



## **CLOSING THE ‘REVOLVING DOOR’: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF TEACHING**

We are all bracing ourselves for the impending crisis that is threatening the teaching profession, as experts predict that the nation will need more than two million teachers during the next 10 years. This is due to retirements and the number of teachers that continue to leave the field. Currently, there is a lack of qualified, effective teachers for every classroom. This situation is complicated by the requirements of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act that created a Federal definition of a “highly qualified teacher” that may or may not reflect quality, experience or effectiveness of today’s teacher. The needs are and will continue to be the greatest in urban and rural communities. These “hard to staff schools” have the greatest difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers. The need for quality teachers is especially great in the areas of mathematics, science, special education and English Language acquisition. Some observers cite poor working conditions and low pay as the causes for the increasing teacher shortage. They argue that if we improve these areas, more teachers will become lifelong teachers and our dream of every child being taught by a highly qualified and effective teacher will be realized.

However, even under the best working conditions and higher pay for teachers, the notion of a person holding only one job over the course of his or her work life is a thing of the past; instead, workers move fluidly from one job to another over the course of their professional careers. The trends that are confronting our nation’s teaching profession are not unique to the field of

education. Today's workforce is dynamic, characterized by flexibility and movement. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2006):

- the proportion of male employees with ten or more years of employment with their current employer has declined for all age groups;
- for women, the results are mixed, with younger women tending to change jobs more often than older women;
- In 2005 alone, the U.S. labor market witnessed 57 million hires and 55 million separations.

This data provides clear evidence that today's workforce is characterized by a high degree of movement.

The teaching profession is not immune from these trends. According to a study by the Center for American Progress and the Institute for America's Future:

- one third of new teachers leave the profession within the first three years of teaching,
- Half of new teachers are gone by their fifth year.

Moreover, as the baby boom generation begins to move into the age of retirement, significant losses to the teaching profession are imminent. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2006), a greater-than-average number of education professionals are over the age of 45, so it is likely that retirements will create large number of job openings.

We cannot minimize or ignore that impact of this changing attitude among America's workforce. Instead, we must acknowledge these new societal trends and adapt the profession of education to reflect them. Only then will we be able to begin to adequately address the teacher shortage and work to ensure that a highly qualified and effective teacher is in every classroom.

### **Loss of Interest in Entering the Teaching Profession**

In addition to noting the changes in the trends of the workforce, we must also acknowledge the significant drop in interest in individuals who want to enter the field of teaching as a first career. A 2006 report by National Center for Education Statistics on the attitudes of U.S. high school sophomores asked what careers they expected to be in at the age of thirty. The data shows an increase among sophomores' interest in becoming a teacher from 1980 to 1990, but there is a dramatic decrease in 2002. In 1980, the response was 1.6 percent, in 1990 it rose to 4.4 percent but by 2002, the level of interest dropped to 1.6 percent of the survey participants. This means that we not only are going to face the challenge of teachers leaving the profession for other opportunities in the workforce or retirement, but will also potentially face a greater difficulty in recruiting recent graduates to the field.

It is also interesting to note that the question asked of survey respondents was their expected occupation by age thirty. Based on the responses ABCTE have received from individuals interested in changing careers to become teachers, we believe we will continue to see a greater potential pool of teachers among those over the age of thirty.

### **Lack of ‘Quality’ Teachers**

Compounding this teacher shortage is the issue of quality. Not only do our schools generally lack teachers in the classroom, but they lack high-quality and effective teachers.

There is no doubt that a quality teacher can enrich the learning opportunities not only for a classroom of children, but also individual students. A study conducted at the University of Tennessee found that teacher quality is a key determinant of student achievement, more important than any other societal or demographic factor. For instance, students assigned to the most effective teachers can achieve a full year of academic growth on top of expected annual gains—with low-performing students gaining the most academic benefit from these teachers.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires all teachers to become “highly qualified” as defined under the law by the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Yet serious concerns exist as to whether being considered “highly qualified” under NCLB will substantially improve the quality of teaching. The Center on Education Policy’s March 2006 report found that only 9 percent of responding states and 8 percent of school districts believe that NCLB’s teacher quality requirements have improved the quality of teaching.

### **Distribution of ‘Quality’ Teachers**

Meanwhile, teachers who are considered highly qualified under NCLB or are effective teachers are not teaching our neediest students.

Nationwide, 44 percent of middle school students take at least one class with an "out-of-field" teacher who lacks a major or minor in the subject being taught. In secondary schools, that figure is almost 25 percent—and 32 percent in high-poverty secondary schools, leaving students in the most challenging classrooms with the least qualified teachers. The Education Trust recently reviewed state plans on highly qualified teachers and released a report in August 2006 criticizing states and districts for failing to adequately examine such inequities in teacher quality among groups of students in each state.

The lack of high-quality and experienced teachers plagues high-need content and geographic areas. According to a 2002 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report on qualifications of public school teachers, 37 percent of high school math teachers and 31 percent of science teachers lack a major or certification in their field.

Again, the need is greatest in hard-to-serve schools. The Children's Defense Fund (2004) writes that the percentage of out-of-field teachers in math, English, science and social studies at high-minority and high-poverty high schools is substantially higher than at low-minority and low-poverty high schools. The Recruiting New Teachers' 2000 study of the largest urban school districts further found that nearly 98 percent of responding districts noted an immediate demand for science teachers and 95 percent reported an immediate demand for mathematics teachers.

## **Opportunity Amidst the Crisis**

While the crisis looms large before us, the education community has a unique opportunity to reexamine and improve our teacher recruitment, preparation, certification and support systems.

We have a chance to harness the new energy and activity of the nation's workforce, to take this vigor and infuse it into public education, to bring new life to our schools.

A shifting workforce allows us to seek prospective teachers from all professions, to recruit individuals looking to change careers who can bring unique knowledge and experiences to the teaching profession. And as the face of America's population changes, so, too, should the face of our schools—we can launch innovative efforts to diversify our teaching force to better reflect the makeup of our students and the growing demands of the 21st Century. We must provide teachers with sustained resources and support, to ensure that they need to successful.

We must target the new energy and diversity to areas with the greatest need—often urban and rural schools. We must also remain true to the principles of quality and effectiveness. Our field must continue to set high standards for teachers and teacher preparation programs. As a field, we must continue to evaluate ourselves, base our decisions on data and, above all, hold ourselves accountable for results.

## **ABCTE: OFFERING SOLUTIONS**

The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) works to respond to the shifting demands of the American workforce. Specifically, we seek to address the needs of the teaching community—the concerns over the quality and effectiveness of teachers, as well as the

increasing shortage plaguing the field.

The primary focus of our work is in the area of alternative teacher certification. We are dedicated to providing talented individuals in other careers with an innovative pathway to the teaching field. Our *Passport to Teaching* program is affordable, costing between \$560 and \$750 for the entire program. It is flexible, designed to fit into the schedules of highly qualified individuals looking to make the transition into teaching. And it is high quality, properly preparing these professionals for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom.

ABCTE strives to help increase the pool of highly qualified and effective teachers available to schools around the country. Currently, there are 2,715 candidates pursuing ABCTE certification nationwide and an additional 28,000 potential teachers who have expressed interest in becoming credentialed through ABCTE. ABCTE certification is officially recognized in six states: Florida, Idaho, Utah, Mississippi, New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. However, our certified teachers are serving in 30 states, helping to fill positions in high-need content and geographic areas.

### **ABCTE Demands High Quality**

Effective teachers are essential for achieving success. ABCTE's vision is that every child in every classroom will have a highly qualified teacher—a teacher who possesses expert levels of knowledge in the subjects he or she teaches and mastery of research-based teaching strategies; a teacher who is effective in the classroom and in raising student achievement.

That is why we demand high quality in our *Passport to Teaching* certification program. All of our teaching candidates must hold a bachelor's degree and demonstrate mastery on rigorous subject area and professional teaching knowledge examinations. These examinations are developed by teachers, policy-makers and other subject-matter experts and are considered among the most rigorous testing instruments for teachers in existence. All teachers who earn state certification through *Passport to Teaching* are considered “highly qualified” according to NCLB.

Our teachers are not only highly qualified—they are effective. We conducted a validity study in 2005 and 2006 to correlate teacher scores on ABCTE's exams for elementary education certification with the teachers' student learning gains. While the sample size was small, the study found that teachers who met *Passport to Teaching* certification requirements based on their proficiency in teaching knowledge and subject-area expertise produced significantly higher average student learning gains in the classroom than teachers who failed to meet certification requirements. Passing teachers had positive student learning gains in each subject area, while failing teachers showed below-average student learning gains in every subject except reading.

Further, in a recent comparison survey, 95 percent of principals said that ABCTE teachers are as effective as—or more effective than—teachers certified through other routes. Both the validity study and comparison survey confirm that teachers achieving certification through the alternate *Passport to Teaching* route can increase student learning at a level equal to or greater than those of teachers achieving certification through traditional programs.

### **ABCTE Attracts and Retains Teachers Who Reflect the Nation's Diversity**

Today's teacher shortage is a problem of both recruitment and retention. Schools and districts struggle to not only attract highly qualified and effective teachers, but also to keep these teachers in their schools.

Through effective teacher recruitment strategies, ABCTE seeks to attract and retain teachers who will stay in the classroom. We partner with schools and districts to meet the community's specific recruitment needs. In order to recruit highly qualified individuals and attract them to the teaching profession, we develop complete advertising, media relations and grassroots campaigns. In addition to state- and district-specific recruitment campaigns, ABCTE conducts national promotions, which are geared toward specific segments of the population to attract a diverse group of people with high levels of subject area knowledge to the teaching profession. For instance, our *Back To School Campaign* was designed to attract college students who did not major in education, while our *New Year's Resolution Campaign* focused on career changers and other individuals who have thought about teaching but had not yet committed to pursuing certification. We have launched various urban, rural and multicultural recruitment initiatives as well.

These targeted efforts have allowed us to help diversify the education profession. The national teaching workforce is 90 percent white and overwhelmingly female. According to the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Workforce, individuals of African American descent make up

only 6 percent of current teachers, while the remaining 5 percent are from other races. The Recruiting New Teachers' 2000 study of the largest urban school districts found that almost 73 percent of responding districts reported an immediate need for teachers of color. The same study found that just over 80 percent of the largest urban school districts reported an immediate demand for male teachers at the elementary level.

ABCTE brings a different demographic into teaching, one that better reflects the current makeup of our schools. We attract a higher percentage of males than many traditional programs—over 30 percent of our candidates are male; comparatively 25 percent of newly hired teachers nationwide are men. We attract a higher percentage of non-white teachers (46 percent) than other programs. We attract professionals looking to bring their knowledge and experience to teaching. We harness their new energy and diversity and infuse it into public education.

But recruiting is only one step of the process. Once teachers are placed in schools, it is vital to provide them with the support they need to succeed in the classroom. We believe that mentoring new teachers is crucial. When ABCTE works with states on certification adoption, we request that successful completion of a mentoring be required for a teacher to move from initial to permanent certification. If a state or school district does not have a mentoring program in place, ABCTE offers its own program. The ABCTE mentoring program combines online course modules, in-class activities and classroom observations by an experienced teacher in the new teacher's school. The mentoring program is designed to support new teachers as they begin their careers and to increase their effectiveness as professional educators. A study performed by the New Teacher Center highlights the value of such support services for these teachers—the study

found that 88 percent of teachers who participated in the mentoring program were still teaching after six years, while a total of 95 percent were still involved in education.

### **ABCTE Seeks To Help Where the Need Is Greatest**

ABCTE's certification is helping not only to meet the critical need for new qualified and effective teachers in America, but also to specifically address shortages in content and special need areas, as well as in urban and rural communities.

Urban and rural schools continue to struggle to fill teaching positions. According to NCES (2005), teachers in high-poverty public schools were about twice as likely to move to another school as their counterparts in low-poverty public schools.

Meanwhile, all schools grapple with the need for highly qualified and effective teachers in specific subject areas—particularly math, science, special education and English as a Second Language. The Recruiting New Teachers' 2000 study reports that nearly 98 percent of responding urban districts noted an immediate demand for science teachers and 95 percent reported an immediate demand for mathematics teachers. The percentage of out-of-field teachers in the subject areas of math, English, science and social studies at high-minority and high-poverty high schools is substantially higher than at low-minority and low-poverty high schools, according to the Children's Defense Fund.

ABCTE is focused on helping these high-need areas. We have launched various urban, rural and multicultural recruitment initiatives geared toward attracting individuals to serve in their local communities. Further, we offer—and a significant percentage of our candidates are pursuing—certification in math (23 percent), general science (seven percent), biology (seven percent), physics, chemistry and special education (five percent). In May 2006, we also launched *Project 5000: Recruiting New Math and Science Teachers for U.S. Schools*, an initiative with the goal of recruiting 5,000 talented new math and science teachers for schools across the United States by 2009.

**ABCTE Not Only Sets High Standards for Its Teachers—It Sets High Standards for Itself and Its Products**

ABCTE is committed to continuous improvement based on data-driven results. We set high standards for ourselves and continually study the reliability of our examinations. In addition to our own validity studies, we work with third-party organizations that conduct independent reviews to determine whether ABCTE tests align with individual state standards. We launched a \$1.2 million longitudinal study of our certified teachers, through an independent firm, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and plan to conduct 18 additional research studies over the next five years to monitor the progress and success of our teachers and our program. We believe in high quality and continue to hold ourselves accountable for producing that quality.

## **INCREASING THE POOL OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED, EFFECTIVE TEACHERS**

As public school enrollment steadily rises and the number of teachers continues to decrease, it is clear that our nation's teacher crisis is so large that no single approach can solve it on its own. Traditional teacher preparation and certification programs, emergency certification programs, alternative teacher preparation and certification programs—we are each one part of the larger solution. All of our unique strategies must be combined to address the teacher shortage—only by doing so will we get to where we need to be in order for our children to succeed both in the classroom and beyond.

### **Bring All Teacher Programs to the Table**

The nation's traditional teacher education programs provide one avenue for certifying teachers. We must look for additional avenues to improve the number of teachers available to support the needs of districts. Comprehensive, innovative approaches to teacher training, certification and support are critical if we are going to adequately address our nation's teacher shortage. Alternative certification programs—which have been providing effective ways to recruit, train, certify and support teachers for years—must be part of this important conversation and part of the ultimate solution. Alternate routes to teaching like ABCTE that allow highly qualified and effective individuals to enter classrooms offer a significant resource to states and districts struggling to fill open positions. They provide a growing pool of teachers to meet the needs of schools nationwide, especially in high-need geographic and subject areas.

Like traditional teacher certification programs, alternative programs must meet high standards that will lead to teacher quality and effectiveness. This includes requiring its teachers to demonstrate mastery of both subject-area knowledge and professional teaching knowledge. It also means providing continued support for teaching candidates through counseling and test preparation materials, and for certified teachers through mentoring and professional development. It requires measuring teacher effectiveness in the classroom and working with states to ensure that qualified and effective teachers serve in areas of high-need or hard-to-serve areas. In our efforts to fill classrooms, we cannot afford to sacrifice on quality, effectiveness and mentoring to ensure that teachers have what they need to be effective educators.

### **Focus More on Recruiting and Retaining Highly Qualified and Effective Teachers**

We live in a changing world. The American population is becoming increasingly mobile. The nation's workers now hold many different jobs—even professions—in their lifetime. The face of the workforce is also changing; as our population becomes increasingly diverse we must harness this energy, expertise and culture in support of public education by launching innovative efforts to recruit, train and certify business professionals looking to become teachers.

We must also target our recruitment efforts to diverse ethnicities, races and genders, for while America's school-age population becomes more multicultural and multi-ethnic, its teaching workforce remains uniform—predominantly white and female.

Alternative programs like ABCTE are already leading the way in this effort to diversify.

Alternatively certified teachers, in general, tend to represent a broader range of ages, genders and racial/ethnic backgrounds than traditionally trained teachers. A 2005 national survey of almost 2,700 alternatively certified teachers conducted by the National Center for Education Information found that they reflected a higher percentage of males (37 percent) and nonwhite (32 percent) and had nearly 80 percent of their teachers holding a bachelor's degree or higher in a field other than education.

Our efforts, however, must not stop with recruitment, preparation and certification. We continue to support teachers as they enter our children's classrooms, through mentoring programs and continued professional development. In order to close the "revolving door" that swings in our schools, we need to show our teachers that we support them in this important endeavor to prepare our youth for life in the new global economy.

### **Continue To Focus on High-Need Areas—Both Geographic and Subject Areas**

The 21st Century brought with it a high demand for qualified workers who have the skills and knowledge to compete in an increasingly global economy. However, children in the United States by and large are not acquiring these crucial skills in school:

- About one-third of 4th and 8th grade students and less than 20 percent of 12th graders reached proficiency in math and science tests administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
- Students are also falling behind internationally: 15-year-olds from the United States

scored below the international average on the 2003 Trends in International Math and Science Study.

We must encourage the development of and increase our support for innovative programs working to address these high-need subject areas. Again, alternative certification programs like ABCTE shine in this arena, as they offer their candidates certification in these areas. And candidates are taking advantage: a 2005 survey finds that alternatively certified teachers often teach subjects in greatest demand such as mathematics, special education, and sciences. For instance, twenty percent of alternative-route teachers—compared to 6 percent of all public school teachers—are teaching math.

The need for highly qualified and effective teachers in all subjects is greatest in our urban and rural schools. We must step up our recruitment and placement efforts and target them toward these hard-to-serve areas. All children—regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status or geographic location—deserve to have an excellent teacher in their classroom.

**Evaluate and Hold Accountable All Teacher Preparation Programs—Be They Traditional, Emergency or Alternative**

Evaluation and accountability must be a way of life in order to realize continuous improvement. All teacher preparation programs—traditional, emergency or alternative—must be continuously reviewed and evaluated for quality and effectiveness.

Recent evaluations of alternative programs demonstrate their effectiveness in training teachers. ABCTE's study, as mentioned earlier, found that teachers who met *Passport to Teaching* certification requirements based on their proficiency in teaching knowledge and subject area expertise produced significantly higher average student learning gains in the classroom than teachers who failed to meet certification requirements.

Other alternative teaching programs have also been reviewed recently. For instance, one study found that, on average, Teach For America (TFA) teachers produce a positive effect on their students' achievement levels relative to teachers in the same district recruited and trained through other routes. Another study found that TFA teachers had a positive impact in math achievement when compared to a control group of teachers of all experience levels and that TFA teachers provide roughly one additional month of math learning per year. Meanwhile, 92 percent of principals said they would hire another The New Teacher Project (TNTP) teacher and 93 percent say they were satisfied with their TNTP teachers.

Teachers have a direct effect on student achievement. We must ensure that the programs training our teachers properly prepare them for the realities of the classroom. These programs must set high standards for quality and effectiveness both for their teachers and for themselves. And they must continue to grow and improve based on data received from ongoing evaluation and assessment.

### **Provide the Resources To Support These Efforts**

We live in a time when funding is scarce and budgets are stretched thin. It remains a stark reality, states, districts and schools need adequate resources to address and improve teacher quality and student learning. Better support for teacher recruitment, training, certification, mentoring and professional development will lead to more effective teachers in the classroom and subsequently increase student achievement. Additional funding is needed and should be geared directly to programs striving to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

### **CONCLUSION**

As Congress moves to reauthorize NCLB next year, we urge those on Capitol Hill to consider the crucial role that alternative certification programs play in the teacher quality discussion.

Amidst an increasing teacher shortage and retention problem, programs like ABCTE not only help provide an expanding pool of highly qualified and effective teachers, but we also work to target areas of highest need. We bring fresh energy and diversity—ethnic, racial, gender and occupational—to the teaching profession. We provide essential preparation and sustained support for our teachers, encouraging them to remain in schools. We continuously work to hold ourselves accountable for the quality of both our teachers and our programs.

Alternative certification programs offer one part of the solution to our current crisis. Together with other teacher preparation programs, we will continue to address the concerns of the field—quality, effectiveness, support, distribution and other issues that lie just over the horizon—

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because our teachers deserve all of our effort and support. And our children deserve a quality education from a qualified, effective teacher.

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