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EDITORIAL

**Building Teachers In-House**

At High Tech High, a charter school in San Diego, fewer than half the students are white and all the students go to college after graduation. More than half are the first in their families to do so. But High Tech High is more than a successful 4-year-old school for teens. This fall, it also began a teachers college of sorts, making it the only individual school in California empowered to train and certify its own teachers (some school districts have the authority).

Principal Larry Rosenstock says he hires bright, potential-laden candidates as teachers, regardless of whether they have teaching experience or credentials, at salaries a little higher than most local schools. Those new to the profession start out right away in the classroom, but after school and on weekends they attend a free, 17-course teacher training program on campus. At the end of 14 months, the newcomers are fully credentialed to teach anywhere in California.

It's a low-cost, effective way to bring needed teachers into the schools. It holds promise for improving teacher quality and keeping teachers from leaving the profession, which they do now in unhappy droves. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing should be commended for approving High Tech High's training program and helping the school navigate its way through the credentialing system. Now what the state needs is an encore. Many encores.

A report this month from the nonprofit Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning points out that there still are too many underqualified teachers, especially in schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students. Though education schools are turning out more teachers, they can't keep up.

There's no better guarantee of a good education than good teachers. Studies show that a great teacher can take students a full year further academically than a weak one. Parents will beg, plead and manipulate to land their children with the best teachers. Yet too little has changed in teacher training.

Class sizes were reduced in elementary grades during the 1990s, creating a huge staffing shortage. As a result, many California public schools hired teachers with emergency credentials, which meant only that they had graduated from college and passed the most basic of written exams. Some of these teachers didn't make the grade, so the public is used to equating bad teachers with those who haven't attended a traditional school of education. Yet a large body of research pokes holes in that notion. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, other factors are far more accurate in predicting a teacher's effectiveness: verbal ability, the teacher's own academic success in college and deep knowledge of the subject being taught — which is especially important for high school teachers.

A handful of school districts, including Los Angeles Unified, have won approval to train and certify their own teachers. But the schools need

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The Commission on Teacher Credentialing, with the backing of the Legislature and governor, should take a fresh look at what makes great teachers and work on innovative ways to hire and train them. Are all those courses in teachers colleges really helpful? Could a strong education in verbal skills and a summer boot camp in pedagogy do just as well or better? Could well-run schools such as Rosenstock's do the job more efficiently and at less cost to both student and taxpayer?

Of course, Rosenstock runs the risk that once the teachers trained at his school gain a free credential, they'll go off to another school. That's OK, he said. At least there will be one more good teacher out there.

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