

The Turlock Journal

Program Looks to Fill Future Teacher Shortages Now

By Maegan Martens

August 21, 2009

Turlock High School teacher Kyle Sires became a teacher after his career as a professional indoor football player. He was able to make the transition from professional athlete to professional educator through the alternative certification program.

The California Teacher Corps aims to prepare 100,000 teachers to be placed in California public schools by the year 2020 using the alternative certification program. The program allows participants to work and teach at the same time.

This program is mainly targeted toward a more mature crowd who have already built life experiences, said Catherine Kearney, president of the California Teacher Corps. Most people going through this program have already had a career or two and are now wanting to become a teacher.

“This program allows you to earn while you learn,” Sires said.

During his football career, Sires realized he wanted to be a teacher after he was inspired by his football coach, he said. His coach made him realize that he wants to make a difference in a child’s life like his coach made a difference in his life.

Sires received his Bachelor of Arts degree in education from North Dakota and started substituting in California. After substituting, he enrolled in the alternative certification program and was on his way to become a teacher, Sires said.

During the alternative certification program, about 160 hours of intensive training with classes like lesson design and classroom management are taken, Kearney said. After the intensive training, they become a teacher and get their own classroom. During their full-time position as a teacher, they attend classes about two times a week and continue their alternative certification program. The program continues from about 18 months to three years after they get their own classroom.

The classes every week are with the same people, so it’s like a team effort working together to become a great teacher, Sires said. They build experience through other people’s experiences.

Through this program, the new teachers work full-time and take classes, Kearney said.

“It is an interactive program to get the best of both worlds,” Sires said. “I got to work full-time, get a paycheck, and make an impact on a child’s life.”

The program starts and finishes like a traditional credential program, Kearney said. The only difference is that they can teach in their own classroom and go to school at the same time. Through this process, they don’t have to student teach. They get to have their own classroom.

Since people going through this program are thrown into the classroom quicker than a traditional credential program, the California Teacher Corps is selective with who they accept into the program, she said.

The California Teaching Corps has set a goal to put 100,000 teachers in California public schools by the year 2020 because they feel like that is when there will be an extreme need for teachers, Kearny said. By the year 2020, they are expecting the retirement of teachers to leave a huge need so the organization is recruiting teachers now.

The organization’s main plan to achieve this goal is to “let the secret out of the bag,” she said. Most people are not aware of the alternative certification program, so they want to get the word out.

“We are not recruiting teachers for today,” Kearney said. “We are being proactive for tomorrow.”

To contact Maegan Martens, e-mail mmartens@turlockjournal.com or call 634-9141.