

Alternative teacher certification: an update



THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS MATTERS A GREAT DEAL TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, STUDENT ATTITUDES, AND PREPARATION FOR JOBS AND COLLEGE

RIGOROUS TEACHER CERTIFICATION VS. LAX TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Much research confirms that the single most important school factor for student learning is teacher quality. The impact of a teacher is two to three times greater than any other school factor.¹

In all of the highest-performing countries in the world, such as Finland, Singapore, and Japan, teacher certification is highly regulated and teacher preparation programs are demanding and rigorous.²

43%

In 2015-16, 43% of Oklahoma's new teachers were alternatively-certified or emergency-certified.

Alternatively-certified and emergency-certified teachers have never been vetted.

In 2015-2016, 1063 emergency certifications and 560 alternative certifications were granted. Individuals receiving these credentials may have had zero experience in the classroom and zero academic preparation. **Almost nothing is known about these individuals who are entrusted with the education and well-being of our children.**

3x more likely

Emergency-certified teachers are 3x more likely to work in poor, urban schools than suburban schools.³ In OK, 1 in 3 emergency-certified teachers work in either Oklahoma City Schools or Tulsa Public Schools.

Alternative certification provides few teachers in areas of "high need."

Alternative certification was created to make it easier to hire teachers in hard-to-staff areas, such as special education. However, **only 8 teachers sought certification in special education last year.**

On the other hand, **166 teachers were alternatively certified in business/career tech**, 110 teachers were alternatively certified in social studies, and 66 teachers were alternatively certified in physical education.

Alternatively certified teachers are found most often in fields that are not "high needs"-- business, social studies, and physical education.

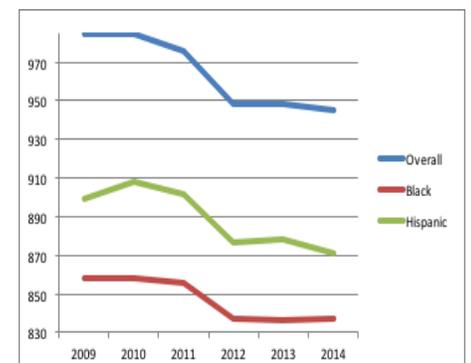
University-based teacher preparation is superior to alternative certification.⁴

High teacher turnover is expensive and has a negative impact on student achievement.⁵ Teachers who graduate from university-based programs are more likely to stay in the profession longer. A recent study of five alternative certification programs--Relay, Match Teacher Residency (MTR), High Tech High (HTH), iTeach, and TEACH-NOW-- found that they lack any "evidence supporting claims of success." MDR and Relay "prepare teachers to use highly controlling pedagogical and classroom management techniques that are primarily used in schools serving students of color whose communities are severely impacted by poverty."⁶

Texas sets the bar very low for teachers. In Texas, 199 different entities, including online for-profit businesses, offer 6000 different programs. Although the quality of education in these online programs is poor, more teachers get their credentials from alternative certification programs than from university-based programs. One recent graduate of the A+ Teachers program commented that he easily "did all courses in about 3 weeks time online."⁷

As a result, **Texas also leads the nation in the number of cases of teacher misconduct.** Last year, 163 allegations of misconduct were made against Texas teachers, the highest rate of teacher misconduct in the history of the state.

Scores by Texas students on the S.A.T. have been dropping rapidly since 2009.



Texas students score among the lowest in the nation on the S.A.T. **The College Board estimates only 14% of African American and 19% of Hispanic students from Texas can be considered "college ready."**⁸

A MORE DEMANDING APPROACH TO
TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Montana

Montana has only 10 education providers and no routes to alternative certification (compared to Texas' 6000 programs). Last year in Montana, there were zero allegations of teacher misconduct. According to the College Board, 41% of African American and 49% of Hispanic students in Montana are college-ready. Those numbers are triple the percentage of college-ready, African-American and Hispanic students in Texas.



TFA is not the answer.

A few years ago, a brilliant student named Susan graduated from the mathematics education program at The University of Oklahoma. Susan had grown up in Tulsa and wanted to return to her old neighborhood as a teacher. She was offered a job in the high school from which she graduated.

After a successful first year of teaching math in her old high school, Tulsa Public Schools faced a budget cut and Susan was fired. At the same time, Tulsa Public Schools hired 75 new teachers from Teach for America. In essence, the mathematics star returning home was fired for an inexperienced TFA recruit from out-of-state.

90% of TFA teachers do not plan to stay in teaching.⁹

More than half of TFA teachers leave the classroom after two years. By the third year, 3 in 4 leave.¹⁰ This rapid turnover of teachers destabilizes schools. While TFA teachers are smart, they are not well prepared. OU, OSU, and UCO require 4 semesters of work in classrooms plus a 15-week internship, courses in pedagogy, and a 3.0 grade point average. TFA requires none of the above.

Emergency-certified teachers are most often found in schools with the most disadvantaged students.

High numbers of emergency-certified teachers

DISTRICT	DEMO-GRAPHICS	% FREE REDUCED LUNCH	RANK IN EMERGENCY TEACHERS (JULY 1)
OKC	51% Hispanic 24% African American 16% White 3% Native American 2% Asian	90%	1 (154 emergency certified teachers)
TULSA	31% Hispanic 26% African American 26% White 9% Mixed race 6% Native American 1% Asian	76%	2 (83 emergency certified teachers)
PUTNAM CITY	42% White 26% Hispanic 25% African American 4% Asian 3% Native American	75%	3 (47 emergency certified teachers)

Low numbers of emergency-certified teachers

DISTRICT	DEMO-GRAPHICS	% FREE REDUCED LUNCH	RANK IN EMERGENCY TEACHERS (JULY 1)
DEER CREEK	79% White 6% Hispanic 6% Asian 5% African American 4% Native American	10%	Near the bottom (1 emergency certified teacher)
BROKEN ARROW	64% White 11% Hispanic 9% Mixed race 8% Native American 5% African American 4% Native American	41%	Near the bottom (1 emergency certified teacher)
STILL-WATER	78% White 9% Hispanic 5% African American 4% Native American 3% Asian	46%	The bottom (zero emergency certified teachers)

*This data compiled from Oklahoma Department of Education website, September 16, 2016.

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- ⁷ Taken from the blog at: https://www.reddit.com/r/Teachers/comments/2ehfxe/has_anyone_in_texas_gone_through_the_alternative/
- ⁸ College Board (2016). *Texas 2014 results*. <https://www.collegeboard.org/program-results/2014/texas>
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