National Report Touts Effectiveness of Lateral Entry Teachers

A recent report by a public policy research organization suggests that teachers who enter the profession through an alternative certification program are just as effective in the classroom as those who take a traditional route.

The National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA) released its findings earlier this month after reviewing national data related to teacher certification and test scores.

According to the LERAC End of Year Report, lateral entry teacher retention rate increased from 66% to 90% since the inception of GCS’s Lateral Entry Resource and Advising Center was established.

A study by the National Center for Education Evaluation found no statistical difference between the academic achievement of students taught by alternatively certified teachers and those taught by teachers who were traditionally certified. Additionally, a study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that students in fourth and eighth grades who attended school in states with less restrictive alternative certification programs experienced larger gains on test scores.

NCPA officials say that is good news for the school systems that are hiring teachers who earned their certification alternatively. From 1992 to 2006, the number of alternative certificates issued nationally rose from 4,000 to 60,000, according to a National Center for Alternative Education study.

Every state has established an alternative certification program, the NCPA says, although the requirements for each program vary.

In most cases, the alternative certification requires at least a bachelor’s degree and general knowledge of the subject the person wants to teach, said Leah Gipson, media relations coordinator with the NCPA. A traditional teaching certificate typically requires a bachelor’s degree in education with 30 credits in teaching methodology and psychology as well as field work, she said. Source: Daily Reflector Sept. 2009
Reflections of a First Year Teacher:

or

The Erratic Ramblings of a Mid-Career Professional

Reinvention is not for the faint of heart. As I began my journey of reinvention I had no idea it would lead me down the road to teaching Language Arts, much less to a Mission Possible School.

Like many women facing uncertainty, post–divorce, I was faced with a dilemma of grand proportions. Although I had two degrees, I had been labeled a “stay at home mom.” I was, however, anything but “stay at home.” I had been working for close to 15 years with teenagers in many different capacities. Little did I know this experience would be the foundation for a new chapter in my life.

Ironically, for years many had told me, “You need to teach!” Now, the opportunity had presented itself, as I began the Lateral Entry process. It was as though the timing was perfect as every door began to open towards this new venture.

After a lengthy and tedious job search I discovered the opening at Aycock Middle School. After an e-mail and a conversation my interview was lined up. I actually signed the letter of intent at my interview. I was thrilled, scared, nervous and excited. New opportunity, new direction and hopefully a stable future for me and my daughters was now on the horizon….

Then school started.

I wish I could say I had been prepared. I wish I could say, there were only a few setbacks. This, however, was not the case. I was met with challenges that at the time seemed insurmountable. From constant paperwork, meetings and more meetings, to classroom management, behavior issues and afterschool duties, I was overwhelmed. (Oh, did I mention meetings?) I felt like I was some sort of exchange student sent to some remote land where the expectations for citizenship were mandatory and impossible at the same time!

Thankfully, I hung in there.

I soon discovered there had been somewhat of a “revolving door” (cont. on p. 3)
“I learned so much and always felt challenged to dig into my own educational philosophy and decide how to best apply the content of each lesson. The lateral entry specialists were a very important part of my success. I always knew that I could go to them with any question or concern and it would be treated with confidentiality and compassion.”

-Ce Ce Taylor
Peeler Open Elementary

“...where you receive the best training to inspire our children.”

-Dontae Donnell
T.W. Andrews High School

Wiley Lateral Entry Teacher Drives Innovative Instruction

Excerpts from the News and Record, Education Reporter Bryan Ewing

Same-sex classes — and even same-sex schools — have gained momentum in education circles in recent years.

Researchers have long sought to understand the differences in how boys and girls learn in the early grades and whether separating the sexes has value.

But at Wiley, anyway, this bit of research is less about education techniques and more about trying new things to improve learning at a long-struggling school.

“I never thought of it as an experiment,” said Higgins, who came up with the idea during a summer conference. “I just thought of it as teaching.

“I think they are not being distracted by each other, it’s just another piece of that puzzle that we don’t have to deal with.”

Test scores have improved during Kennedy’s three years at the school, but it has still been a challenge to lift math and reading performance. In fact, it was her concern for boys’ math test scores that got Higgins thinking about same-sex classes.

During that summer conference, there was lots of talk among teachers about same-sex classes and the need to engage boys early in school. (cont. on p. 4)
Higgins wanted a boys-only math class.

If you keep doing the same thing, you’re going to get the same results, and we can’t keep getting the same results,” said Wiley’s principal, LaToy Kennedy, paraphrasing Albert Einstein.

Higgins and teaching partner Kevin Brenner swap the girls and boys about halfway through the day. Brenner teaches social studies, science and writing, and Higgins teaches math. Both teach reading.

The journey has been the biggest difference and the most exciting,” Brenner said. “The boys are finishers; they want to get it done. With the girls, they go deeper.”

When Higgins worked on math word problems with the students, she found that the girls learned the math easier if she gave them the numbers and let them develop the “story” around the problem. The boys quickly looked for the numbers and cue words to solve the problem.

“I pretty much have to do two lesson plans,” she said.

At Wiley, teachers have been intrigued by some of their early observations. As expected, behavioral differences have popped up, but they’re not what the staff expected.

For instance, the boys are much quieter than the girls; they chatter but not nearly as much as the girls. The girls are constantly talking, sometimes about the work, sometimes about anything else.

“With the boys, I have to pull it out of them,” Higgins said. “With the girls, you have to say, ‘OK, that’s enough.’”

The teachers have found other surprising differences, such as the fact that the girls argue more.

Occasionally, two boys will bicker, Brenner said, but it seldom goes beyond the two boys. The girls, however, argue frequently, and it often involves more than two girls.

“By the end of the year, I’ll have that taken care of,” Higgins said. She’s working with the girls to build team spirit and collaborative skills.

The children seem nonchalant about being separated.

The girls and boys sit at separate tables during lunch, less than 3 feet from each another. They pay little attention to each another.

Everyone involved knows hard evidence is needed to show whether the same-sex classroom test is working.

Kennedy said the school will collect test scores to compare where each student was academically in the second of the year to decide whether to continue separating girls and boys.

“The stakes are high,” she said, “because we’re dealing with children and their education.”
LERAC Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the blue Professional File?

The Professional file, also referred to as your Blue Folder, is an important resource to help organize your essential documents. It should include your Professional Development Log, used to document all professional development activities; and your BT Mentor Contact Log, which documents your meetings with your required Mentor, Induction Coordinator, and Support Coach. Also included in your folder should be copies of your Individual Growth Plan (IGP), administrative and peer observations, and end-of-year summative evaluation. Please have your blue folder available when your Support Coach/Specialist visits your classroom.

I have received several packets of information on area licensure programs. Do I need to make a decision about my program and course plans now—or can I wait until the spring?

You do need to decide now the route you plan to take to meet your state-mandated licensure requirements. There is no extension period for your requirements. Please review the literature, contact our office or the college or university program coordinator for assistance, and apply for the program of your choice. If you are planning to take courses this spring, you do need to register for those now to make sure you have a seat and to make sure the class makes. Some colleges are offering special course sections for cohorts—designed to meet the needs of GCS teachers. Don’t delay—make your plans now.

How often should I meet with my support professionals?

Though school schedules can often get quite busy, it is important that you and your mentor schedule time to meet each week for at least 20 minutes. Your new teacher coach should meet with you at least once a month.

Get Connected at Upcoming Networking Events!

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<td>Natty Greene’s Pub</td>
<td>Guilford County Association of Educators, Guilford Education Alliance</td>
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<td>345 South Elm St.</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 4</td>
<td>Sticks and Stones Pizza</td>
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<td>Tuesday, April 6</td>
<td>Liberty Steakhouse</td>
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<td>Thursday, June 3</td>
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Teachers kickoff 2009-10 LERAC Networking with GCS Curriculum Specialists at Kiosco’s Restaurant.