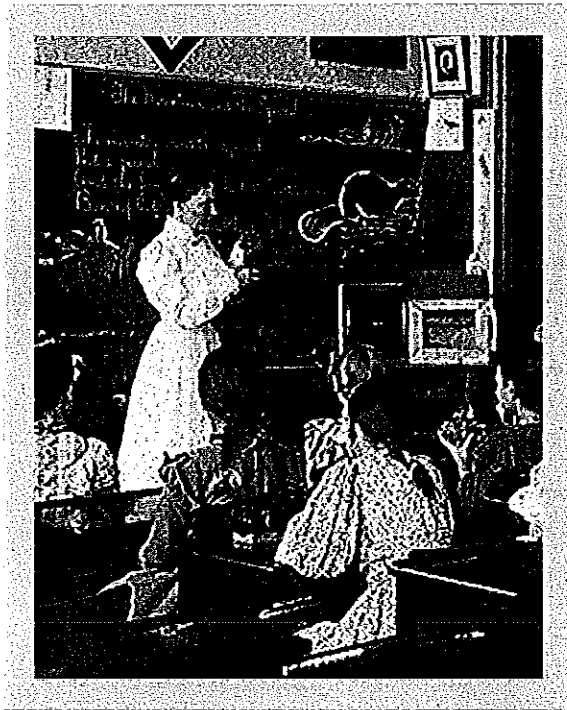


TEACHER CERTIFICATION RECONSIDERED:

STUMBLING FOR QUALITY



THE ABELL FOUNDATION

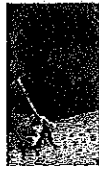
DECEMBER 2001



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The Abell Foundation is dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life in Baltimore and Maryland. It has a broad and active interest in public education for its capacity to improve the lives of poor children. Readers interested in reviewing the separately-published, full Review of Research may order a hard copy from The Abell Foundation or may review it online at www.abell.org. Both electronic and hard-copy versions of the study can be obtained free of charge by contacting:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The requirement that individuals must complete a prescribed body of coursework before teaching in a public school is deeply misguided. This process, known as teacher certification, is neither an efficient nor an effective means by which to ensure a competent teaching force. Worse, it is often counterproductive.

The importance of good teaching to the academic success of students is intuitively obvious to any parent and well substantiated by a body of sound research. For this reason, ensuring that good teachers staff public schools is a critical policy objective in Maryland and across the nation. All states, including Maryland, have developed regulatory policies under the seemingly logical theory that requiring credentials of teachers is simply good government in action. These regulations prescribe the process for certifying teachers, whereby individuals who want to teach must first complete extensive coursework (usually completed in an undergraduate program), in both the field of education and the subject they intend to teach.

At the heart of this policy is a claim by the education establishment that taking the coursework needed to obtain certification is not only the best,

but also the only acceptable means for preparing teachers. Leading advocates of certification assert that its value is confirmed by a body of research consisting of 100 to 200 studies.

THE RESEARCH ON CERTIFICATION'S VALUE

This report reveals in detail the shortcomings found in the research on which teacher certification advocates rest their claims. In fact, the academic research attempting to link teacher certification with student achievement is astonishingly deficient.

To reach this conclusion, we reviewed every published study or paper, as well as many unpublished dissertations, cited by prominent national advocates of teacher certification. We found



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roughly 150 studies, going back 50 years, which explored or purported to explore the relationship between teacher preparation and student achievement. To our knowledge, there has been no comparable effort by analysts to drill down systematically through these layers of evidence in order to evaluate the data and findings at their core.

The following deficiencies characterize the work advocating teacher certification:

- Research that is seen as helping the case for certification is cited, while research that does not is overlooked.
- The lack of evidence for certification is concealed by the practice of padding analyses with multiple references that appear to provide support but, once read, do not.
- Less reliable, older research is not cited responsibly.
- Research that has not been subjected to peer review is treated without skepticism, and there is particularly heavy reliance on unpublished dissertations.
- Instead of using standardized measures of student achievement, advocates of certification design their own assessment measures to prove certification's value.
- Basic principles of sound statistical analysis, which are taken for granted in other academic disciplines, are violated routinely. Examples include failing to control for such key variables

as poverty and prior student achievement; using sample sizes too small to support generalization or reliable statistical inference; and relying on inappropriately aggregated data.

AN ILLUSION OF HIGH STANDARDS

For as long as the teacher certification process has existed, there has been dissatisfaction with it. One after another reform of the certification process has been promoted, usually from within the ranks of the education establishment. These reforms do not address a fundamental weakness of certification, which is a problem under any configuration: it is an inexact method by which to identify teachers of genuine quality.

Essentially, certification consists of matching course titles on a candidate's college transcript with a list of state-approved courses needed for certification. An employee of a school of education, a state education agency, or a school district personnel office reviews the college transcript of each prospective teacher to verify that it reflects completion of the state's own scrupulously articulated coursework requirements. The process is not designed to take into account the possibility that relevant knowledge can be acquired by means other than coursework, the actual content of the college courses, the quality of the instruction or educational standards of the college, or even the



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The certification process declares all uncertified candidates as substandard, no matter what other attributes they possess

grades earned in the courses. These omissions render the process unsuited to determining the true capabilities of teacher candidates.

Certification's limitations might not matter if the process did not discourage capable potential candidates from considering teaching (many people do not view positively the typical syllabi of schools of education) or that it screens out capable persons who try to enter teaching but are turned down. For the most part, school principals are never aware of the range of applicants that might be available, because many prospective teachers never get past the first hurdle: certification screening in the personnel office.

The certification process declares all uncertified candidates as substandard, no matter what other attributes they possess—including measurable attributes that correlate with effective teaching. States, including Maryland, operate under an illusion of quality and high standards that prevents them from considering some of the most capable teaching candidates.

DOESN'T CERTIFICATION MAKES SENSE?

Even though the nation's system for training teachers is widely criticized, its flaws are defended as the typical progression of a new field of study, no different from other disciplines that have only recently matured. The same defense is offered to discount the charge that there is a dearth of research evidence linking certification with student achievement. Certainly, few would argue with certification's premise, that teachers need to know *how* to teach and effective teachers do need to know more than just their subject matter.

While conceptually true, certification's theoretical value is not sustained by its practical application, erected as a barrier to entry into the teaching profession for anyone who has not taken the right college courses. By any accounting, schools of education have not earned the right to claim a monopoly on teacher preparation, particularly in light of these widespread practices:

- Collectively, schools of education have eschewed research-based, instructional practices, most grievously in reading instruction.
- Most schools of education refuse to link their coursework to training in specific curricula, with the result that school districts reap little benefit from teachers' pre-service training.
- There is little accountability for how schools of education train teachers.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Abell Foundation is indebted to the many scholars who contributed their expertise to this report, most notably Mark Schug and Richard Western from the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Our thanks to the many researchers who cleaned out their file drawers and attics to find the research that we pursued and who answered so graciously our many questions. To the extent practical, we contacted many of the researchers to ensure the accuracy of our analysis. We thank the following scholars for their comments on all or part of this document:

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Any errors remain my own.

Kate Walsh

Senior Policy Analyst



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- Schools and school districts always have been the most effective training ground for new teachers.

MEASURING TEACHER QUALITY

Although certification does not measurably improve student achievement, research has identified a few teacher attributes that do. No state, including Maryland, currently measures or reports these attributes as a way to improve recruitment of new teachers or raise teacher quality. The backgrounds and attributes characteristic of effective teachers are more likely to be found outside the domain of schools of education.

A scientifically sound body of research, conducted primarily by economists and social scientists, reveals a single teacher attribute that is *measurable* and relates consistently to higher student achievement: *verbal ability*.

Most researchers understand verbal ability, usually measured by short vocabulary tests, to be a measure of a person's general cognitive ability. Recent research has altered significantly the understanding of cognitive ability or intelligence. A person's cognitive ability is no longer understood to be an innate quality that depends exclusively on one's genetic composition at birth. Verbal ability is to some degree plastic in nature and can be improved at all levels of schooling, including college.

The importance of a teacher's verbal ability aligns with similar findings that teachers who attended selective colleges are more likely to raise student achievement. Private school principals

_____ routinely seek out teachers who appear to be bright, and they use the selectivity of the teacher's college as a possible indicator of a teacher's aptitude. On the other hand, Maryland and its public school districts not only fail to recognize the importance of these qualities, but often eschew them, a rejection that contains a strong undercurrent of anti-intellectualism. Baltimore City public schools, for example, are more likely to hire a fully certified teacher with a C average who graduated from a college with no admissions standards than an uncertified teacher with an A average who graduated from a college with the most difficult admission standards.

_____ The measurable teacher attribute found consistently to be most related to raising student achievement is verbal ability.

Certification is an inhospitable process that deters many capable individuals from becoming public school teachers, notwithstanding that they possess the most powerful attribute identified for raising student achievement.



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ademic credentials to teaching, outscoring traditionally trained teachers on the mandatory teacher's exam. Their performance on the test is a good indication that they have, on average, higher verbal ability than the teacher candidates pursuing certification by conventional means.

Maryland admirably holds its nearly 1,400 public schools accountable for their student outcomes by various punishments and rewards. Yet the State restricts schools' ability to decide freely the single most important teacher variable in student achievement: the quality of their teachers. By contrast, State officials answer to no one. There are no direct consequences to these officials for poor school performance, yet they are the gatekeepers of the teaching profession.

In contrast to its policy regulating public school teachers, Maryland does not regulate private and parochial school teachers; nor does it regulate teaching faculties at either public or private colleges and universities. Given this disparity and the lack of research to support its regulations, Maryland's zeal for certifying public school teachers does not appear to be premised on certification's ability to assure teacher quality, but rather on protecting the power wielded by the State's education establishment and national teacher organizations such as the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Their overwhelm-

ing self-interest is aligned with rigid state regulation of entry into public school teaching positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maryland should eliminate the coursework requirements for teacher certification, in favor of much simpler and more flexible rules for entry. The only fixed requirements should be a bachelor's degree and a passing score on an appropriate teacher's exam. This exam must assess, foremost, a would-be teacher's verbal ability, along with the basic knowledge and skills needed by an elementary teacher (including knowledge of research-based reading instruction) and the specialized content knowledge needed by secondary teachers.
2. As an accountability measure, the Maryland State Department of Education should make available in a public report the average verbal ability score of teachers in each school district and of teacher candidates graduating from the State's schools of education.
3. Maryland should devolve its responsibility for teacher qualifications and selection to its 24 public school districts. It should encourage these districts to place hiring responsibilities primarily in the hands of school principals.
4. School districts and principals should rely on more productive methods for helping teachers gain the instructional skills and knowledge they



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THE PRACTICE IN MARYLAND

Like most state departments of education, the Maryland State Department of Education appears to place considerable confidence in the traditional teacher certification process, without evidence that its certification regulations improve teacher quality. It has never sought to determine the value of its costly and time-consuming certification process. Absent any Maryland study justifying teacher certification, the State relies upon 12 national studies, newsletters, and articles as proof of certification's value. Only three of these 12 cited

sources try to make the case that teacher certification improves student achievement; none of the three makes its case. The remaining nine sources do not attempt to link certification with student achievement, and any references to research are ambiguous (see Appendix A).

The Maryland State Department of Education contends that the lower percentage of certified teachers in its poor, urban school districts is evidence that certification improves student achievement. This theory is not supported by any research. Even as a supposition, it does not explain why the highest levels of student achievement are found in





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schools with the lowest number of certified teachers: the nation's private and parochial schools.

Teachers recruited by Teach For America, a national organization that supplies teachers to under-resourced school districts have an average GPA of 3.4 and have graduated from the nation's most selective colleges. This organization identifies Maryland's regulations as "the most stringent" of any of its 15 regions across the United States. In 2001, 386 new teacher recruits asked to teach in Baltimore City, but 275 of them were found to be ineligible under Maryland regulations, the lowest eligibility rate of any area in the nation served by this organization.

If Maryland's complex regulations governing teacher credentialing do not accomplish their purpose and, in fact, undercut that purpose by discouraging potentially excellent teaching candidates, then deregulation is in order.

In its 1990 report, the Maryland Governor's Commission on School Reform put education reform at the forefront of policy changes needed in the State. The report called for the elimination of rules, regulations, and other constraints on school staffs, specifically stating its suspicion that State teacher certification requirements impede quality education.

The Commission's findings led to some important reforms, including the creation of the State's alternative teacher certification program, known as the Resident Teacher Certificate, along with a

A principal's judgment may be fallible, but it is certainly no more fallible than the current regulatory approach to deciding who teaches.

reduction of education coursework required for traditional certification. However, these reforms were largely eroded in the late 1990s, mainly by a 30 percent increase in the requirements for education coursework prompted by the State's reading initiative. This initiative requires that every elementary teacher in the State take four education courses in reading instruction and that every secondary teacher in the State must take two such courses. Though certainly well intentioned, the regulation may represent regulatory excess, absent any means by which to measure the quality and effectiveness of the coursework. The regulations do not distinguish among the needs of different schools and different teachers in the State.

Maryland has also placed further regulatory obstacles in the path of candidates for the Resident Teaching Certificate. Never embraced by State or local district education officials, this alternative route to certification has provided only 500 new teachers since its inception in 1990, though nearly 50,000 teachers have been hired in the State during this same time. Like Teach For America teachers, Resident Teachers, by virtue of the high academic requirements for the certificate, bring strong aca-



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1. SEARCHING FOR TEACHER QUALITY

All parents worry about who will be assigned to teach their children in school.

The fundamental connection between the quality of teaching and the quality of

the education that will ensue is understood intuitively. This connection is not

bound by social class or income; the highest priority for families in both

private and public schools is the assignment of a good teacher.

Almost everyone would agree that good teachers matter, but quantifying how much they matter is a newer development. In the process, researchers are discovering both the significant extent to which inferior teachers impede student achievement and the disproportionate effects that good and inferior teachers have on children who are poor.

The importance of teacher quality has not been lost on policymakers and professional educators who regulate the teaching profession. However, the resulting regulations are largely ill-advised, misinformed by a tradition of shoddy education research, and distorted by the interests of colleges of teacher education. And although

advantaged families, many of whom send their children to private schools or who can navigate assignment of their children to the best classrooms, may never confront the more harmful consequences of these policies, poor families do so regularly.

Educators, policymakers, the media, and the public mistakenly equate teacher quality with teacher certification.

■ In February 2001, an article appeared in *The Baltimore Sun* lamenting the lack of certified teachers in Baltimore City's worst schools. Under the banner "Least-prepared teachers are at worst city schools: One-third lack basic credentials for certification," the article equates



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lack of certification with a general lack of effectiveness.¹

- Several months later, a Baltimore community group's study bemoaned the fact that more uncertified teachers were teaching in the city's high-poverty, predominantly African-American schools than in the city's whiter, more affluent schools.²
- In a 2001 letter to the Maryland General Assembly reviewing the progress made in the Baltimore City public schools, the State Superintendent singled out teacher recruitment and retention as the single most important issue facing the city, citing a lone criterion that characterized the city's poor teacher quality: its low number of fully certified teachers.³
- Baltimore City, reacting to ongoing pressure from the State Department of Education to recruit more certified teachers, decided in 2000 to stop targeted recruitment for its 10-year-old Resident Teacher program, a program established to recruit individuals with strong academic records who had chosen not to pursue the traditional teacher training route.

The *Baltimore Sun* article, the community report, the admonitions from the State department of education, and the reaction of Baltimore City educators reflect a view of certification that is

shared instinctively by the public. By insisting that teachers be certified, the thinking goes, we will guarantee children, most importantly children who are poor, teachers of quality.

The claim that there is a body of research proving the value of teacher certification, estimated to consist of 100 to 200 studies, is specious.

These views may be understandable, but they are built on quicksand. The intent of this study is to analyze education research from the past 50 years cited as evidence that teacher certification improves student achievement. As this report shows, the claim that there is a body of research proving the value of teacher certification, estimated to consist of 100 to 200 studies, is specious.⁴

¹Daemmrich, J., "Least prepared teachers are at worst city schools," *The Baltimore Sun*, February 28, 2001.

²"Learning the hard way" *City Paper*, May 16, 2001, Baltimore, Maryland.

³Letter from Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, to Chairs of House and Senate committees on education: Clarence Blount, Sheila Hixson, Barbara Hoffman, Howard Rawlings, February 22, 2001.

⁴NCATE's president, Arthur Wise, estimates that there are "over 100 studies [that] show that qualified teachers outperform those with little or no preparation in helping students learn" *NCATE newsletter*, 1999, 9(1); NCTAF's Executive Director, Linda Darling-Hammond, estimates that there are "more than two hundred studies [that] contradict myths that 'anyone can teach and that teachers are born and not made... Teacher education, as it turns out, matters a great deal'" (1997; page 10).



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need to be effective: comprehensive new teacher induction programs, reduced teaching loads for first-year teachers, ongoing professional development closely associated with the curriculum, including the teaching of reading, and outcomes-based performance evaluation.

Unless hiring authority is delegated to individual schools, hiring decisions will merely shift from the state-level bureaucracy to a district-level bureaucracy. School principals, most appropriately, must bear responsibility for their hiring decisions; both the State and the school districts hold these leaders accountable for their schools' performance. A principal's judgment may be fallible,

but it is certainly no more fallible than the current regulatory approach to deciding who teaches.

Such an overhaul in the system represents a direct threat to schools of education and other education groups that benefit from the flawed certification process. Although these groups will readily admit that the teacher preparation system is in dire need of repair, their reform agenda consistently leads to heavier state regulation, more time spent by prospective teachers in schools of education, and a crackdown on alternative certification routes and waivers. Yet another re-tooling of the certification process is insufficient. Reinvention is in order.



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What is Teacher Certification?

Every state requires that teaching candidates obtain formal approval to teach in public school classrooms, a process that is known as teacher certification (or licensure). State officials review and count course titles on college transcripts to verify that state requirements for teacher preparation have been successfully fulfilled. Most new public school teachers in Maryland have graduated from a state-approved program located at a college or university, where that institution ensures certification requirements have been fulfilled.

Coursework Requirements. States differ on their requirements. Generally, teaching candidates must complete 27 to 36 credits of prescribed education coursework, depending both on state requirements and the college attended. In Maryland, elementary teachers are required to take 27 credit hours of education coursework and 48 credit hours of content coursework in the academic fields taught in elementary education.* Secondary teachers are required to take 27 hours of education coursework and generally 36 hours of content coursework in the subject matter to be taught. The coursework requirements include a student teaching experience.

Alternatives. If a teaching candidate has not completed an approved program at the undergraduate level, he or she can satisfy the State's coursework requirements through a post-baccalaureate program, in two ways. The candidate can enroll in a State-approved graduate-level program in a school of education, which results in a *master's degree in teaching*. The alternative is a somewhat arbitrary process, termed a credit count, where the State reviews case by case the courses listed on a college transcript and determines how many and what courses the teaching candidate needs to take before certification will be granted.

Resident Teacher Certificate. Since 1990, Maryland has offered another alternative route known as the Resident Teacher Certificate. In theory, this alternative route allows an individual to bypass Maryland education coursework requirements, provided certain academic standards are met. This certificate has fallen victim to "regulation drift," (see Section 5), whereby State officials have steadily increased the course requirements. Teachers recruited by Teach for America, a national organization that provides highly able teachers to under-resourced school districts usually teach under this certificate.

Teacher's Exam. All teachers in Maryland whether they come in through an alternative or traditional route, must pass the teacher's exam (the Praxis) that is administered by the Education Testing Service. The first part of this exam (Praxis I) tests basic skills. The second part of this exam (Praxis II) tests knowledge a teacher is expected to know in a particular subject area, content-related pedagogy and general pedagogy.

Certification is mandatory. Certification is eventually required even if an individual is first hired without being certified. If a teacher is not certified before they enter the classroom, then they must work towards achieving certification within one to four years, depending on the number of courses they need (COMAR 13A.12.01.05). The hundreds of provisional teachers that Baltimore hires each year must enroll in classes in their off-time, if they want to continue teaching in a Maryland public school.

*Some Maryland colleges exceed the State requirements. The two leading producers of certified teachers in Maryland are Towson University and the University of Maryland College Park. Towson requires 34 credit hours in education courses at the elementary level and 29 at the secondary level, while the University of Maryland requires 36 hours and 21 hours respectively. An elementary teacher must take 12 credits in English, 3 in geography, 9 in history, 3 in any social studies, 3 in biology or physical science, 9 in any science, 6 in mathematics, and 2 credits each in music, art and physical education.



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A FAULTY PREMISE

To begin, even the most committed advocates of certification do not claim the currently structured certification process works well. In part, this dissatisfaction stems from certification's limitations. Absent the wholesale reinvention of what it means to be certified, these limitations cannot be avoided.

Reduced to its essence, teacher certification currently consists of no more than counting the course titles taken by teacher candidates. It is incapable of providing any insight into to an individual's ability, intellectual curiosity, creativity, affinity for children, and instructional skills. Acting as a crude proxy for teacher quality, the process is incapable of distinguishing between significant, justifiable reasons for denying uncertified candidates access to the profession and insignificant, unjustifiable reasons. A highly able candidate who did not take a required course is no more likely to be allowed to teach than the candidate who is poorly educated and unable to pass the teacher's examination.

CERTIFICATION'S HARM

Because the intent of teacher certification is to ensure that teaching candidates have taken a pre-

scribed set of coursework, certification serves as a barrier to anyone who has not done so. In a time of teacher shortage, districts feel the strain of trying to enforce the certification criteria while facing the reality that every classroom of children requires an adult, certified to teach or not. In poor districts such as Baltimore City, this strain preceded the current, well publicized, teacher shortage. Even in the best of times, poor cities like Baltimore face considerable teacher turnover, with roughly 15 percent of its teaching force leaving each year. This chronic high level of vacancies often forces cities to hire a teaching force that is predominantly uncertified, known as *provisional* teachers.

The Maryland State Department of Education attributes some of the dishearteningly low student achievement in its two poorest school districts, Baltimore City and Prince George's County to the high number of uncertified teachers in these districts.⁵ However, this view remains unsupported by sound research.⁶ No controlled study has isolated the certification variable and uncovered a connection with student achievement. As states do not measure teachers' verbal ability, the only measurable variable demonstrated by the research that partially explains the lower student achievement in Baltimore city schools remains unmeasured.

⁵Maryland State Department of Education, correspondence with The Abell Foundation, August 30, 2000.

⁶In fact, a number of studies dispute directly the notion that poor districts employ more uncertified teachers (Boorman and Rachumba, 2000; Lippman et al., 1996; Ingersoll, 1997), citing other teacher variables that distinguish poor schools from more affluent schools. These national findings do not reflect the low number of certified teachers employed in Baltimore.



coursework that is necessary or optimal for these teachers to have taken in various academic disciplines. Only one piece of research on the relationship between elementary teachers' coursework in any of the major academic disciplines and student achievement was found (Eberts and Stone, 1984), but it did not find a relationship between fourth graders' mathematics achievement and teachers' coursework in mathematics.¹⁰

■ **Teachers with master's degrees are not significantly more effective than those without, unless the teacher is at the secondary level and the master's degree is in the academic discipline being taught** (Greenwald, Hedges and Laine, 1996; Goldhaber and Brewer, 1997, 1998; Monk, 1994; Murnane, 1983; Hanushek, 1989, 1992; Harnisch, 1997; Larson, 2000; Link and Ratledge, 1979; Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 1998; Summers and Wolfe, 1977; Ehrenberg and Brewer, 1994; Kiesling, 1984; contrasted with small effects found by Ferguson, 1991; Ferguson and Ladd, 1995).¹¹

Most importantly, all of the positive teacher attributes described above have a greater impact on students who live in poverty because school has a disproportionately stronger effect on children who are poor (Coleman, 1982; Ferguson, 1998; Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997).

BEST KEPT SECRETS ABOUT TEACHER QUALITY

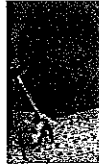
A particularly unfortunate consequence of certification is that it is counterproductive, discouraging those individuals who are more likely to produce greater student achievement from entering the profession.¹² Nationally, teachers generally score about 40 to 70 points lower on their college entrance exams than do college graduates who choose other professions (Educational Testing Service, 1999). Teachers who did not prepare in college for teaching careers, but who chose to teach anyway, were more likely to have scored in the top quartile of their entering college class than were those teachers who were prepared in college to teach.¹³

¹⁰ One published dissertation written in 1959 found that students in grades 4, 5, and 6, whose teachers only had two years of college, did no worse on a mathematics achievement test than students of teachers with four years of college (Smail, 1959). However, the age and unpublished status of the paper precludes it from inclusion in any review of sound research.

¹¹ Kain and Singleton (1996) found that schools that serve poor children have more teachers without advanced degrees but do not attribute the lack thereof to lower student achievement.

¹² The Digest of Education Statistics, 2001, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo>.

¹³ *Ibid.*



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Exceptions to the Rule. The supposition that the lower number of certified teachers in poor, urban districts partially explains their lower student achievement cannot explain why the highest levels of student achievement are found in schools with the lowest number of certified teachers: the nation's private and parochial schools. Certification is a barrier to teaching in Maryland's public schools only. Private schools do not require certification, nor is there any record of the State having suggested they do so.

DEFINING AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER

No credible research was found supporting the teacher certification process as a regulatory barrier to teaching. Much of the research that is cited in support of certification reflects a level of scholarship that would not be tolerated in other professions. Even when such research is well done, it is often misinterpreted.

However, there is a body of credible research, conducted primarily by economists and social scientists, that examines the relationship between teachers and student achievement, briefly summarized here:

⁷ Coleman (1966) found marginal effects on student achievement from teacher experience; Hanushek found inconsistent effects (1971; 1986; 1992); Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (1998) found that one or two years of experience improve a teacher's quality, but that additional years have an insignificant impact; Murnane (1975) found beginning teachers were significantly less effective; Murnane and Phillips (1981) found a direct and positive correlation for experience, as have Greenwald, Hedges and Laine (1994, 1996); Summers and Wolfe (1977) found that poor children did better with inexperienced teachers; Ferguson (1991) found some small effects of experience on student achievement; both Ferguson and Ladd (1996) and Goldhaber and Brewer (1998) found no effect; Kain and Singleton (1996) found that beginning teachers and teachers with more than 20 years experience were both less effective than other teachers; Lippman et al. (1996) found a positive correlation of experience with student achievement.

- **Teacher quality is a critical determinant of how much students, rich or poor, White, Hispanic or Black, will learn.** Estimates by even the most skeptical researchers have produced findings revealing the powerful effect of teacher quality. In the course of a single school year, students who are assigned to a good teacher can learn a full-grade level more than students who are assigned to a bad teacher (Hanushek, 1992; see also: Murnane, 1975; Murnane and Phillips, 1978; Armor et al., 1976; Ferguson, 1991; Goldhaber and Brewer, 1997, 1999; Sanders and Horn, 1998; Sanders and Rivers, 1996).
- **Experienced teachers are more effective than new teachers.** There is a great deal of conflicting research on teacher experience, making it difficult to state firm and specific conclusions about its importance. Much of the research has found that teachers get better with a few years of experience; but at some point their effectiveness drops, viewed as an inverted U-shaped pattern of effectiveness and perhaps caused by "burnout" or the promotion of better teachers out of the classroom.⁷ The effect of experience can be distorted or obscured because teachers



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who enter the profession at the same time tend to share certain common attributes having nothing to do with experience. However, these attributes may be mistakenly interpreted as the effect of experience rather than as a manifestation of common traits that represent a particular cohort of teachers.⁸ Another reason the effect of experience is so hard to measure is that teachers who have seniority can choose to teach in the better schools.⁹

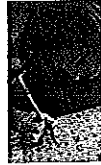
- **Much of the research indicates that matching a teacher's race with students' race does not consistently improve student achievement** (Alexander et al., 1987; Ehrenberg, Goldhaber and Brewer, 1995; Farkas et al., 1990; Ferguson, 1991; with more mixed evidence provided by Ehrenberg and Brewer, 1995; and contrasting evidence from Murnane, 1975).
- **The most consistent finding is that effective teachers score higher on tests of verbal ability and other standardized tests.** These tests generally appear to be a reflection of a teacher's cognitive ability or intelligence (Bowles and Levin, 1968; Bruno and Droscher, 1981; Coleman, 1966; Ehrenberg and Brewer, 1995; Ferguson, 1991; Ferguson and Ladd, 1995;

Greenwald, Hedges and Laine, 1996; Hanushek 1971, 1972, 1992; Greenwald and Hedges, 1996; Kain and Singleton, 1996; Levin, 1976; Massey and Vineyard, 1958; Murnane and Phillips, 1978, 1981b; McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978; Murnane 1975, 1983; Strauss and Sawyer, 1986).

- **Teachers who have attended more selective colleges produce higher student achievement** (Murnane and Phillips, 1978; Ehrenberg and Brewer, 1995; Ferguson, 1991; Winkler, 1975; Summers and Wolfe, 1977; Monk and King, 1994). Selectivity of college is most likely another way of measuring teacher's verbal ability (Ferguson, 1998).
- **At the secondary level, teachers who know more about their subject matter are generally more effective, at least in science and mathematics.** (Goldhaber and Brewer, 1996, 1998; Hawkins, 1998; Monk and King, 1994; Monk, 1994; Rothman, 1969; Rowan et al., 1997). Very little research has been done on the importance of teacher's subject matter knowledge in English and social studies.
- **At the elementary level, there is no research indicating the amount or type of college**

⁸ For the best explanation of these mixed results, see Murnane and Phillips (1981).

⁹ Hanushek (1989) observes this phenomenon, stating, "causation may run from achievement to experience and not the other way around" (page 47).



THE IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL ABILITY

No evidence linking a particular teacher attribute with student achievement is stronger than the evidence on verbal ability. Teachers with higher verbal ability produce greater achievement gains in students. Most researchers understand verbal ability, usually measured by short vocabulary tests, to be a measure of an individual's general cognitive ability. This firm scientific finding must do battle with unsupported assertions minimizing the importance of a teacher's intelligence compared to other teacher qualities.¹⁴ State policymakers, regulators, higher education officials, and the national accrediting body for teaching (known as NCATE) largely disregard the most effective and best substantiated quality of teacher effectiveness.

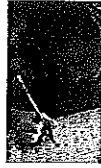
There are strong social and political issues at play here that may explain why verbal ability is undervalued. The unique disregard for the benefits of intelligence on the classroom may stem from a worry that the access to the teaching profession might become less democratic. The steps Maryland's poorest districts, Baltimore City and Prince George's County,

Individuals who demonstrate strong verbal ability may or may not turn out to be good teachers, but the odds are considerably more in their favor than for less able individuals.

could take to upgrade teacher quality are often met with charges of intellectual elitism, despite evidence that poorer children can derive even greater benefit from having such teachers than other children (Summers and Wolfe, 1997). The Baltimore City Public School System, for example, is more likely to hire a fully-certified teacher with a C average who graduated from a college with no admissions standards than an uncertified teacher with an A average who graduated from a college with the most difficult admission standards.

Whatever motivating factors may be working against acceptance of the findings on verbal ability, its importance is treated as an aside in discussions of teacher quality and preparation. Nationally, the current structure does little to target teaching candidates of strong aptitude. To its

¹⁴For example, in 1999, Linda Darling Hammond asserts that research shows that teacher's intelligence or general academic ability has a small and statistically insignificant effect on teacher performance. She differentiates between cognitive ability (using research done in the 1940s that looked at teachers' IQ) and verbal ability. She provides a singular definition of verbal ability, which she perceives "as a more sensitive measure of teachers' abilities to convey ideas in a clear and convincing ways," though the tests of verbal ability used in the research have all been written, vocabulary tests (page 9). Also, researchers Victor Vance and Phillip Schlechty (1982) encountered considerable criticism for an article that they wrote examining the lower academic ability of teachers, stating that they were "challenged to defend our use of measures of academic ability as a gauge of teacher quality" (page 22).



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HUMAN JUDGMENT CANNOT BE CIRCUMVENTED

Essentially, a principal's judgment may be fallible, but it is certainly no more fallible a measure than the current regulatory approach that decides who teaches in Maryland. Determining who is qualified to teach is a task fraught with ambiguity and nuance, far more so than the mechanical process of counting a teacher's coursework suggests. Regulatory policy cannot supplant the need for human judgment.

Principals in private schools have always been considered the best judge of teacher quality. A principal's choice is not without flaws (human judgment never is), but it is the principal who is held most directly accountable for student academic performance. The school principal has more motivation than anyone to make a good hiring decision.

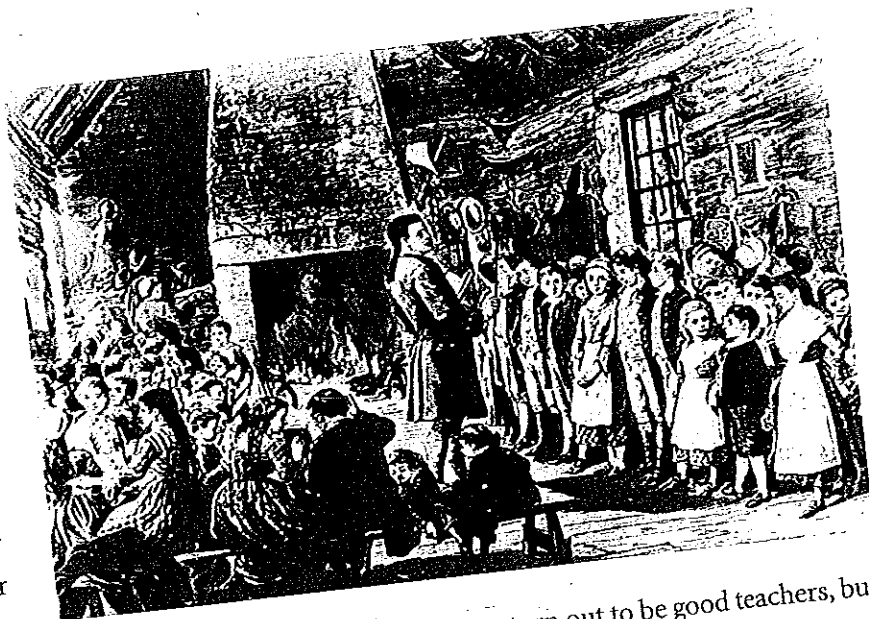


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credit, Maryland has funded strategies to recruit into teaching top-performing students,¹⁵ but these efforts are diluted by mainstream processes for recruiting, identifying, and credentialing new teachers.

Implications for Teacher Training. Recent research has altered significantly the understanding of cognitive ability or intelligence. A person's cognitive ability is no longer understood to be an exclusively innate quality that depends entirely on one's genetic composition at birth. Instead, through frequent and increasingly complex exposure to oral and written language, cognitive ability can develop and be sustained successfully throughout life. In short, verbal ability is to some degree plastic in nature, capable of being improved at all levels of schooling, including college. With this understanding in mind, teacher training programs could turn out more effective teachers by shifting the typical curriculum to a more intellectually challenging course of study that concentrates on improving oral and written language skills and reading increasingly challenging books.

Individuals who demonstrate strong verbal ability



may or may not turn out to be good teachers, but the odds, says the research, are considerably more in their favor than for less verbally able individuals.

MARYLAND'S ERRANT PURSUIT OF TEACHER QUALITY

Course Counting. Like all states, Maryland reduces the complex task of teacher selection to counting course titles and credits. Either indirectly or directly, all teaching candidates are subjected to a count of their college coursework as the primary criterion for being allowed to teach. In most cases, this process is subsumed into the college or university school of education, which must seek State review and approval of its teacher preparation program in order to ensure that the right

¹⁵ MSDE provides a signing bonus for top students. Also, the Maryland Distinguished Teacher Scholarship also aims to recruit academically talented candidates into teaching.



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number and type of courses are taken by all of its graduates. For any teaching candidate who does not graduate from a Maryland-approved program, the State reviews each individual transcript, classifying and counting courses.

Maryland regulations appear to reflect the belief that by counting the courses on a transcript, it can ensure that its teachers are prepared adequately for the classroom. This approach vastly underestimates the ambiguity and complexity involved in hiring good teachers, yet it is often echoed by district-level personnel offices.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Currently, most Maryland school districts deny their school principals the discretion to hire uncertified teachers; most district personnel offices turn away any uncertified candidate before the school principals review any applications. Given the burden of trust that school districts place on their principals to progress toward meet-

Principals are held accountable for their hiring decisions; despite their authority, State officials bear no responsibility for the poor performance of a school.

ing the State's accountability and assessment standards, the State should extend that trust to letting the principal hire the faculty necessary to achieve those goals. A principal is likely to be a better judge of a school's hiring needs than an employee in the district personnel office. Most importantly, principals are held accountable for their hiring decisions; despite their authority, State officials bear no responsibility for the poor performance of a school.

Mixed Messages. Districts appear to be reluctant to take full advantage of the little regulatory flexibility that the Maryland does provide for teacher selection because it comes with a mixed message. Although the State Superintendent has stated publicly her support for alternative paths to teaching, the State department of education tells districts directly and repeatedly that they must improve teacher quality by focusing on recruiting more certified teachers. In reporting to House and Senate chairs in the Maryland General Assembly on the status of the State-City partnership, Dr. Nancy Grasmick writes: "*I find little evidence that BCPSS has a coordinated strategy for recruiting teachers and promoting their full certification in a way that will increase the number of qualified teachers in the classroom. I challenge the new CEO to make this her number one priority.*"¹⁶

¹⁶ Letter from Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools, to Chairs of House and Senate committee on education: Clarence Blount, Sheila Hixson, Barbara Hoffman, Howard Rawlings, February 22, 2001.



2. CERTIFICATION AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

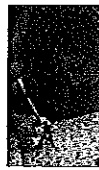
Though public education from kindergarten through 12th grade is a \$300 billion industry, the research that helps to steer its course lacks depth and intellectual rigor.

We are not the first to observe this weakness. Too often, education researchers do not adhere to the basic standards of academic inquiry that govern most other areas of research. This deficiency is nowhere more evident than in the research cited to support the theory that teacher certification is a surrogate for teacher quality.

As telling as the low academic standard found in education research is the paucity of studies on teacher certification. We struggled to find 150 studies, going as far back as 1950, that explored the relationship between teachers' educational preparation and student achievement; and, even then, many of these were unpublished doctoral dissertations, which had not undergone a review process considered mandatory in most fields of study.¹⁷

This lack of rigorous and legitimate evidence corresponds with a recent effort undertaken the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, albeit obliquely (Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy, 2001). Charged by the U.S. Department of Education to comb the existing research on teacher preparation and subject it to scientific standards used in other field of study, they eliminated all but 57 studies written in the past 20 years. However,

¹⁷ *In the social sciences, unpublished doctoral dissertations do not carry the same scholarly weight as published journal articles. There are two reasons for this. First, by definition, the work is that of an apprentice who is learning to conduct independent research. More important, however, is the fact that unlike journal articles, dissertations have not passed independent peer review. Typically dissertation research requires months or even years of refinement by young scholars before it is ready for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. This problem is compounded in the area of education research. It is widely recognized within academe that the quality standards for Ph.D.'s in schools of education can be quite low. Moreover, in the case of Ed.D.'s, the scholarly bar is lower still, since the ostensible purpose of these degrees is to produce practitioners rather than researchers. Faculty at schools of education produce far more graduate degrees per capita -- MA's, Ed.D.'s, Ph.D.'s -- than do their colleagues in the social sciences, suggesting that quality control may be rather low. Moreover many of these graduate degrees are produced not at universities in the top ranks of research universities (AAU Research I or AAU research II) but at institutions lacking a research focus. Both of these facts suggest that research findings reported in school of education Ph.D.'s or Ed.D.'s must be treated with caution.*



literature review published perhaps two decades previously. Study B might cite as its only supporting evidence Studies C, D, and E, some of which were written as long ago as the 1940s and 1950s. To verify the accuracy of the assertion made in the year 2000, it was necessary to read the original source. Although many researchers have asked the same fundamental question – “does certification make a difference?” – we found no comprehensive effort by scholars in the field to drill down systematically through these layers of evidence to discover what of any value can be found at the core.

Certification Advocates. The principal proponent in the nation for the formal preparation of teachers is the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), led by its executive director, Linda Darling-Hammond. Darling-Hammond's writings figure quite prominently in our analyses, as she is both prolific and, arguably, the most effective and respected spokesperson-cum-researcher on teacher preparation.

NCTAF is joined in its advocacy by the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Certification is a leap of faith taken without benefit of supporting evidence.

NCATE is the main accrediting body in the nation for schools of teacher education. It is assuming an increasingly powerful role in Maryland, as explored in a later section of this paper. Also figuring prominently is the Center for Teaching and Policy at the University of Wisconsin. In addition to these national sources, the Maryland State Department of Education has been a strong defender of teacher certification and provided us with many sources. The research that MSDE provided is reviewed separately in Appendix A.

FINDINGS

The theory that teacher certification leads to teacher quality is predicated more on what we think ought to be true (why wouldn't a systematic approach to teacher preparation lead to better teachers?) than on controlled experimentation. It is a leap of faith taken without benefit of supporting evidence.

Much of the research on teacher certification suffers from deficiencies that are so serious in nature that the research must be discounted. Generally, these deficiencies can be characterized by the frequent practice of making assertions without sufficient evidence and failing to apply norms of scientific rigor.



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most of these 57 studies were "interpretive" case studies involving only a few teachers. The actual number of longitudinal or quasi-longitudinal studies that controlled for poverty and used student achievement as the measure of the effectiveness of teacher preparation was far fewer. Under their own standard, only six studies containing any evidence for teacher certification were left standing, a fact omitted in Wilson et al.'s text.¹⁸

Linking student achievement with teacher effectiveness. In the groundbreaking *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966), renowned sociologist James Coleman established a new standard for education research, in which the principal measure of a school's effectiveness is whether its students are learning.¹⁹ This connection may seem self-evident, but it was largely ignored until Coleman's study; most previous studies used supervisors' evaluations of teachers as the measure of teacher quality. Coleman also revealed a fundamental problem inherent in the American educational system, which had always focused on inputs (equalizing school resources) at the expense of outputs (student performance).

In spite of significant contributions by Coleman and others, the field is still flooded with research that is flawed, sloppy, aged, and sometimes academically dishonest (see appendices). The same limited research is quoted repeatedly, with frequent mistakes in interpretation; and one cannot help but conclude that the research was not actually read (or not read very carefully). We often had to track down the author in order to obtain a copy of studies that no longer are, or never were, available through a university library. Some unpublished studies proved impossible to find. Several authors complained that they had been misquoted and misinterpreted.

SCOPE OF STUDY

For this analysis, we focused exclusively on research that examines the relationship between teacher attributes and education background with student achievement. Whether students are achieving more on comparable and valid measures of learning is the only measure of teacher effectiveness we accepted as reliable (a rule shared

¹⁸ The six studies are: Darling-Hammond (1999); Hawk, Coble and Swanson (1985); Fetler (1999); Ferguson and Womack (1993); Guyton and Farokhi (1987); and Monk (1994) and all are analyzed in the separately-published appendix of this study.

¹⁹ Coleman's work also had the effect of demoralizing educators across the nation, as its overall conclusion appeared to be that schools are relatively powerless to overcome the effects of students' socioeconomic background. Though in later work, Coleman and others (Coleman, J., Kilgore, S., Hoffer, T., *Public and Private Schools*, New York: Basic Books, 1982) altered his position to show that poor children derive considerable and disproportionate benefit from a common academic curriculum and high academic expectations (and considerable harm from schools that lacked these characteristics), his initial conclusions in which home and background matter more than school has not been conclusively challenged.



QUALITIES OF GOOD RESEARCH

Greenwald, Hedges and Laine used the following standards in deciding what research merited inclusion in their 1996 meta-analysis (p.364). These standards offer useful guidance for independent analysis of research.

- The data are presented in a refereed journal or a book. Research published by research institutes is acceptable.
- The data originate in the United States to account for differences in educational systems in foreign countries.
- The outcome measure is some form of academic achievement. Standardized achievement tests offer the best measure of academic achievement because scores are comparable, valid and reliable.
- The level of aggregation of the data is at the level of school districts or smaller units. Greenwald et al. note that "moving beyond the level of school districts greatly limits the validity of the relation between inputs and outcomes."
- The model controls for socioeconomic characteristics or is either longitudinal (including a pretest and a posttest) or quasi-longitudinal (including IQ or a measure of earlier achievement as an input).

by most researchers).²⁰ Though important in some contexts, evaluations by supervisors of teacher's classroom management are irrelevant if at the end of the year the supposedly "better managed" classroom of students has not learned. The most vocal proponents of teacher certification agree that the measure of teacher effectiveness should be student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease, 1983; Evertson et al., 1985).

METHODOLOGY

We attempted to look at every published and unpublished study cited on this issue by the principal advocates of teacher certification and preparation. This process, however, was akin to an archaeological dig. Typically, an assertion about certification made in Study A, published in the year 2000, would cite as supporting evidence Study B, often a

²⁰ There is considerably more research in education that looks at the relationship between a teacher's formal preparation and less quantifiable variables, such as a certified teacher is a better classroom manager, or can deliver certain kinds of instructional strategies more effectively, or is more nurturing. But these variables distract from the public's primary interests: whether or not students are learning. The majority of these studies also use supervisors' ratings as the measure. Ratings are unreliable predictors of teacher quality as they depend on the construct of the ratings instrument and generally do not control for critical variables, such as student poverty.



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Specifically, we found a pattern of the following types of errors:

1. Research that helps the case for teacher certification is cited, while research that does not is overlooked.
2. The lack of support for the benefits of certification is concealed by padding analyses.
3. Less reliable, older research is not cited responsibly.
4. Conclusions are asserted absent any evidence.
5. Research that has not been subjected to peer review is treated without skepticism, and there is particularly heavy reliance on unpublished dissertations.
6. Instead of using standardized measures of student achievement, researchers design their own assessment measures to prove certification's value.
7. Studies in support of teacher certification routinely violate basic principles of sound statistical analysis that are taken for granted in other academic disciplines; methodological errors go unchallenged.
 - Studies do not control for key variables.
 - Conclusions are drawn based on sample groups that do not mirror the general population.
 - Conclusions are drawn based on samples that are simply too small to produce results which are reliable or generalizable.
 - Studies suffer from serious statistical errors known as aggregation bias, producing findings that are distorted.



salaries as a way for states to purchase higher teacher quality was presented in the context of how salaries might persuade individuals with *higher verbal ability*, as measured specifically by the SAT, to enter teaching. The discussion did not pertain to promoting more formal teacher preparation or providing better financial incentives for teachers to obtain master's degrees.

Commenting on the second study that Darling-Hammond cited as evidence for putting more state dollars into formal teacher education, Darling-Hammond notes that Ferguson and Ladd (1994) found similarly strong effects of teacher expertise on student achievement, but that she notes that it used "much rougher proxies for teacher knowledge." It measured only teachers' pre-college scores on the ACT, instead of using a teacher licensing test. Darling-Hammond makes no connection to the verbal ability findings, and no connection with the literacy test measured by Ferguson (1991) and the ACT test scores measured in this later study, even though the researchers noted the important connection (page 288).

Turning to the last of the three studies, Darling-Hammond describes the meta-analysis of Greenwald, Hedges and Laine (1996) as finding that "teacher education, ability, and experience" are associated with significant increases in student achievement, and that "spending on teacher edu-

cation swamped other variables as the most productive investment for schools."

Yet Greenwald et al.'s firmest and most significant conclusion from reviewing 60 studies is that verbal ability had by far the most significant effect on student achievement. This fact was confirmed to us by one of the researchers who stated in an e-mail "Teacher ability (which was generally measured as teacher's verbal ability) seems to show the strongest and most replicable effect on achievement."²¹ Darling-Hammond's reference to teacher spending was based on a tangential exercise engaged in by the authors, who were speculating on how to invest school resources to improve student achievement. They were unable to identify ways in which school districts might improve the average verbal ability of their teachers, so they did not even consider how school districts might cultivate stronger verbal ability.

2. The lack of support for the benefits of certification is concealed by padding analyses.

Ex: Darling-Hammond (1992, page 30) asserts that there are "**consistently positive relationships between student achievement in science and the teacher's background in both education courses and science courses,**" citing four studies to support this statement. In fact, not one of the

²¹ Hedges, L., email correspondence with The Abell Foundation, February 26, 2001.

3. DISSECTING THE RESEARCH BEHIND CERTIFICATION

In this section, we provide examples of common errors found in the research on teacher certification. The examples presented here are by no means exhaustive, but illustrate the low standards characterizing this research. Indeed, some are deeply troubling.

1. Research that helps the case for teacher certification is cited, while research that does not is overlooked.

In *Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching*, Linda Darling-Hammond (1997; pages 7-10) describes the findings of three studies that demonstrate the important role of teacher expertise in raising student achievement: Ferguson (1991), Ferguson and Ladd (1994); Greenwald, Hedges, and Laine (1996). She claims these studies support her contention that states should put more money into supporting formal teacher education, which she argues will produce teachers that have more expertise.

To begin, Darling-Hammond misrepresents how these studies measured teacher expertise. She does not convey to the reader that all three studies

found that the most of the large effects on student achievement were generated by a single teacher variable: *teacher's verbal ability*.

The other two achievement-related attributes identified by the research were teaching experience and the possession of a master's degree. Experience had some effect, but it was not nearly as strong as the effect from verbal ability. Teachers' master's degrees were either marginally important or not important at all. None of the studies measured the effect of teacher certification on student achievement, and none contended, much less demonstrated, that teacher education programs improve a teacher's verbal ability.

In Darling-Hammond's presentation of the findings of the first study by Ronald Ferguson (1991), she says correctly that this Texas study demonstrates a strong effect on student achievement from teacher expertise, which she character-



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GREENWALD HEDGES AND LAINE (1996): BREAKOUT OF STUDIES ON TEACHER ATTRIBUTES

NUMBER OF STUDIES AND THEIR CORRELATION TO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT				
TEACHER ATTRIBUTE	POSITIVE AND SIGNIFICANT	POSITIVE ,BUT INSIGNIFICANT	NEGATIVE AND SIGNIFICANT	NEGATIVE BUT INSIGNIFICANT
VERBAL ABILITY	12	9	1	2
EXPERIENCE	20	2	28	18
MASTER'S DEGREES	7	6	16	16

Of the three teacher attributes examined by Greenwald, Hedges and Laine, the evidence supporting the value of a master's degree for improving student achievement is only marginal.

izes as "a combination of teacher scores on a licensing examination, master's degrees, and experience." She also states that Ferguson found that "every dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater increases in student achievement than did less instructionally focused uses of school resources." What the reader does not learn from Darling-Hammond is:

- Ferguson states that teacher scores on the examination known as the TECAT explained the greater part of student achievement gains in Texas. The better teachers performed on this test, the better their students did on the state achievement tests. Ferguson comments on the sometimes moderate, sometimes negligible effect of master's degrees (page 477): "Master's degrees have no predictive power [with respect to student achievement] after the seventh grade."
- Ferguson's description of the TECAT teacher examination is at odds with that of Darling-Hammond's. He describes this examination as

a "test of basic literacy." He makes a point of distinguishing this examination from "tests of teacher competency," such as the National Teacher's Examination (NTE), which he observes have "scarce and weak" evidence of a relationship with student achievement (page 475). Darling-Hammond diverges from this definition, portraying the Texas test as a "teacher licensing test," similar to tests like the NTE that test on teacher's professional knowledge. While it is critical to Darling-Hammond's case that this test be construed at least partially as a test of professional knowledge, it was not. The extent to which the Texas test measured any professional knowledge consisted of ten multiple choice items, asking teachers to define such words as "standardized tests," "classroom management" and "certification." It is hard to assert that anyone needs to sit through 30 credit hours of education coursework to learn the proper meaning of those terms.

- Ferguson's discussion about using teacher



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four studies shows the benefit of education coursework on student achievement unless this variable was combined with others. Of course, if a researcher only reports a combined positive effect from education and science coursework, then it is impossible for the reader to discern if both or only one of the variables was responsible for the effect. Here is what the four studies explored:

- **Davis (1964)** studied the effect of teachers' science coursework and participation in National Science Foundation summer institutes and found a positive effect. Davis did not study the effect of teachers' education coursework on student achievement.
- **Taylor (1957)** found a negative effect from education coursework on student achievement when the variable was isolated; he was only able to report a positive effect from a combined variable that included both education and science coursework.
- **Druva and Anderson (1983)** found that science coursework correlated significantly with student achievement, but that education coursework did not when the variable was isolated.
- **Perkes (1967)** can be considered a stand off at best. Students who had teachers with more education coursework scored higher on a test of higher order thinking, but lower on a science achievement test.

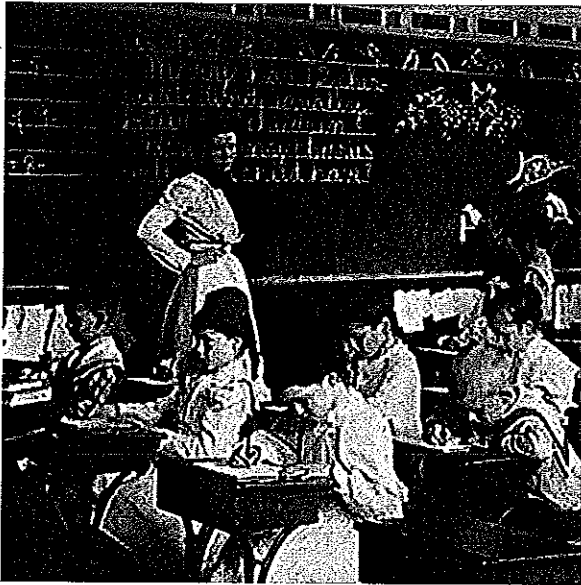
Certification advocates also assert that education coursework is more important than a teacher's knowledge of subject matter. For this example, it is important to understand the distinction between the Core Battery portion of the National Teacher's Exam (NTE) and the subject matter portion of the NTE. The Core Battery was a test of basic skills and knowledge of pedagogy. The subject matter portion was a test of teacher's knowledge of the subject area that he or she was going to teach.

Ex: Darling-Hammond (1999, page 6) states there are five studies that have found "**no consistent relationship between the subject matter tests of the National Teachers' Exam (NTE) and teacher performance as measured by student outcomes or supervisory ratings.**" However, not one of the five found a negative relationship between the NTE subject matter tests and student achievement.

- **Andrews, Blackmon and Mackey (1980)** found a positive relationship from teachers' scores on the NTE English and elementary subject matter tests with supervisors' ratings; the only negative relationship found was from teacher scores on the NTE physical education and special education tests, again examined alongside supervisors' ratings.



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5. Research that has not been subjected to peer review is treated without skepticism, and there is particularly heavy reliance on unpublished dissertations.

The process of peer review, i.e. having researchers' fellow experts review a study before it is deemed worthy of publication, is a fundamental principle adhered to in all fields of serious scientific study. Yet, many assertions about teacher certification are largely, if not exclusively, dependent upon the evidence provided in unpublished dissertations, papers delivered at conferences but never published, or articles published in the many education journals that are not "refereed".²⁵

²⁵ For example, many education magazines lack a system of blind peer review, such as *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Education Leadership*, and *American Educator*. The journals published by the American Education Research Association are all refereed.

²⁶ The two that were published are equally problematic as the unpublished studies. Rothman, Welch, and Walberg (1969) only studied 35 teachers and these teachers were accepted into an elite project developed by Harvard Project Physics, making it inappropriate to generalize the findings. The other study, Perkes (1967), produced mixed results: students whose teachers took more subject matter coursework reported higher scores on an achievement test, but lower scores on the STEP, a test of higher order thinking.

Ex: Ashton and Crocker (1987) cite numerous studies on teacher preparation to support their conclusion that there is more evidence that education coursework is more important for teacher effectiveness than subject matter coursework. They claim that nine of the 14 studies that they found showed subject matter coursework made no difference. It takes a careful reading of the footnotes to discover that all but two of these nine studies were dissertations, unpublished and unavailable to scrutinize, as they range from 25 to 45 years old.²⁶

Ex: Druva and Anderson (1983) reported a **largely positive link between education coursework and "successful teaching,"** but 54 of the 65 studies reviewed were dissertations or unpublished articles, all written between 1966 and 1975.

The difficulty of tracking down some of these studies is worth noting. We tried to find one frequently cited unpublished paper, delivered at a 1990 AERA conference in Boston, which was written by Gomez and Grobe. It was not available from the archives of the AERA and could not be located through the services of a university library. Even the authors no longer had a copy of the paper and none of the researchers who cited this study was either able or willing to produce the report



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- Ayers and Qualls (1979) examined the relationship of teachers' scores on the NTE with their ratings by their students, which is an essentially meaningless measure.
- Quirk, Witten and Weinberg (1973), a literature review on the effect of the NTE, found only one study that looked at the relationship of the NTE with student achievement, and it was written in 1947. Though too old to be considered relevant, it reported a positive relationship between the teachers' scores on the NTE and student achievement.
- Haney, Madaus and Kreitzer (1987) is another literature review, recycling the same findings found in Ayers and Qualls and Quirk et al. (One of the authors, George Madaus, told us that he was not aware of any research showing a negative correlation between the NTE subject matter test and student achievement.)²²
- Summers and Wolfe (1977) was the only study of the five that explored the relationship of NTE subject matter tests with student achievement and it found a largely positive effect! (The negative effect to which Darling-Hammond refers was probably the "perversely" negative relationship between 6th grade teachers' scores on the NTE Core Battery with their students' achievement.)

See also separately-published appendix discussions for Darling-Hammond (1999, 2000) on Armour-Thomas (1989) and Taylor and Dale (1971).

3. Less reliable, older research is not cited responsibly.

The fact that research is relatively old does not automatically negate its relevance.²³ Yet older studies should be regarded skeptically. There are many reasons why older research is problematic:

1. Most studies written before sociologist James Coleman's 1966 seminal study did not use student achievement as the measure of teacher effectiveness; they were more apt to use supervisory ratings, which can be too subjective to measure teacher quality accurately, and which usually fail to control for critical teacher and student variables.
2. Before the advent of the modern computer, circa mid-1960's, some of the more sophisticated and more accurate analyses were not feasible. Goldhaber and Brewer (1996) note that many studies, "particularly those completed in the 1970s, had major deficiencies in empirical methodology and available data" (page 4).

²² Email correspondence from George Madaus to The Abell Foundation, March 27, 2001.

²³ We found a small amount of useful research dating back several decades, most notably one of the most superior studies of the past half-century written by Summers and Wolfe (1977).



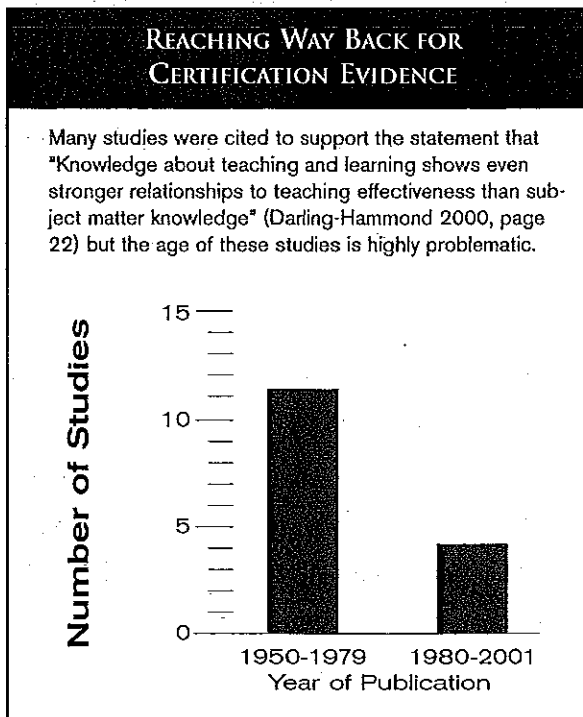
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3. Research needs to be subject to continuing academic scrutiny. The older the research is, the less likely that it can be found through routine sources and verified by others.

4. The structure and makeup of schools change. To name but a few, the level of financing changes; average class sizes change; teachers arrive with different sets of common attributes; and students present a different set of social issues.²⁴

Ex: Darling-Hammond (1999, page 6) cites numerous studies to support the statement that **“Knowledge about teaching and learning shows even stronger relationships to teaching effectiveness than subject matter knowledge”** (Darling-Hammond 2000, page 22) but the age of these studies is problematic.

4. Conclusions are asserted absent any evidence.



EX. Denton and Lacina’s 1984 study is cited repeatedly by certification advocates because it was supposed to have found a **positive relationship between formal teacher preparation and student achievement** (Evertson, Hawley and Zlotnik, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1999). Yet Denton and Lacina never even looked at student achievement; their study only measured the morale of student teachers and the ratings of student teachers by their supervisors.

See also separately-published appendix discussions for Taylor (1957); Ferguson and Womack (1993) and Darling-Hammond (1992) on Veenman (1984); Darling-Hammond (1999, 2000) on Begle and Geeslin (1972); Evertson, Hawley and Zlotnik (1985) on Denton and Smith (1983).

²⁴Conversation with education researcher, Dr. Sam Stringfield, May 2, 2001.



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after numerous requests. However, the author's own recall of their findings were at odds with others' assertions about this study.

6. Instead of using standardized measures of student achievement, researchers design their own (usually not validated) assessment measures to prove certification's value.

Ex: Ashton and Crocker (1983) cite Copley's 1975 dissertation as evidence that beginning teachers are better prepared by virtue of having taken education coursework. The assessment Copley used was a survey designed by education doctoral students. It asked principals to rate their new teachers on factors unrelated to student achievement, such as how often

they participated in professional meetings, if they had a good disposition or if they had a sense of humor.

See also separately-published appendix discussions for McLaughlin and Marsh (1978); Hice (1970); McNeil (1974); Denton and Smith (1983); Rowan, Chiang and Miller (1997).

7. Studies in support of teacher certification routinely violate basic principles of sound statistical analysis that are taken for granted in other academic disciplines; methodological errors go unchallenged.

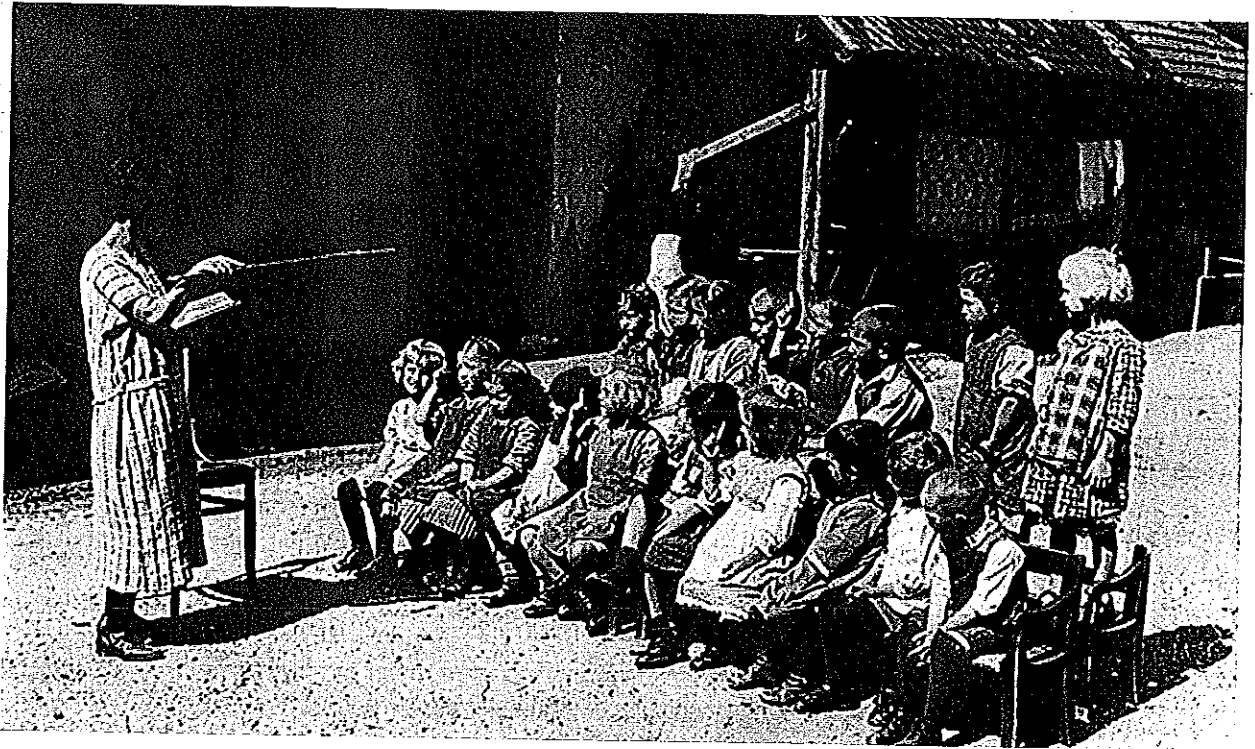
STUDIES DO NOT CONTROL FOR KEY VARIABLES.

Ex: Darling-Hammond asserts that "students will achieve at higher levels and are less likely to drop out when taught by certified teachers" (1997, page 9). She supports this claim using three studies, none of which controlled for poverty: Knoblock (1986), Sanders, Skonie-Hardin and Phelps (1984), and Council on School Performance (1997). Studies of teacher effects on student achievement need to include controls for student poverty as this variable appears more important than any single variable in determining student achievement.²⁷

²⁷ For example, distinguished researchers Eric Hanushek and Larry Hedges will only include studies that control for poverty when they perform meta-analyses on the impact of school resources on student achievement. An exception is William Sanders who does not control for student poverty or race in his highly visible value-added studies in Tennessee. However, he includes not just one prior test score, but often several years of prior test scores, allowing "each student to act as his or her own control." His theory is that after controlling for prior student achievement, race or poverty do not matter in student gains.



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variables to be able to control for them all. In this instance, Darling-Hammond does not control for some of the most basic variables, including racial or ethnic compositions among the states.

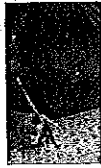
2) The findings are biased because an average score is used to represent all student performance in each state. Different types of students, such as low achievers, high achievers, minority, white, or Asian, respond differently to different kinds of teachers; but in a state-level study, all of these heterogeneous effects appear homogeneous. For example, Summers and Wolfe (1977) found that African-American children who are poor learn more when taught by teachers who attended more

selective colleges, and their gains are larger than for other types of students.

In the study, Darling-Hammond acknowledges the likely distortions in her analysis:

"Aggregating data to the state level produces different results than one would find if one looked at similar kinds of data at the individual student, teacher, school, or district level" (page 28).

Even conceding that the findings are probably not accurate, she maintains that the data are still useful "for the purposes of assessing broad policy influences at the state level."



(Darling-Hammond acknowledges this fact when she cites these three studies the second time in 1999 on page 9; it would have been more appropriate to not mention these studies at all.)

CONCLUSIONS ARE DRAWN BASED ON SAMPLE GROUPS THAT DO NOT MIRROR THE GENERAL POPULATION.

Ex: The work of a respected mathematician in the mid-twentieth century, Edward Begle, is cited by certification advocates as one of five studies that “**show no or negative relationship between teacher knowledge and student achievement**” (Evertson, Hawley and Zlotnik, 1985). Indeed, Begle (1972) found that that the number of mathematics courses a teacher had taken did not have a strong effect on student achievement, but he points out a critical limitation of these findings that others disregard, including Evertson et al. The teachers in the study were part of an elite group of science teachers, all having been accepted by the National Science Foundation Summer Institute; they also had felt comfortable enough with their knowledge of mathematics to volunteer to take the math test used for the study. It is not surprising that variation in coursework within this elite group did not lead to highly varied student outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS ARE DRAWN BASED ON SAMPLES THAT ARE SIMPLY TOO SMALL TO PRODUCE RESULTS WHICH ARE RELIABLE OR GENERALIZABLE.

Ex: Wilson et al. (2001) include inappropriately an “interpretive” study of only three teachers—all certified—in their count of studies that they claim prove the value of certification. A study that includes only a few teachers is not designed to produce findings that can be generalized to a broader population.

Here is a sampling of studies looking at the effect of teacher certification and the number of teachers that were involved:

Bullough, Knowles and Crow	3 teachers
Davis	29 teachers
Eisenberg	28 teachers
Grossman (1989)	3 teachers
Hall	38 teachers
Hice.....	40 teachers
Howe.....	51 teachers
Hurst.....	55 teachers
Lins	27 teachers
Perkes.....	32 teachers
McNeil	38 teachers
Rothman, Welch, and Walbert	35 teachers
Thoman	29 teachers

STUDIES SUFFER FROM SERIOUS STATISTICAL ERRORS KNOWN AS AGGREGATION BIAS, PRODUCING FINDINGS THAT ARE DISTORTED.

Aggregation bias occurs when a researcher gets data at an aggregated level but wants to make a statement at a disaggregated level. It is one of the most



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debated and routinely committed errors found in statistics (Hanushek, Rivkin and Taylor, 1996). It is also one of the harder concepts to understand because it can seem counterintuitive to suggest that analyzing large samples of data can create distortions that might not be present in smaller studies. Nevertheless, it is not the large sample size that presents the challenge for the researcher; it is the way in which the large amounts of data are analyzed.

The following scenario may help explain this frequent, but confusing, statistical error.

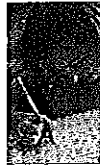
A study compares the rate of bicycle ownership in two small European countries. The researcher finds that there are many more bicycles in the country with a much higher per capita income than in the country with a lower per capita income. Based on this finding, he theorizes that more affluent people are able to afford more bikes. In fact, if he had further disaggregated the data on bicycle ownership to measure more specific variables, he might have discovered the actual reason why there were more bicycles in the wealthier nation. By looking at the income level of the people who actually owned the bicycles or how wealth was distributed in the country, he might have learned that the poorest people were so poor that they could not afford cars, necessitating bicycles for transportation.

Education research contains many examples of studies that examine data aggregated at the state level; e.g., the number of certified teachers in the state. These data are used to reach conclusions about the qualities effective teachers need; for example, "certified teachers produce higher student gains." For the same reason that the researcher was not able to know that poor people were buying more bikes, it is not possible to know whether certified teachers produce higher student achievement simply because a state with high test scores employs more certified teachers. It may well be some other variable, one having nothing to do with teacher attributes, is responsible for student performance. Using state-level data, these variables are inordinately difficult to take into account.

Ex: In 1999, Darling-Hammond published a widely publicized study of the relationship between student performance on 4th and 8th grade national tests with the educational background of teachers employed in a state. She found that those states reporting higher student achievement also employed a greater percentage of certified teachers.

Her findings do not take into consideration two very important factors that statisticians recognize as aggregation bias:

- 1) Many other unmeasured variables might explain why scores were higher in some states than in others. At the state-level, there are too many



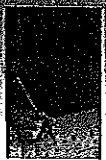
4. MARYLAND'S REGULATORY DRIFT

Although the research about teacher certification lacks substance, its impact on who can teach in Maryland classrooms is both tangible and troublesome. The State's insistence that teachers be fully certified is costly; the benefits are purely speculative. While the State holds its nearly 1,400 schools accountable for their student outcomes using various punishments and rewards, it restricts schools' ability to decide freely the single most important variable in student achievement: the quality of their teachers. By contrast, the State answers to no one. There are no direct consequences to State officials for poor school performance, yet these officials are the gatekeepers of the teaching profession.

In the early 1990's, when the Maryland State Board began to build its school accountability program, it also enacted more flexible policies toward teachers. However, these efforts have fallen victim to regulatory drift, the tendency of State officials to increase control by regulation. Regulations have been approved without any reference to supporting research. More importantly, the State has no strategy to measure the impact of these regulations.

REGULATIONS GOVERNING PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Two sharply differing approaches to the selection of teachers are practiced in Maryland and across the nation. The first is the regulatory approach, enforced to some degree by every state on its public schools. This approach focuses on specific inputs, such as the courses teaching



trained teachers has been undermined by more regulatory requirements.

- The State continues to rely on course counting as the means to assess teacher quality.

THE STATE'S READING INITIATIVE

In response to a well publicized series of reports in *The Baltimore Sun* over the mediocre achievement in State elementary reading scores, the Maryland State Board of Education voted in the summer of 1998 to require all elementary teachers to complete four courses in reading instruction and all secondary teachers to complete two courses. This move reversed the reduction in education coursework requirements, advocated by the Sondheim Commission. The number of college credits in education courses now required is at an all-time high of 27 credits for elementary school teachers and 21 credits for secondary teachers (COMAR 13A.12.02.17 and 13A.12.02.40).

This new initiative, although well intended, demonstrates consistently flawed regulatory tendencies:

1. The State mandated this coursework without a strategy for measuring its impact on State reading scores. Absent any effort to collect data on the capacity of the particular courses (or of the institutions in which they are taught) to improve State

reading scores, the value of this costly and time consuming new regulation cannot be discerned.

2. The State did not adequately articulate the rationale for the number of courses. In fact, the only justification for four courses was that they will provide the depth and breadth necessary to cover all of the topics that were identified by the Maryland Reading Task Force. Yet this report was itself criticized by five national reading experts for providing little meaningful guidance to teachers and appearing to contradict evidence about the way children learn to read.³¹

3. The new reading courses may be the same ineffective courses, now under new titles and descriptions.³² No matter how thorough the State's approval process may be, it cannot guarantee the quality and value of this coursework, taught by faculty from the same schools of education which had earlier advanced ineffective methods of reading instruction.

4. The initiative may be regulatory overkill, requiring teachers who do not need to teach reading fundamentals to take courses in the subject. The requirement applies equally to high school teachers of mathematics, art, music, and technology, as it does English teachers.

5. The regulations do not distinguish between the needs of different schools in the State. Requiring teachers at Montgomery County's Walt

³¹ The Baltimore Sun, "Md. reading plan flawed, experts say" October 3, 1998, page 1A.

³² The Baltimore Sun, "Bold reading reforms bog down in colleges" June 26, 2001, page 1A.



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candidates must take before teaching. The second approach is the practice of every state concerning private schools: the only credential required for private school teachers is a bachelor's degree.

Maryland's hands-off policy toward private school teachers contrasts with its active regulatory role à propos other facets of private schools. The State imposes substantial restrictions on private schools (*see box*) but, other than a criminal background check and a bachelor's degree, private school teachers do not have to meet any State criteria to determine if they are qualified to teach.²⁸

Higher Education. The State's public colleges and universities also enjoy the same lack of regulatory control of their teaching faculties. There are no regulations about the credentials that faculty members must have in higher education. Individual colleges and universities impose their own credential requirements.

A SYSTEM OF MULTIPLE CERTIFICATES

Under the current system of certification, some teacher is always teaching without appropriate certification. Maryland lists 66 different teaching certificates, each with its own set of requirements.²⁹

This regulatory excess contrasts with medicine, law, accounting, and dentistry fields in which states typically issue only one license to practice, no matter what branch of medicine or what area of law an individual may be practicing. A consequence of this complex system is that virtually no school district can ever fully comply.

SONDHEIM COMMISSION

In a remarkably progressive effort, the 1989 *Maryland Governor's Commission on School Performance*, known informally as the Sondheim Commission, called for the "elimination of rules, regulations, and other strictures that constrain school staffs." It specifically stated its suspicion that State certification requirements impeded quality education.³⁰ The Commission challenged the State to hold schools accountable for outputs and to avoid regulating the inputs. Although in 1990 the State Board of Education adopted enthusiastically the Commission's report, there has been little progress on reducing State regulations governing teacher training and certification.

The Commission's report initially spurred considerable reform including:

²⁸COMAR 13A.09.09.06. *The State has one exception to these regulations: nonpublic schools receiving federal funding for service to special education students need to employ state-certified special education teachers.*

²⁹Maryland regulations (COMAR 13A.12.01 through 13A.12.04) list 45 different teaching certificates, 11 specialists' certificates, and 10 administrative certificates.

³⁰Report of the Maryland Governor's Commission on School Performance, 1989, page 22.



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STATE REGULATIONS GOVERNING MARYLAND'S PRIVATE, NON-RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS*

- A private school must be certified to operate, a process that includes direct observation by State officials.
- The content of the school's report cards must meet the State standard.
- All students are required to have a personal education plan.
- The number of books in the library must meet the State standard.
- The time that must be spent each day on certain subjects is prescribed by the State.
- The number of instructional days each year is prescribed by the State.
- There must be a written curriculum for each subject at each grade level.

YET

- *There are no regulations governing the credentials of these schools' teachers, other than a bachelor's degree and passing a criminal background check.*

* Private schools that are religious are subject to almost no regulation.

- Creation of an alternative path to teaching, known as the Resident Teacher Certificate, in 1992;
- Reduction of the number of education courses required for certification between 1995 and 1998;
- Significant reduction of the number and type of subject-area coursework required for certification under the credit count, in 1995;
- Release of a report calling for the "redesign" of teacher education, in 1995.

Still, the Commission's challenge has gone largely unmet. The normal pull and tug of politics, shifts in priorities, the vocal interests of schools of education and professional teaching organizations, and the State's predilection for regulatory control have blocked deregulation. Since 1995:

- Significant new education coursework requirements have been added as the State's response to low reading scores. The number of required education courses is now the highest ever in the State, and there is no mechanism in place to assess the effectiveness of these courses;
- A 1995 report, Maryland's *Redesign of Teacher Education*, introduced additional requirements for teacher training, again with no mechanism in place to assess effectiveness, and eliminating none of the existing requirements;
- The State has entered into consortia with national organizations that strongly resist deregulation and alternative routes into teaching.
- The original intent of the Resident Teacher Certificate to recruit bright, nontraditionally



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Whitman High School, one of the best performing high schools in the nation, to take the same State-prescribed coursework as teachers assigned to a low-performing, reconstituted-high school will almost certainly result in some teachers wasting their time.

An alternative. Responding to some of these criticisms, the State is now allowing experienced teachers to “test out” of the requirements. There is no move, however, to allow *new* teachers to test out of the requirement. School districts and principals are not granted any discretion to ascertain the level of reading skills needed by teachers, both new and veteran.

Alternatively, the State could provide school districts with sound reading assessments. This tool

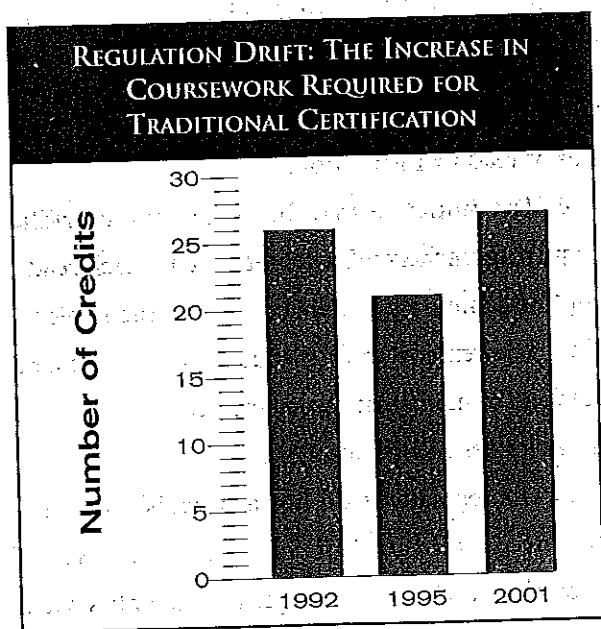
could be used by districts to judge the knowledge and skills of prospective teachers, as well as help determine the particular professional development needs of their veteran teachers.

MARYLAND'S *REDESIGN OF TEACHER EDUCATION*: MORE INPUTS?

The State Department of Education has responded timidly to the Sondheim Commission's challenge, stopping far short of adopting student achievement as the output by which to measure teacher effectiveness. The department has interpreted the mandate for “outputs over inputs” by collecting more data on teachers and schools of education (see MSDE, July 30, 1998: 30-31), but not by reducing many of the inputs.

The major purpose of its *Redesign of Teacher Education*, which became State policy in 1995, was to eliminate State-mandated inputs for traditional teacher education.³³ Yet the *Redesign* has very little to say about current teacher education requirements other than the important and commendable point that teachers need to know their subject matter.

The real focus of the *Redesign* is to prescribe the content of Maryland's mandatory student teaching experience, which it renames a *clinical internship*. It prescribes three extensive portfolios that teacher candidates prepare at different points during their



³³Letter from Dr. Nancy Grasmick to Mr. Robert Embry, The Abell Foundation, July 27, 2000.



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5. MARYLAND'S REGULATORY HURDLES

Neither the ten-year-old alternative teaching certificate, known as the Resident Teacher Certificate, nor the State's Credit Count procedure offer prospective teachers significant ways to circumvent the State's cumbersome regulatory hurdles.

THE UNMET POTENTIAL OF THE RESIDENT TEACHER CERTIFICATE

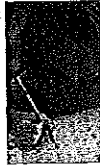
The Resident Teacher Certificate represents a genuine effort by the State Board of Education to give school districts (not individual schools) more flexibility in hiring. Created by regulation in 1990, the Resident Teacher Certificate was designed to attract academically talented college graduates possessing a 3.0 GPA in their major, allowing them to bypass education coursework requirements. Only 500 teachers have been hired under this certificate since its inception, though nearly 50,000 teachers were hired in the State in this same time period.³⁸

A TROUBLED HISTORY

Despite its capacity for attracting bright, capable teachers, the Resident Teacher Certificate has never flourished. Dependent for years on private support, disparaged in official State documents, and a victim of conflict between the State department of education and the districts that have tried using it, the certificate has held the status of a poor cousin. Its inferior status may be attributable to mixed messages from State officials, compounded by strong adherence to traditional teacher certification by school district officials. The State's analysis of the Resident Teacher Certificate described it as "substandard."³⁹

³⁸Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2000-2002 found on www.msde.state.md.us.

³⁹Maryland State Department of Education, July 30, 1998: 18.



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student teaching experience before the State grants certification. These portfolios do not replace the coursework that schools of education and the State require.

Furthermore, the *Redesign* never states how the clinical internship, which it advises to be a year long, will accommodate someone who has not enrolled in a formal teacher program at a university or college.

An alternative. A genuine commitment to the principles outlined by the Sondheim Commission would mean that the State stop requiring certain coursework or program approval for teacher preparation. Responsible but flexible governance by the State, first, would ensure that teaching candidates meet a minimal standard for entry, such as a bachelor's degree and a passing grade on a suitable teacher examination. Second, schools would be allowed to judge the true merits of particular candidates since they are held accountable by the State for student achievement.

MARYLAND'S ALLEGIANCE TO PROFESSIONAL TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS

A major impediment to substantial deregulation of teacher certification policies in Maryland is the State's close alliance with powerful organiza-

tions whose interests align with maintaining or even strengthening the current regulations.

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TEACHING AND AMERICA'S FUTURE

In 1997, Maryland entered into a consortium of states led by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). NCTAF is a private organization, funded by the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations.

The goal of NCTAF is to "professionalize" teaching, with an emphasis on formal teacher preparation. Though NCTAF acknowledges there are multiple paths into teaching, it in no way supports the deregulation of the profession. The only alternative routes that NCTAF endorses are those contained within traditional, university-based formal teacher preparation programs.

The NCTAF consortium shifts control of and policy making for the teaching profession away from public bodies, such as local school boards and state education agencies, to private accrediting bodies. Consequently, as of 2001, the only body approved by the State Board of Education to accredit schools of education in Maryland is NCTAF's close ally, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).



4

MARYLAND'S NCATE-ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS*

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY
TOWSON UNIVERSITY
COPPIN STATE COLLEGE
MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
SALISBURY STATE UNIVERSITY
UMBC
UMCP

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

NCATE's relationship with the State of Maryland also tends to stifle reform. NCATE and MSDE conduct joint evaluations of Maryland's teacher preparation programs, providing each other feedback. Unfortunately, both NCTAF and NCATE oppose strenuously teachers who have not participated in formal teacher preparation programs and resists their entering the profession.³⁴ Therefore, NCATE's broad influence and partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education bodes ill for flexibility and openness in teacher training. It is extremely unlikely that it would endorse any Maryland program or effort to

bypass the traditional approach to teacher preparation. NCATE's standards provide leverage only for *reversal* of Maryland's professed emphasis on outputs over inputs.

A NATIONAL RESERVOIR OF ILL WILL TOWARD NCATE

Whereas MSDE has embraced NCATE, many schools of education in the nation, especially independent colleges, find its standards so detailed and prescriptive that "they have become unreasonable."³⁵ Only 500 of the 1,200 institutions that prepare teachers are NCATE-accredited, many of them opposing NCATE's review process.³⁶ Only one-half of the nation's top 50 schools of education have sought and received NCATE accreditation.³⁷ There is such a backlash against NCATE's attention to process over product that the Council on Higher Education endorsed recently an alternative accrediting body that regards itself as a renegade. Though far more flexible than NCATE, this organization, known as *Teacher Education Accreditation Council*, is not permitted to accredit Maryland schools of education.

³⁴Darling-Hammond, *Doing What Matters Most*, NCTAF, 1997.

³⁵Remark made by Sandra Cohen, the director of teacher education for the education school at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, one of top twenty programs in the country as ranked by US News and World Report, reported in *Education Week*, May 23, 2000, Vol XX (37): 13.

³⁶Phi Delta Kappan, *January 2001*, page 39.

³⁷<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/college/rankings> and <http://www.ncate.org>.



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RENEWED EFFORTS

More recently, the State maintains that it is "actively campaigning to scale up" use of the Resident Teacher Certificate.⁴⁰ As the teacher shortage reportedly has grown, the State Superintendent has become more vocal in support of the certificate. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) reports that three higher education institutions are working actively with local school districts to create new Resident Teacher programs. For the past couple of years, it has requested that the Governor provide funding to expand the use of this certificate; additionally, it has sought grant money to bring into the teaching profession more career changers using this certificate.

NEW REGULATIONS

The State's change of heart may have been provoked by the rising teacher shortage, but it unfortunately coincides with the addition of more coursework requirements for obtaining the certificate. The

The Resident Certificate is no longer as flexible as it once was; and it certainly can no longer be used to bypass education coursework.

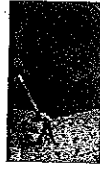
requirements have evolved from an unrestrictive process in 1990, when a candidate had to present strong academic credentials and then participate in a short summer training program, to a process in 2001 that is substantially more regulated. Given these new requirements, the Resident Teacher Certificate is no longer as flexible as it once was. It certainly can no longer be used to bypass education coursework.

BALTIMORE CITY'S USE OF THE RESIDENT TEACHER CERTIFICATE

The increased State-wide use of the Resident Teacher Certificate is somewhat ironic, given that Baltimore City decided in 2000-2001 to discontinue targeted staffing of its Resident Teacher recruitment office, apparently reacting to perceived pressure from the State to concentrate on the recruitment of traditionally certified teachers. For the school year 2001-2002, it recruited one of its smallest cohorts since the program's inception ten years ago.

While Baltimore usually hires the most Resident Teachers in the state, it has always hired relatively few compared to its total number of new teacher hires each year. Part of the reason for this limited recruitment lies with the State's certification division, which plays an aggressive role in the management of

⁴⁰ Correspondence from Dr. Nancy Grasmick to the Abell Foundation, July 13, 2000.



American history. Why, then, is an elementary teacher who has taken such courses as "Ancient Chinese History" or "The Russian Revolution" more qualified to teach than someone who has not? The State cannot assert that such coursework assures teacher preparedness.

The result of these well-intentioned regulations on coursework is that Resident Teacher programs cannot accept many of the candidates for whom the certificate was designed.

ILEANA IMHOFF

Ileana Imhoff, a Spanish teacher with twelve years of teaching experience was hired to teach last year in a Maryland public elementary school. Ms. Imhoff, a native Spanish speaker, was informed by the State that she could not continue teaching unless she took 54 credits of additional coursework. The time, energy, and expenses required to take 6 college courses a year over three years, especially when her principal already considered her an excellent teacher, was untenable. She left the public school system and was immediately hired by a prestigious private school, which in her own words *"would not place unreasonable hurdles on my professional future."*

TEACH FOR AMERICA

These restrictions led officials from the national teacher service group, Teach For America, to identify

Maryland's regulations as *"the most stringent"* of its fifteen regions located across the United States.⁴² Though 1,100 applicants were accepted into Teach For America with an average college GPA of 3.4, the organization had a difficult time providing Baltimore City public schools with 75 candidates who met the State's various criteria for coursework.

In 2001, 386 new teacher recruits asked to teach in Baltimore City, but 275 of them were found to be ineligible under Maryland regulations, the lowest eligibility rate of any area in the nation served by this organization.

THE CREDIT COUNT, A ROUTE WITHOUT MERIT

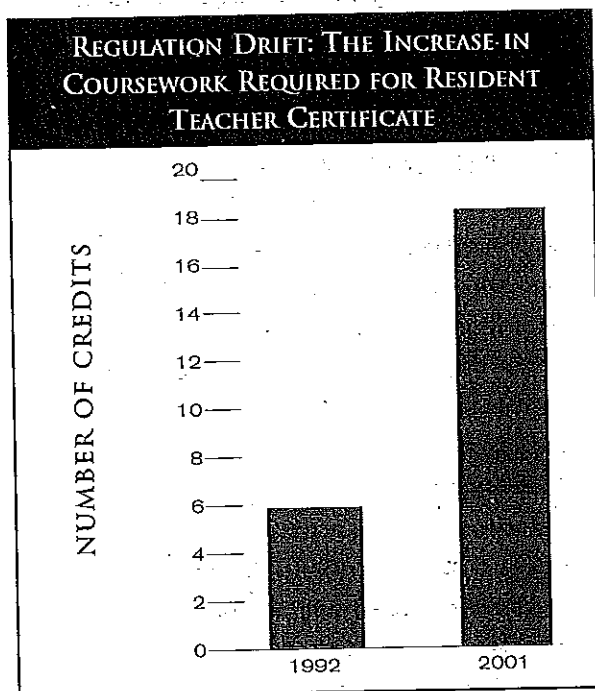
Recent college graduates with non-education degrees may seek certification via a "credit count" program option. The term credit count describes the process of transcript checking to identify courses that meet certification requirements, a judgment based essentially on the titles of courses. Using this option, teaching candidates enroll as post-baccalaureate students at a college or university, in order to complete the State-required content-area and education courses for which no equivalents can be found in their undergraduate records. The credit count is entirely a matter of completing certain types and quantities of course-

⁴²Quote from Peter Kannan, Executive Director, Teach for America, Baltimore.



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the district's Resident Teacher program. Subjected to a level of scrutiny given to no other school district's hiring practice, the transcript of every applicant to this program is reviewed by the State, eliminating any candidate who fails to meet its criteria.



In 1990, the Resident Teacher Certificate required completion of 90 clock hours of teacher training in advance of teaching, equivalent to 6 credits. By 2001, that requirement has increased to 135 hours of education coursework, roughly equivalent to 9 credits, before starting to teach. Another 135 hours (9 credits) is required over the course of the first two years of their teaching. Resident Teachers must acquire only 9 credits less than a traditionally certified elementary teacher. Secondary teachers take 45 clock hours or 3 credits after the initial 135-hour pre-teaching requirement, again 9 credits less than required of a traditionally certified secondary teacher.

AN APPARENT PREFERENCE FOR PROVISIONAL TEACHERS

Baltimore City hires a much larger number of provisional teachers each year than Resident Teachers: about 55 percent of new hires are provisional, compared to about 10 percent who are classified as Resident Teachers (a figure that includes Teach For America candidates). Each year, the city renews its commitment to the State to hire more certified teachers, bypassing opportunities to recruit qualified Resident Teachers. Each year, the city comes up short on certified teachers and, faced with a time crunch, races to hire as many provisional teachers as it can, so that classrooms do not stand empty.

By virtue of the high academic requirements for the certificate, Resident Teachers bring strong academic credentials that provisional teachers do not. More than 20 percent of Resident Teachers hold advanced degrees in their fields, and all of them possess the Resident Teacher Certificate's requirement of a 3.0 GPA in their undergraduate major. On scores on the Praxis exam (Core Battery and Specialty Areas), teachers in the Resident Teacher Program outscore both provisional and traditionally trained teachers, both in Maryland and nationwide.⁴¹ These programs attract into the profession candidates who want to teach but are unwilling or

⁴¹Data supplied by the Resident Teacher office, Baltimore City and Teach for America, Baltimore.



unable to complete certification requirements. For example, for every slot Teach For America has available, it receives five applications, an enviable application rate in a time of teacher shortage. On the other hand, Baltimore City hires nearly every certified applicant who applies.

WHAT DO ELEMENTARY TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW?

Since 1998, the Maryland State Department of Education has elaborated upon the subject-area coursework requirements needed to qualify for the Resident Teacher Certificate, including coursework in multiple subjects required of elementary teachers. Though much evidence suggests that secondary teachers who have taken more coursework in their subject area are more effective teachers, the subject-area coursework that may be needed by elementary teachers is not so easily discerned, and it has not been identified by any research (*See Section 1*).

The State's requirements for elementary teachers (6 credits each in social studies, mathematics, science, and English) seem reasonable, but in practice, these course requirements preclude many talented and able individuals from teaching in Maryland (*see box on Stephanie Nelson*). There are four reasons why this ruling is so problematic:

1. No study has shown a positive relationship between any subject-area college coursework and an elementary teacher's capacity to be successful.

2. Many universities and colleges do not require a broad base of coursework across the disciplines to satisfy the requirements of a liberal arts degree, precluding some of most able candidates.

3. The State will not consider other alternatives for demonstrating that requisite knowledge has been obtained, such as a test.

STEPHANIE NELSON

Stephanie Nelson is a native of Baltimore and a graduate of the prestigious Bryn Mawr School. She recently graduated cum laude from Duke University with a degree in cultural anthropology and was accepted into the highly competitive program, Teach For America. She wanted to return to Baltimore to teach elementary school but was told by the State that she could not teach in Maryland, even under the Resident Teacher Certificate. Despite the fact that Stephanie graduated with honors in her class at Bryn Mawr, and scored a 1460 on her SATs, she was considered inadequately prepared for teaching elementary school because she had not taken science courses in college. Stephanie is teaching in Washington, D.C. public schools this year.

4. There is no indication that, even if an individual has taken requisite college coursework, these requirements have any relevance to what an elementary teacher will be teaching. For example, in Maryland, most elementary schools teach no history in grades K-3 and in grades 4 and 5 teach only the most rudimentary units in Maryland and



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work (see box on *Ileana Imhoff*).

In 1995, the State significantly lowered the amount of *subject-area* coursework required under the credit count. Still, the credit count option often proves to be elusive, owing to narrow rulings by MSDE staff. It is especially difficult for individuals who were educated outside the United States (see box on *Kanan Mishra*). Even though there is little question that teacher knowledge of subject area is essential, this regulatory approach leaves no room for discretion or alternative ways to assess a teacher's knowledge. For example, a teaching candidate who may have graduated with a high GPA from a selective college and traveled all over the world would not be permitted to teach in Maryland without first taking a geography course, no matter how much knowledge he could, if permitted, demonstrate about geography.

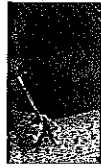
One teacher educator who works frequently with post-baccalaureate students, negotiating on their behalf with the State, described the credit count option as fraught with difficulty. In most cases these applicants find it easier to pursue certification through enrollment in a costly, year-long Master of Arts in Teaching program.

In sum, even though Maryland advocates flexibility and multiple paths to certification in principle, in practice State teacher certification strongly favors traditional university-based programs. The continued regulatory approach in Maryland and elsewhere retains the focus on input measures and

KANAN MISHRA

In 1998, a highly competitive math and science program in Baltimore tried to hire a new middle school math teacher, Kanan Mishra. The teachers selected for this selective program are held to rigorous hiring standards, with expectations that they have the teaching ability to prepare their students to be nationally competitive at the highest levels. Ms. Mishra was educated in India, but also received a master's degree in education at Pepperdine University in California, and completed all of the coursework required for a doctorate in math education at Southern Illinois University. She had been certified to teach in another state and had spent the last twelve years teaching in Johns Hopkins' prestigious Center for Talented Youth, as well as teaching college level math at a community college. When this teacher's transcript was routinely submitted to a Maryland official for a "credit count," Ms. Mishra was informed she would not be allowed to teach in a Maryland public school. The official had interpreted her transcript from her Indian undergraduate institution as containing too few courses to be the equivalent of an American bachelor's degree. The official insisted that the presence of a master's and the near-doctorate was irrelevant. All appeals to the State were rejected. It was not until the case was privately taken to the State Superintendent for review that the decision was rescinded. By then, the school year was underway, and Kanan was no longer willing to take the job, returning to teach in community college.

not performance-based measures. Instead, the goal of reform should be to attract articulate and capable people to careers in teaching and to free up individual schools to hire the best possible teachers from that pool of applicants.



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6. CONCLUSION

Reduced to its essence, teacher certification is incapable of providing any insight into an individual's ability, intellectual curiosity, creativity, affinity for children, and instructional skills. So long as the deficiencies in the research on teacher quality are ignored, misrepresented, or debated, there are clear losers. They are the disadvantaged students who are the most dependent upon the quality of their teachers and the opportunity provided by a high quality public school education.

A CAUTION TO POLICYMAKERS

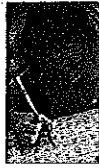
One of the more prolific and respected scholars focusing on teacher quality is Harvard professor Richard Murnane. In a 1983 paper, he identifies three basic sources of teacher competence:

- Intellectual ability
- Formal pre-service education
- On-the-job experience

Murnane observes what we, too, have noted: the most compelling measurable evidence on teacher quality is found in a teacher's cognitive ability. This ability is measured by a teacher's score on a test of verbal ability, on some other written, stan-

dardized measure, or by the selectivity of the undergraduate college attended by a teacher.

Advocates of formal teacher preparation may not acknowledge the preeminence of a teacher's verbal ability on student achievement, but no one denies that it has some role. Yet its importance is unknown to policymakers and the public. This lack of awareness can be attributed, perhaps, to the lack of an advocacy organization championing the recruitment and retention of teachers with excellent verbal ability. It is not in the interest of certification advocates to promote the strong findings on the correlation of a teacher's verbal ability with teacher effectiveness, because formal teacher preparation becomes less critical to the strategies for improving student achievement.



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practical truth is that school systems have borne and continue to bear the responsibility of training teachers in how to teach.

It is important for schools, school districts, principals, and teachers to be able to decide, without the distractions of regulatory compliance, what kind of training would make them effective teachers. The growth and popularity of new teacher-induction programs, once considered a luxury provided sparingly only to uncertified teachers, has come to be seen as essential for all new teachers. The popularity of these programs is a strong indictment of the ability of schools of education to prepare teachers adequately for their chosen profession. These teacher induction programs, best

accompanied during the first year by a reduced teaching load, may prove far more effective than college education courses for training teachers.

Even if their monopoly over teacher training is rescinded by states, schools of education will have a role to play in training the nation's teachers, either through pre-service education or later on in professional development. Both prospective and practicing teachers may find particular coursework offered by schools of education to be reassuring and useful. But teachers and principals should be the final arbiters of teacher qualifications, because they are the ones accountable to states for educating our nation's children.



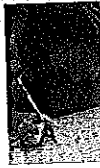
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On the most important question of the effectiveness of teachers from alternative programs, Darling-Hammond cites the findings from many studies that looked at alternative programs; but she does not include findings that show alternatively trained teachers are at least as effective at raising academic achievement as those who graduate from traditional programs. For example, she cites a study by Lutz and Hutton (1989) offering evidence that alternatively trained teachers experience less job satisfaction (page 132), but did not report Lutz and Hutton's response to their own question: whether or not alternative certification teachers are good teachers. Their response was "an unqualified yes! On virtually every indicator examined in this study, [alternatively certified] interns did as well as first-year teachers were doing" (page 252).

4. Educational Testing Service (1999), "The Academic Quality of Prospective Teachers: The Impact of Admissions and Licensure Testing," Princeton, NJ.

This report contains no data or research on any correlation between a certified teacher and student achievement. Rather, its intent is to compare the scores of college graduates who are prospective teachers with the scores of college graduates who do not enter teaching on such measures as the SAT, the ACT, and the Praxis I and II. The report is broken out by the teacher's major and anticipated

grade level of teaching. The study does not dispel the findings from previous studies showing that prospective teachers do not perform as well on tests such as the SAT, but it does explain and narrow the gap somewhat through its analysis of the data. The report contrasts the differences in academic standing of elementary and special education majors with teachers who have majored in an academic discipline. It provides more evidence of the relatively poor standing of education majors, a difference of about 50 points on the SAT in this particular study.

The report also compares the Praxis pass rates for students who attend institutions whose colleges of education have been accredited by the national accrediting body known as NCATE, but the comparison is problematic (see #8).

5. National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (November 20, 1997) "Research Proves Well-Prepared Teachers Produce Higher Achieving Students, But Many Students Do Not Have Qualified Teachers" (Press Release)

This is a press release from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, arguing vociferously for formal teacher preparation but providing no evidence of its value.

6. ERIC Digests (1986), "Misassignment of Teachers in the Public Schools"

This article is a description of the problems aris-



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APPENDIX A

Maryland's Case for Certification

We asked the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for evidence to support its teacher certification regulations and practices. Though it did not have any research that examined specifically the value of Maryland's teacher certification process, the department did provide twelve citations of newspaper articles, press briefings, studies, and position papers. These documents, claimed the department, "offered research-based evidence on the positive relationship

between having certified teachers in public school classrooms and K-12 student achievement."¹

Only three of these 12 cited sources try to build a research-based case linking teacher certification with greater gains in student achievement; none of the three makes its case (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 1992; Fuller, unpublished). The remaining nine sources do not attempt to link certification with student achievement, and any references to research are ambiguous.

¹Correspondence from Dr. Nancy Grasmick, Superintendent of Schools, Maryland State Department of Education to Robert C. Embry, President, The Abell Foundation, August 30, 2000.



1. Darling-Hammond, L. (1999) "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence"

The most comprehensive study on the subject and highly persuasive on first reading, this paper appears to contain extensive support for its many assertions about the need for formal teacher preparation. Unfortunately, the research cited by Darling-Hammond concerning the relationship between student achievement and a teacher's certification is thin. Many of the studies cited must be discounted for never having been subjected to peer review and for being so old that their validity and their relevance are in question. In addition, her interpretations of the research overreach, often employing misleading tactics to exaggerate the case for certification's effect on student achievement (see Section 3).

2. Darling-Hammond, L. (2000) "State Teaching Policies and Student Achievement" Teaching Quality Policy Briefs

This is a later, abbreviated form of the above study, restated for a more general readership.

3. Darling-Hammond, L. (1992) Teaching and Knowledge: Policy Issues Posed by Alternative Certification for Teachers

Darling-Hammond presents an elaborate case to support formal teacher preparation and dis-

courage states from adopting alternative certification routes. She congratulates Maryland for developing fairly good alternative routes as, in her view, such programs go; but she is not referring to Maryland's Resident Teacher Certificate, only to a university-based program offering a master's degree in teaching.

Despite all of the carefully crafted statements allegedly supported by nearly 50 studies that she cites, there is not a single piece of credible research presented in this paper that shows that alternatively certified teachers produce lower student gains than traditionally certified teachers. On page 130, she contends "the weight of research indicates that fully prepared teachers are in fact more successful with students than are teachers without full preparation and certification." However, the "weight of research" to which she is referring is three studies. These three studies misinterpret credible findings, cite flawed research often found in unpublished dissertations, or fail to use student achievement as the measure (Ashton and Crocker, 1986; Evertson, Hawley and Zlotnik, 1985; Greenberg, 1983).

Many of her references to research lose all of their authority when scrutinized; for example, her statement "Denton and Lacina (1984) found a positive relationship between the amount of professional coursework taken by teachers and their teaching performance, including their students' achievement" (page 134). Denton and Lacina (1984) did not examine student achievement.



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ing when teachers do not have a major in the subject they are teaching, not to be confused with the problem of uncertified teachers. Teaching outside of one's field of expertise, even if certified, has been shown to have a negative effect on student achievement (Hawk, Coble and Swanson, 1985; Monk and King, 1996; Goldhaber and Brewer, 1996, 1998, 2000; Hanushek, Gomes-Neto and Harbison 1992; Rowan, Chiang and Miller, 1997). If certification were linked to student achievement, a certified teacher teaching out of field should produce stronger student gains than should a teacher who is not certified and who is teaching out of field. For example, a history teacher who is certified in English should have higher student scores than the history teacher who is not certified in any subject. No research has produced such a finding. The distinguishing feature of these studies of high school teachers is the positive effect produced by knowledge of subject matter, not certification.

7. Wise, Arthur (Fall 1999), "Effective Teachers...Or Warm Bodies?" Quality Teaching, NCATE Newsletter, Volume 9, Issue 1

Written by Arthur Wise, the president of National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), this brief states that there are over 100 studies that show "qualified teachers outperform those with little or no preparation in helping students learn" (page 2). Though Wise, understandably, does not include the titles for these 100 studies

in the newsletter, we presume that we have sufficiently examined the 100 studies to which he refers as we did not omit any study from our analysis that related teacher preparation to student achievement. Further, Darling-Hammond (1997) did provide references for 200 studies that purportedly produced similar findings, all of which we reviewed and again found lacking (see separately-published appendix).

8. Wise, A., "ETS Study Shows NCATE Makes a Difference," Volume 8, Issue 2

This brief restates the findings from the ETS study (see #4).

The ETS study compares the pass rates on the Praxis teachers' exam for teaching candidates who attend a college or university where the college of education is accredited by NCATE. NCATE's growing influence on how teachers should be prepared is controversial; some administrators from private colleges and universities have expressed frankly their perception of NCATE, viewing the accrediting process as "overly intrusive, using vague criteria that focus more on inputs than results."² This brief reports higher passing rates on the Praxis for teaching candidates attending these institutions compared to teaching candidates from non-NCATE institutions.

There are two errors in the researchers' presentation of the data: 1) Praxis II pass scores vary considerably from state to state, as does the share of test-takers who graduate from NCATE-accredited



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schools. The positive relationship between the number of NCATE schools and the Praxis pass rate may simply reflect the fact that NCATE schools tend to be located in states with low cutoff scores. Secondly, researchers classified test-takers based on the college they attended and not enrollment in or completion of teacher training program. In fact, 14 percent of the sample of test-takers report that they were never enrolled in a teacher training program.

Researchers Dale Ballou and Michael Podgursky examined this same issue using individual-level test data obtained in two states that do not mandate NCATE accreditation and that have large numbers of both NCATE and non-NCATE programs. They found no evidence that graduates of NCATE-accredited programs have higher pass rates or higher mean test scores than non-NCATE graduates. In both states, the teacher training institutions with the lowest pass rates were NCATE-accredited (1999, 2000).

The brief does not mention that individuals from NCATE colleges have lower SAT and ACT scores than individuals from non-NCATE schools.³ It also fails to mention that college graduates who were never enrolled in teacher education programs have higher SAT scores than college

graduates enrolled in teacher education programs, a fact confirmed by the ETS study.

9. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (March 1998) "Policy and Excellent Teaching: Focus for a National Research Center," University of Washington

This paper outlines the issues surrounding teacher quality and proposes areas to investigate. It presents no evidence on the value of teacher certification.

10. Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (December 1999) "State Action to Improve Teaching," University of Washington (1)

This brief provides an overview of what states are doing to improve teaching, but does not evaluate these efforts. It urges states to focus on results rather than inputs, specifically referring to education coursework.

11. Viadero, Debra (March 22, 2000) "Students in Dire Need of Good Teachers Often Get the Least Qualified or Less Experienced," Education Week.

This news article reports on the work of Education Trust, which has provided evidence of the uneven distribution of teacher quality among

²Blair, J., "New accreditor gaining toehold in teacher ed" Education Week, Volume LXX, (37), May 23, 2001, pages 1, 12; and, Ballou, D. and Podgursky, M., "The case against teacher certification," The Public Interest, Summer 1998, Vol 32, pages 17-29.

³Ballou, D. and Podgursky, M., July 1999, "Teacher training and licensure: A layman's guide," in Better Teachers, Better Schools, eds. Marci Kanstroom and C. Finn, Jr., Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.



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schools, a disparity dependent upon the affluence and race of the children served. Education Trust (Spring 2000) reports the findings of several studies, most unpublished, showing that children who are minority and poor are far more likely to be taught by individuals who are 1) teaching outside their area of certification; 2) not certified; 3) lacking a major or minor in the fields; or 4) scoring poorly on tests of literacy. Even though all these facts may be true, the studies cited by Education Trust do not isolate teacher certification as a variable (controlling for critical factors such as a teacher's major or scores on measures relating to verbal ability).

It should be noted that some researchers dispute the disparity in teaching credentials between poor and affluent schools (Borman and Rachuba, 2000; Lippman, Burns and McArthur, 1996). Nevertheless, most research indicates that the distinct problem in schools serving children who are poor is the number of teachers who are teaching subjects in which they have no expertise (Goldhaber and Brewer, 2000; Ingersoll, 1998;

Hawk, Coble and Swanson, 1985). These studies do not show that certification status, as an isolated variable, has any significant effect on the achievement level of children who are poor or minority.

12. Fuller, Ed (no date) "Does Teacher Certification Matter?" Unpublished paper, University of Texas at Austin; also reported in "Texas Study Links Teacher Certification, Student Success" Education Week, May 12, 1999.

Findings from this never-published paper were reported quite prematurely in *Education Week* and by Darling-Hammond, who discussed it extensively in her 1999 study. More than two years later, the author still has not published the research. When we contacted the author at the Dana Center in Texas to try to obtain a finished version of the paper, he warned us emphatically that all he had was a "preliminary analysis for discussion purposes." The short paper that we reviewed was full of caveats and disclaimers; not one of its findings can be reported with confidence.