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Survey: Alternative credentialed teachers just as good

More than 90 percent of principals statewide said second-career teachers are equal or better.

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People who worked in professional fields, then pursued a second career in teaching and received their certification through alternative programs, are just as good, or better, than other beginning teachers, according to 90 percent of principals surveyed in a new report.

The survey by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing asked principals across California their opinions on these second-career teachers – who previously worked as engineers, lawyers, computer programmers, and in other professional fields.

In Orange County, about 330 of the 30,000 k-12 teachers are from alternative certification programs. Twenty-five of the county's 27 school districts employ teachers from these programs.

The survey also found that about 95 percent of principals would hire more teachers from alternative certification programs.

Most of these teachers were trained through one of about 70 alternative certification programs, which credit work experience in the certification process. The idea is that these teachers can bring their real-world expertise to the classroom. The Orange County Department of Education runs one of these certification programs, with about 10 to 15 graduates each year, officials said.

The certification programs are now under the umbrella run by the California Teacher Corps, a new statewide organization, formed this past August.

"Principals are reaffirming what we already know. Professionals who choose to pursue an alternate route into the classroom are not only highly qualified, but they are an invaluable asset to our public schools," said Catherine Kearney, president of the California Teacher Corps.