a college or school of education failed the certification test, the district would charge any graduate of that institution an additional fee of $300 to take the test. Those who passed would receive a rebate of $150.

In effect, this plan would place great pressure on the colleges of education to reform their practices and provide adequate technical preparation for their graduates.

Benefits

The district-based certification model has four benefits:

1. It would provide teachers who are far more highly trained and knowledgeable about effective teaching than current 1st-year teachers:

    a. Specialists for specific grade ranges would have the technical skills needed to teach lower performers effectively.

    b. The 1st-year teachers would be more experienced in working with at-risk students in a classroom setting than 2nd-year teachers from traditional training institutions, which means that they would not require the “learning curve” that characterizes typical 1st-year teachers.

    c. The district’s school-based training would provide teacher trainees with many more times the individualized attention and more modeling of effective practices than traditional training provides.

2. Certification would require much less time than the traditional sequence in the 4-year college:

a. For the district, this means that it would take a lot less time to upgrade the instruction for at-risk students.

b. For the teacher trainees, the shorter time period means that they would be earning a teacher's salary 2 years before the student in the 4-year institution.

3. The cost of the training program would be greatly reduced because of the format:

   a. The training would occur within one of the district's existing schools.

   b. The practica would be supervised by teachers already assigned to the various classrooms.

   c. The coordinators would become the initial cadre of instructors for classroom work.

   d. Both 1st-year and 2nd-year teacher trainees would generate income (or savings).

4. The certification procedures would provide significant employment potential for high school graduates in the high-risk neighborhood served by the district-based training program.

   a. High-performing high school graduates would not have to go through college or incur great debt even if they had no financial-relief program. The district could provide these candidates with a loan or scholarship and waive the tuition fee, which would make the teaching option quite attractive to better students, who make better teachers.

   b. The first-year schedule could be arranged so that trainees would have some time, preferably after 2:00 p.m., for a part-time job.

Section 3
CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE DISTRICT-BASED MODEL

Licensing

There seem to be four options for licensing graduates of the program.

1. Challenge the state licensing commission to recognize the written test and practicum exam as evidence of **demonstrated competence**.

2. Arrange for candidates to be licensed by an online certification test.

3. Challenge the state on the grounds that the district has the arbitrament of issuing courses that have credit; therefore, there is no reason that the district should not be able to provide an organized series of courses that lead to some form of emergency, provisional, or special-purpose license.

4. Work in conjunction with an accredited teacher-training college to modify the program in a way that it leads to a regular four-year college diploma.

The licensing issue could be complicated because of the relationship of agencies: the state board of higher education, the educational code, the rules of the licensing commission, and the expressed needs of the district.

Challenging the state licensing commission would possibly be the most direct route, at least in some states. For instance, in Oregon, section 342.121 of the ORS education code indicates, “The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission shall issue licenses to teachers and administrators who possess the minimum competencies, knowledge and skills to teach and administer in the public schools of the state.” The subsection also indicates that a person may obtain certification but that “A teaching certificate . . . shall not be required to teach . . . in a public school of this state.”

These statements seem to imply that evidence of possessing the minimum competencies, knowledge and skills could be assessed by a means other than certification. That test would imply a demonstration of some sort (which the district-based proposal would have). The challenge to the state would be simply that if these statements about licensing are in the law, the program should not have to lead to a college degree or certification by any certifying agency. It would simply be based on the evidence that the person has “minimum competencies, knowledge and skills to teach . . . in the public schools.”

This route would be the most direct for states that have provisions like those of Oregon. The district would assert that the graduates of the program are judged to meet minimum standards. The commission would seem to be bound to test candidates on a test that

would be passed by traditionally licensed teachers, or to accept the final practicum exam and written exam that candidates pass in order to receive certification.

To arrange for certification through an online certifying agency would be less attractive but in some states possibly more convenient or expedient. Those would be the states that recognized the test performance as an indication that the candidate is qualified. Although the district-based training would provide candidates with most of the information they would need to pass the test, they would probably have to do some additional study to prepare for test items that asked about legal matters and peripheral issues.

There are various types of online certification, most of which offer a degree. A more radical proposal has been sparked by pending Pennsylvania legislation that would establish “equivalencies of education and experience for all certificate areas.” Because Pennsylvania has reciprocity with many other states, certification in Pennsylvania through an online **testing program** that is supposed to document “equivalence experience” would permit candidates to obtain the online degree and apply it to one of the states that has reciprocity agreements with Pennsylvania.

One of the online certification testing services is the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (www.abcte.org). The main drawback to the service is that it requires the candidate to have a college degree. A college degree should not be necessary to teach in any area of elementary school, where the need for excellent teachers is greatest. Experience with high school graduates who earn high grades suggests that they are primary candidates for becoming excellent teachers.

Challenging the state to meet an expressed need of the district is another approach. The precedent is that the district may provide classes or experiences that lead to some sort of degree or pay increase. Also, the board of higher education has been responsive to the districts’ requests for emergency certification, provisional certification, and the like. Therefore, the board should be sensitive to the districts’ expressed needs for teachers who have skills that are not properly developed by extant teacher-certification practices.

Working in conjunction with an accredited college of education may be possible, but it is both expensive and requires candidates to study for a longer period of time before being able to work. From the standpoint of the district, the district’s school-based sequence could be modified so that during the 2nd and 3rd year, the students took “inservice” courses offered by the cooperating college and some form of self-study program to serve the function of a 4th year, after which the candidate would be certified and licensed by the state.

It may be that some colleges recognize the need for modifying current teacher training practices. In fact, in 2002 Imig made the following observation.

Implications for Ed Schools

> . . . Our clients need and expect new and very different teachers to meet the expectations of *No Child Left Behind*; it is our responsibility to respond to those demands and to prepare a new generation of teachers. If we fail to respond, the policy community is fully committed to by-passing us and creating a world of alternatives and choices for the preparation of teachers and school leaders. They have the will and the resources to do so. Our future depends on designing new programs that meet changing client expectations. Education schools that enter into joint ventures with those clients and customers will prevail in a world of dramatic change. (final paragraph)

Various modifications of these plans are possible, but the solution that would lead to the most immediate and complete resolution of the problem would be a challenge to the state licensing commission to provide standards for demonstrated competence. The goal of the program should not necessarily be to produce college graduates, but licensed teachers.

Recognition of Certification by Other Districts

A possible problem with the district-based certification model has to do with teachers who are licensed by the 2-year training program and who move to another district. It seems that if the graduate of the 2-year program has been licensed by the state (which is ultimately what would have to occur), the holder of the license would have the same rights of reciprocity that other licensed teachers from the state enjoy. The teacher-training institution on the application for a license in another state would be whatever name the district designates for the training unit. If the name is *Chicago Teacher Training Institute,* that's the name that would appear on the license. It would appear whether or not the institute is "certified" by some accrediting agency.

If the district to which the teacher is transferring does not "recognize" the training institution, the district would be obligated to give the teacher the same test that is given to other licensed teachers who transfer into the district and are tested. The license in one state, however, would have to carry the same rights as others from that state. If the state in which the license was initially issued designates the license as "general," applying to grades K–6, it would imply the same grade range in any state that has "reciprocity" or accepts students for the state issuing the license. If the issuing state provides a more restrictive license (for a particular grade range), the district to which the teacher transfers would have to judge whether to limit the grade range for the teacher. (This possibility may be unlikely because the license issued is probably the most basic "general" license described by the education code.)

In addition to the legal issues, there are some public-relations strategies that would provide the training unit with public recognition.

1. The transferring teacher would have a data sheet that summarizes what she had to achieve to receive her district certification and summarizes the performance of her students during her tenure in the district. This information would disclose that the teacher has a much higher rate of success than typical teachers who transfer into the district. Possibly the receiving district will recognize that this teacher is indeed certified and qualified.

2. Formation of an association with services that provide online certification testing, such as the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, may be possible if ABCTE drops its requirement for applicants having a degree.

3. Arranging for studies that document the accelerated performance that is achieved by graduates of the district-based program can be compared to the performance of traditionally trained teachers. The more exposure and publicity the district receives on the program, the greater the acceptability it will have.

Teacher Unions

The national teachers' unions should not be opposed to the practices or format of the program if these organizations receive information about what teachers learn and the skills they acquire. Local affiliates may have problems, largely because the format presents a potential threat to extant teachers. The conflict would tend to be reduced if the training program involved only at-risk students or failed schools. There would probably be grievances from teachers in these schools, but their protest would not carry the weight of those from affluent neighborhoods, particularly if the district had data on the performance of the program graduates.

Once the program is institutionalized and recognized, it could be extended to school failures who are not at risk because of economic status or because of unfamiliarity with the English language.

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