



The Value of Comprehensive, University-Based Teacher Education for Oklahoma Children

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The Problem

Emergency certification allows individuals to begin teaching on their own in public school classrooms **without** having...

- coursework on teaching and learning.
- background or coursework in the content area they're teaching.
- experience working with children.
- attempted or passed any state certification exams.

Oklahoma is facing an emergency: each year since 2009, the number of unprepared and underprepared teachers entering classrooms has skyrocketed, reaching 3,038 approvals for emergency certification in 2018-2019 (OSSBA, 2019) with record-setting approvals for June and July (Halter, 2019).

The Evidence

Research from both Oklahoma and across the nation provides evidence that **new teachers who complete a comprehensive, university-based education program are significantly more effective than those who receive emergency certificates**. A large-scale study showed that higher numbers of emergency certified teachers were associated with lower levels of student learning (Podolsky, Darling-Hammond, Doss, and Reardon, 2019). This conclusion is echoed in the 2018 Oklahoma Administrator/Mentor First Year Teacher survey data. When compared to individuals teaching with emergency certificates, **comprehensively-prepared teachers from Oklahoma's university programs...**

- begin teaching after completing 12-15 weeks of a full-time, mentored internship and an additional average of 146 hours of field experience (OACTE, 2018).
- conduct coursework on children's or teens' development and how they learn.
- have a stronger understanding of the subject they teach as demonstrated by higher pass rates on state content knowledge exams (OEQA, 2018) and have conducted substantive coursework on the subject.
- have passed all 3 certification exams.
- are rated as more successful on administrator-conducted performance evaluations (Debacker, 2018).
- remain in the profession longer (OKSDE Teacher Shortage Task Force, 2018).

Emergency certification plays a necessary role in keeping Oklahoma's public schools staffed in the short-term. This challenge is widespread across the state as indicated in the 2018 *Oklahoma Watch* report (Palmer, 2018). Emergency credentialed instructors serving in historically marginalized communities' classrooms may be particularly harmful, as it is likely to fuel the dangerous but prevalent myth of a culture of poverty, which serves to blame students and families for the so-called "achievement gap" while ignoring the systemic issues that have denied those same communities equitable learning opportunities for generations (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Any viable, long-term solution must have comprehensively prepared teachers at its center. Appropriate incentives reflective of this level of preparation may encourage future teachers to complete comprehensive training, positioning new educators and their students for greater success.

Solutions

- Offer state-funded **loan forgiveness and/or scholarship funds** for university-prepared teachers who *commit to employment in Oklahoma public schools*.
- Allocate state funds for university-based teacher candidates' **certification exam costs**.
- Provide state-funded **signing bonuses** for the first 3 years in OK public schools for university-prepared teachers, as theirs is the only pathway required to have met all of the profession's entry requirements **before** they begin teaching.
- Provide state funds for **paid student teaching internships** to ease fiscal stress of university-based candidates while avoiding the cost to districts and possible recruitment inequities among districts.