ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS
November 21, 2002

TO: Illinois State Board of Education
FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
       Christopher Koch, Director

Agenda Topic: Information Item: Alternative Routes to Teacher and Administrator Certification – An Update

Materials: Data: Illinois Alternative Certification Programs

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Purpose of Agenda Item

• To provide an update on the status of alternative certification programs, enrollments, and program completers.

Expected Outcomes of the Agenda Item

• To understand the history and current status of alternative certification programming for teachers and administrators.

Background Information

The first of the Alternative Teacher Certification laws was enacted in 1997 (105 ILCS 5/21-5b). This piece of legislation restricted programming to cities with populations in excess of 500,000 and, in fact, created a certificate that was valid only in Chicago. It required a partnership between a higher education institution approved to prepare teachers and a not-for-profit organization. Enrollment was capped at 260 new participants each year.

The law was amended in 2000 to allow the application of the certificate statewide and to exempt programs operating under this statute from the five-year experience requirement. The amendment also established the Initial Alternative Teaching Certificate that is valid for four years of teaching and is not renewable, like the Initial Teaching Certificate. Eligibility for the Standard Teaching Certificate is determined at the end of four years and in compliance with the requirements established for its issuance (HB 1436, Public Act 92-796).
A second alternative certificate law, Alternative Route to Teacher Certification (105 ILCS 5/21-5c), was passed by the General Assembly and enacted in 1998. Under 5/21-5b, alternative programming was only available in Chicago. The five-year experience requirement was included in 5/21-5c, but the enrollment cap of 5/21-5b was eliminated.

While there are differences between the statutes, many commonalities exist. For instance, each

- requires a three-phase program of study that includes coursework, a paid, year-long internship, and a comprehensive assessment of the candidate’s teaching performance;
- requires the program to be based on the content and skills required in the traditional programs offered by a teacher training institution; and
- requires passage of the tests of basic skills and subject-matter knowledge prior to entry in the internship.

In all alternative certification offerings, the candidates must meet the same standards and must demonstrate the same performance skills demanded of candidates enrolled in traditional training programs. Applying these expectations mitigate against the alternative pathway becoming a “back door” to the profession.

Finally, the General Assembly passed an alternative preparation option for administrators (105 ILCS 5/21-5d) in 1998. However, the statute applies only to the preparation of superintendents or chief business officials. Alternative administrative certification is not available to those who wish to become principals or assistant principals. Experience demanded for admission consideration includes “a master’s degree in a management field . . . or a bachelor’s degree and the life experience equivalent of a master’s degree in a management field as determined by the State Board of Education.”

Approval of alternative teacher training programs must be secured from the State Teacher Certification Board and the State Board of Education. Staff assists institutions in designing and submitting proposals. An analysis of a proposal assuring the satisfaction of all statutory and regulatory requirements is prepared by staff and shared with the Certification Board, typically within 30 days of the receipt of the document. Proposals for alternative administrative certificate offerings, however, must first be endorsed by “an advisory panel consisting of no less that 7 administrators” before being considered by the Certification Board.

Universities have developed other non-traditional offerings not under the aegis of legislation but under the provisions of program approval. Some of these options incorporate the Resident Teacher Certificate, which used to be valid for two years and required enrollment in a training program and passage of the State tests. In the summer 2002, the duration of the certificate was extended to four
years (SB 1707, Public Act 92-560). Significantly, the amendment indicates “the holder of a resident teacher certificate shall be deemed to have satisfied the requirements for the issuance of a Standard Teaching Certificate” pending completion of four years of teaching, passage of the “appropriate tests,” and receipt of a master’s degree in education. At present, three non-traditional options employ the Resident Teacher Certificate as the vehicle for a paid internship.

The Division of Professional Preparation and Recruitment website includes information on each of the statutes and a description of each program offered by participating institutions. While visiting the site, potential candidates can email a designated contact person on each campus for additional information, including admission requirements and application procedures. The web address is http://www.isbe.state.il.us/profprep/alternative.htm.

**Analysis and Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action and Communications**

**Analysis**

In the past two years, Professional Preparation and Recruitment staff have recommended to the Certification Board eight institutions and nearly 200 programs for approval. In aggregate, the ten teacher training universities that provide alternative certification options have produced 400 certified teachers. Data provided by the sponsoring institutions indicate more than 350 are enrolled this fall in an alternative offering leading to a teaching credential, although that number has increased this fall. (See attachment for information on each institution, including the location of the program, not-for-profit partners, if any, available programs, current enrollments, and program completers. The year the offering was approved by the State Board also is noted.)

There has been less success with alternative programs to prepare administrators. Currently, only Western Illinois University offers an option to prepare superintendents in a non-traditional program. Since its inception in 1999, 17 candidates have received the endorsement, and eight are currently employed as superintendents. The university reports a cohort of six in the current class.

**Policy Implications**

State Board policy supporting alternative training options should continue. Staff has encouraged institutions to develop alternative models, with as many as five likely to be presented to the Certification Board in 2002-2003. Recently, colleges and universities have been more open to the design and implementation of these programs, in part because the market is clearly present and competition for career-changers is keener than ever. Staff expects this trend to continue.
Legislative Action

Staff suggests the Board give consideration to a legislative initiative to combine the common features of 5/21-5b and 5/21-5c, to remove the enrollment cap on 5/21-5b, and to establish a single alternative certificate title. Further, staff supports a change in the alternative administrative certificate (5/21-5d) to allow prospective building principals to be trained in non-traditional programs. With the serious shortage of principals, denying qualified individuals the opportunity to be trained in an alternative model is unwarranted. Moreover, opening the preparation to principals would encourage more universities to develop alternative administrative offerings.

Budget Implications

There are no budget implications for the above recommendations or for the continued expansion of the alternative training opportunities.

Communication

The Division of Professional Preparation and Recruitment continues to develop and refine the design and posting of an informative web site on alternative certification. The web site is updated immediately following action on alternative certification proposals by the State Teacher Certification Board and the State Board.

Pros and Cons of Various Actions

Pros

- Positively, extending the State Board policy supporting alternative programming will encourage teacher training institutions to develop and, where appropriate, to expand offerings available to qualified individuals entering the teaching profession. Although the growth of these options has been slow, recent years have witnessed increasing activity. The division receives approximately 10 to 20 emails and phone calls each week from individuals seeking information on alternative certification opportunities. With the downsizing of many companies in the State in the past year, email traffic concerning alternative paths to teaching has increased.

- Consideration of combining the two existent statutes on alternative certification will position the Board to direct staff to develop appropriate legislation. If legislation is pursued successfully, it will eliminate the confusion that candidates frequently experience between the two laws. The combining of the two also will facilitate the work of the Division of
Professional Certification and Testing through the issuance of only one certificate, rather than two.

**Cons**

- Some stakeholders (e.g., the teacher unions, higher education, etc.) may object to combining the existent statutes. It is also unlikely that the Illinois Principals’ Association will support the preparation of principals and assistant principals through alternative programming (5/21-5d).

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

The Board should accept the report as an informational update on alternative certification programs in Illinois.

**Next Steps**

The growth of alternative programming in Illinois in the past two years has been encouraging. Institutions are engaging in partnerships with school districts to target delivery in needed areas. For instance, the Consortium Model for Alternative Certification (CMAC) includes LUDA districts in northern Illinois (e.g., Rockford, Aurora, DeKalb, etc.), two teacher education institutions (i.e., Aurora University and Northern Illinois University), the Associated Colleges of Illinois, teacher unions, Waubonsee Community College, and other partners. Funded by a grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the consortium has a full-time staff person. In June, a cohort of 24 candidates began the coursework that will place them in classrooms in Rockford, Freeport, and Aurora as interns this fall and spring. The consortium is replicable, and one university in southwestern Illinois already has expressed an interest in developing a similar model.

While alternative routes to certification are not expected to resolve the shortages that exist in most fields and in some regions of the State, they do afford talented individuals from other careers an opportunity to enter the teaching profession unencumbered by a traditional four-year program that is replete with general education courses and the accumulation of credits that duplicate the candidate’s undergraduate experience. In many alternative models, program completion also results in a graduate degree.

Staff will continue to conduct workshops and to provide technical assistance to colleges and universities interested in developing alternative certification programs for teachers or administrators. All non-traditional offerings will continue to be examined for compliance against the content and unit standards during the Fifth-Year review process.