

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO TEACHER CERTIFICATION
IN WASHINGTON STATE: EVALUATION UPDATE**

Background

Traditionally, to become a teacher in Washington State, candidates must attend a teacher preparation program offered by a college or university and approved by the State Board of Education. Washington has 22 higher education institutions (8 public and 14 private) offering programs that lead to certification as a teacher.

Prior to 2001, teacher shortages (particularly in certain subject areas or geographic locations) and interest in attracting mid-career professionals into the teaching force led 42 other states to create “alternative routes” to teacher certification. Alternative programs typically combine college coursework with on-the-job training through a mentored internship or apprenticeship and are offered collaboratively by colleges and school districts.

In 2001, the Washington State Legislature adopted recommendations from the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) and created three alternative routes to certification for prospective teachers in Washington (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1
Washington’s Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification

	Target Interns	Intern Qualifications	Other Criteria
Route 1	Classified instructional staff currently employed by a district	Transferable associate degree, and 3 years of experience with a district	Seeking endorsement in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education • Bilingual education • ESL
Route 2	Classified staff currently employed by a district	Bachelor’s degree, and 3 years of experience with a district	Endorsement in subject matter geographic shortage area
Route 3	Individuals not employed by a district or individuals who hold emergency substitute certificates	Bachelor’s degree, and 5 years of professional experience, and Demonstrated successful experience with students or children	Endorsement in subject matter geographic shortage area Non-shortage areas allowed for secondary school endorsements

In addition, four primary objectives were articulated by the Legislature for alternative routes to teacher certification.

1. High-quality preparation based on intensive field-based training, coursework, and strong mentoring.
2. Flexibility and expedience for candidates, including a focus on demonstration of competencies.
3. Assistance in filling teacher shortages in certain subject areas and geographic locations.
4. The expectation that alternative route candidates meet the same state standards for certification as regularly prepared candidates.

For the 2001–03 biennium, the Legislature appropriated \$2 million to support mentored internships and \$1 million for forgivable loans to assist current school staff with tuition costs. The PESB was directed to distribute the funds to partnerships of school districts and colleges developing the alternative route programs. Additionally, in December 2001, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) received a \$1.2 million federal grant to help mid-career professionals become part of the teaching force.

Legislative Direction and Key Questions

To learn about the law’s implementation, the legislation directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to “submit to the education and fiscal committees of the legislature, the governor, the state board of education, and the Washington professional educator standards board, an interim evaluation of partnership grant programs funded under this chapter by December 1, 2002, and a final evaluation by December 1, 2004.”¹

The Institute’s evaluation addresses the following questions.

- Who are alternative route candidates, and why do they enroll in the programs?
- Does the design of alternative route programs meet legislative objectives of high-quality, flexibility, and expedience for candidates?
- How does the design of alternative programs (including field work, coursework, mentoring, performance-based aspects, scheduling, and cost) compare with traditional teacher preparation programs?
- Do alternative route programs help districts find teachers for hard-to-fill positions, and have all teachers meet state standards for certification?
- How do alternative route teachers compare to traditionally prepared teachers?

¹ E2SSB 5695, Section 8; Chapter 158, Laws of 2001.

An interim report describing the programs and the interns was published in December 2002.² A final report will be completed in December 2004. This update describes the evaluation steps in 2003 and plans for 2004.

Steps in 2003

- Program candidates (interns) were surveyed during April and May 2003 as they neared completion of the program.
- Mentor teachers were surveyed in May 2003.
- Interviews were conducted with the college program directors.

Plans for 2004

- Survey interns in their first year after program completion to learn about their job-search experience and current employment.
- Conduct interviews with college field supervisors.
- Contract with the National Center for Alternative Certification to compare Washington's program with those in other states.
- Incorporate information from the OSPI survey of school principals regarding their perceptions of alternatively certified teachers compared with new teachers from traditional programs.

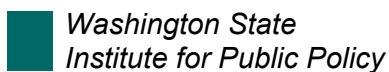
Highlights to Date

- Of 169 candidates who initially enrolled in an alternative certification program, 145 (86 percent) successfully completed the program by August 2003. Three candidates were continuing their internships in the fall of 2003.
- Seventy-two percent of mentors judged that, at the end of the internship, alternative route candidates were better prepared to teach than new teachers from traditional teacher education programs.
- In the 2002–03 school year, there were 23 Route 1 candidates in two programs, all of whom completed the program in August. In the current school year, only five Route 1 candidates are enrolled. Of the two programs serving this population last year, one chose not to offer a Route 1 program this school year. The other program received fewer applications from qualified paraeducators. Both programs cited the change from a stipend (80 percent of a starting teacher's salary) to an \$8,000 forgivable loan as the primary reason for the reduction in the number of Route 1 candidates.

² Shannon Matson, *Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification in Washington State: 2002 Interim Report* (Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, December 2002).

For more information on the Institute's evaluation of alternative routes to teacher certification, please contact Marna Miller at (360) 586-2745 or millerm@wsipp.wa.gov.

Document No. 04-02-2901



The Washington Legislature created the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 1983. A Board of Directors—representing the legislature, the governor, and public universities—governs the Institute and guides the development of all activities. The Institute's mission is to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to Washington State.