



IV. Findings on Secondary Alternative Certification Programs

A first stage in NCTQ's evaluation of alternative certification programs

In this section of *Teacher Prep Review 2014*, we report our results from a pilot study of new standards for assessing the quality of alternative certification programs. In our first iteration, the scope is limited. We evaluate only the most “alternative” of the programs: those programs not managed by institutions of higher education that also offer traditional certification.³⁴ Our sample includes only secondary preparation programs, not programs that prepare elementary or special education teachers, both of which in our view require too much specialized professional training in advance of teaching to serve as practical options for alternate route entry into the profession. In spite of the parameters we have imposed on ourselves for this pilot study, the standards applied here should prove useful for examining any alternative certification program, whether associated with a higher education institution or not. In later iterations, we will expand the scope of our evaluation to all types of alternative certification programs.

What is alternative certification?

Roughly 30 years after the first “alternate route” into teaching was established in New Jersey, all states at least claim to offer prospective teachers some form of alternate routes into the classroom. These routes are “alternative” to traditional preparation in the sense that they generally have the teacher candidate serve in an “internship” as the teacher of record *before* obtaining initial certification.³⁵

The term “teacher of record” may seem bureaucratic, but it has flesh-and-blood implications. It means that the candidate can be the only adult in a roomful of students, just as certified teachers in neighboring classrooms are on their own. Unless the support provided by both the supervisor assigned by the alternative certification provider and an assigned mentor rises to the level of co-teaching (which is very rare), the candidate is left largely to his or her own devices except for periodic observations and coaching. Needless to say, given the difficulty of the first year of teaching, this is a daunting challenge for teacher candidates, and the potential for students to lose days, weeks, or even months of ground academically is a real risk.

At the inception of alternative certification, there was clear consensus about how it should differ from traditional preparation: Alternative certification would be a responsible way to get smart, content-proficient individuals — especially individuals with content knowledge in areas such as secondary math, science, and foreign languages — into the classroom with necessary training and coaching, but without requiring that they earn another degree or its equivalent. For example, a chemical engineer could make a career change and become a chemistry teacher, or an accountant could become a math teacher. We note the important distinguishing features of ideal alternate routes:

- *They attract very capable individuals*, which implies relatively high admission standards.
- *Their candidates already “know their stuff,”* which implies that they can demonstrate their content knowledge prior to entry.
- *Candidates get sufficient on-the-job training and coaching*, which implies that experienced teachers mentor candidates intensively and program supervisors closely monitor their teaching.

Sample for NCTQ pilot study of alt cert

Our sample includes providers that produced significant numbers of candidates of all program types (elementary, secondary, special education and so on) over the period 2009-2012, as well as providers in as many states as possible. A total of 23 states and the District of Columbia are represented in the sample.³⁶ A disproportionate share of the programs in the sample (45 percent) is located in Texas because about 40 percent of the state’s teachers are produced by alternate routes, with for-profit providers dominating the market.³⁷ Texas is the only state permitting for-profit providers.

The sample does not include “teacher residency programs.” Because teacher candidates in residencies are trained in classrooms but are not teachers of record, the providers offering residencies are not categorized as “alternative certification” providers.³⁸

NCTQ’s standards for assessing alternative certification

In crafting our alternative certification standards for secondary programs, we considered the essential features of alternative certification (capable and content-knowledgeable candidates who are then trained in the classroom) mentioned earlier. With appropriate modifications for supervised practice, we have also made the standards as parallel as possible to the key standards applicable to all traditional graduate secondary preparation programs, the traditional programs to which secondary alternative certification programs are most analogous. We have also included a standard on “evidence of effectiveness,” which is analogous to a standard for traditional secondary teacher preparation programs, but cannot be a key standard because the data on which it is evaluated are so scant that it is available for virtually no traditional secondary programs evaluated in the *NCTQ Teacher Prep Review*.

The full text of the alternative certification standards is found on our [website](#).

Individual rating sheets for each of the programs included in this sample are found [here](#). Each rating sheet contains not only the program’s overall grade, but also its score on each of the three standards, with an additional comment that provides information on the salient programmatic features that determined the scores. A graphic depicting the program’s basic structure is also included, with some program features described (often those advertised by the provider), including ones on features not included in this evaluation, such as professional coursework.

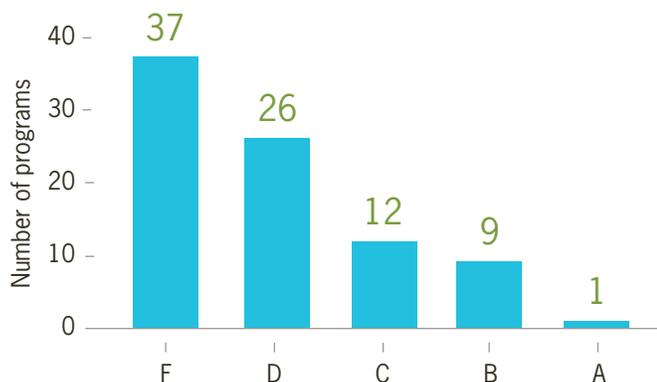
Alt cert programs and grades

State	INSTITUTION	Grade	State	INSTITUTION	Grade
AR	Arkansas Department of Education: Arkansas Professional Pathway to Educator Licensure (APPEL)	D	TX	ACT Central TX	F
AR	Teach For America	C	TX	ACT Dallas	F
CA	Los Angeles Unified School District: District Intern Program	B	TX	ACT Houston	F
CA	Rex and Margaret Fortune School of Education	C	TX	ACT Rio Grande Valley (RGV)	F
CA	San Joaquin County Office of Education: IMPACT Intern Program	B	TX	ACT San Antonio	F
CO	Teach For America	C	TX	Alternative South Texas Educator Program (A-STEP)	F
CO	Teacher Institute at La Academia	F	TX	Alternative South Texas Educator Program (A-STEP) – Laredo	F
CT	State of Connecticut Office of Higher Education: Alternative Route to Teacher Certification (ARC)	C	TX	Dallas Independent School District: Alternative Certification Program	F
CT	Teach For America	C	TX	Education Career Alternatives Program (ECAP)	F
DC	DC Teaching Fellows	B	TX	Educators of Excellence: Alternative Certification Program	F
DC	Teach For America	B	TX	Houston Independent School District: Effective Teacher Fellowship (ETF)	D
FL	Gulf Coast State College: Educator Preparation Institute (EPI)	D	TX	iteachTEXAS	F
FL	Hillsborough Community College: Educator Preparation Institute (EPI)	D	TX	McLennan Community College: Alternative Teacher Certification Program	F
FL	Pasco County Schools: Alternative Certification Program	D	TX	Pasadena Independent School District: Alternative Teacher Certification Program (ATCP)	F
FL	Valencia College: Educator Preparation Institute (EPI)	D	TX	Quality ACT (Alternative Certification for Teachers)	F
GA	Clayton County Public Schools: Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy (TAPP)	D+	TX	Region 1 Education Service Center: Project PaCE (Preparing and Certifying Educators)	D
GA	DeKalb County School District: Teacher Academy for Preparation and Pedagogy (TAPP)	D+	TX	Region 2 Education Service Center: Educator Preparation Program	D
ID	American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)	D	TX	Region 3 Education Service Center: Educator Preparation Program (EPP)	D
LA	Louisiana Resource Center for Educators (LRCE): Certification Solutions Program	F+	TX	Region 4 Education Service Center: Alternative Teacher Certification Program (ATCP)	F
MA	Catherine Leahy-Brine Educational Consultants, Inc.	D	TX	Region 5 Education Service Center: Teacher Certification Program (TCP)	D
MA	Collaborative for Educational Services	D	TX	Region 6 Education Service Center: Teacher Preparation and Certification Program (TPCP)	F
MA	Springfield Public Schools: District-based Licensure Program	D	TX	Region 7 Education Service Center: Teacher Preparation and Certification Program (TPCP)	D
MA	Teach For America	A	TX	Region 10 Education Service Center: Teacher Preparation and Certification (TPC)	F
MD	Baltimore City Teaching Residency (BCTR)	B	TX	Region 11 Education Service Center: Teacher Preparation Program (TPP)	F
MD	Prince George's County Public Schools: Resident Teacher Program (RTP)	B-	TX	Region 12 Education Service Center: Teacher Preparation and Certification Program (TPCP)	F
MD	Teach for America (Baltimore)	B	TX	Region 13 Education Service Center: Educator Certification Program (ECP)	C-
MD	Teach for America (Prince George's County Public Schools)	B	TX	Region 18 Education Service Center: Teacher Certification Program (TCP)	F
MO	American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)	D	TX	Region 19 Education Service Center: Teacher Preparation and Certification Program (TPCP)	D
MS	American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)	C	TX	Region 20 Education Service Center: Teacher Orientation and Preparation Program (TOPP)	F
MS	Mississippi Community College Foundation: Mississippi Alternative Path to Quality Teachers Program (MAPQT)	D	TX	South Texas Transition to Teaching Alternative Certification Program	F
MS	Teach For America	C	TX	TeacherBuilder.com	F
NC	Regional Alternative Licensing Centers (RALC): Region 1 – Charlotte/Cabarrus	F	TX	Texas Alternative Certification Program	F
NC	Regional Alternative Licensing Centers (RALC): Region 2 – Fayetteville	F	TX	Texas Alternative Certification Program at Brownsville	F
NC	Regional Alternative Licensing Centers (RALC): Region 3 – Nash	F	TX	The Texas Institute for Teacher Education*	C
NC	Regional Alternative Licensing Centers (RALC): Region 4 – Catawba	F	TX	Web-Centric Alternative Certification Program	F
NH	New Hampshire Department of Education: Alternative 5 (Site-Based Certification Plan)	C	TX	Training via E-Learning: An Alternative Certification Hybrid (TEACH)	D
NJ	State of New Jersey Department of Education: Provisional Teacher Program (PTP)	D+	TX	YES Prep Public Schools: Teaching Excellence Program	B-
PA	American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)	D	UT	Utah State Office of Education (USOE): Alternative Routes to Licensure (ARL)	F
SC	American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE)	D	VA	EducateVA: Virginia Community Colleges' Teacher Prep Program	C
SC	South Carolina State Department of Education: Program of Alternative Certification for Educators (PACE)	D	VT	Vermont Agency of Education: Alternative Licensure Program (Peer Review)	F
TN	Tennessee Department of Education: Teach Tennessee	D-	WI	Norda, Inc: Project Teaching	C+
TX	A Career in Teaching: Alternative Certification Program (Corpus Christi)	F			
TX	A Career in Teaching: Alternative Certification Program (McAllen)	F			
TX	A+ Texas Teachers Alternative Certification	F			

* Based on program approved for fall 2015.

Finding #1: Although the preparation of candidates at the secondary level by traditional programs is weak, a much larger share of alternative certification secondary programs earns failing grades.

Fig. 30 Grades of alt cert secondary programs (N=85)



The distribution of grades of alternative certification programs is skewed, with only 10 programs (12 percent) earning an “A” or “B” and 37 (44 percent) earning an overall grade of “F.”

What combination of features is typical in a program that earns a grade of “F”?

- No required minimum GPA, or a required minimum GPA of 2.5, which translates to a B-/C+ average. No standardized test required, or if required, the test only addresses basic skills. Possibly an interview, but no audition.
- No content test required even if the candidate hasn't earned a typical major in the subject (generally 30 credit hours), but has 21 to 24 credit hours of coursework in the subject area. To qualify to teach multiple subjects in science or social studies, the candidate has to be qualified in just one subject (e.g., the transcript lists a lot of chemistry coursework but no other science courses, yet the provider certifies the candidate is qualified to teach any science).
- No or limited fieldwork (a week or less) prior to beginning to teach. No clinical practice.
- After beginning to teach, anywhere from 1-4 formal observations by a program supervisor. May have mentor support, but at best the mentor has had mentor training and has no track record as an effective instructor.

In contrast, what combination of features might earn a program a grade of “A”?

- A required minimum GPA of 3.0 or a documented average GPA of 3.3 or above. Alternatively, a score on an adequate standardized test that places the applicant in the top half of the college-going population. A required audition.
- To teach a single subject, passing a content test or having a major of at least 30 semester credit hours (SCHs). To teach multiple subjects in the sciences or social studies, having 15-SCH minors in at least two subjects.
- Prior to beginning to teach, undertaking clinical practice that involves full class instruction and several formal observations, with a cooperating teacher who is both a capable adult mentor and an effective instructor.
- After beginning to teach, a period of co-teaching with a mentor or frequent observations provided by a program supervisor with ongoing mentor support.



Considering that our alternative certification standards most closely parallel our key standards for traditional graduate secondary preparation programs (with appropriate modifications for supervised practice), the distribution of grades for those traditional programs in *Teacher Prep Review 2014* are provided below for comparison:³⁹

Fig. 31 Comparison of grades of secondary programs: Alt cert vs traditional graduate



Comparing the distribution of grades of the alternative certification programs in our sample with the grades of their closest counterparts in traditional preparation (graduate secondary programs) reveals substantial differences. Many more alternative certification programs fail; fewer have average or above average grades.

How do Teach For America and ABCTE fare?

Because **TFA** and **ABCTE** are two of the most well-known alternative certification programs — in fact the only ones we find mentioned frequently by name in state regulations — their performance as analyzed in this review may be of particular interest.

Teach For America

Since TFA policies and practices are nearly uniform across the country, it may be surprising that the eight TFA regions included in the sample did not earn the same grades. As mentioned above, the Massachusetts region earned an “A,” the only such grade in the sample, having met the **Selection Criteria** and **High School Content Standards** and nearly meeting the **Supervised Practice Standard**. However, four TFA regions earn “Bs” (**Arkansas, District of Columbia, Prince George’s County Public Schools (MD), and Baltimore (MD)**) and three earn “Cs” (**Colorado, Connecticut, Mississippi**). These last three regions share the same high scores on the **Selection Criteria** and **Supervised Practice Standards**, but differ on scores on the **High School Content Standard**. The difference stems from the fact that the different TFA regions do not adjust their testing and/or transcript review requirements to meet a single national standard, only requiring what is mandated by the states in which they reside. The lower-performing TFA regions allow candidates to teach in one or two areas of multiple-subject certification (general science and/or general social science) for which no state requirements or guidelines satisfy NCTQ’s standard.

Given TFA’s enviable record on delivering effective teachers into the classroom (see Appendix C), our scores on their content preparation may seem off base. However, much as we appreciate the contributions TFA teachers make to America’s education institutions (including the contributions of the four TFA alums on NCTQ’s staff), we note that TFA teachers’ performance is being judged on a relative basis in K-12 schooling in which weaknesses abound.

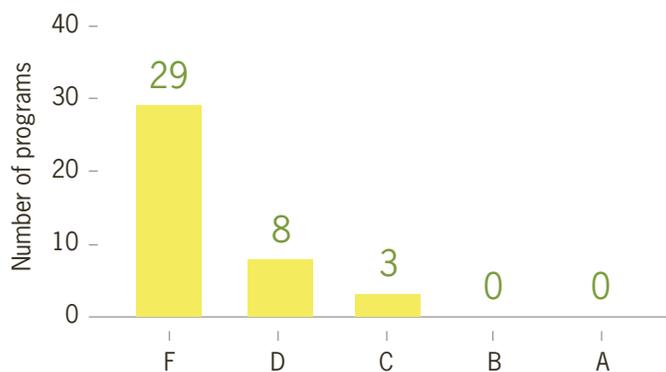
ABCTE.

The sample includes five ABCTE programs in **Idaho, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania** and **South Carolina**. Grades for these programs are also affected by state context, for the same reasons as those noted above to explain the variation in scores for TFA regions. The ABCTE programs in Idaho, Missouri, Pennsylvania and South Carolina earn grades of “D,” whereas the Mississippi provider earns a grade of “C”; the fact that it offers no multiple-subject certification means that the content proficiency of its interns is assured by testing requirements.

Finding #2: Because the vast majority of the Texas programs evaluated earn failing grades, the sample’s grade distribution improves enormously when grades of Texas programs are not factored into the results.

As mentioned earlier, because about 40 percent of the state’s teachers are produced by alternate routes, a disproportionate share of the programs in this sample (45 percent) is located in Texas. Nonetheless, the mere fact that a large share of the sample is based in Texas does not explain differences in grades. What accounts for this difference in grades comparing programs outside of Texas and those within? The answer to this question lies in the graphic below, showing the distribution of scores for the 40 Texas programs. Virtually all Texas programs get failing grades.

Fig. 32 Grades of Texas alt cert programs (N=40)

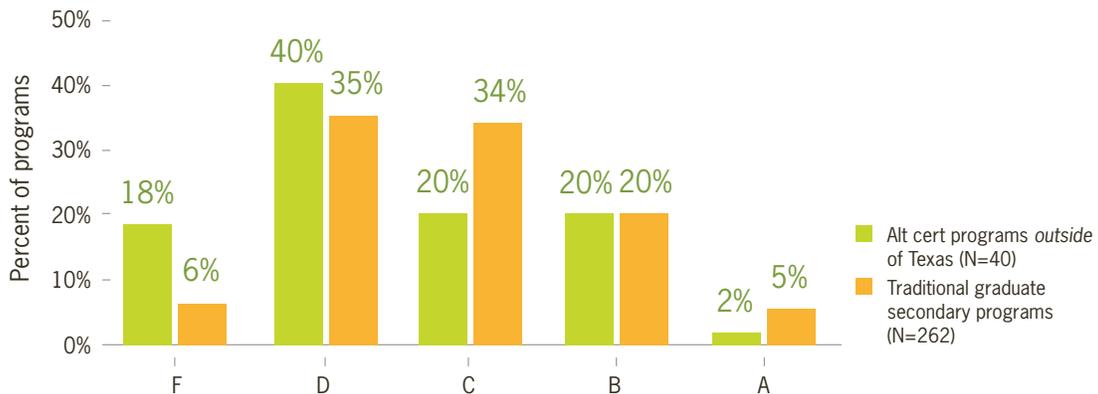


The distribution of grades of Texas alternative programs in the sample mirrors that of the sample as a whole as shown in Fig. 30.

When the grades of alternative certification programs located outside of Texas are compared to those of graduate secondary programs, the distributions of grades are much more similar.



Fig. 33 Comparison of grades of secondary programs: Alt cert programs *outside* of Texas vs traditional graduate

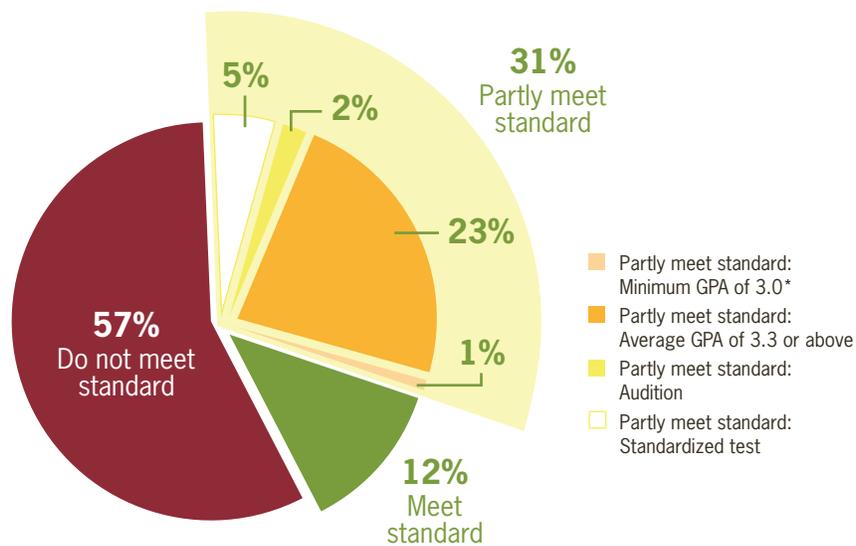


Looking only at grades of alternative certification programs outside of Texas, the distribution is fairly close to that of traditional graduate secondary programs.

What accounts for the low grades in Texas? Clearly state regulations play a large role; an examination below of the distribution of scores on each standard, with attention drawn to the relevant state regulations in Texas, will make this clear.

Finding #3: Over half of the alternative certification programs have inadequate admissions standards.

Fig. 34 Scores of alt cert programs on the Selection Criteria Standard (N=85)

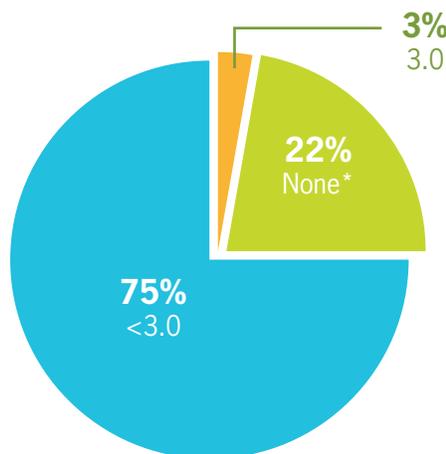


* One provider requires a 3.0 min GPA and has an average GPA of 3.3 or above.

Well over half (57 percent) of the sample has no selection criteria that even partly satisfy NCTQ's standard. To meet the standard it is necessary to require a minimum GPA of 3.0 or obtain a 3.3 (or above) average GPA for a cohort and require an audition, something only 12 percent of all programs require.

Grade inflation has been documented in recent years, with average college GPAs increasing. Accordingly, an applicant applying mid-career to an alternative certification program may have earned grades at a time when grading standards were slightly higher. Still requiring only a GPA of 2.5 is substantially below the current national average GPA of 3.0-3.3.⁴⁰ In fact, these data do not just reveal programs having set too low a standard; some have no standard at all.

Fig. 35 What are alt cert programs' requirements for minimum GPAs? (N=85)



* Includes programs that have a variety of requirements, of which a minimum GPA is only one possible requirement.

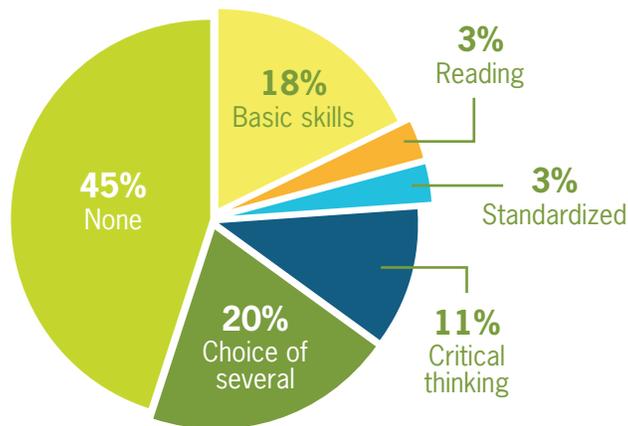
Only 3 percent of programs in the sample require a minimum GPA of at least 3.0.

There are some limited signs of change. Texas regulators are considering a proposed increase of the minimum GPA for admission from 2.5 to 2.75 and Arkansas' state alternative certification program will increase its current GPA requirement of at least 2.7 to 2.9 in 2015.⁴¹

Almost half of alternative certification programs (45 percent) require applicants to take admissions tests, but most only require a low-level test of basic skills in reading, writing, and math that is designed for teachers (the PRAXIS I or its equivalent). The type of standardized test that would be an acceptable alternative to a requirement of a 3.0 GPA (the ACT, SAT, GRE or an equivalent) is required by only 3 percent of the programs in the sample.



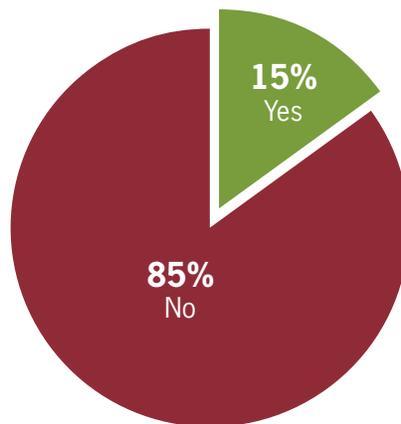
Fig. 36 What are alt cert programs' requirements for admissions tests? (N=85)



Slightly more than half (55 percent) of alternative certification programs require some kind of admissions test, but few (3 percent) require an appropriate standardized test of general academic aptitude. One in five programs provide so many choices to candidates that their requirement is hard to categorize.

Although interviews are commonly required for admission, auditions are not.

Fig. 37 What proportion of alt cert programs require auditions for admission? (N=85)



Just over one in seven (15 percent) alternative certification programs require an audition as part of the admissions process.

How to Become A Teacher in Texas

Five Easy Steps that begin with a phone call!

- ✔ **Step 1: Appointment to determine your eligibility**
- ✔ **Step 2: TExES Content Exam for your certification area**
- ✔ **Step 3: Preparation Program Institute & Field-based Experience**
- ✔ **Step 4: Choose your route to teach! Internship OR Clinical Teaching Practicum**
- ✔ **Step 5: Receive your STANDARD TEACHER CERTIFICATE!**

Begin your teaching career NOW!

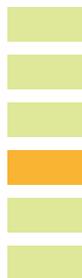
From ACT Houston [website](#).

What about Texas?

Texas regulations for all teacher preparation programs, traditional and alternative, require a minimum GPA of only 2.5. Moreover, while an interview or other screening device is required, no audition is required (and the interview can range from a commercially designed one such as the “Haberman Star Teacher Pre-Screener” to an “open-ended” phone conversation). A provider may choose to require an appropriate test as a demonstration of basic skills in reading, written communication and mathematics,⁴² but there are so many possible alternatives (including an undergraduate degree from any accredited college or university in the United States) that few programs do so. Only one Texas program meets this standard,⁴³ and nine other programs partly meet the standard, four for having average GPAs of at least 3.3,⁴⁴ four for requiring an appropriate standardized test with nearly sufficient cut scores,⁴⁵ and one for requiring an audition.⁴⁶

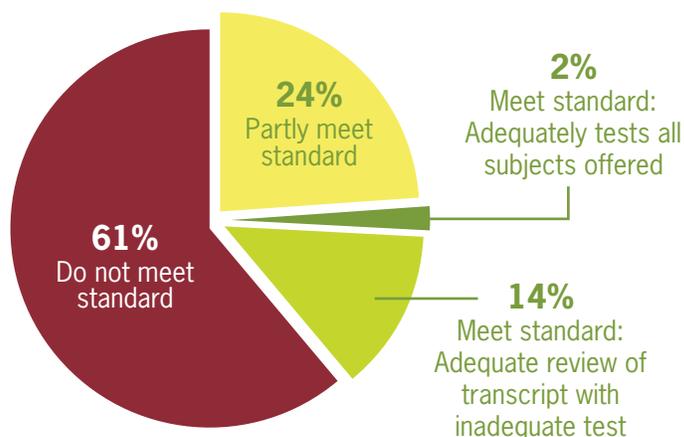
Texas programs’ advertisements in many cases seem to focus on the speed at which anyone can become a teacher (see graphic to left), rather than on the fact that teaching is a challenging profession that requires academic and other talents. For example, **ACT Houston** advertises on its website, “No matter what your major or the type of Bachelor’s Degree that you hold... ACT Houston offers content and grade level certification for you to enter the classroom quickly — without any additional university coursework.” Likewise, the **Texas Institute for Teacher Education** says “Earn full teacher certification within 12 weeks.”

The only Texas provider we could identify that emphasizes the importance of recruiting talented applicants over recruiting as many (paying) applicants as possible is the **YES Prep Public Schools: Teaching Excellence Program**, which has established a “Talent Strategy Team” to attract, acquire and hire new interns at more selective IHEs such as Texas A&M, the University of Texas at Austin, and Rice University (within Texas), and Stanford, Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, Lewis & Clark, Vanderbilt, and the University of Virginia (outside of Texas).



Finding #4: Most programs evaluated (85 percent) fail to ensure that their teachers are proficient in every subject programs claim to qualify them to teach.

Fig. 38 Scores of alt cert programs on the **Subject Area Expertise Standard** (N=85)



Alternative certification programs are not requiring that candidates demonstrate content proficiency before entering the classroom, or they use inadequate tests for that demonstration. They also do not supplement testing with transcript reviews. Only 16 percent of programs ensure that candidates “know their stuff.”

NCTQ’s standards on content proficiency in both traditional and alternative certification shine a light into the darker, often ignored corners of certification, wherein lie multiple-subject certifications in general science and general social science (“social studies”). Teachers who can be assigned to teach high school classes in biology, chemistry, physics, history and government should actually have taken a test that demonstrates their competence or have on their transcript more than a few credits in the subject.

But even for subject areas like English or mathematics where expectations can be much more clear cut, the results are not good: In 30 programs in the sample (35 percent), requirements are inadequate across the board due to the fact that testing is optional and/or coursework preparation standards are inadequate.

The rationale for these lax requirements is unclear. For example, **Tennessee** has an exemplary secondary certification structure and accompanying testing requirements, and no candidate graduating from a traditional teacher preparation program is exempt from testing. Yet applicants to a Tennessee alternative certification program — who should have to meet more stringent standards for demonstration of content since they have not necessarily graduated from

Of 40 Texas programs in the sample, **McLennan Community College’s** program is most explicit about the skills mentor teachers should possess: Conferencing skills, ability to provide quality instruction to adults, good interpersonal skills, demonstrated diplomacy skills, demonstrated tolerance of others, demonstrated good role model for novices.

ABCTE programs in Idaho, Missouri, Pennsylvania and South Carolina recommend that candidates select their own mentors, a remarkable suggestion given that the candidates have had no experiences that would equip them to assess the relevant capabilities of any colleague.

a regulated teacher preparation program whose coursework is presumably approved — may forego testing if they have only 24 SCHs of relevant content coursework on their transcript.

What about Texas?

Texas regulations allow for two possible approaches to assuring content preparation before candidates enter the classroom: (1) a requirement that candidates take a pre-admission content licensing test (PACT) that is substantively the same as the licensing test normally taken at the end of preparation programs of any type, or (2) a transcript review to ensure that candidates have taken at least 24 SCHs in the subject they wish to teach.

Both of these approaches are inadequate, but for different reasons. The first is inadequate to the task of ensuring that candidates seeking any one of four types of multiple-subject certifications for grades 8-12 (Physical Science, Physics/Mathematics, Science, Social Studies) are adequately tested in every subject they will be certified to teach. The second is inadequate because 24 SCHs is too few credits for content proficiency even in single-subject certifications such as mathematics, and certainly too low for multiple-subject certifications. Only if a Texas provider goes above and beyond state regulations in terms of transcript reviews, as one soon will do,⁴⁷ can the provider partly or fully meet the standard.

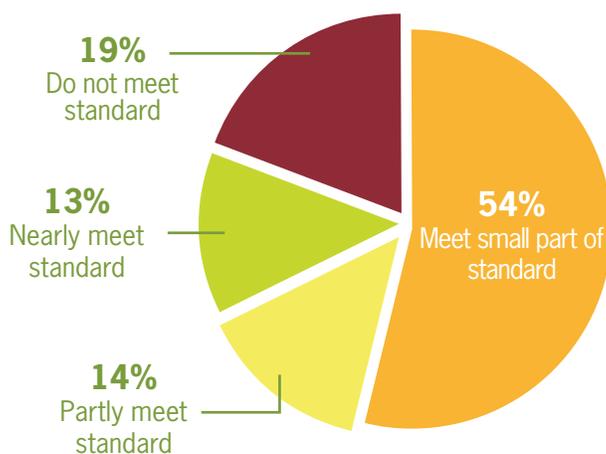
With the exception of programs in **California** and **Tennessee**, all of the programs in the sample are located in states whose content testing is either inadequate across the board, or inadequate for multiple-subject certifications.⁴⁸ Even when testing is partly or fully adequate, as it is in **Tennessee**, it may not be required before the candidate enters the classroom as the teacher of record. Looking at programs outside Texas, in the absence of adequate testing, only in **Wisconsin** was a program's transcript review process adequate for a multiple-subject certification — in this case, general science.

Granted, the problem of inadequate testing is one that states need to fix (and we certainly propose as much in our *State Teacher Policy Yearbook*), but there is nothing that stops providers from exceeding state requirements to better serve the interests of the teachers they produce and the students of those teachers.



Finding #5: By every measure, training and coaching offered to alternatively trained candidates is inadequate.

Fig. 39 Scores of alt cert programs on the Supervised Practice Standard (N=85)



Just over half the sample (54 percent) “meets a small part of the standard;” no program fully meets the supervised practice standard.

Although there were nearly limitless versions of support offered to alternative certification teachers by these programs, all fell short mostly because of inadequate opportunities to practice full class instruction in clinical practice and/or the absence of intense training and coaching in the first weeks of the internship. The standard we applied was constructed to accommodate the limited time available to train and coach alternatively prepared candidates.

For more information on how we have categorized programs’ support of practice in three different models — clinical practice, internship and hybrid — see [Appendix C](#).

Nature of fieldwork

In keeping with our **Student Teaching Standard** for traditional teacher preparation, our standard here does not consider the features of fieldwork. Few details are provided on the exact nature of the fieldwork most programs offer. However, where descriptions were provided and fieldwork appeared to be sufficiently structured to be of value, we would mention it in this report. In contrast, those details that are available make it appear that in some programs, fieldwork might better be described as “field trips.” For example, two Texas programs advertise that attending a football game can count towards the required 30 hours of “interactive field experience.”⁴⁹

Pasadena Independent School District’s

program is the only Texas program of 40 in the sample to require that teachers apply to be mentors and provide references, as opposed to relying on principals to select mentors.

Length of clinical practice

Our standard looks for at least eight weeks of clinical practice. In six programs that strongly emphasized practice before entering the classroom, the length ranged from five weeks to a full semester. For those programs that paired clinical practice with internships, the length of time spent in the classroom ranged from a few days to seven weeks.

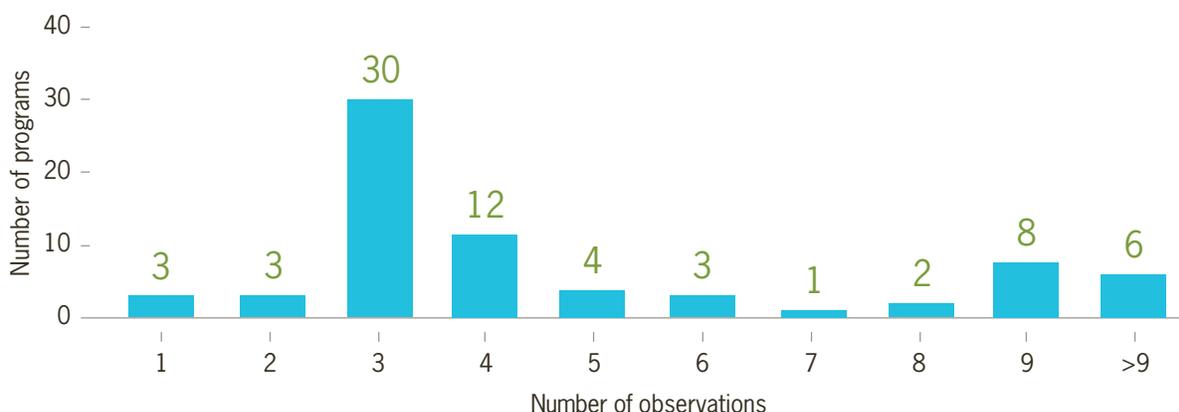
Length of co-teaching

Our standard looks for at least six weeks, with a gradual reduction in intensity after the first month of school. Only two programs offer a period of anything approaching co-teaching, in one case for two weeks, in another for four weeks, described as “intensive mentoring at the beginning of the program.”⁵⁰

Number of formal observations

Our standard looks for at least five formal observations in the eight-week period of clinical practice or in the first 12 weeks of an internship. The graphic below shows, for the programs for which an explicit number is advertised, the combined minimum number of formal observations provided by the program supervisor over the course of the combination of any clinical practice and the entire first year of the internship.⁵¹

Fig. 40 Total number of formal observations of alt cert candidates in their first year (N=72*)



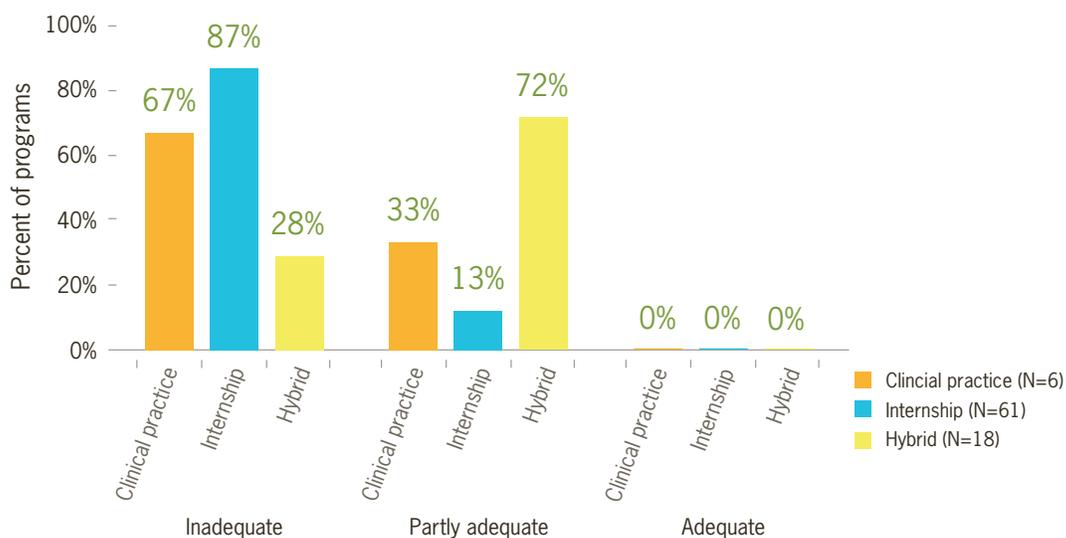
* Does not include programs for which the number of formal observations is discretionary or not specified.

In well over half (58 percent) of the programs for which this number could be determined, candidates receive only three or four observations. In a significant number (8 percent), candidates receive only one or two.

Considering the nature of training and coaching in a holistic manner, the graphic below illustrates the portion of each model that earned scores of “inadequate,” “partly adequate” and “adequate.”



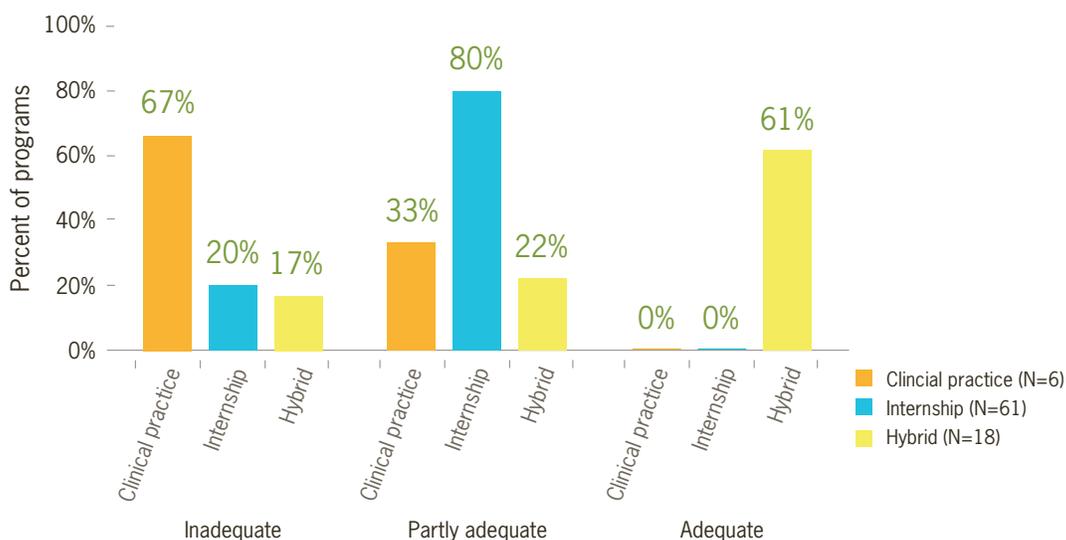
Fig. 41 Supervised Practice: Training and coaching



Not a single provider had “adequate” training and coaching — meaning they did not fully satisfy any part of the first indicator of the Supervised Practice Standard — whether they relied on clinical practice, an internship or a combination of the two in a hybrid.

The second indicator in the **Supervised Practice Standard** pertains to the characteristics of the cooperating/mentor teacher. The graphic below illustrates the share of programs whose required characteristics are evaluated as inadequate, partly adequate or adequate on the indicator.

Fig. 42 Supervised Practice: Mentor characteristics



Only 13 percent of the overall sample of programs satisfy the indicator by requiring that mentors be both capable mentors and effective instructors, and all of the programs that do so are hybrid programs.

Only the **Teaching Fellows** and **TFA** programs, and **Houston Independent School District's Effective Teacher Fellowship** (together accounting for 11 programs in the sample) require that the teacher who works with teachers in clinical practice also be an effective instructor, as measured by student learning. This requirement is phrased as “a track record of raising achievement in challenging classrooms” by the **Teaching Fellows** and “quantifiable success as a classroom teacher” by **TFA**. The **Effective Teacher Fellowship's** mentors' evaluations (partly based on student performance data) must be at the top or next to the top level.

What about Texas?

It's instructive when placing the Texas results on the **Supervised Practice Standard** in context to know that under Texas regulations a program supervisor need not formally observe a teacher candidate until six weeks into the candidate's internship. (The supervisor needs to establish contact within two weeks, but the contact can be by email.)

Texas programs' relatively low scores on this standard can be attributed to the following:

- Only three programs out of 40 offer the opportunity for clinical practice prior to the beginning of an internship.⁵²
- Only six programs provide more than nominal levels of mentor support.⁵³
- Well over half (60 percent) of programs have supervisors conduct a minimum of three formal observations over the full internship — meeting, but certainly not exceeding, the required minimum number of observations required by the state.
- Only six programs provide structured mentor support that is relatively strong, although still far from the level contemplated by NCTQ's requirement of a significant period of co-teaching at the beginning of the internship.⁵⁴
- Only one program's mentors are explicitly required to be effective instructors, as measured by student performance.⁵⁵

Texas does require that interns be provided with mentors and that mentors have appropriate training. However, that is as far as the regulations go, leaving programs to decide if they will accept any teacher a principal selects, regardless of the teacher's years of experience or instructional performance. Even those providers that do set a bar for instructional performance do so at a level that can hardly inspire confidence in the candidate: for example, “at least one year of successful teaching.”⁵⁶