

## Teacher Certification: Safeguard Or Superstition? A Short Symposium (IP-5-1990)

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Issue Paper

By [1990 Symposium Speakers](#)

Executive Summary

The Carnegie Corporation warns that the caliber of Americas newest teachers is at an all-time low. In response, Colorado Gov. Roy Romer has urged the legislature to revise teacher certification regulations in ways that will encourage professionals from other fields to enter teaching.

"It works" is the verdict on alternative certification from Saul Cooperman, commissioner of education in New Jersey, who pioneered the reform nationally. Business leaders like David Kearns, chairman of Xerox, also favor opening up the alternate route. But the reaction of teacher unions and university education deans has ranged from polite skepticism to open hostility.

The Colorado General Assembly will soon complete work on an alternative teacher certification program, House Bill 1150, patterned after the New Jersey system. This paper collects six viewpoints on the issue, on a spectrum from the blunt criticism of classics professor Christian Kopff to the double-talk of union leader and Home Ec teacher Nancy King.

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### Crisis In Teacher Quality Requires Bold Response

By Christian Kopff and Dale Watt

"Never before in the nations history has the caliber of those entering the teaching profession been as low as it is today," a recent Carnegie Foundation report has warned, adding: "This is true for every state in the union."

The crisis of public education in Colorado and the nation is epitomized in the low quality of too many teachers today. A case can actually be made that this situation is a direct result of the very measures taken by the state to maintain teacher quality, the state-mandated certification process.

Interestingly, everyone acknowledges that the best of Americas educational institutions are the private elementary and high schools and the public and private universities, where there is no certification of teachers. In one recent graduating class at Princeton, only 19 seniors were enrolled in the universitys teacher certification program -- yet 60 were placed as teachers in private schools.

Standardized tests of student achievement, corrected for socio-economic factors, show public schools surpassed not only by the prestigious Episcopalian and Lutheran systems but even by the formerly despised Catholic and fundamentalist schools. When tests on elementary skills are mandated for public school teachers, as many as 25% fail.

Why does certification fail to provide enough good teachers?

1. Certification proceeds from the political process, which emphasizes compromise for the protection of organized interest groups, while education demands objective excellence.
2. The education establishment, professional groups, the National Education Association, etc., function as labor unions and lobbyists to protect jobs, not to promote excellence.
3. Certification is controlled by education schools which for historical reasons are committed to downplaying knowledge of a subject in favor of methodology and process in teaching.
4. Certification tends to cut off the public school system from competition, yet competition is the proven breeding ground of excellence in other fields of social and economic endeavor.

George Lyons, writing in the Phi Delta Kappan (October 1984), summarized the indictment and the remedy: "The monopoly of education schools must be broken; there must be other paths to certification. Since teaching is a pragmatic art best learned by experience, school districts should establish apprenticeship programs for people who can satisfy the literacy requirements and show a command of subject matter."

In recent years the nations student population has declined, yet the education workforce keeps rising and expenditures on education have increased by tens of billions of dollars. Scores on standardized tests in this period have also been falling or flat.

But statistics cant begin to measure the opportunity cost of all the rigid, arbitrary rules that characterize teacher certification today. An M.A. graduate from the University of Colorados Department of Classics, for instance, will be trained in the Latin language as well as the history and literature of Greece and Rome. But could she take her rich preparation into the high school classroom?

Not under Colorados existing certification process, in which "social studies" certification is required in order to teach history and "language arts" certification to teach any work published in English, even translations from other languages. These topics are mandated by law to be taught by those who may have no professional training in the original languages of the relevant body of history and literature.

Nor are classical fields of learning the only ones that suffer. How many innovative and original subjects are not introduced or taught at all in our public schools because of this straitjacketing of subject areas? Of course, we cannot tell. How many creative and Innovative teachers are driven out or give up in despair? We can only guess. We can say that certification in its present form --and to some extent, by Its very nature -- is opposed to excellence in teaching and learning.

Governor Thomas H. Kean of New Jersey, a former teacher, led the fight to open up his states teacher training and certification requirements. New Jersey became the first state to allow graduates of accredited universities and colleges to teach in elementary and high schools without first taking college-level education courses. As related elsewhere in this issue paper, New Jersey is now reaping the benefits of being able to draw upon her wealth of experienced business and professional people; schoolchildren are the real winners from this reform.

Teaching is a practical art, not an abstract science. It is best learned by students of great teachers and best taught by example. While the following recommendations may not reflect political caution, they are obvious on educational grounds:

1. Colorado should boldly liberalize, if not abolish, its state teachers certification requirements.
2. It should allow principals to hire experienced and enthusiastic business and professional people.
3. It should create grades of Master Teacher where a superb teacher would spend part of his or her time training other teachers.

Of course, that teacher will teach fewer students. If, however, in twenty years every Master Teacher (of whom there will be hundreds) can help mold forty other fine teachers, more will be done for education in Colorado than would be accomplished by requiring a thousand courses in theory or process.

Such a reform would have the immediate advantage (or from the interest group standpoint, disadvantage!) of being less expensive and less restrictive than our present system.

The basic premises of this new teacher employment regime would be freedom from state restrictions, openness to competition, and rewards for demonstrated excellence.

These premises have never failed America yet -- and they will not fail to give us again the worlds greatest educational system. We should be satisfied with nothing less.

Christian Kopff is associate professor of classics and associate director of the honors program at the University of Colorado in Boulder; Dale Watt is the former headmaster of a private academy in Minnesota, now principal of a public high school in Wisconsin.

## What Colorado's Alternative Teacher Certification Plan Would Do

By F. Charles Froelicher

Here is a brief introduction to House Bill 1150, sponsored by Rep. Elwood Gillis and Sen. Mike Bird. The bill has passed the House of Representatives and the Senate Education committee. At this writing it awaits action by the Senate Appropriations Committee and then the full Senate.

### **I. Rationale**

The United States of America is engaged in a global economic struggle in which it will prevail only if it has the best educated work force in the world. By every measure, at the present time, and over the past two decades, our students measure up dead last when compared to our 10 principal international competitors.

House Bill 1150 is but one piece of a 20-piece education policy puzzle which will, if put together, have a profound effect on the quality of the public education system.

### **II. Purpose Of H.B. 1150**

Patterned after the New Jersey Alternative Certification program which is now in its sixth year, the purpose of the bill is to:

- A. Enhance and strengthen the quality of new teachers entering the system by drawing from pools of candidates which have heretofore been dissuaded from entering the profession because of expense and onerous training requirements, i.e., the traditional teacher certification system;
- B. Expand the supply of high quality teacher candidates by providing them with an opportunity to obtain their certification through:
  - 1. In the classroom on-the-job training under the supervision of "mentors" or master teachers and an institution of higher learning; and
  - 2. A rigorous academic program of some 200 hours, agreed upon by the school, school district, Colorado Department of Education, and an Institution of Higher Learning.

### **III. The Need**

- A. While Colorado is reported to have a reasonably adequate pool of candidates who wish to enter the teaching profession, the State's goal must be to constantly expand and strengthen that pool so as to be certain that the public schools have available to their teaching staffs, the best teaching candidates.
- B. There is abundant evidence from both New Jersey and across the country that when the artificial barriers for entrance into the teaching profession are removed, substantial numbers of citizens from the following groups enthusiastically enter the profession.
  - 1. Able, highly motivated minority graduates from competitive colleges, with a 3.0 grade point average and better. These graduates with B.A. and M.A. degrees are entering the New Jersey system at twice the rate of those from the traditional teacher colleges. The New Jersey pool of these candidates make up 20% of the alternative pool versus 10% in the traditional pool.
  - 2. Able, highly motivated college graduates, with B.A.'s, B.S.'s, M.A.s and Ph.D.s, who have been unable to enter the profession because of the extensive time and expense of the traditional program, are now entering the New Jersey secondary school teaching field in substantial numbers because of the alternative certification route.
  - 3. Highly skilled, well-educated, seasoned professionals in engineering, mathematics, the law, medicine, music, colleges, universities and nonpublic schools who are interested in a mid-career change, are presently prevented from teaching in public elementary and secondary schools because of the certification requirements of the traditional system. There are many who would opt for a change in career if the alternative training route were open to them.
  - 4. Highly educated women who have had successful careers out of college, who have raised their children to school age and who would like to go back to work on schedules coinciding with their children's schedules, would make up a superb pool of teaching candidates were they able to enter the profession with a combination of on-the-job training under master teachers and concurrent

course work.

#### **IV. Support Of H.B. 1150**

Support of H.B. 1150 has come from college and university presidents, including Gordon Gee and Dan Ritchie, the Colorado Department of Education and Its Commissioner, William Randall, Governor Roy Romer in his State of the State speech to the Legislature, Dr. William Grady, Dean of the School of Education at the University of Colorado at Denver, Dr. Calvin Frazier, former Commissioner of the Colorado Department of Education, Dr. Christine Johnson, principal of Abraham Lincoln High School, the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry (CACI), the Denver Public Schools administration, the Denver Chamber of Commerce, the Colorado Department of Education through Mr. Jim Bailey and Dr. Rich Laughlin, and Mr. Ed Lyell of the Colorado State Board of Education.

#### **V. The Program**

Aristotle said "that to learn to be a house builder, one should build houses, to learn to play the harp, one must play the harp, and to learn to teach, one must teach."

The Alternative Teacher Certification Program is an Intensive, one-year, on-the-Job teacher education program which combines a full year of working in the classroom, under the supervision and guidance of a master teacher or "mentor" teacher, with approximately 13 semester hours of higher education courses -- 200 classroom hours-- appropriate to the needs of the Individual considering the courses and age groups being taught.

The entire training program must be agreed to in advance by the teaching intern, the school, the district, the university with which the district is in partnership, and the Colorado Department of Education.

Essentially, the Alternative Certification program is equivalent to a drivers learning permit whereby the driver in training drives only under the supervision of a master teacher-a mentor. No drivers license, i.e., teaching certificate, will be issued until the training course is complete and the candidate receives the blessing of the master teacher, principal, superintendent, university, and Colorado Department of Education.

#### **VI. Opposition To H.B. 1150**

Mr. Bill Coiner of the Colorado Education Association (CEA) testified in favor of H.B. 1150 on February 6, 1990 in front of the State Affairs Committee of the House. He made some constructive wording changes which were adopted. On Thursday, March 22, and again on Thursday, March 29, Mr. Coiner, after acknowledging that the New Jersey program had indeed brought a number of excellent teachers into the New Jersey system, opposed the bill. The AFT representative took the same position.

Charles Froelicher is executive director of The Gates Foundation, one of Colorados largest private philanthropies. Long active as an educator with Colorado Academy and the Outward Bound movement, he was instrumental in organizing the statewide leadership conference on "Public Education: A Shift in the Breeze," held at Keystone in September 1989. Saul Coopermans influential presentation on the New Jersey experience ([see below](#)) was given at that conference, as were many elements of Governor Roy Romer's school reform agenda ([see also below](#)).

Colorado can become class act of U.S. education

By Gov. Roy Romer

That is the dilemma facing Colorados and this nations educational system. Each year we slip further behind as other nations accelerate, giving their students a competitive edge over future American generations. It is a problem that Colorado does not face alone, but one so important that Coloradans cannot wait for some national solution.

We can meet this challenge ourselves. First, we must be bold enough reduce their complexity and to encourage professionals from other fields to enter teaching.

Reducing class size in kindergarten through the third grade to 24 students. Some classes now exceed 30 students.

Extending the current 180-day school year to 200 days by 1995 while making simultaneous improvements in educational quality. Assisting school districts in making computer literacy a basic skill in all kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms by the year 1993.

Expanding early childhood education programs for at-risk children.

Continuing to experiment with school choice to determine where it works and how it might be useful.

Funding an additional \$1.5 million in special incentives to schools that make significant progress in achieving goals for school improvements and for increasing student achievement levels.

Thank you for taking the time to think with me about Colorado's future. I hope that you will attend one of the town meetings and that you also will become involved in helping to make the schools in your community and in your state the best that they can be. Together we can make it happen.

#### Teachers Warily Back Plan To End Certification

By A RYAN COVARRUBIAS

Rocky Mountain News Education Writer

Teachers gave a cautious thumbs up yesterday to Gov. Roy Romer's proposal to eliminate teacher certification rules that prevent qualified experts in other fields from entering the classroom.

Although teachers agreed that certification requirements could use some revamping, they stopped short of endorsing the idea completely, saying even experts need to learn how to teach.

"I think we need to be more flexible," said Sandra Simmons Weiser, assistant dean of the teacher education center at the University of Northern Colorado. "But just because they're an expert doesn't

mean they will be good teachers. Teaching is an art unto itself. You not only have to know your content well, but you have to be skilled in delivery of that content."

Romer made the suggestion earlier this week when he presented a budget proposal that would pump \$128 million into education from preschool through college. The idea is popular among some education reformers looking for ways to cope with a "brain drain" in the teaching profession and an impending teacher shortage.

Romer suggested that all teacher certification requirements be tossed out by July 1, 1991, to make it easier for people in other professions, such as chemistry, geology and engineering, to enter the classroom. Right now, it takes about 1-year for someone with a bachelor's degree to become a teacher in Colorado.

Nancy King, vice president of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association and a home economics teacher for 18 years, said people who want to become teachers should know what they are getting into first. Classroom observation and student teaching -- requirements under current certification laws -- serve that purpose, she said.

"It gives them a chance to get a feel for the real classroom. So they know if they're really interested," said King, a student adviser at Kunsmiller Middle School in Denver. "It's a real challenging situation to teach. There are so many demands on teachers."

The U.S. Department of Education predicts that the demand for new public-school teachers will rise from 128,000 in 1988 to 174,000 in 1995. Only 8.8% of 1988 first-year students in college planned to pursue careers in elementary or secondary schools.

The shortage will be particularly acute in the sciences and mathematics, where college graduates can make more money working in private industry.

#### Teacher Certification - The NJ Approach

By Dr. Saul Cooperman

Reprinted from the Gates Foundation conference proceedings booklet, "Public Education: A Shift in the Breeze," summarizing school reform recommendations by ten national leaders at Keystone, Colorado, September 20-23, 1989. Speakers in addition to Dr. Cooperman included Ernest Boyer, Fletcher Byrom, John Goodlad, Frank Newman, Ruth Randall, Roy Romer, Albert Shanker, Theodore Sizer, and William Youngblood. The booklet can be ordered by calling (303)722-1881, audiocassettes by calling (303)750-3000.

"If you appeal to the intellect of the teacher, the teacher will apply it to the classroom."

To meet the educational challenge ahead we have to ask the right questions. Two of the most important questions are deceptively simple: Who teaches? Who administers?

I started as New Jersey's Commissioner of Education in July of 1982. After defining the issues, I submitted 20 separate initiatives to Gov. Thomas H. Kean which became his blueprint for educational reform. Four of them had to do with teachers. We refer to them as the four Rs: Recruit, Recognize, Renew and Retain.

- Recruit. We boosted beginning pay for teachers in one year from \$14,200 to \$18,500. To draw quality students into teaching, we now offer scholarships of \$7,500 a year for four years provided they come back to New Jersey to teach for four years in an urban school district or six years in a suburban district

- Recognize. You have to recognize people who are doing a good job, and we have a program to do that. We have a symposium every year to discuss issues, and I and my staff constantly meet with teachers.
- Renew. If you appeal to the intellect of the teacher, the teacher will apply it in the classroom. We started an Academy for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. We now have 85 school districts in New Jersey that assign one teacher - the Staff Development Leader - who will be freed from all teaching responsibilities for one half-day to focus on staff development and the needs of the students.
- Retain. To retain teachers they've got to feel they are a part of the action. Cooperative Relationships is a mediation program that helps teachers work with administrators. Effective Schools allows the teacher to identify a problem, propose a solution, and outline expected results. For the best proposals, we give out up to 30 grants per year of \$15,000 each.

#### Alternate Route to Teacher Certification

In 1982, with teacher shortages, New Jersey was giving emergency certification to teachers in math, science and foreign language. At times, 20 to 30 percent of our teachers had received this type of certification. This practice, which had been around since the 1920s, was a euphemism educators use for lowering standards. I also found that the majority of education majors were from the bottom half of their high school class.

We implemented a two-year program to ensure that teachers reached a minimum standard before certification. We declared there would be no more emergency certification of teachers (except for vocational and bilingual education). So we had to find another way to raise the quantity and quality of teachers at the same time. We developed the alternate route for certification. Like the traditionally certified teacher, a teacher under the alternate program needs a college degree, an academic major, and can pass a test of academic competence (we use the NTE). But instead of having to go to school to learn teaching methods, an alternate route teacher could learn the pedagogy on the job through a one-year program.

All hell broke loose. We overcame the initial opposition, particularly from the teachers colleges, by getting 100 percent newspaper editorial support and by meeting with small citizen groups across the state.

Four years later, we have not had one emergency certification except in vocational and bilingual education. Test scores on NTE are now in the top quarter of the US. In almost every area, the alternate route teachers score far higher than the traditional route teachers in the academic area. The dropout rate after the first year of teaching in the traditional route is 16 percent; the alternate route dropout rate is only four percent. And we are attracting more minority teachers; 25 percent of those entering the program are minorities.

What have we learned? It works. We have increased the quantity and the quality of our teachers. We have also learned that it's a heck of a lot of work. In conclusion, I thought James Baldwin was right when he said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed unless it is faced."

Dr. Saul Cooperman is the Commissioner of Education for the State of New Jersey.

#### Do Teachers Really Need Licenses?

By David T. Kearns

From the Wall Street Journal, February 28, 1990

Most observers of the American education scene would agree that you can't have a first-rate system without first-rate teachers. Currently, there is a huge shortage of them. Because of archaic policies and practices, some highly motivated and otherwise qualified people can't get teaching licenses. The reason? They never took education courses in college. Several cities and states, including Los Angeles, Massachusetts, Maryland and Connecticut are doing something about it. That something is called "alternative certification."

The programs vary all over the lot. One that works and should be the model for a nationwide movement is New Jersey's. Pioneered in the mid-1980s by then-Gov. Tom Kean (president of Drew University), the program directly addresses the two most pressing problems in teaching today - the quality and quantity of new teachers.

Under the program, talented and capable recent college graduates who haven't taken education courses, private-school teachers (who may not hold a state certificate), mid-career adults, scientists and others interested in teaching -- but not interested in taking a slew of education courses -- now have a route open to them.

A candidate for alternative certification must hold a bachelor's degree in the subject he is interested in teaching (the liberal arts for elementary-school teachers); pass a subject-matter test; and apply for a job. If a school district is prepared to offer a job, it must get state permission. The three parties (including the aspiring teacher) sign a contract with three elements: training, support and evaluation. New teachers must spend 200 hours teaching in the classroom (during the first year; supervision must be provided by a mentor teacher; and three

evaluations are required. If the year is successful, the new teacher is eligible for a full certificate without ever having had an education course.

Needless to say, teachers unions were fearful and fretful, school board members skeptical, and policy makers cautiously optimistic. The preliminary results are in and they are encouraging.

Leo Klagholz, director of the program, reports that in 1985, the first year of operation, 121 certificates were awarded, about 10% of total teaching vacancies that year. In 1989, 470 were awarded, 25% of the vacancies. And there is no longer a "shortage" of teachers in New Jersey. What about staying power? Mr. Klagholz reports a 4% to 8% attrition rate among first-year "alternative" teachers, compared with 18% among regularly certified teachers.

New Jersey has approved a similar program for principals, and one is on the drawing boards for superintendents. Holders of advanced degrees in management -- MBAs for example -- will soon be permitted to apply for principalships.

Most important, Mr. Klagholz reports that quality is up. Why? Many of the alternative-route teachers are older and more seasoned. The training they receive is tailored to their strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps most important is a mentor, providing real on-the-job training.

There are two reasons to license: to protect clients (or students, in the case of teaching) from the uninformed, unscrupulous or malicious amid to establish high standards of professional performance.

Traditional education licenses in the U.S. do a good job at the first, not the second. Teaching licenses are ordinarily awarded on the basis of the number of education courses taken-usually the more the merrier. Most states also require prospective teachers to take the National Teachers Exam, but each state sets its own passing grade and there is a wide discrepancy on what score is passing. The Japanese, by contrast, require a rigorous examination on a variety of academic disciplines, including math, science and language, and only the top scorers get teaching positions.

As everyone knows - particularly teachers-most education courses range from dull to deadly. Education courses have such a bad reputation that many talented and energetic young people -- not to mention older people -- simply turn and run at the mention of them.

The reason is deceptively simple -- there is, as yet, no science of pedagogy the way there is a science of medicine, for example. Teaching is an art, and the best teachers report that the most valuable things they learned were not in the college classroom but the classroom in which they first taught. The luckiest report that they had mentors who showed them the ropes.

Is there a solution short of dismantling the whole system overnight? The answer has a long-term and a short-term answer. In time, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, on whose board I serve, will simply transcend the issue of state credentials by making it possible for the teaching profession to set a standard higher than certification.

By the mid-1990s, teachers-like doctors-will be able to become "board certified," demonstrating special knowledge and accomplishment.

Until such time as board certification becomes a reality, however, let bright and enthusiastic adults enter the teaching ranks by an alternative route. Make sure they are grounded in their discipline, assign them to a responsible and seasoned senior teacher, and let them begin; if there is a core education course or courses that should be taken (luring the year, fine. But keep it short and sweet).

What role should business play in all of this? First, American business is itself a model of "alternative certification." One of our greatest competitive strengths is that we have not succumbed to "credentialism," a plague in most advanced countries, particularly in decisions about promotion and advancement, American employers ask "Can you do the job?" before they inquire about credentials.

European and Asian business leaders are astonished at how fluid and flexible our workforce policies are. Indeed, that is why so many of Xerox's best sales people are former teachers. The qualities that distinguish a good teacher are in demand in the high-tech firm: intelligence, verve, a capacity to solve problems on your own and on the spot, affability and a flair for the dramatic. That so many good teachers leave the profession to seek employment at companies like Xerox is a dismal commentary on the state of our schools-schools should be vibrant, exciting and rewarding places to work.

Alternative certification would give corporate employees with the gift of teaching a chance to explore it. Some would try it and like it-for a while. Some would try it and never return to teaching (with new respect for those who stay in teaching). Some would try teaching part time, some upon retirement. Some would ask for release

time or even shared time.

Finally, some would hike it so much they would devote their lives to teaching. And the corporations loss would be the societys gain.

Mr. Kearns, chairman of Xerox, is co-author of "Winning the Brain Race: A Bold Plan to Make Schools Competitive" (ICS Press, San Francisco, 1987).

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