

Beginning Teachers from Florida Teacher Preparation Programs

A Report on State Approved Teacher Preparation Programs with Results of Surveys of Program Completers

January 2008

About the Report

The Report is designed to provide information related to the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in Florida by focusing on the early professional experiences of completers from the three types of programs: Initial Teacher Preparation Programs and Professional Preparation Programs offered through Educator Preparation Institutes and District Alternative Certification Programs. Section 1004.04(5), Florida Statutes, authorizes Initial Teacher Preparation Programs and requires that:

[by] January 1 of each year, the Department of Education shall report ... information for each postsecondary educational institution that has state-approved programs of teacher education to the Governor, the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors, the Commissioner of Education, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, all Florida postsecondary teacher preparation programs, and interested members of the public. This report must analyze the data and make recommendations for improving teacher preparation programs in the state.

Additionally, section 1004.85, Florida Statutes, authorizing Educator Preparation Institutes, and Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C., which implements approval processes for all types of teacher preparation programs, require that continued approval of teacher preparation programs of each type be based in part on the satisfaction of program completers and their school district employers with the level of preparedness for teaching provided by their respective programs. District Alternative Certification Programs are also required by section 1012.56, Florida Statutes, to conduct a postevaluation of their completers to assure that they completed the program successfully.

Information in this Report is provided to assist all institutions with approved programs in meeting their continued approval requirements in the area of completer and employer satisfaction, by annually providing high-level, state-wide data in candidate performance areas that lead institutions and districts to do further and more in-depth study. Surveys of program completers and those closely associated with them, their principals, mentors and program coordinators, were conducted to glean information about their perceptions of the level of completers' preparedness for the classroom with regard to the competencies and skills associated with their respective preparation programs. The surveys included questions of:

- Principals, regarding how effective their new teachers were in demonstrating the twelve Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs) and in providing reading instruction and standardized test preparation, and as to whether these beginning teachers met their criteria for rehiring
- Mentors, regarding how well the teachers they were working with compared with other beginning teachers
- Teachers, regarding their own effectiveness and satisfaction with their preparation for the classroom.

Background

Florida's Need for Teachers

Florida's need for teachers is expressed in both quantity and quality. In School Year 2006-07, there were more than 168,000 teachers in Florida public school classrooms, a two percent increase over the previous year.¹ Approximately 16,878 teaching positions are needed to be filled in 2007-08; of these, most are in elementary education and exceptional student education. Between 2007-08 and 2016-17, Florida will need to fill between 17,000 and 23,500

¹ Adapted from The Florida Department of Education, Miller, Martha "Projected Number of Teachers Needed Florida Public Schools February 2007" retrieved on September 8, 2007, http://www.fldoe.org/evaluationpdf/chr_proj_feb07_text_rpt.pdf

classroom teacher positions per year – a total of more than 200,000. This represents nearly 120% of the size of the entire 2006 teacher workforce. Beginning with the 2005-06 school year, the Department instituted a number of significant recruitment efforts both in the state and around the nation, many of which were targeted at critical shortage areas, and all of which were based on input from school district recruiters. Vacancy numbers have dropped from 2,101 on the first day of school each year in 2005-06 to 1,946 in 2006-07 and 1,158 in 2007-08.²

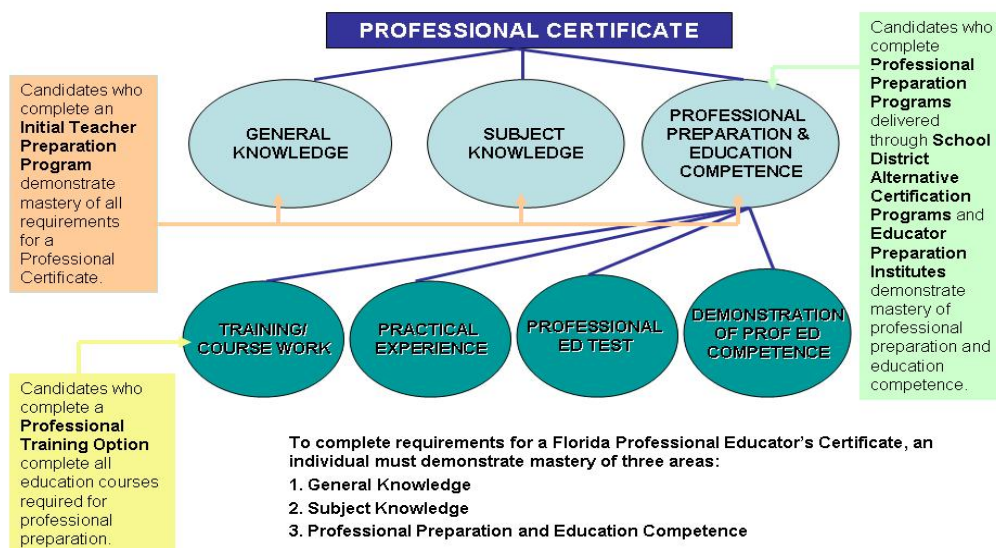
Teacher Preparation and Certification in Florida

When examining the programs that prepare teachers, it is important to understand that Florida's systems are based on two key principles: maintaining high standards and recognizing options. Those principles drive both our certification structure (how individuals become certified or licensed) and our approval of teacher education programs (how individuals learn to teach). Florida has a two-tiered certification system, which provides for an individual to begin teaching under a non-renewable Temporary Certificate by demonstrating subject matter knowledge, during which time professional education and examinations are completed for the Professional Certificate. The Professional Certificate requires that candidates demonstrate mastery in three areas: (1) general knowledge, (2) subject matter knowledge, and (3) professional preparation and education competence.

Again, under the same guiding principles, The Florida Legislature and State Board of Education have provided for multiple types of programs designed to prepare teachers for Florida's classrooms. These include:

- Initial Teacher Preparation Programs (s. 1004.04, F.S.)
- Professional Preparation Programs offered through
 - Educator Preparation Institutes (s. 1004.85, F.S., 2004)
 - District Alternative Certification Programs (s. 1012.56, F.S., 2000)
- The Professional Training Option (Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C., 2006).

Because of Florida's two-tier certification system, many individuals receive their teacher "preparation" during their first years of teaching while holding a Florida Temporary Certificate. Therefore, Florida's teacher preparation programs not only contribute potential new teachers to fill vacancies in Florida, but they also respond to the needs of early career teachers by providing them the means to complete their teacher preparation for the Florida Professional Certificate. The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the types of approved teacher preparation programs and the certification process.



Sections 1004.04, 1004.85, and 1012.56, Florida Statutes

² Data Source: Bureau of Educator Recruitment, Development and Retention's annual district recruiter survey.

Results from the Report

General Comparison of Programs and Completer Characteristics

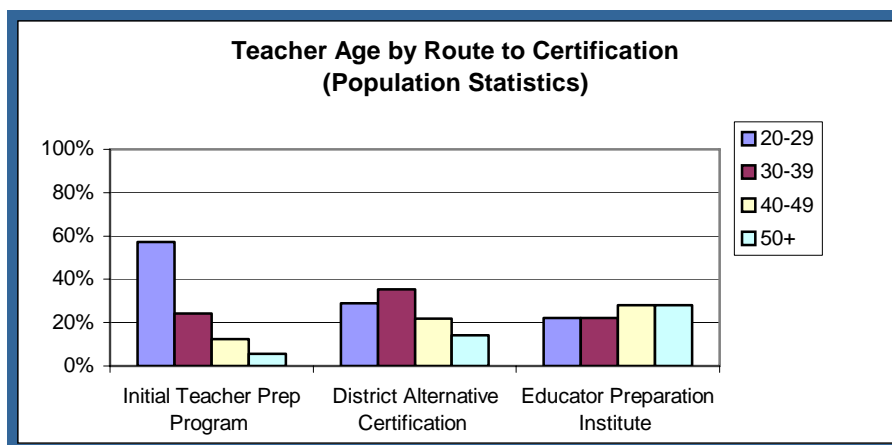
Initial Teacher Preparation Programs. Initial teacher preparation programs (ITPs) are those that typically terminate in a bachelor's, master's, or specialist's degree in education with specific subject area expertise, and whose completers are qualified for a Professional Certificate. At the time of this publication, there are 389 Initial Teacher Preparation Programs offered by 32 Florida state universities, independent colleges, and community colleges with authorization to offer bachelor's degrees. For the 2005-06 school year, 6,139 individuals completed an ITP program, 72 percent of which were employed in a Florida public school the year after they completed their programs. It is important to understand that this number includes not only those who begin teaching after their program is completed, but also those who complete the program as their initial teacher preparation under a Temporary Certificate. Completers also include experienced teachers with a Professional Certificate who enroll in the program to add a new certification subject area, such as a master's or specialist's program in guidance and counseling or school psychology.

Professional Preparation Programs. To enroll in a Professional Preparation Program, an individual must already hold a bachelor's degree. These programs were conceived to help primarily with critical shortage areas in secondary education where a bachelor's degree in a content area of arts and sciences could be paired with intense pedagogical training to complete initial certification. These programs are referred to as "alternative certification" programs and were provided in 2005-06 through Educator Preparation Institutes (EPIs) at 26 community colleges and one state university, and delivered as District Alternative Certification Programs (DACPs) in all Florida school districts.

In the 2005-06 school year there were 1,303 completers of DACPs, which districts may offer using the Florida Alternative Certification model, a program developed by the school district, or a combination program. Results of this study indicate that most respondents from DACPs are teaching in secondary subject assignments, as the program design was intended. However, 2006-07 showed the first significant increase of program completers assigned to elementary education classrooms (8% to 15%). Additionally, statistics on the prior employment of DACP completers continue to show that the top fields are business and education, with a slight increase in the number of individuals who reported that they were students the year before entering the program. Finally, study results indicate that the DACP is used by districts as a recruitment tool, with over 75 percent of the respondents who were aware of the program before they entered teaching, indicating that this program was an incentive for choosing teaching.

Since 2004-05 was the first year that EPIs were in existence, only 86 completers of EPIs were reported from Florida community colleges who taught in Florida classrooms during the 2006-07 school year. However, first time survey results do indicate that school districts are marketing the program to their first time teachers. With additional programs being approved through EPIs at community colleges and state universities in 2006-07 and their marketing efforts, enrollment and completer numbers are anticipated to rise significantly.

A comparison of completers from the 2005-06 school year shows that in all program types, most completers are female and white; although ITP programs have a higher percentage of Hispanic completers (15.5%, ITPs vs. 10%, DACPs and 0%, EPIs) and both types of professional preparation programs have higher percentages of males (13.1%, ITPs vs. 29.9%, DACPs and 25.6%, EPIs). The age of the completers shows that EPIs and DACPs serve higher percentages (but not numbers) of more mature candidates.



Conclusions

Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs). The FEAPs are the common set of competencies in all of Florida's teacher preparation programs. Overall, teachers rated themselves higher than did their principals on their performance in each of the FEAPs. However, further analysis of the results indicates that there is still a correlation (moderate) between teachers' self-ratings and their principals' ratings on their competency in each of the FEAPs. An even stronger correlation is displayed between principals' intent to rehire new teachers and their ratings of their performance on the FEAPs. These results indicate that a new teacher's competency in the FEAPs is a good predictor of whether that individual will meet criteria for re-employment.

Teacher Level of Preparedness. Teachers, their principals and their peer mentors who responded to the survey are all in general agreement regarding their high level of satisfaction with the preparedness of new teachers from all program types, responding with high percentages on both teachers' competency levels and eligibility for rehire. Some areas of interest that program providers may wish to pursue further would include differences in EPI completers' self-ratings and their principals' ratings in the areas of reading, knowledge of subject matter and critical thinking; differences in ITP completers' self-rating and their principals' ratings in the area of preparing students for standardized tests; and a decrease in training provided in classroom management reported by DACP completers.

Peer Mentoring and Induction Support. More than 80 percent of respondents from ITP programs and DACPs and over 90 percent of respondents from EPIs participated in a formal induction program, and about 80 percent of the entire group rated their programs as overall "effective" or "very effective." Additionally, approximately 80 percent of ITP and more than 80 percent of both DACP and EPI respondents were assigned a peer mentor. Nearly 85 percent of the entire group felt their peer mentor was at least somewhat to very important to their professional development. These responses are positive indicators of the practices of structured support programs and mentoring, and of the need for this additional study to improve teacher performance and retention.

Recommendations

This Report provides information on the current state of teacher preparation programs by describing survey results from program completers and their employers for the school year of 2005-06. The following is an overview of the recommendations for institutions and education policy makers could undertake to further improve our teacher preparation programs and support teachers' continued professional development:

1. Fulfill the intended use of the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs) as our core standards for teacher instructional performance by providing all teachers, teacher educators, and employers with a common set of expectations for teacher instructional performance.
2. The Department should continue to streamline the continued approval process for all types of teacher preparation programs. This includes issuing this report and other statewide data on a regular basis and expecting institutions to pursue the information with their own completers and candidates on a more in-depth level.
3. Study induction and mentoring programs and require districts to implement them based on the results. In Florida, these programs in districts and schools vary widely; a more in-depth study is required to determine specific aspects of these programs that are the most beneficial to new teachers and their effects on teacher performance and retention.