

New organization planning to prep thousands of teachers

A new statewide organization aims to prepare 100,000 highly qualified teachers to be placed in California public schools by 2020.

The California Teacher Corps, representing more than 70 alternative certification programs, is being established to meet the critical need for qualified and committed teachers in the state's public schools over the next decade.

Formerly a loose group of affiliates, the California Teacher Corps will provide a unified voice for alternative certification programs throughout the state. Supporting multiple routes into teaching, the new organization will focus on recruiting qualified second-career professionals and other content experts to teach in public schools that are in the greatest need.

The California Teacher Corps will help establish new alternative certification programs in areas of the state that currently do not have such programs, providing them with technical assistance as they grow, and strengthening existing programs as they continue to serve as pipelines for preparing highly qualified teachers. Also, the organization will serve as a resource on research about the effectiveness of teacher preparation in California.

Additionally, as the Obama administration pledges Race to the Top funds to the states who embrace alternative routes to certification for teachers, the California Teacher Corps will work to ensure that California is well-positioned to capitalize on the administration's efforts to prioritize teacher

preparation programs.

"At the heart of the California Teacher Corps is the belief that every student in California deserves an outstanding teacher who is well prepared and who wants to serve their community in the classroom," said Catherine Kearney, president of the California Teacher Corps. "For nearly two decades, alternative certification programs have been placing talented, passionate and committed teachers in the schools that need them the most. The California Teacher Corps will accelerate this success, work to ensure that all schools have the best and brightest teachers in their classrooms and expand the pipeline into teacher preparation programs."

Despite today's current economic climate, California's teacher workforce will soon face historic challenges. Estimates show that as Baby Boomers reach retirement age over the next decade, teacher retirement rates will increase exponentially.

Approximately 8,000 California teachers will retire each year over the coming years, according to a 2008 WestEd report.

Additionally, research has shown that nationally, close to half of all new teachers leave the profession within five years. As a result, the state will experience a critical shortage of high-quality teachers, especially in the fields of math, science and special education, both in urban communities as well as in the state's more rural school districts.

Alongside traditional teacher preparation programs, the California

Teacher Corps is poised to meet the future demand for teachers in the state's public schools, particularly in its underserved communities. The organization will recruit and train skilled second-career professionals and others committed to working in hard-to-staff schools.

Alternative route programs attract talented individuals who bring with them deep content expertise and valuable professional experience and who otherwise would not have pursued teaching.

The teachers who come out of alternative certification programs in

California also tend to stay in the teaching profession longer. According to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, after five years, more than 80 percent of teachers from alternative certification programs are still teaching.

"I applaud the California Teacher Corps for its leadership and commitment to improving public education in California," said Secretary of Education Glen Thomas. "The organization's mission builds on Gov. Schwarzenegger's efforts to recruit the best and brightest teachers into

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our classrooms, and I look forward to working together to ensure our students get the world-class education they deserve."

Nimble enough to quickly meet the ever-changing needs of individual schools, school districts and the students they serve, the California Teacher Corps will address the growing need for highly skilled teachers who are experts in the fields of math, science and special education.

Last year, 50 percent of California's math teachers came out of alternative certification programs. Additionally, more than 80 percent of hiring school districts believe that alternative certification programs help meet their needs in critical shortage subject areas, also according to the credentialing commission.

"We recognize there are many routes to certification. One of those routes, intern programs, has a long histo-

ry in California of placing qualified teachers in our public schools," said Dale Janssen, executive director of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. "While not right for everyone, these intern programs provide a viable option for established and mature professionals to enter the teaching profession and immediately take charge of a classroom, benefiting our students. The California Teacher Corps can play an important role in attracting highly qualified teachers to our public schools."

California alternative certification programs provide rigorous training that enables prospective teachers with both established professional experience and deep content expertise to teach in public schools while concurrently continuing with coursework toward their teaching credentials. Alternative certification programs currently place an average of 8,000 teachers annually in California's public schools.

For more information visit www.cateachercorps.org.