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## **Alternate Routes to Teacher Certification**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Washington and 40 other states have instituted one or more “alternate routes” to teacher certification.<sup>1</sup> An alternate route is one that does not require people to complete a traditional teacher education program at a college or university. Alternate route programs can be based at a university, state agency, school district, and/or educational service district. States pursue alternative routes for three major reasons:

- Meeting teacher shortages;
- Drawing experienced professionals into teaching; and
- Recruiting teachers from under-represented groups.

Two alternative certification programs are in existence nationwide: Troops to Teachers<sup>2</sup> and Teach for America. Both programs have successfully recruited higher percentages of minority teachers than traditional certification routes.

Mature candidates are attracted to alternate routes because the programs include “learning by doing” internships that also provide a salary. These programs often take previous work experience and training into account when developing courses of study for their students.

The Institute examined programs in 12 states and the District of Columbia in the following areas:

- **Preparation.** The majority of programs provided a summer of pre-service training followed by a one- to three-year paid internship.
- **Cost.** In half the states, the candidate paid for the training. In two states all training costs were paid by the state, and in the other states the costs were shared between the candidate and state or school district.
- **Percentage of Alternate Route Teachers.** Few states actually certify a large percentage (greater than 20 percent) of teachers through the alternative certification route.

Currently, no true alternate routes exist in Washington, despite a perceived demand on the part of some potential teacher candidates. In Washington State, school districts are allowed to hire an individual on an emergency or conditional certificate if a certified candidate is not available. The State Board of Education (SBE) created a pilot internship route for alternative certification in 1991. These regulations expired August 31, 1999. Two alternative certification programs were tried in Washington but did not work, due in part to the reluctance of school districts to hire interns with alternative certificates when an adequate supply of new teachers who completed the traditional certification process were available.

<sup>1</sup> The District of Columbia also has an alternative certification program.

<sup>2</sup> Troops to Teachers also connects candidates to traditional certification programs.