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TEACHER CORPS TAPPING CA PARAEDUCATORS TO MEET IMPENDING TEACHER SHORTAGE

California Teacher Corps to recruit more than 2,000 skilled paraeducators into alternative certification programs to ultimately place in teaching positions to meet teacher shortage

Sacramento, CA – The California Teacher Corps, a coalition of the state’s alternative route to certification programs, today announced that it is strengthening its partnerships with California’s paraprofessional programs to recruit more than 2,000 talented paraeducators into Teacher Corps programs. This effort is designed to get more teachers on the path to their teaching credential in order to help meet California’s impending teacher shortage expected in the coming years. This effort is part of the Teacher Corps’ founding mission to place 100,000 highly-qualified teachers in California’s communities by 2020.

Over the next decade, California will experience a critical need for qualified teachers in the state’s public schools. One-third of the state’s teachers are over the age of 50 and are on track for retirement within ten years, according to a December 2010 report by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL). Additionally, the number of prospective teachers annually enrolling in teacher preparation programs has dropped over a seven-year span from 75,000 to 45,000. While the number of individuals viewing education as a viable career is decreasing, at the same time, California’s teaching pipeline has been thinned by systemic layoffs due to the budget crisis.

Teacher Corps programs are exploring innovative ways to build the infrastructure needed to meet these challenges. Recognizing paraeducators as one untapped pipeline of potential teachers, Teacher Corps programs will work closely with California’s two major paraprofessional grant programs, the Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP) and the Transition to Teaching Program, to recruit individuals showing exceptional talent and skill for teaching into a Teacher Corps program. These partnerships will ensure that talented paraeducators have access to the resources necessary to seamlessly move into a Teacher Corps program to earn their credential. In 2009-10, approximately 12 percent of teachers going through a Teacher Corps program were former paraeducators.

“The California Teacher Corps is taking action today to ensure that California has a robust pipeline of teachers to meet tomorrow’s impending teacher shortage,” said Catherine Kearney, president of the California Teacher Corps. “Colleges of education and teacher preparation programs alone are not going to be able to recruit the large number of teachers needed to meet the expected shortage. We must be innovative in our recruitment efforts and look to untapped pipelines of talented teachers. Right now, school districts are sitting on top of a gold mine, and that gold mine is paraeducators.”

Paraeducators, also known as instructional aides, are most often from the community they serve, and also from diverse backgrounds and under-represented minority groups. They bring with them experience

in the classroom and previous mentorship from the veteran teachers they assisted. Oftentimes, paraeducators who show an aptitude for teaching are requested by their school leadership and school districts to enter into a teacher preparation program to work towards their credential. School districts, desiring to grow their teacher pipeline from within the community, look to second-career professionals and paraeducators to fill this pipeline.

PTTP and the Transition to Teaching program serve as career ladders for individuals who are interested in becoming a teacher, but who must first fulfill the requirements needed to earn a teaching credential. This can include completing a bachelor's degree, meeting subject matter competency and completing a teacher preparation program. Both programs provide paraeducators with assistance with college tuition, fees, and books, as well as ongoing support in making the transition from instructional assistant to instructional leader.

"In the next ten years, we will experience a national teacher shortage, one that will leave us with 1.5 to 2 million teacher positions to fill," said Jo Anderson, Senior Advisor to Education Secretary Arne Duncan. "We must take steps today to build the infrastructure we need to meet this future challenge. We need to be innovative in our recruitment efforts and build a talent pipeline of diverse, committed and qualified teachers."

Alternative route to certification programs have historically met the varying needs of California's public schools. During last year's round of layoffs, Teacher Corps programs partnered with school districts to provide their pink-slipped and laid-off teachers retraining to move into the high-need fields of math, science and special education. Through these efforts, 1,500 pink-slipped teachers shifted into high-need teaching positions and were able to remain in the classroom.

Teacher Corps programs recruit and train second-career professionals, which include paraeducators, and other content experts, to serve in hard-to-staff schools, as well as to meet the critical need for math, science and special education teachers.

About the California Teacher Corps

The California Teacher Corps is a nonprofit organization established in 2009 with the goal of placing 100,000 highly-qualified teachers in California's communities by 2020. The Teacher Corps provides a unified voice for the state's alternative certification programs, effectively and proactively addresses teacher preparation issues facing California and recruits the best and the brightest professionals to teach in the public schools that need them most. CA Teacher Corps membership trains second-career teachers, and others committed to working in hard-to-staff schools, who have deep subject-area expertise and who remain in the teaching profession. For more information, visit the California Teacher Corps at www.cateachercorps.org

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