



A Path to Teach

By Sarah Lippincott
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On May 15th, school districts handed out 19,000 pink-slips due to the current economic budgetary crisis according to the California Teacher Corps (CTC) representative Mira Brown. However, schools are expected to have a deficiency of teachers in the next ten years.

“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. 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.

In preparation for the teacher shortage CTC announced that it is ramping up its partnerships with the State’s Paraprofessionals programs to recruit Paraeducators (also known as teacher instructional aides) into Teacher Corps programs —putting them on the pathway to teaching.

“Our program brings in Paraeducators who would be great teachers but might have difficulty navigating college. We help support them by assisting them with the system, taking care of tuition and books,” said Dr. Catherine Kearney President of the CTC who resides in San Joaquin County. “Additionally, many Paraeducators are bilingual assistants, which will help develop bilingual teachers and ethnic diversity that reflect the students they teach.”

“My experience as a Paraeducator is what gave me a leg up in making the transition to a certified teacher,” James Gilbert explained his experience as he went through the program, “while I was a Paraeducator, I was in the special education classroom. The work provided me with first hand experience; more than any textbook could do.”

Gilbert was able to attend Sacramento State University with a grant through Project Impact, San Joaquin County Office of Education’s Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program.

“I had the grant for 3 years and I have now been teaching for 5 years and plan to continue as long as there are jobs,” said Gilbert. Additionally, Gilbert received a grant for teacher training from Project IMPACT.

CTC hopes to structure similar paths like Gilbert who is passionate about teaching Spanish, “I really feel it is every Californians duty to know two languages. Whether it is Russian, Hmong, American Sign Language or French; If people spoke more than one language,” Gilbert believes, “our nation would be better off.”

“We do the best to serve as many as we can with different levels of resources. If someone is interested we are not turning people away and they should talk to us,” concluded Kearney. To learn more about CTC visit www.cateachercorps.org.

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