

Education Matters

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Mid-Career SWITCHERS

Alternative routes are attracting talented individuals from other careers who otherwise would not become teachers

By Charlene Haar

Thousands of men and women are becoming teachers after working in other careers only because they can take an alternate route to certification. According to the first multistate survey of these teachers, they very often enter teaching from careers and professions outside of education. Generally older, with a higher proportion of men and minorities than the conventionally certified teaching cohort, these new teachers are bringing their skills, experience, and knowledge into the classroom in growing numbers.

Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia now offer 538 different alternate route programs. These programs offer individuals, regardless of whether they have a background in education, the opportunity to become certified as teachers by meeting requirements prescribed by the state. Generally, teachers who become certified through an alternate route are able to teach while they are obtaining certification.

The survey, Profile of Alternate Route Teachers, was conducted by the National Center for Education Information (NCEI), which has been documenting what is going on in this field since 1983. Last year, approximately 35,000 individuals entered teaching through alternate routes. Nearly half of the survey respondents said they would not have become teachers if an alternate route had not been available. Only about 20 percent said they would have gone back to college to get a teaching certificate.

Providing Crucial Data

As the first demographic and attitude multistate survey ever done of teachers entering the profession through alternate routes, this study will be an important touchstone for policy makers at the local, state, and federal levels as they shape policies to attract highly qualified individuals into teaching.

In the past decade, alternative teacher certification has spawned many new

pathways that provide excellent transitions for a career in teaching. The most dramatic change in the past few years has been a shift toward people beginning their preparation to teach later in life and later in their careers. “The data show for the first time the advantages of having individuals entering from alternate routes,” said Dr. C. Emily Feistritzer, president of the National Center for Education Information and the author of the report. “They are more mature, more satisfied with several aspects of teaching, feel competent as teachers, and are more likely to remain in teaching than recent college graduates entering teaching.”

Alternate routes to certification began in the 1980s as an effort to ward off projected shortages of teachers. “This once was a controversial movement that some critics called ‘sub-standard,’” said Dr. Feistritzer. “Now the movement has become a respectable, prime source for recruiting highly qualified individuals



The rapidly growing number of persons entering teaching through alternate routes is helping states and localities meet the demand for more teachers.

they would not have become a teacher if an alternate route had not been available.

Half (50 percent) of those in their 40s, 46 percent of those in their 30s, and 45 percent in their 20s say they would not have become teachers if an alternate route had not been available.

More than half (54 percent) of individuals entering teaching from a professional occupation say they would not have become teachers without alternative certification.

More than half (52 percent) of men compared to 45 percent of women say they would not have become a teacher without alternative certification.

Fifty-three percent of Hispanics compared to 48 percent of whites and 43 percent of African-Americans in the survey say they would not have become a teacher without alternative certification.

Who is Doing it?

Nearly half (47 percent) of the people entering teaching through alternate routes were working in noneducation jobs before they began an alternative teacher certification program; 40 percent were working in a professional occupation outside the field of education.

The alternatively certified teacher population has more males, more minorities, and more older people than the population of teachers who obtain certification via the traditional route.

Thirty-seven percent of the samples were men and 63 percent were women. Twenty-five percent of the teaching force in the United States is male.

Seventy-two percent of those sur-

veyed were 30 or older; 47 percent were 40 or older, and 20 percent were older than 50.

Thirty-two percent were nonwhite compared to 10 percent of the overall teacher population.

Nearly eight out of ten enter an alternative certification program with a bachelor degree or higher in a field other than education.

Nearly one-third (32 percent) of entrants into teaching via alternate routes are nonwhite compared to 11 percent of the current teaching force.

Optimistic Expectations

Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of the survey respondents entering teaching through alternate routes expect to be teaching five years from now. States with the highest percentage of alternatively certified teachers report that 87 percent of them are still teaching after five years.

Only five percent of respondents report they expect to be employed in an occupation outside of education five years from now. Only two percent report they expect to be retired completely compared to 22 percent of the overall teaching force.

Eighty-two percent of teachers entering the profession through alternate routes rated one's own teaching experiences as very valuable in developing competence to teach, followed by life experiences in general (71 percent, very valuable) and other teachers (67 percent, very valuable).

Only 3 percent of those entering teaching through alternate routes say they would not recommend an alternate

who wouldn't have entered teaching otherwise."

The rapidly growing number of persons entering teaching through alternate routes is helping states and localities meet not only the demand for more teachers but also the federal No Child Left Behind mandate for highly qualified teachers. These alternate routes bring thousands of individuals with careers, knowledge, and experience from outside teaching into the profession, and they provide opportunities for existing teachers to upgrade their credentials.

The Appeal

Nearly half (47 percent) of those entering teaching through alternate routes say they would not have become a teacher if an alternate route to certification had not been available.

The data indicate that the older one gets, the less inclined one is to enter teaching without an alternate route.

More than half (59 percent) of those surveyed who were in their 50s or older when they entered an alternate route say

route to teacher certification to others interested in becoming teachers.

The Future

As more states have instituted legislation for alternative routes to teacher certification, an increasing number of institutions of higher education have initiated nontraditional alternative programs that include on-the-job training for the preparation of post-baccalaureate candidates for teaching.

Most teachers entering the profession through alternate routes are recruited for areas where the demand for teachers is greatest—in large cities and rural areas—and in subject areas in greatest demand—special education, mathematics and science.

Alternate route programs are created and designed specifically to meet the

needs in those areas, as well as the specific needs of prospective teachers who come from other careers and with considerable life experiences. These programs get prospective teachers into the classroom early, usually as a full-time teacher, earning a salary, while working with experienced teachers.

Alternative routes for preparing and licensing teachers are attracting large numbers of highly qualified, talented, and enthusiastic individuals to the teaching profession. Applicants to these programs number in the thousands. Most are highly educated, life-experienced adults who want to teach and to improve America's educational system. Many of them think alternative routes not only make the most sense but also provide the best preparation for the real world of teaching. ■



Charlene K. Haar serves as National Center for Alternative Certification's (NCAC) Director of Technical Assistance and is a member of the core management team. She has testified before Congress, appeared on numerous radio

and television broadcasts, and presented at various national conferences. Charlene is the author of The Politics of the PTA. She completed her Ph.D. in education policy from American University in 2005.

Profile of Alternate Route Teachers is the most recent of more than 35 data-based reports conducted by the National Center for Education Information (www.ncei.com). Founded in 1979, NCEI is a private, nonpartisan research organization in Washington, D.C. specializing in survey research and data analysis. NCEI is the authoritative source of information about alternative preparation and certification of teachers and school administrators.

Opening New Paths

“We must go beyond our traditional system of teacher education...”

Frederick M. Hess, “Tear Down This Wall,” Progressive Policy Institute, 2001

The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence is “tearing down walls”—opening new pathways for knowledgeable professionals to change careers, become teachers, and advance student learning.

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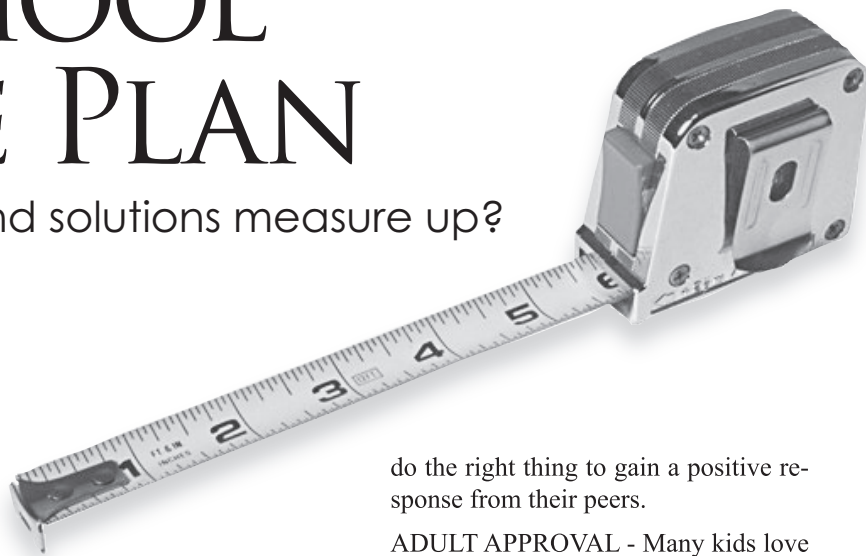
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BUILDING A TOTAL SCHOOL DISCIPLINE PLAN

Do your discipline strategies and solutions measure up?

By Gene Bedley



8tudents can and will make responsible choices when administrators, teachers and adults implement comprehensive plans for schoolwide discipline programs in their schools. All too often one of the major components of a comprehensive discipline plan is neglected—helping students see the correlation between cause and effect and what ultimately strengthens or weakens them. Eight essential components will enable your school to implement a successful discipline program.

1 Develop a clear discipline plan. A total school discipline plan begins with a sound definition of discipline: Training that enables students to make appropriate choices in a climate of warmth and support, always beginning with clear, concise limits, practiced procedures, and numerous options to meet specific temperament types.

A discipline plan should clearly identify who is responsible for what. It should outline administrators' responsibilities, teachers' responsibilities, parents' responsibilities, and students' responsibilities. Have everyone sign the document.

2 Focus your discipline plan on student responsibility rather than identifying various areas where you need control. Help students see that every person deserves what his attitudes produce. Involve students in constructing the list of behaviors that en-

hance or destroy learning. Use the list that enhances learning to write a class mission statement titled "What We Need from People." Require students to sign the class mission after they assist in designing it.

3 Be mindful of and use the high correlation between motivation and student behavior. Be an expert in "child currency," that is, what the child values. What a teacher does before the misbehavior occurs, largely determines whether there will be violations of behavioral standards. Identify from seven major motivators those that contribute the most in promoting a productive learning environment. The seven major motivators are:

INDEPENDENCE - Some children are motivated by having the opportunity to play with a special tub of toys and games. They like doing things on their own. You might want to have a number of items in a "rental tray" that kids can "rent" from you based on accomplishing their behavior goals.

COMPETITION - Kids that are motivated by competition can't wait to see how they're doing relative to other class members.

PEER APPROVAL - Many kids will

do the right thing to gain a positive response from their peers.

ADULT APPROVAL - Many kids love to perform for adults, especially the adults they like.

MYSTERY DISCLOSURES - If you place a highly prized puppet into a paper bag, you'll only have to do it once and the bag will forever be magical and prized as one of the top kid currency.

FOOD - There's no doubt about it, kids are motivated by all kinds of snack foods. However, because food has allergy implications and dependency issues, be selective about the kinds of food you use in the classroom.

ANIMALS - I discovered one of the most powerful kid currencies was when I introduced kids to a monkey that taught them how to set goals and behave. I have since learned how really powerful and life changing a stuffed animal can be in transforming negative classroom behavior to positive constructive behavior.

4 Avoid an overindulgence in either praise or punishment. Instead, focus on identifying agreements and replacement behaviors that ultimately serve both the student and the teacher.

Be intentional about making and keeping agreements. Make sure your child is able to

verbalize the agreement after you have decided on a course of action.

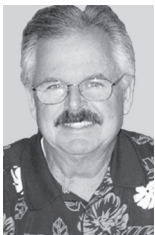
In seeking to find replacement behaviors for children who are out of control, check the things that are contributing toward the frustration/injury that is fostering the lack of control. Building the child's confidence is critical in helping him overcome his unrealistic demands on himself and others.

5 Provide training in ethics for all students and include discussions on how to build an ethical community. Conduct forum sessions discussing ethical actions when faced with various choices. Promote schoolwide value themes including themes of respect and responsibility.

6 Implement options for students who learn in different ways allowing for various temperaments and learning types.

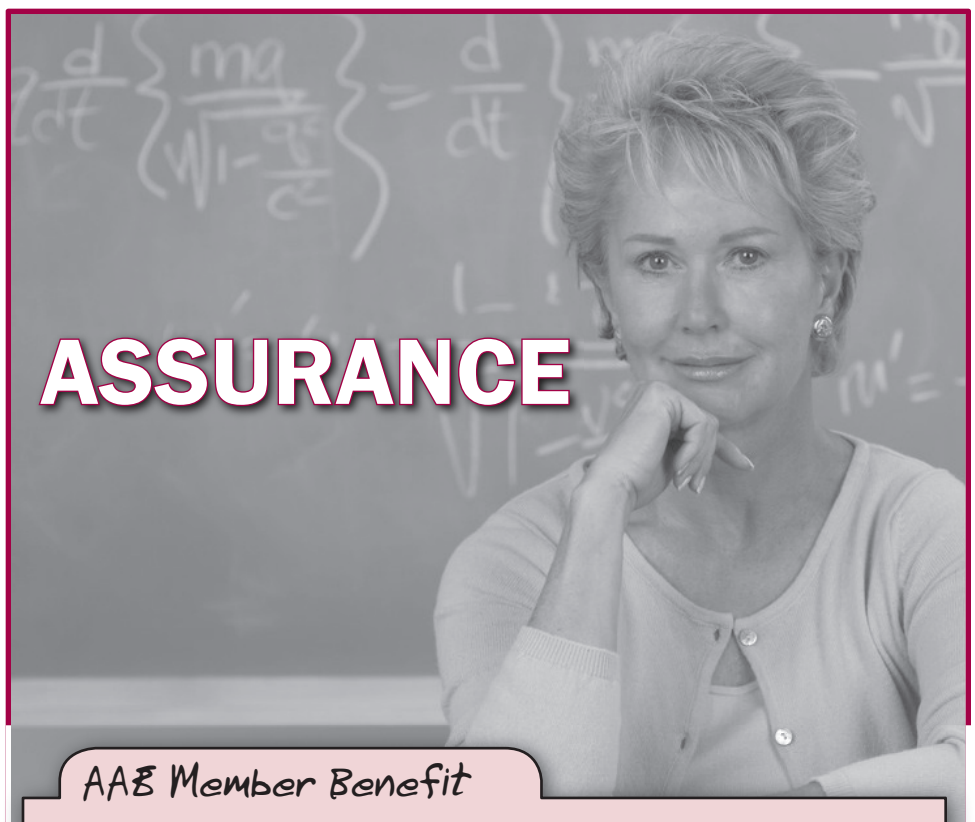
7 Institute problem-solving strategies that include fact finding (What happened?), personal responsibility (How are you going to fix it?), and action steps to correct the problem (What would you be willing to do to fix it?).

8 Distinguish between compliance issues (required choices) and those issues that are negotiable (optional solutions and strategies). Help everyone see that when individuals do not comply with certain expectations, there are little, if any, options other than consequences. At the same time, help students see that most interactions are negotiable within the context of responsible choices. ■



Gene Bedley is the executive Director of the National Character Education Center (NCEC). NCEC provides Educators with hundreds of solutions and practical strategies through its free online newsletter, Values in Action! The Best in Ethics Education, and a comprehensive

character development program, "Values in Action!" Visit NCEC online at www.ethicsusa.com. Gene Bedley's new book Discipline Solutions and Strategies has just been released for 2005.



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Choices

One district surveys the customer

The votes are in. Officials from the Durham Public School system in North Carolina surveyed almost 3,000 Durham parents, and the results are clear: Parents want more choices in their children's education.

The survey revealed that parents want more schools focusing on math, science, and technology; more year-round school options; and high schools that provide a more personalized learning environment.

School officials plan to use the input from the survey to create a new plan for school choice options across the district.

"Choice and reform are two key words in education right now," said Chris Bennett, the school system's executive director for choice programs.

Like other school districts nationwide, this isn't the first time district officials took notice of increasingly vocal parents and decided to poll them about their interests. It's about time. And it's a clear indication that choice is impacting districts to behave in ways they never would have before. ■

Source—CER Newswire, published by The Center for Education Reform (CER). www.edreform.com

Teachable moments

Helping children know how to make better decisions

A new website is now available to help parents and teachers show students how to be successful in school and in life.

Twice a month, Accent On Success, a St. Louis organization, sends an E-mail to parents and teachers giving easy-to-implement ideas to help facilitate classroom and family discussions about important life skills issues. The goal of each E-mail is to counter the negative influences that bombard our children daily. Parents and teachers will receive ideas to help increase a child's academic achievement, build self-esteem, and help motivate the child to reach their full potential.

For more information, visit www.teachingsmoments.com.

Wisdom of the ages

Do not walk behind me, for I may not lead. Do not walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. Do not walk beside me either. Just pretty much leave me alone.

Always remember that you're unique. Just like everyone else.

Good judgment comes from a bad experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

Everyone seems normal until you get to know them.



Source: anonymous

Cream of the Yale Crop

Yale University appears to be a ripe source of new teachers. First, there's the Teach Kentucky program, which began four years ago as an effort by determined Yale alum Rowan Claypool to recruit that university's graduates to teach in Kentucky. His effort has since expanded to include grads of other elite schools such as Middlebury and Vanderbilt. For a total program cost of \$77,000, about a dozen new teachers are recruited each year, with some sensible incentives for new college grads, such as free transitional housing and a small stipend.

Back in New Haven, Yale has teamed up with the local school

district to provide up to ten high-quality new teachers annually to schools that are more accustomed to being the last choice of job-hunting teachers.

The Yale students will receive \$18,000 stipends and full tuition subsidies for their master's degrees in urban education from Yale. New Haven loses many teachers to the state's

more upscale suburbs, and officials hope that this program will recruit people looking for a challenge. "These are people who really want to be urban teachers," said Reginald Mayo, New Haven's superintendent of schools.

Source: *Teacher Quality Bulletin*, www.ntcq.org.





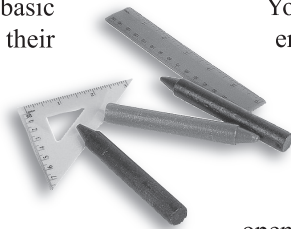
Thousands of children lost their school supplies in hurricane Katrina. Teachers in Louisiana are struggling to make up the difference.

Teachers struggle to give devastated children new school supplies

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina is crippling schools across the state of Louisiana! The education of more than 240,000 students is severely impacted by the hurricane disaster. Many schools and teachers throughout the state are shouldering the responsibility to rescue these children by taking them into their already overcrowded classrooms.

These caring teachers are digging into their own pockets to give the evacuated children basic school supplies that their parents now cannot afford.

AAE's sister organization in Louisiana, the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana (A+PEL), has established the Katrina Assistance for Teachers of Evacuees (KATE) Fund to help. KATE will offer affected teachers an immediate \$50 stipend to purchase school supplies.



The applications for funds are already pouring in. Now it's time for the funds to pour in!

You Can Help

A gift of \$50 will help a teacher in Louisiana provide needed supplies directly to the devastated children in the classroom. A \$100 gift will help two teachers assist their new students.

You can provide immediate relief to teachers who are struggling with the aftermath of Katrina. Your donation will be used only for teachers of evacuees, without any administrative costs attached. Your gift will go directly to your colleagues who have already opened up their hearts and wallets to these suffering students.

Information about KATE can be found at www.apeleducators.org. Online donations are welcome, or they can be mailed to the A+PEL office. A+PEL is a 501(c)(3) chari-

table organization, so your contributions are tax deductible—receipts will be issued.

Please rally around our colleagues in Louisiana!

www.apeleducators.org

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Teaching Test-Taking Skills

Four essentials that every student needs

By Scott Mandel

Test-taking is a skill, and it is one of the most important ones that your students can learn. However you may feel about the process, tests are embedded in our society. Standardized tests have become primary to the evaluation of all educational institutions and personnel. The SAT and ACT tests are critical for getting into college. Test-taking is critical for student success.

Contrary to what they may believe, test success is a question of quality study time versus quantity of study time.

How Not to Study

The primary way that students study is by reading the assigned chapter or other materials a couple of times. This is also one of the worst ways to study.

When a student reads a chapter more than once, his or her mind already has an idea of what is next, what is on the bottom of the page, or even what is on the next page. The result is that the mind begins to wander and concentration diminishes. Therefore, central to effective studying is to review the material in new and different ways, thereby keeping the brain at attention.

Use of Flash Cards

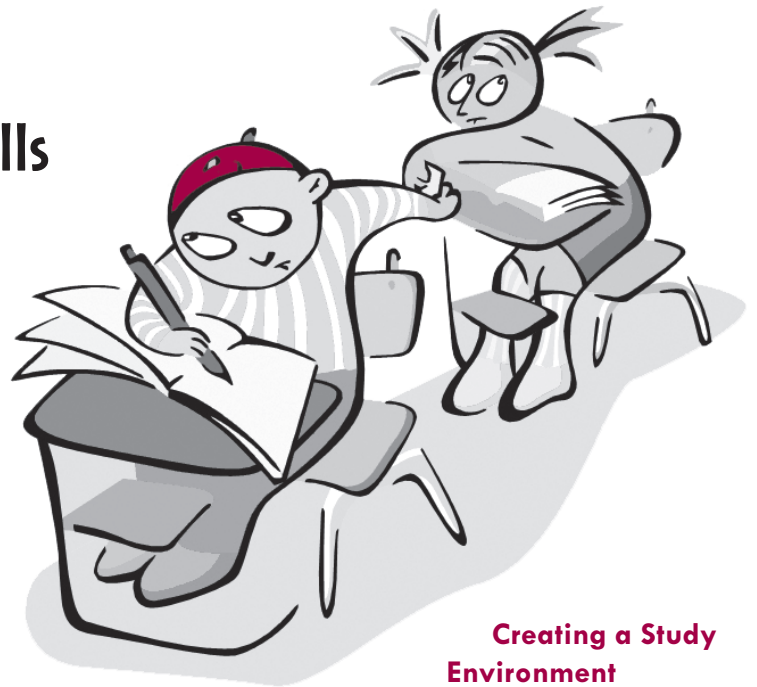
Flash cards are probably the single most important tool that a student can use in studying. Students can create cards of key terms, concepts, formulas—virtually any information that may appear on the

test. Be sure to demonstrate to the students what are and where to find key terms, concepts, and formulas relevant to your curriculum. Often they have no idea how to evaluate this information.

By using flash cards, the students reinforce and study the material in two different ways. First, during the actual creation of the flash cards, the student is slowly and deliberately reviewing each piece of information while writing the question or concept on the front of the card and the answer or explanation on the back. Second, as the student shuffles and reads the cards, the material is presented in a new order each time, thereby keeping it fresh.

Reviewing the Book's Concepts, Not Just the Words

Besides using flash cards, students need to learn the basic concepts being presented rather than simply rereading the material. First, the student should review all study questions presented by the author. The student must also review all pictures, charts, maps, and graphs included in the chapter and ask, "Why are they there?"



Creating a Study Environment

This is probably the most difficult process for students to accept, and it is one of their biggest obstacles to succeeding on tests. In creating a study environment, distractions need to be at a minimum.

Students should limit their study time to no more than forty-five minutes to an hour in one sitting.

Finally, each student should develop a plan for studying, a short to-do list of the areas to study during one evening. He or she then checks off each area as it is accomplished; this action gives the student positive internal reinforcement. ■

This article was adapted from *The New-Teacher Toolbox: Proven Tips and Strategies for a Great First Year* by Scott Mandel

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