

## **GOING THE ALTERNATE ROUTE: PERCEPTIONS FROM NON-CREDENTIALLED TEACHERS**

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This article reports data from a two year study of emergency permit teachers who took non-traditional routes to certification in California. Findings imply that early field experiences, those undertaken as part of a preservice program as well as those gained through employment as a teacher aide or substitute teacher, are important preparatory experiences by emergency permit teachers, and serve as a "quasi-apprenticeship." Teacher education courses are highly valued by alternate route entry teachers. For alternate route teachers, well thought out induction support is even more crucial than for traditional route teachers. Policymakers must weigh carefully the benefits and disadvantages to alternate route entry as pressure to weaken traditional teacher preparation increases.

*My experience in my parents' classrooms really prepared me for what a 'real' classroom would operate like. Hands-on experience in their rooms was very beneficial for me. Second, my methods courses helped out tremendously (especially the off-campus) course. Thirdly, my experience with Sunday school, teaching on a German exchange program, and coaching high-school track and soccer. (An emergency permit teacher)*

Since publication of *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) first brought teaching and teacher education under public scrutiny, alternate routes to certification have taken up increasing space on the teacher prepara-

tion agenda. Publicly funded alternate route programs initiated by state, university and college, and school districts, as well as independent programs such as Teach for America, have sprung up nation wide so that nearly every state has some form of alternative certification (Feistritz & Chester, 1998). The Department of Education has devoted large portions of the first Title II report on teacher quality to a severe criticism of traditional teacher education and has extolled the virtues of alternate route certification as a means of recruiting highly qualified candidates to teaching and breaking the putative monopoly on teacher preparation held by colleges and universities (U. S. Department of Education, 2002).

Alternate routes typically seek to fast-track or circumvent traditional university-based teacher education, even when they are spon-

sored by or in partnership with universities or colleges. Some see alternate routes as a serious threat to university sponsored professional preparation (Roth, 1986). Some disparage teacher preparation as it currently exists and welcome its overhaul or even removal from the academy (Innerst, 1999; Ballou & Podgursky, 2000; Hess, 2001; U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Still others hold that the issue is not over which agency prepares teachers, but “over the timing and institutional context for teacher preparation, and about the mix of professional knowledge and skills to be acquired” (Stoddart & Floden, 1996, p. 90).

Multiple reasons are given for alternate routes (Feistritzer & Chester, 1998): they offer greater access to teaching for non-traditional candidates; they are better at providing teachers to under-served geographical areas; they attract candidates to subject areas of perennial shortage such as science and math; they draw in promising candidates who might otherwise pursue different careers (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996); they permit candidates to bypass needless hurdles put up by traditional teacher education programs (Hess, 2001; U. S. Department of Education; 2002). In California, alternate routes have served to lessen the historical shortage of special education and bilingual teachers (Institute for Education Reform, 1996; McKibben & Schrup, 1995; Gunderson & Karage, 1992).

The research on alternative certification is mixed (Ashton, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996; Dill, 1996; Shen, 1997; Sandlin, Young & Karge, 1998; Stone & Mata, 1998). Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996, p. 41), in their review of several studies,

maintain that “fully prepared and certified teachers are generally more highly rated and more successful with students than teachers without full preparation.” Teachers who complete traditional preservice preparation before beginning teaching are superior to alternate route teachers on virtually every dimension of teaching, including classroom management, curriculum development, repertoire of teaching strategies, knowledge of students, awareness of differing learning styles, and ability to assess for evaluative as well as instructional planning purposes. The linking of a theoretical, research-based foundation with practical clinical experiences is central to university-based teacher education and distinguishes it from alternate routes unconnected with the academy (Darling-Hammond and Cobb, 1996). Similarly, Ashton (1996, p. 21) concludes that teachers “with regular state certification receive higher supervisor ratings and have higher student achievement than teachers who do not meet certification standards.”

Conversely, Miller, McKenna & McKenna (1998) report three carefully controlled studies of traditional versus alternative certification teachers in which there were no discernible differences between the two types of preparation on measures of observable teaching behaviors, student achievement, and self-perceptions of teacher competence after three years of teaching. Dill (1996) writes that there is little evidence yet to determine if alternate routes show more or less success than traditional programs at lowering attrition rates for the first five years of teaching. There is, however, evidence that alternate routes have had some success attracting teachers

to staff inner city schools and at attracting non-traditional candidates to teaching. In a cautionary study, Shen (1997) reports that candidates attracted to alternate routes have lower academic qualifications than their traditionally prepared colleagues, are less attracted to teaching as a lifelong career, and that many seek alternate route programs to avoid traditional teacher preparation.

The New Jersey Provisional Teacher Program, started in 1984 as the first alternative certification program in the nation and perhaps the largest and most visible program of its kind, has demonstrated a degree of success achieving some of the stated goals of alternate route advocates (Klagholz, 2000). Klagholz (p. vii) writes that the program has "markedly expanded the quality, diversity, and size of the state's teacher candidate pool." In addition, "applicants had higher scores on teacher licensing exams than traditionally prepared teachers and attrition rates . . . were lower." Finally, the New Jersey alternate route program has become the "dominant source of minority teachers for both urban and suburban schools." Interestingly, no studies have been done of the effects on student achievement of alternate route teachers by its principal architect or the state of New Jersey (L. Klagholz, personal communication, February 24, 2000).

In 1996, California hurriedly implemented a class-size reduction initiative that rushed uncredentialed teachers into classrooms to achieve a teacher-student ratio of 20 to 1 in grades K-3. These emergency permit teachers had preparation experiences ranging from none to near completion of a preservice program. Stone and Mata (1998, p. 8) did a study of the

needs of 37 "fast track" teachers who "were placed in particularly challenging situations, which added to the other typical problems of beginning teachers." The teachers reported that their needs, in order of importance, were: curriculum development, classroom materials and resources, teaching strategies, dealing with difficult students, classroom management, and feedback on their teaching from an observer.

Sandlin, Young and Karge (1998) conducted a five year longitudinal study of traditionally certified and alternatively certified teachers in California in which they looked at developmental concerns of beginning teachers of both types. Their analysis utilized Fuller's framework of a hierarchy of teacher development that begins with a concern for self, moves to a concern for curriculum and teaching tasks, and culminates in a concern for impact on student lives and learning (Fuller, 1969; Fuller, 1974; Fuller & Bown, 1975). Sandlin et al. (1998) found that the development of alternatively certified teachers lags slightly behind that of traditionally certified teachers in the three areas of concern for self, task, and impact. They concluded that alternate route programs must develop appropriate curricula in recognition of the different type of student serviced and the conditions in which these students work. They also pointed out that emergency permit teachers in California display dramatic differences from both traditionally certified teachers and other types of alternatively certified teachers, since they are typically placed in the classroom with little, if any, professional preparation.

Turley and Nakai (2000) compared preservice students who completed their

preparation in one of two ways: traditional student teaching or emergency permit teaching. They looked at overall satisfaction with how participants completed their professional preparation. They also investigated what students perceived as the advantages and disadvantages of doing their culminating field experience while working as emergency permit teachers or as traditional student teachers. Respondents of both types were overwhelmingly satisfied with the way in which they completed their preservice preparation. Financial rewards, independence in the classroom, and experiential learning were reported as the chief factors motivating emergency permit teachers (EPTs) to take the job. Traditional student teachers (STs) reported unpreparedness, desire for a mentor, and concern for students as reasons for completing their preparation with traditional student teaching. EPTs reported unexpected workload, lack of a mentor, lack of observation opportunities, and stress as disadvantages to the job. STs reported the lack of adequate income and problems with cooperating teachers as disadvantages to being traditional student teachers.

The current study reports data on a sample of emergency permit teachers over a two year period (1996-98). As background information we gathered demographic data, grade level assignments, and types of teaching assignments (alone, team teaching, initial team teaching followed by individual teaching, etc.). Our analysis looks first at the extent of "prior teaching experience" in six key areas: (a) no prior relevant experience; (b) field work in preservice program courses; (c) camp counselor or equivalent; (d) religious school teacher (e.g., Sunday

school teacher, Hebrew school, etc.); (e) teacher's paid aide; (f) paid teaching position (substitute teacher, independent school teacher, parochial school teacher); and (g) other relevant teaching experience. Second, we look at perceptions emergency permit teachers have of their preparation for taking the position, including (a) experiences that EPTs felt prepared them most for the position and (b) additional preparation that would have been beneficial. Finally, we look at indicators of the type and perceived quality of support provided by school districts to emergency permit teachers, including (a) district support in five areas (orientation, training, mentoring, release time, resources), (b) additional support or assistance the EPTs would like to have had, and (c) who EPTs look to for assistance or guidance regarding instructional and/or classroom issues.

### Data Collection

#### *Context*

In California, emergency permit teaching has historically been discouraged as a means of entry into the profession by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, which governs credentialing in the state, and by teacher education programs at public and private institutions. However, the class-size reduction initiative in 1996 paved the way for thousands of alternate route teachers with little or no professional preparation prior to entering the classroom. Districts no longer needed to demonstrate special hardship to hire emergency permit teachers (McKibben, 1996). As of the 2000-2001 school year, there were approximately 30,000 emergency permit teachers

in California classrooms (Shields, et al., 2001).

A large percentage of emergency permit teachers were "walk ons" who held an undergraduate degree and had passed the required basic skills test, but had no professional preparation. Others left jobs in private and parochial schools for larger salaries and improved benefits; they brought teaching experience, but most were uncredentialed. A small number of people who left teaching years earlier returned to the field, but their credentials were long expired. A large source of new, uncredentialed teachers was preservice program students who took emergency permit positions before completing their professional preparation. This group had more or less professional preparation in the way of preservice courses and field work, but they too were uncredentialed when they took emergency permit positions.

#### *Data Source*

Though they were employed by school districts as elementary level emergency permit teachers, participants in this study had all completed the course work in a traditional preservice program. They skipped traditional student teaching and began as teachers of record during the semester that would have been their student teaching term. Thus, they represent one type of alternate route teacher in that they did not have a traditional student teaching apprenticeship with a cooperating teacher. All participants were graduate students who had completed their professional preparation course work, which included foundations courses, four methods courses, and a minimum 80 hours of field work.

Of the 140 respondents, Eighty-nine percent were female, 68% were in their twenties, 24% were in their thirties, and 8% were over forty. Participants self-identified as White, 59%; Hispanic, 16%; Asian American, 14%; African American, 6%; Multi-Ethnic, 1%; and Other, 4%.

Eighty-three percent of respondents reported working alone in the classroom. Ten percent reported having a team teaching arrangement. Seventy-four percent of respondents were in kindergarten through third grade assignments. Actual practice took several forms: some worked alone in their own classroom teaching all curricular subjects; some worked alone but taught restricted subjects; some shared classroom space with another teacher but worked essentially alone in opposite areas of the room or at different times; some had team-teaching arrangements with a veteran teacher; some split their time team-teaching with two teachers in two separate classrooms.

#### *Instruments*

Participants completed a single, untimed survey developed by the researchers specifically for this project. The survey consisted of 11 background information questions, 8 forced answer questions, and 11 open-ended questions. In addition to the background information questions, this study draws on the following survey prompts:

- *Indicate your prior teaching experience.*
- *Rate the following in terms of level of support the district/school provided for you as an emergency*

*permit teacher: pre-year orientation, ongoing training, providing a mentor at the school, providing release time for professional activities, providing a classroom with appropriate teaching resources.*

- *What additional support or assistance do you wish you had from the district?*
- *If you need assistance or guidance regarding instructional and/or classroom issues, who is the first person you seek?*
- *What do you feel prepared you most for your emergency permit teaching position?*
- *What additional preparation prior to working on the emergency permit do you wish you had?*
- *What additional support or assistance do you wish you had from the school district?*

Data were collected over four sequential semesters from four separate cohorts. In the first data collection semester, surveys were distributed by student teaching seminar instructors, completed at the leisure of respondents, and returned by mail. In the remaining three data collections, surveys were distributed at a seminar session near the end of each semester, completed in class, collected by the instructor, and returned to the researchers.

*Data Analysis*

Of 226 surveys distributed, 149 were returned (66 %). Thirty surveys (47%; 64 distributed) were returned in the initial intake; 38 (86%; 44 distributed) in the second intake; 39 (87%; 45 distributed) in the third intake; and 42 (58%; 73 distributed)

in the final intake. Quantifiable survey responses were entered into an SPSS database (Norusis, nd). Analyses for this paper draw on frequencies and descriptive statistics. Analysis of the open-ended survey responses involved transcribing, reiterative coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and thematic clustering (Miles & Huberman, 1994) utilizing HyperResearch software (Hesse-Bilber, Kinder, Dupuis, P. R., Dupuis, A. & Tornabene, 1993).

**Results**

*The extent of "prior teaching experience"*

All but one respondent reported having some kind of germane teaching experience, other than program field work, prior to taking the emergency permit position. Seventy-eight percent reported field work through methods courses. Twenty-five percent reported having "camp counselor or equivalent" experience. Twenty-three percent reported having done some kind of "religious school" teaching such as Sunday school or Hebrew school. Forty-six percent of respondents reported having worked as a "paid teacher's aide" for at least one year (21% reported one or two years, 19% reported three to five years, and 6% reported more than five years). Eighty-three respondents (59%) reported having "prior paid teaching experience" as a substitute teacher, an independent school teacher, or a parochial school teacher. Forty-one percent of respondents reported having substituted for one or more years (37% reported from one to two years, 3% reported three to five years, and 1% reported more than five years). Fifteen percent of respondents reported having worked as

an independent school teacher for one year or more (13% reported one to two years, 2 % reported three to five years, and none reported more than five years). Five respondents (4 %) reported prior experience in a parochial school of more than five years. Thirty-eight respondents (27%) reported prior teaching experience other than the default categories reported here. Since respondents could indicate prior experience in more than one category, it is assumed that there is overlap in experiences reported.

*Preparation for the emergency permit position*

(a) We asked teachers to elaborate on the experiences they felt prepared them most for their emergency permit position. Teachers identified working as an instructional aide, substitute teaching, and methods courses most frequently as the most important preparatory experiences.

Emergency permit teachers drew heavily on their prior experience in some type of teacher's aide capacity. Some noted their experiences working with different teachers at multiple grade levels as beneficial. Typical responses were:

- *My prior work as a teacher's assistant helped me the most. I got to see real situations. The teachers I worked with gave me the opportunity to teach or reinforce small groups and individual students.*
- *What prepared me the most was my experience as an aide for eight years. I worked in many different classrooms and with ages ranging from pre-K to 6th grade. Most of the techniques that I implement in*

*my classroom today are things I observed and participated in over the years.*

- *The work experience as an aide prepared me the most. I worked with many different teachers at many grade levels within those six years.*
- *I think what prepared me most was my previous classroom experience. I was an instructional assistant for five years previous in a variety of grade levels. I not only helped the teacher with lessons, but I also dealt with parents and administration.*

In addition to working as instructional aides, many teachers had prior experience as substitutes. In a number of cases, teachers had both subbed and aided. Diverse experiences across grade levels was noted as helpful by some respondents. Teachers responded to the prompt thusly:

- *Working as a teacher's aide and a substitute. I feel preparation is the best when it is through experience, as opposed to instruction only.*
- *My subbing experience showed me how a whole day is structured for different teachers at different grade levels and helped me hone my classroom discipline skills.*
- *Substitute teaching in a variety of grades, I believe, was very helpful. I was able to visit many classes. I saw how many teachers set their classes up. I was able to see different bulletin boards as well as a variety of reward and discipline techniques.*

Teachers in this study viewed their methods courses in an especially positive light. Sixty-six respondents (n = 140) men-

tion methods courses as one of the key preparation experiences. Respondents distinguished among the classroom instruction they received in reading, language arts, math and social studies methods courses (even in a number of cases naming valued instructors); the field work component of the same methods courses; and whether the methods course was conducted at the university or off-campus at a school site. A few teachers referred to their undergraduate liberal studies major as an important experience launching their first year of teaching. Characteristic responses were:

- *Social studies and Reading methods courses. These classes allowed me to teach the class and gain confidence as a teacher.*
- *The undergraduate Liberal Studies program offers excellent academic preparation. I found literacy and social studies [methods] to be especially helpful.*
- *[Professor C's] language arts [methods] class. She provided/demonstrated lots of practical, useable ideas. She also taught us how to think like a teacher, i.e., how to take a topic and expand it throughout the curriculum.*
- *Off-campus reading [methods] class. It's like a mini-student teaching.*
- *My social studies methods course. The professor was a current fifth grade teacher. She had ideas and knew what is really going on in the classroom. She taught real world situations, not from the book.*
- *I had great methods courses and*

*great teachers who really emphasized lesson planning and putting units together.*

- *My methods classes and the time I spent in the classroom during those classes.*

- *The reading methods course. This class gave me practical, hands-on experience, and theory into how to teach reading. In addition, the way the instructor required us to compile projects . . . made an outstanding, impressive portfolio.*

(b) We asked teachers to identify additional preparation that would have been beneficial to their first year in the classroom. Teachers in this study for the most part realized they were novices and that they had not experienced the benefits of traditional student teaching before entering the classroom. As one said, *Mostly I feel I was as prepared as someone could be as an emergency permit teacher.* Teachers identified five primary areas in which they could have had greater preparation: reading instruction, classroom management, prior experience either by observation, aiding or substituting, administrative how-to, and science teaching.

Many teachers, not surprisingly for beginners, voiced classroom management and discipline as an area in which they could have had more preparation. A large number of these respondents simply indicated a desire for more instruction on management in their preservice courses. One teacher would have liked *strategies of class management, positive reinforcement, handling difficult students.* Another put it as: *More concrete methods of discipline and classroom management. This*



area is difficult for most beginning teachers, yet is so vital in running a classroom. Without proper control and management, it is impossible to implement effective instruction. One wanted hands-on activities to deal with behavioral problem students. One teacher apparently felt s/he had enough on management from the pre-service program, but would have liked better discipline techniques or training by the district.

More instruction in reading, particularly in phonics, was salient for a number of teachers. Representative responses were:

- *I was only trained in 'whole language' and do not feel I was exposed to reading instruction in phonics.*
- *Specific steps in teaching a child how to read. Yes, I believe in exposing them to all sorts of language experiences, but I feel it would be beneficial to know step by step. I realize each child is an individual and learns at different rates, but I felt least prepared to take a child who doesn't know how to read and train them.*

Interestingly, of thirteen coded entries for "reading," ten were from teachers responding during the first year of data collection; three came from teachers in the third semester of collection and no respondents indicated a need for greater "reading" preparation in the fourth and final semester of data collection. What meaning can be made of this, if any? Is it a reflection of a different approach to teaching reading methods courses? There was curricular change in the reading methods course during this time in response to new state

guidelines that placed a heavy emphasis on phonics instruction. Does it reflect improved district inservicing during the second year of class-size reduction? Is it a reflection of greater classroom experience for participants in collection period four, most of whom had been teaching for minimally one year, and some longer, at the time of data collection?

Teachers identified three types of additional preparation that would have been beneficial. Included in the category are observation in classrooms, working as an aide, and substitute teaching. Several teachers agreed with one who said, *I wish I could have observed more teachers interactively with their class.* Another would have liked *more observation of experienced teachers doing new and innovative things in the classroom.* A third teacher would have appreciated *a chance to observe a veteran teacher for a month before I started working.* One teacher felt that *substituting would have given me more experience on how to handle children in a classroom setting.* One wished *I had worked as an aide.* One would have liked more experience substituting and more observation time of excellent teachers.

What we coded as "administrative how-to" showed up with some frequency in response to the prompt about additional preparation. Comments in this category included a desire for clear expectations from administrators regarding teacher responsibilities and district and state policies. One teacher wrote that she had *more trouble dealing with the paperwork than teaching.* One would have appreciated strategies to deal with *communication with parents, organizing the room, files, and the*

*general daily school routine.* Another would have liked more information on such things as cumulative files, child abuse reports, and attendance.

A category that we coded "science teaching" occurred in the data with surprising frequency. Teachers wanted *science activities, science teaching theories.* One wish[ed] *I had been exposed to more hands-on activities in science. I wish I had been able to use these activities in order to integrate more of the curriculum.* Though there were required methods courses in reading, language arts, math, and social studies, the science methods course was elective, and a handful of respondents clearly saw a need for instruction in science teaching.

*Indicators of support from the school/district*

(a) Respondents were asked to rate district support in five areas. Thirty percent reported that the "pre-school year orientation" by their new district was outstanding; 33% reported it adequate; 11% said it was poor; 23% marked N/A on the survey (which may be inferred to mean that there was no orientation for these teachers). Forty-nine percent reported the "ongoing training for emergency permit teachers" in their district was outstanding; 35% reported it adequate; 13% reported it poor. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported the "mentoring" they received at their school was outstanding; 25% reported it adequate; 12% said it was poor. Forty-four percent reported the "release time" they were granted outstanding; 40% reported it adequate; 10% reported it poor. Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated the "resources provided by the district

or school" were outstanding; 47% reported resources were adequate; 16 % reported resource support as poor.

(b) Teachers were asked, What additional support or assistance do you wish you had from the district or school? In open-ended responses, teachers indicated they would have liked additional support or assistance in three major areas: mentoring, curriculum, and resources. The most common area in which teachers indicated they could have had more support or greater assistance was "mentors." Said one teacher, *I wish I had a consistent mentor who really helped me with daily curriculum [and] materials that were appropriate for my classroom.* Another responded, *I wish the district had provided an onsite mentor teacher. We have a mentor teacher but it isn't set up so we meet on a regular basis.* One teacher had a particularly unsatisfactory arrangement: *I wish that the school district monitored the mentor program. I received absolutely no help from my school site mentor. In fact, he was the most critical of my first year's performance.* One teacher would like a team teaching arrangement: *More experienced teacher involvement, having another teacher to team teach with me in order to model teaching.* Another would have liked a *peer mentor who [you] can call for advice.* Several teachers simply responded with the word "mentor" to the prompt.

A second area was coded "curricular help." Some of the new teachers felt they needed greater orientation to district standards (*I should have been handed content standards and curriculum guides from the start; A curriculum guide from the district;*

*Some kind of inservice for our curriculum would be very helpful. The depth of knowledge required really called for it; I could have used some kind of inservice for our curriculum with the mathematics program).* Others expressed a need to be better informed of expectations for student performance (*They did not explain what we should expect from our students until we were deep into the school year; What level a second grader is; I would have loved a thorough run-down on the district's testing policies).*

A third common response was the desire for appropriate and more resources. Teachers wrote such responses as:

- *I wish the district could provide me with the textbooks, teacher's guides, library books.*
- *We are told to use things like a pocket chart, big books, magnetic letters, and have a classroom library, etc. But these aren't provided and we can't afford to purchase these things on our own.*
- *My own materials. I share everything with other teachers. It would be nice to have enough so my students had their own materials.*

Respondents also mentioned the strong support they received from principals, the need for time to observe other teachers, a desire for more collaboration with colleagues, and preservice program preparation more aligned to the real world of the classroom.

Perhaps support can sometimes be overplayed. Said one teacher, *I have a great support team . . . Too many people would just get in the way. I need to add support systems slowly, and not drown in too many.*

Said another: *There has been so much offered to me by my own school site that I really don't know if any additional was needed. As a matter of fact, I felt somewhat overwhelmed at everything that was offered/given to me.*

(c) We also asked teachers to indicate who they looked to for assistance or guidance regarding instructional and/or classroom issues. Of the 154 responses to this survey item (multiple responses could be given; some gave no responses), 104 (68%) indicated they looked to another teacher. Within that category, 50% (52) identified a teacher, 41% (43) identified someone functioning in an official mentor capacity, and 9% (9) identified a teacher/friend. Ten percent said they turned to a district-type person such as a reading specialist or language arts mentor. Eight percent looked to their university supervisor for assistance.

### Discussion

This study looked at emergency permit teaching within the framework of a preservice program as a type of alternate route to teaching. Findings imply that early field experiences, those undertaken as part of a preservice program as well as those gained through employment as a teacher aide or substitute teacher, are highly valued preparatory experiences by emergency permit teachers.

Early field experience has been identified as important in the preparation of teachers (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996). The emergency permit teachers in this study have clearly had significant field work prior to entering the classroom. All had a minimum of 80

hours of directed field work in their preservice program courses. Results from this study imply that methods courses and the accompanying field work are highly valued by beginning teachers as important preparation experiences. About one fifth had non-program field experiences in quasi-teaching settings (e. g., camp counselor, religious school). Prior classroom experience, particularly experience gained as a teacher's aide or substitute teacher, is perceived by beginning teachers as highly beneficial to their success. Almost half had worked as paid teacher aides for at least one year. Over half had worked as a substitute teacher or as a teacher of record in a private or parochial school. Substantive prior experience very likely contributed heavily to the decision these teachers made to travel the alternate route of emergency permit teaching. Those who apparently did not have any or sufficient prior aide or substitute experience identified this lack when asked what kind of additional preparation would have benefited them.

Many alternate route teachers experience a "quasi-apprenticeship" prior to taking the position. Increasing field work requirements in preservice programs, coupled with paid teacher aide and substitute opportunities, provide teachers in training with a wide variety of preparatory experiences leading up to the final field experience. Many, as this study shows, feel this experience is sufficient for them to assume teacher of record responsibility and forego traditional student teaching. This attitude is consistent with alternate route theory, which holds that "induction" teaching and professional course work are best done concurrently (Dill & Stafford,

1996; Klagholtz, 2000). The program studied here has consistently had about 50 percent of its candidates use emergency permit teaching as their culminating field experience since 1996. Increasingly these preservice students are preservice "teachers"; that is, they take emergency permit positions very early in their preservice training and teach concurrent with methods courses.

There are several advantages to teaching concurrent with preservice course work. The opportunity for immediate application of learning is obvious. The anecdotal record is full of comments by students of the value of methods course instruction for the next day's teaching. The benefit is two way: working teachers bring real life experience into the methods course discussions and activities, thus leading to a richer classroom experience for both themselves and for students who are not teaching. An added value is that methods instructors are also brought closer to current classroom conditions through their students. The interaction between theory and practice is dynamic and constructive. It is our hunch that methods courses in the program we studied are much more closely tied to real classrooms today than they were before the influx of emergency permit teachers into the program.

There are disadvantages as well. Emergency permit teachers often have less experience of classrooms other than their own than do students who do not teach, and who thus have the freedom to do field work in a variety of settings. A well-designed set of early field experiences will have candidates observe and participate in classrooms at different grade levels, with

different demographics, and with teachers who use different teaching styles. Field experiences will be structured to provide multiple learning activities for candidates with incremental instructional responsibilities and interactions with students. Emergency permit teachers often miss out on this variety of experiences, especially the modeling of good teaching practice that field work provides. They carry out the activities set for them in methods classes and during student teaching in their own classrooms, without the modeling from or dialogue with a cooperating teacher that can be so important to growth. They also do not have the safety net of a cooperating teacher during field experiences, and especially during the “student teaching” phase of preparation.

A minor but too frequent occurrence among emergency permit teachers is typified by candidates who believe that firsthand classroom experience is sufficient preparation to teach, and that they have little to learn from the sequence of methods courses, from university instructors, or from their fellow students. They feel that the university classroom overly emphasizes empirical, theoretical, and intellectual content that contributes little or nothing to their work. They seek the immediately practical, and do not feel they receive it sufficiently. These teachers would rely almost solely on Lortie’s (1975) apprenticeship of observation to guide them in their early years of teaching. Instructors often find them resistant to exploratory, reflective practice. In their need to survive on the job they pursue a narrow range of teaching strategies that will ensure classroom control. The result

can be an impoverished curriculum designed to help the emergency permit teacher’s survival rather than provide rich learning experiences for students. The task of program instructors is to bring practical applications into the methods courses without sacrificing the larger perspective that theory and reflection encourage. Results indicate that instructors in the program studied are, indeed, successful at blending the practical with the theoretical for most students. Yet there remains a small number of emergency permit teachers who simply fail to see the value of professional preparation other than the experience of the classroom. Their simplified attitude is, I’ve been hired by the district, I must know how to teach, I’m merely jumping through the hoops you’ve set for me, don’t hassle me.

Results from this study indicate that, for the most part, school districts provided an appropriate level of support for emergency permit teachers in the initial two years of class size reduction. It is somewhat disconcerting that about one-third of respondents indicated the pre-year orientation by their district was poor or not applicable to them. On the other hand, over 80 percent of respondents felt that the district’s training for emergency permit teachers, the mentoring they received at their school, the release time they were granted for professional activities, and the resources provided by the school were adequate or outstanding.

Support for new teachers is crucial and must take several forms: (1) beginning teachers need to be provided with clear curricular and instructional expectations, as well as with assistance with materials

and resources; (2) they need guidance in the "how-to's" related to daily routines, recordkeeping, attendance, etc.; (3) they need to be linked with peer assistance for curriculum planning; and (4) they need someone who functions in a formal or informal mentor capacity. Districts have traditionally provided induction support for newly credentialed teachers, with more or less attentiveness. For alternate route teachers, well thought out induction support is even more crucial. Districts must develop new kinds of support processes and mechanisms. Many emergency permit teachers do not share the experience, training, or professional vocabulary of traditional-entry teachers. Pre-year and inservice workshops, as well as mentoring, must account for these differences.

Advocates of alternate routes are quick to point to their advantages (Dill & Stafford, 1996; Klagholtz, 2000; U. S. Department of Education, 2002). It is clear that there are benefits to alternate route entry. Alternate routes have attracted non-traditional candidates more successfully than have traditional routes. Underserved areas and subjects suffering from a shortage of credentialed teachers have benefited from alternate route entry programs. But there are disadvantages as well that policy makers need to be aware of. Candidates attracted by alternate route entry do not always possess the attitudes and dispositions that make for successful teaching. They do not always have a commitment to teaching beyond a few years so that the training and experience and knowledge of students that are required to become a truly competent teacher are wasted when the alternate route teacher leaves after a few short years. Programs such as Teach for

America build in this factor when they require only a two year commitment from participants. If alternate routes attract large numbers of teachers with this attitude, attrition rates will not be significantly reduced. There is not much difference, in the end, between a teacher who leaves the profession from early burnout and one who never had much commitment to stay long in the first place. In both instances, society has made a large investment in their preparation that has not resulted in the hoped for return.

Nevertheless, alternate route entry promises to be a feature of the teacher education landscape for the foreseeable future. Policymakers must weigh carefully the benefits and disadvantages to alternate route entry as pressure to weaken traditional teacher preparation increases. Candidates must make a cold appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses as they choose between traditional and alternate routes to teaching. Teacher educators must work collaboratively with districts to fashion programs that permit alternate entry while preserving professional preparation standards that look to both the short term needs of alternate route teachers as well as to their long term needs to be well schooled in their craft.

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