



Need for Rigorous Alternative Routes to Licensure in Nevada

Nevada regularly experiences teacher shortages. As recently as September 2013, Clark County engaged in an aggressive campaign to recruit new teachers, including extensive internet advertising, and recruiting teachers from states as far away as New York.¹ Nevada reports teacher shortages in over 50 academic disciplines statewide.² High quality alternative route programs can help Nevada fill this gap.

Currently, Nevada allows multiple entities to provide alternative routes, requires alternative route programs to be streamlined, and allows alternatively certified teachers to teach all grades and subjects. However, more can be done to ensure that Nevada's alternative route programs are attracting quality candidates and producing highly effective teachers.

Nationally, there is a push for increased teacher preparation program accountability, for both alternative and traditional routes. The University of Nevada, Reno is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE merged with the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) last year to form the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), which sets rigorous standards for preparation programs. Other states, including IN, TN, LA, and DE, have increased admissions standards and/or accountability standards for its teacher preparation programs in the past few years.

Improving Nevada's Alternative Routes to Licensure

Define admission standards

NRS 391.019: While Nevada law requires alternative route programs be "selective" in their admission processes, the law provides no clarity in terms of specific admissions requirements. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) found that none of the elementary and secondary programs in Nevada restrict admissions to the top half of the college-going population, compared to 28 percent nationwide. Countries where students consistently outperform the U.S. typically set an even higher bar, with teacher prep programs recruiting candidates from the top third of the college-going population.³ To ensure that Nevada's alternative route programs are recruiting quality candidates, the state should require programs to:

- Hold the average GPA of its accepted cohort of candidates to the CAEP minimum of 3.0 or higher, and the group average performance on nationally normed ability/achievement assessments such as ACT, SAT, or GRE:
 - is in the top 50 percent from 2016-2017;
 - is in the top 40 percent of the distribution from 2018-2019; and
 - is in the top 33 percent of the distribution by 2020.
- Up to 10% of the admitted applicants can be waived from this program requirement.

Remove restrictions related to degree

NRS 391.019 and 391.031: Under current law, teacher candidates in alternative route programs must have a bachelor's or graduate degree related to the subject the candidate intends to teach. While earning a degree is one way to demonstrate content knowledge, it is not the only way. Linking certification with a candidate's degree subject discounts knowledge gained through work experience, and makes alternative certification less attractive to potential mid-career candidates. To make alternative route programs more flexible and attractive to mid-career candidates, the state should:

- Allow candidates to substitute passage of a rigorous content exam for attainment of a degree in the area taught.
- Require content exam passage as a prerequisite for program entry.

Improving Teacher Preparation Program Accountability

Hold programs accountable for graduate effectiveness

NRS 391.038 and 391.039: Nevada law currently requires the State Board to annually evaluate each provider, publish the evaluation online, and allows disapproval of programs. However, the decommissioning process is not based on the effectiveness of program graduates. With the new evaluation system, the state is best positioned to make transparent the quality of programs, to better serve teaching candidates and district leaders hiring graduates for their classrooms. To ensure that alternative route programs are held accountable for producing effective teachers, the state should:

- Link the state's databases on teacher licensure and teacher performance evaluation.
- Require programs to report data on graduate effectiveness, including:

¹ CBS Las Vegas, *CCSB Goes Nationwide To Fill Teacher Shortage* <http://lasvegas.cbslocal.com/2013/09/03/ccsd-goes-nationwide-to-fill-teacher-shortage/>

² U.S. Department of Education, *Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing 1990-1991 through 2013-2014* <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pol/tsa.pdf>

³ National Council on Teacher Quality, *Findings By State – Nevada*. 2013. <http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/findings/stateFindings.do?state=NV#overview>

- Average scaled test scores and pass rates for each teacher preparation program on content area and pedagogy licensure tests.
- Average number of times individuals who complete a teacher preparation program take licensing tests applicable to the initial teaching license before receiving a passing score.
- The percentage and number of individuals who obtain:
 - full-time; or
 - part-time;
 teaching positions in Nevada after completing the teacher preparation program.
- The percentage and number of individuals who complete the program, teach in a school in Nevada, and receive a rating of highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or ineffective on a performance evaluation during the individuals' first and second years of teaching.
- The Board should also create minimum performance standards based on these metrics of graduate performance.
 - The Board should make this data and evaluation public on its website, with teacher-level information aggregated for privacy protection.
- For programs not meeting these minimum performance standards, the Board shall place programs on improvement plans with clear performance goals and a designated period of time in which these goals must be achieved.
- The Board shall disapprove consistently poorly performing programs within a designated timeline.