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ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE TRAINING FOR 25,000 TEACHERS TO WORK WITH STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

To meet growing needs of children with autism, new CA state regulations require schools districts to be in compliance of Autism Authorization by July 2011

Sacramento, CA – Due to the vast increase of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the California Teacher Corps today announced that its programs will partner with local school districts and County Offices of Education to provide autism training to approximately 25,000 veteran teachers who hold a special education credential. The partnerships come on the heels of new state regulations by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) requiring teachers who work with students with ASD to complete an Autism Authorization certification.

The prevalence of students diagnosed with ASD in California has increased 12 fold over the last twenty years, according to the California Department of Developmental Services. Today, there are more than 53,000 students with ASD in California schools who need specialized services. With the flexibility to quickly meet the needs of school districts, alternative certification programs will tailor instruction, professional development and training on Autism based on the individual needs of veteran teachers in each school district.

“Alternative Certification programs are closely tied to the communities that we serve, allowing us to quickly provide high-quality training to veteran teachers in need of certification in this key area,” said California Teacher Corps President Catherine Kearney. “As more and more children are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, our teachers must be prepared to meet their individualized needs, allowing these students full access to the best possible educational opportunities. To ensure no student with autism goes unserved, California Teacher Corps programs are ramping up to provide training and professional development in the area of autism for thousands of special education teachers.”

School districts in California must be in compliance of the Autism Authorization by July 2011. Training for the additional certification includes understanding the characteristics of students with ASD, learning effective behavior strategies for students with ASD, as well as completing additional fieldwork. In order to ensure teachers are able to meet these requirements before the deadline, alternative certification programs are working closely with school districts to provide autism authorization certification programs for each school district, creating an expedient pathway for already-credentialed teachers to become certified.

“With the number of children diagnosed with Autism rapidly growing, our schools must be prepared to provide the services that these children need to succeed,” said Kathy Skeels, assistant superintendent for special education for San Joaquin County. “With the new autism authorization, thousands of teachers in California will need additional training to better serve students with autism, and California Teacher Corps programs can provide this training.”

California Teacher Corps programs are recruiting and preparing new teachers across the state to serve children with special needs. Alternative certification programs place annually an average of 3,500 highly-qualified special education teachers in public schools statewide. Last year, more than half of all new special education teachers were placed from alternative certification programs. Additionally, alternative certification programs have proactively trained these new teachers to meet the autism authorization.

These programs are applying innovative strategies to train teachers who work with children with autism to fully understand their specialized needs and utilize methods that best help these students succeed academically. Programs across the state focus on core elements of educational practices, including individualized supports and services, systematic instruction, comprehensive and structured learning environments, specialized curriculum content, approaches to problem behavior, and family involvement.

Autism is a developmental disorder that generally affects a child's ability to learn. It occurs in one in 150 children, and is more prevalent in males than females, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children with autism experience impairments in the development of communication, socialization and behavior. The understanding of autism has broadened over the years and it is now considered to be a spectrum of disorder that includes autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome, Rett syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified.

About the California Teacher Corps

The California Teacher Corps is a nonprofit organization established in 2009 with the goal of placing 100,000 highly-qualified teachers in California's communities by 2020. The CA Teacher Corps provides a unified voice for the state's alternative certification programs, effectively and proactively addresses teacher preparation issues facing California and recruits the best and the brightest professionals to teach in the public schools that need them most. CA Teacher Corps membership trains second-career teachers, and others committed to working in hard-to-staff schools, who have deep subject-area expertise and who remain in the teaching profession. For more information, visit the California Teacher Corps at www.cateachercorps.org.

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