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Free-linking and thinking on education by Joanne Jacobs

Getting tough on teacher ed programs

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Texas will [judge teacher-training programs based on graduates' effectiveness](#) in the classroom, reports the Houston Chronicle. Poor programs could lose state accreditation. Till now, programs have been judged only by the percentage of graduates who pass the teacher certification exam.

The biggest change to the accrediting rules — and potentially the most controversial — involves linking a teacher's ability to improve student test scores to that teacher's training. In theory, the state, which still is working on a formula and a long-range data system, should be able to determine which programs produce graduates whose students make the biggest — or smallest — gains.

... The programs also will get graded on how often and how well they follow up with teachers during their first year on the job. In addition, school principals will get to weigh in on the programs through evaluations of the new teachers they hire.

On Education Gadfly, Stafford Palmieri thinks the [“fortified walls”](#) of teachers' colleges are ready to crack, battered by “the development and refinement of value-added assessment, the widening use of data-based decision-making in education, and the improvement of state and district data systems,” plus the growth of alternative certification programs.

A growing number of charter schools, as well as the overwhelming majority of private schools, don't even require certification. A few districts, such as Cambridge, Massachusetts, and some charter school operators, like High Tech High, simply train their own.

More than 90 percent of California principals say teachers from alternative certification programs are as good or better than other beginning teachers, according to a [survey](#) conducted by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) and California Teacher Corps.

The American Federation of Teachers [hates](#) the new [SMHC report](#) on “strategies for attracting, developing, and maintaining an effective teacher workforce,” notes Teacher Beat.

Among the recommendations, the report says states and districts should raise entry requirements for teacher preparation; institute a tiered licensure system requiring teachers to complete an induction program and demonstrate teaching effectiveness before receiving tenure; and overhaul professional development and evaluations to be standards-based and to provide pathways for teacher improvement.

AFT President Randi Weingarten complains that “the proposals don’t pay enough attention to the context in which teachers teach, and that accountability for student outcomes is focused too heavily on teachers, and not on the administrators and other environmental factors that affect working conditions. And finally, there is not enough focus on developing reforms in collaboration, with unions.”