



Get started with 10 Free Points towards great rewards



See mycokerewards.com For details. My Coke Rewards open to legal residents of the 50 U.S. States (and D.C.) 13 years of age and older.

Search: Site Web



powered by Google

Home Sections Obituaries Multimedia Community Marketplace Classifieds E-Edition Island Breeze TheV247 About Us Subscribe

Home > Opinion

Del.icio.us | Digg | Print Article | E-Mail Article | Change Font Size

August 20, 2007 - 10:06PM

Experts still are locked out of classrooms

Brooke Dollens Terry

With the school year fast approaching, many school districts blame the "teacher shortage" for their inability to fill teaching vacancies with certified teachers in areas such as math, science, English as a second language, and special education. But the so-called "teacher shortage" is a myth.

School administrators struggle to find "certified teachers" to teach these subjects, yet many willing and well-qualified experts in their field are locked out of the classroom because of cumbersome certification requirements.

Texas' lengthy and unwieldy teacher certification process is an unnecessary government restriction that bars entry into the classroom for potential teachers. Even the alternative certification process for college graduates seeking a career change into teaching is expensive, unnecessary and takes a year to complete.

Teacher certification emphasizes pedagogy (the "art" of teaching) over subject matter expertise. Certification requirements include coursework in child development, foundations of education, pedagogy and diversity. All teaching candidates must pass a state certification exam, which tests their knowledge of pedagogy and their specific content area.

Yet, the exam is multiple-choice and only has an oral component for those wanting to teach a foreign language; otherwise, there is no evaluation of an individual's presentation skills or teaching ability.

If student learning is the main objective, then it defies common sense to bar a genius like Albert Einstein or business guru Jack Welch from the classroom because he doesn't have a teaching certificate.

Since the demand for certified teachers outweighs the supply in certain fields, schools assign teachers to teach subjects for which they have no training. Thus, a high school unable to fill a math teacher vacancy could assign a history teacher to teach a couple of geometry classes.

The Texas Education Agency reports that, between 2001 and 2004, 25 percent of Texas public school teachers taught classes out of their field of study. Nationally, more than half of those teaching physical science classes (chemistry, physics, earth science or space science) do not hold a college major or minor in any of those subjects, according to the National Governors' Association's Center for Best Practices.

When teachers teach what they themselves do not know, student learning suffers. Research finds that math and science teachers who majored in those subjects produce 39 percent more high-performing students.

Even more troubling is that students attending school in a high-poverty area are 77 percent more likely to be assigned to an out-of-field teacher. Thus, students from disadvantaged backgrounds who arguably would benefit the most from knowledgeable teachers are the least likely to have them.

Federal policymakers tried to end this practice with the requirement in the No Child Left Behind Act that all teachers be "highly qualified" in core academic subjects by the end of the 2006-2007 school year. This requirement has reduced out-of-field teaching in Texas, as only 14 percent of Texas teachers taught out of their field of study in 2005.

Teachers are deemed "highly qualified" if they have a bachelor's degree, full state certification and know the subject they teach. Therefore, within the "highly qualified" requirement, states have flexibility in how they define certification.

Prominent figures in the education world favor scrapping traditional teacher education policies and basing teacher licensure on a candidate's intellect and superior teaching ability, not on courses taken.

Even President Clinton's secretary of education, Richard Riley, understood the need for reform. In his 1999 State of American Education address, he implored state leaders to rethink teacher licensing requirements. Riley observed that "too many potential teachers are turned away because of the cumbersome process that requires them to jump through hoops."

An easy way to solve the teacher shortage problem and improve student mastery of subjects like math and science is to simplify the hiring process for teachers and allow our best and brightest to teach. Focus on results, not on inputs.

Legislators and policymakers can improve student learning and give students the best possible chance for success by unlocking the classroom door to qualified individuals who have a desire to teach, yet don't hold a teaching certificate.

Terry is an education policy analyst at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a non-profit, free-market research institute based in Austin. She can be contacted at bterry@texaspolicy.com.

'Opinion' Archives >

Ads by Google

Advertise on this site

Teacher Certification

Earn your teacher's certification or license online. Fast & flexible. www.Online-Education.net

Teacher Certification

Fast and Flexible. Get More Info. Earn Your Certification Online Now. www.CertificationTeaching.com

Resources for Teachers

Differentiate education with nine grades of tutorials in 4 subjects www.rapidresources.com

Scholarship to Teach

Online WGU Scholarship to Learn to Teach Math or Science in Rural Area www.WGU.edu

Weather: Harlingen, Brownsville, McAllen. Light Rain - Winds From the Northeast at 8 MPH. 79°F

Ford logo. The only car company this year with... 2007 Mercury Milan. "Highest Ranked Midsize Car in Initial Quality"

Yellow Pages

Search: Enter name or type of business. Location: Harlingen, TX. Enter city & state, or zip code

AP Video

Tag Cloud

What is this? teachers teacher teaching teach certification school education texas science subjects qualified opinion field classroom student math students locked percent experts process requirement shortage requirements certified sports classrooms policy pedagogy dean learning highly classes best site card child language potential ability hold columnists listings subscribe buy improve rate suspect career photos

Most Popular Stories

- HPD officer arrested on assault charge
City may get public transportation
Texas officials stand down, lift Dean evacuation orders
Guerra's request to lower teen's bond denied
Death Notices: August 22
E-E QB looks to keep Jackets rolling
Prisoner sues Dept. of Corrections for blocking access to gay material
Man accused of killing his wife dies in shootout with police
Dean heads toward Gulf oil installations after slamming Yucatan
New legislation to help Valley's impoverished

Highest Rated Stories

- Guerra: Cut slaying suspect's bail
If Dean comes this way..... here is what to do and where to go
Developer offers land for veterans hospital
Soldier who paid to be shot won't be charged
AG prosecutors handle 104 cases in Willacy County

Introducing the 2008 Mercury Mariner Hybrid. An extraordinary, earth-friendly SUV.

Ads by Google

Scholarship to Teach Online WGU Scholarship to Learn to www.WGU.edu

Your Day Your Answers Your Guide!

Click to vote

Recommend this story?

Yes No