



October 7, 2009

Mr. Dale Janssen  
Executive Director  
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing  
1900 Capitol Avenue  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Janssen,

Thank you for inviting the California Teacher Corps into your conversation regarding the distribution of interns and their effectiveness in the classroom. As you know, the California Teacher Corps represents, and advocates on behalf of, California's alternative certification programs. As we begin to take a more active role in the state's efforts to improve public education, we appreciate the opportunity to share with you our thoughts on enhancing teacher preparation, as well as enhancing the role of interns in hard-to-staff schools.

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL) has coined the terms "maldistribution" and "underprepared" when speaking about teachers who come from alternate route programs. However, the California Teacher Corps would like to challenge this thinking, and instead, employ the terms "targeted distribution" and "highly-qualified" when describing the placement of interns by alternate route programs in hard-to-staff, lower performing, and high poverty schools. Additionally, the California Teacher Corps strongly disagrees with the concept that an intern is only valuable to a district when a "suitable fully prepared teacher is not available," as written in current Education Code. It is our belief that interns are often best suited to serve in our high need public schools, and that any action taken to limit the concentration of interns in high poverty schools would be a mistake on the part of the Commission.

It is important to our discussion to fully understand who is pursuing the alternate route pathway into teaching. Interns are second-career professionals, and other content experts, who desire to serve their community and teach in public schools that are in greatest need. There is the common misconception that, because these teachers did not take a traditional route to the classroom, they are "underprepared" and "inexperienced." However, alternate route programs are placing highly skilled teachers in the classroom, especially in underserved communities. These teachers, who bring with them a wealth of life and professional experience, understand the community in which they serve and have the tools necessary to meet the diverse needs of their students. Our teachers are mature, diverse (more than 50% under-represented minority), and committed (80%+ retained after 5 years) teachers who choose to teach in our hard-to-staff schools. The belief that they are only placed there when a fully credentialed teacher is not available is not accurate.

According to data released by the Commission, the school districts that hire interns from alternative certification programs recognize their success in the classroom. School districts report that 90% of these teachers were as good as, or better, than other beginning teachers at their schools, especially in the areas of planning and implementing instruction (91%), classroom management (87%), and providing effective teaching strategies (89%). Additionally, more than 70 percent of school administrators would hire additional teachers from an alternative certification program.

As the data suggests, it is not surprising that the original intent of intern programs, to increase effectiveness of teachers by placing theory and practice more closely together, has shifted towards addressing California's teacher shortages and education challenges. Today, as California continues to face shortages of math, science and special education teachers, alternative certification programs are placing highly-qualified interns into classrooms that need them. In fact, just last year 50 percent of California's math teachers came from alternative certification programs.

Therefore, it is the position of the California Teacher Corps that we continue to recognize that highly-qualified interns are successfully filling teacher shortage needs, and are the best suited to serve in our hard-to-staff schools. We must amend the Education Code to ensure that interns are able to serve the schools in greatest need by removing the outdated and arbitrary language that discriminates against teachers from alternative certification programs.

Our programs work to match the best teacher with the students who need them the most. Ultimately, we must remember that the right teacher makes all the difference. California Teacher Corps looks forward to working with the CCTC to guarantee that all children get that right teacher, regardless of the route taken into teaching.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Catherine Kearney, Ed.D  
President  
California Teacher Corps

Copy: Marilyn Errett, Governmental Relations