

## LATERAL ENTRY

### For More Information:

- <http://www.ausl-chicago.org/> Academy of Urban School Leadership in Chicago, Illinois.
- <http://www.bpe.org/btr> Boston Teacher Residency Program.
- <http://www.pebc.org/ourowkr/schools/boettcher/html> Boettcher Teacher Program in Denver, Colorado.
- <http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/publications/database/htm> Education Commission of the States, database on state activities relative to teaching quality.
- <http://www.wiche.edu/policy/SPIDO/index.asp#search> The State Policy Inventory Database Online (SPIDO) from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education provides a searchable listing of policy initiatives, including promising efforts related to teaching quality and lateral entry.
- <http://ncteach.ga.unc.edu/> NC TEACH Web site.

*"...lateral entry can be a good thing. My biggest concern about placement of teachers is that too often we are placing those teachers in schools that are the most difficult, so we set them up for failure from the beginning. That is why the rate of lateral entry teachers leaving is so high. They went in to help somebody, and they are not receiving the help they need."*

*– Elementary School Principal*

As education stakeholders and policymakers increasingly focus on addressing a growing teacher shortage, many states are making it easier to recruit teachers without prior formal teacher training. Many of these lateral entry programs hold the promise of placing new recruits in the classroom rapidly, and proponents of such efforts cite a number of reasons for their necessity:

- existing teacher shortages
- subject matter expertise of new entrants to the profession
- perceived decline in the quality of teachers from traditional preparation programs
- continued lack of minority and male teachers
- a need to reduce reliance on emergency licensure

Currently, 42 states provide for some alternative route into the teaching profession. As states rely more heavily on lateral entry programs, the quality and impact of these efforts should be more closely considered. There are hundreds of different kinds of lateral entry or alternative teacher preparation programs, and the duration and quality of preparation received through those routes varies dramatically across – and even within – states. Reviewing the effectiveness of lateral entry programs requires an understanding of the type of program and teaching candidates being considered: not all lateral entry programs are created equal.

The prominence of lateral entry is likely to increase under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), as the law considers alternatively certified teachers “highly qualified.” NCLB requires that alternatively certified teachers receive high-quality, sustained, classroom-focused professional development and an intensive induction or mentoring program. Unfortunately, many schools and districts in North Carolina and across the country are vastly unprepared to offer meaningful induction and mentoring support for any novice teachers, especially those who are alternatively certified.

There are some very high quality national alternative preparation programs that bring dedicated individuals into the teaching profession from other career paths without incurring high attrition rates for these teachers. The *Academy for Urban School Leadership* in Chicago, the *Boston Teacher Residency Program* and the *Boettcher Teachers Program* in Denver are all exemplary lateral entry program models. Each of these three model programs move well beyond what their respective states require in terms of pre-service clinical experience and academic instruction and standards required of their teaching candidates.

Unfortunately, many other lateral entry programs are still producing and quickly losing teachers who lack the knowledge they need before starting in the classroom. Any state serious about recruiting nontraditional teachers into teaching—and North Carolina must be in order to address teacher shortages—should take steps to ensure that these programs provide incoming teachers the support, skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the classroom. Recently, the North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL) found six common characteristics in effective lateral entry programs:

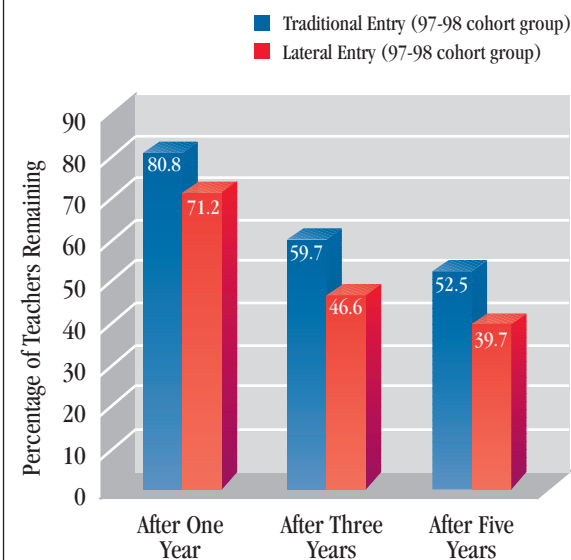
- High standards and proper screening of candidates;
- Solid academic instruction in teaching methods, subject matter, classroom management and child development, before the candidate begins to work in a school;
- An organized and comprehensive system of support from experienced, trained mentors;
- A period of observation and assistance in the classroom by an experienced teacher before the candidate begins teaching alone;
- Ongoing training, instruction and reflection; and
- Continuous monitoring, evaluation and feedback on performance to allow for improvement.

### NORTH CAROLINA POLICY AND PRACTICES

In the past seven years, the number of candidates completing lateral entry programs in North Carolina has increased by 250 percent (2,112 candidates completed lateral entry programs and applied for licensure in 2002-2003). However, teachers from these lateral entry programs were less likely to stay in the profession than traditionally prepared educators (see the chart on the next page, from DPI data). Although these statistics relate to teacher retention problems, if North Carolina recruits new teachers from lateral entry programs that yield these high attrition rates, the state will continue to face a revolving door of new teacher candidates. This turnover rate requires the state to consistently incur the high costs required to recruit, hire and train a significant portion of its teacher workforce each year.

*Prepared for the Hunt Institute by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality.*

## New NC Teachers Remaining in Profession



Launched in 2000, NC TEACH provides candidates with a five-week summer institute, as well as classes and seminars throughout their first year of teaching. While the program was designed to attract and retain mid-career professionals, a recent analysis found that a large number of educators entering the program already had significant experiences in education as substitute teachers and teaching assistants. In fact, 40 percent of 2003 NC TEACH participants had been classroom teachers and 18 percent had been teaching assistants before entering the program (many had been in other lateral entry programs). The majority of program entrants chose NC TEACH due to its quick route to licensure, and almost two-thirds *intended to stay* in teaching for more than 10 years — a high percentage relative to other lateral entry programs.

## POLICY AND PRACTICES ACROSS THE NATION

Few state policy actions have created standards for lateral entry programs that ensure non-traditional teachers receive the training and support they need before entering classrooms. The trend of legislative adjustments raising the minimum grade point average and minimum cut-scores on content exams may be laudable because they raise the bar for lateral entry candidates. Unfortunately, these state legislative actions fail to raise the bar on the standards that matter most for a new teacher's effectiveness in the classroom — pre-service training, preparation for classroom management and child development, support from trained mentors and a period of assistance in the classroom from an experienced teacher before the candidate begins teaching alone.

In the face of teacher shortages, many states have lowered standards for entry into teaching and discount the need for any authentic assessment of lateral entry candidates.

- In November 2003, the **Texas** State Board of Educator Certification voted 5-4 to create a temporary two-year teacher certificate for grades 8-12 for candidates with an appropriate degree and passage of the content area exam; upon positive evaluation based on student achievement, a full certificate will be granted.
- In **Georgia**, due to NCLB and legislative changes, the Professional Standards Commission allows anyone with a bachelor's degree, a 2.5 GPA and passage of the content assessment to receive a provisional license.
- An analysis of **Colorado's** 44 alternative programs found concerns about the capacity of the state to oversee program quality and hold them accountable, insufficient recruitment strategies to attract teachers to hard-to-staff schools, and a lack of proper pre-service training (alternative route teachers received, on average, *18 clock hours* of training before entering classrooms).

**Wyoming** has established a different process to identify whether potential lateral entry teachers meet the state's standards for entering the classroom. Facing a problem recruiting teachers to the western part of the state, as well as into small and rural schools, Wyoming now offers the opportunity to become certified through portfolio for those with a bachelor's degree and extensive experiences with school age children. The portfolio, a collection of documented evidence that shows an applicant's lifetime of activities and verifies how he/she meets Wyoming certification standards, is reviewed by a five-member committee. The state's Professional Teaching Standards Board makes the final determination for certification. Teachers with a current Wyoming certificate can also use the process to add an endorsement area. Applicants report needing 100 to 500 hours to complete an entire portfolio.

The **Vermont** alternative and peer review program is designed for both initial licensure and additional endorsements. The program does not require an internship or specific field experience and candidates are evaluated by a panel of three licensed educators (at least two of whom must be in the areas in which the candidate is seeking licensure) to determine qualifications and experience. Candidates who seek licensure are required to prepare a portfolio documenting how they meet the licensure requirements and the endorsement competencies they seek. The panel independently reviews the portfolio and then jointly interviews the candidate. The panel then decides if the candidate should be recommended for licensure or recommended with stipulations, in which case the candidate must complete additional work (e.g. student teaching) to demonstrate competency. The Vermont Department of Education has administered this peer review process since November 2000.

## IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- **What is the appropriate amount of preparation and pre-service that will ensure quality, but not discourage potential teachers from entering the profession?** Careful assessments of prospective candidates can result in customized preparation routes. All lateral entry candidates should have clinical teaching experiences under the supervision of an experienced, successful teacher. Once they are in the classroom, lateral entry teachers should participate in a comprehensive induction process.
- **Is lateral entry a pathway or is it a program? What is the current relationship between school districts and institutions/organizations offering lateral entry opportunities?** The state helps develop collaborative relationships to create alignment between district needs, lateral entry preparation efforts and ongoing mentoring/professional development. When school districts have meaningful partnerships with lateral entry programs, creating sustainable models that fit long-term district goals, then lateral entry will become more of a pathway into the profession and less of a program to fill immediate teaching vacancies.
- **How does the state consider financial investments in lateral entry programs?** Effective lateral entry programs require strong financial support, just as good traditional preparation programs do. Lateral entry programs should not be considered as less expensive substitutes for traditional programs. Statistics on teacher attrition rates indicate that financial costs for "short-cut" programs are incurred later as districts must recruit, hire and train more teachers to replace those who leave because of inadequate preparation and support. Most importantly, the costs of replacing lateral entry teachers fall most heavily on students. The cumulative negative effect of inexperienced teachers on student learning is considerable.