

Governors State University

Proposal for an Approved Alternative Route to Certification: Initial Elementary Certificate

Introduction

Basis for request:

Governors State University seeks approval of the program described in this proposal which provides an alternative route to the initial elementary certificate as pursuant to the law (105 ILCS 5/21-5c). The University intends to continue this program as long as there is sufficient need for the program. Sufficient need means that districts in the GSU service region (S&SW Cook, Will, and Kankakee counties) will support a minimum of twenty (20) students as outlined below. Other districts will have the opportunity to participate if space is available.

History of Proposal Development

Since the passage of S.B. 452, school districts have asked Governors State University to develop such a program to address pressing staffing problems experienced by the districts. Within the past few months discussions have been held to discuss the character of such a program and the district needs requiring response. Two meetings have been held, the first with superintendents of interested districts and the second with superintendents and union representatives. The following districts have now indicated their commitment to participate in this program:

District 143 ½	Posen-Robbins	District 152	Harvey
District 144	Markham	District 168	Sauk Village
District 148	Dolton	District 169	Ford Heights
District 151	South Holland	District 201U	Crete

In addition to these districts, representatives of the University Professionals of Illinois (IFT) and the Illinois Education Association have been involved in conversations with Governors State University concerning the program and have indicated their interest and support of this program. A high school district has also indicated an interest, though their interest is limited primarily to the area of physical science. While planning to respond to these needs is underway, this draft proposal does not include secondary science as one of the areas of emphasis. Finally, representatives of the Intermediate Service Center #4 which serves the 66 school districts in South and Southwest Cook county have participated in these meetings and the Center has committed itself to providing such assistance to the development and implementation of this program as is consistent with its mission.

The Need for an Alternative Route to Certification in the Participating Districts

All of the participating districts are located in South Cook and Northeast Will counties. Examination of school report card data for 1997-98 provided by ISBE reveals the following characteristics of the approximately 18,000 students served by these districts.

- 40% of the students served by these districts are low-income. Among the districts, the percentage of low income students ranges from 35% to 96%.
- The mobility rate of students in these districts is 29%.
- 80% of the students belong to ethnic and racial minorities. Among the districts, the percentage of minority students ranges from 30% to 100%.

The need for an alternative route to certification has become evident as we have jointly reviewed data concerning staffing in the districts listed above. Together these districts employed approximately 800 elementary and junior high school teachers in both 1993-94 and 1997-98. Between the years 1993-1994 and 1996-97, the districts hired 434 elementary and junior high teachers. Of these teachers, 290 were newly prepared and 144 had previous experience. By 1997-98, 52% or 226 of these teachers had left employment in these districts; most of them left after completing only one or two years of service.

These data capture only what is actually reported to the Illinois State Board of Education. Some districts lose a significant number of teachers between the time school begins and official data are reported. For instance, in 1999-2000, before September 10, District 148 had lost 11 of the 42 teachers hired. District 144 has been unable to hire appropriately certificated teachers and had to seek a waiver from the Illinois State Board of Education permitting employment of substitute teachers beyond the statutory limit of 90 days.

Several factors potentially related to retention of newly hired teachers in these districts were examined, including gender, ethnicity, teaching experience, completing preparation at Governors State University or elsewhere, and kind of teaching position. The only differences detected were related to gender and kind of position. The leaving rate was about 5% higher for males than for females. Junior high teachers were the most likely to leave. Forty-nine percent of elementary teachers hired left while 58% of junior high teachers were gone by 1997-98.

Of the 226 teachers leaving these districts, 82 or 36% continued to teach in Illinois public schools. Of these teachers, about 75% remained in Cook county; the next highest percentage were teaching in Will county the next year. It appears that most of those continuing to teach moved to districts with higher salaries. Of those who left the districts under study, 64% were not teaching in any Illinois public school the following year.

The districts and the University believe that the program described in this proposal will assist in addressing these needs for several reasons:

- A majority of the program participants are likely to be persons who are geographically connected to the South Suburbs.
- The program will explicitly address teaching in culturally and socially diverse settings.
- Districts and participants will agree that the participant will work in the district for a stated period of time after completion of the program.
- Research suggests that the kind of mentoring the program will provide is strongly associated with individuals remaining in the teaching profession.

GSU Response to District Needs

Governors State University has a history of working closely with districts in the South Chicago Metro Region which includes approximately 110 school districts located in South and Southwest Cook, Kankakee and Will counties. In addition to preparing students as beginning teachers and offering extensive professional development opportunities at the graduate level, Governors State University has sponsored a wide variety of policy forums through its Regional Leadership Development initiative and has provided significant leadership and support for the Beginning Teacher Program, the Administrative Guild which nurtures beginning administrators in the area, and the Consortium for Educational Change, an initiative that brings teachers, school boards, and administrators together to address issues common to districts in the region. The initiative most closely resembling the proposed program is one related to Reading Recovery in which the University first organized several districts into several consortia to support teacher training in Reading Recovery and then continues for more than a decade to provide leadership in this area. Experience with this consortia has informed the discussions and actions in creating the organization to support this program providing an alternative route to certification.

When conversations with the districts referred to above concerning an alternative route to certification moved from exploration to serious program development, the College carefully assessed its capacity to sponsor a program providing an alternative route to certification. During these discussions, the College affirmed as its first priority the continued support of the currently approved teacher education program. Further, action by the appropriate bodies of the faculty directed the Dean to insure that any such new program must be self-supporting and that no funds currently allocated to the current programs could be used for this program. The Dean and other University officials committed themselves to this restriction.

As a result, the program outlined here will be supported solely out of revenues generated from districts. Further, the sole purpose of this proposal is to address the staffing needs identified by the districts listed above. As a result, the relationship between the University and the districts can be characterized as contractual. The details of this relationship are described in the proposed agreement with the districts in Attachment A. The monies generated from these agreements together with tuition and fees paid by students will enable the program to be self-supporting. More detail regarding funding and staffing of the program is provided in the section, Funding and Staffing, below.

Because this program responds directly to the staffing needs of the participating districts, the program is collaborative in character. To structure this collaborative effort, a coordinating council will be created to oversee and facilitate the continued development and implementation of the program. The Council's purpose is to consider and recommend to the Dean of the College of Education policies and procedures related to the program as well as to insure the appropriate involvement of districts and the University in recruiting, selecting, mentoring, and evaluating participants in the program.

Coordinating Council

Because the GSU alternative certification program is directly linked to specific school districts, a Coordinating Council will be created to consider and recommend to the Dean of the College of Education policies and procedures related to the alternative certification program.

The Coordinating Council has the following membership:

1. The superintendent or his/her designee from each participating district. A district participates by sponsoring at least one candidate in the program.
2. A representative from each of the Illinois Education Association and the Illinois Federation of Teachers.
3. The Director of ISC #4 or his/her designee.
4. Members of the Governors State University Alternative Certification Committee as may be appointed by the Dean of the College of Education. One member of this committee shall be the Chair of the Division of Education Curriculum Committee (or his/her designee).
5. The Dean of the College of Education or his/her designee will serve as Chair of the Council.

The Council may recommend appropriate additional members to the Dean of the College by vote of the majority of the Council.

Program Overview

The Governors State University Alternative Certification Program will include "a course of study offered on an intensive basis in education theory, instructional methods and practice teaching" as outlined in Section 105 ILCS 5/21-5c of the Illinois School Code. Prior to assignment to a classroom teaching position, the candidates will complete both intensive instruction and field experience. During their teaching experience, they will enroll in an ongoing seminar and be supported by a full-time mentor who will work with no more than seven interns. After completing this year-long assignment as a classroom teacher, the candidate will participate in a culminating seminar in preparation for the final performance based assessment. During Core I and/or Core IV, the candidate may be required to complete up to nine

semester hours of course work as identified in the candidate's Individualized Professional Development Plan developed in consultation with the Assessment Committee.

The program has been designed to include "the current content and skills contained in the university's current courses for State certification, which have been approved by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Teacher Certification Board, as the requirement for State teacher certification" (Section 105 ILCS 5/21-5C, Illinois School Code). Because this program is specifically designed to prepare teachers to work with districts with a high percentage of at-risk students, there will be an explicit urban teacher education focus throughout the program. The coursework will combine specific courses now offered in our education program, adapt other existing program components, and include new seminars and courses designed specifically to meet the needs of this selected population. All coursework will be aligned with the performance based assessment which will determine if the participants gain initial certification. The ongoing and final assessments will be based on the Illinois Elementary Education Content Standards and the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards.

Recruitment, Assessment, and Admission

Beginning in January 2000, Governors State University and the participating school districts will begin recruiting participants for the program. The University is currently logging names of potential participants who contact the University inquiring about an alternative certification program, and the participating districts are developing lists of prospects. Upon approval these prospects as well as those generated through announcements, press releases, and other forms of publication, will be invited to apply to the program.

The goal of the application and assessment process is to admit to the program 25-30 students who are sufficiently academically able and conceptually advanced that they can survive the rigor of an intense training program that focuses on teaching ethnically and culturally diverse students. The assessment process will emphasize selecting able candidates who demonstrate a commitment to the communities represented by the participating districts and a willingness and ability to make long-term commitments to teaching in the South Metro region.

Assessment policy and action will be monitored by the Assessment Committee created by the Coordinating Council.

Applications will consist of:

- A written statement indicating why the applicant wishes to pursue the program;
- Transcripts verifying a bachelors degree from a regionally accredited college or university
- Letters of reference that specifically document the applicant's experience working with children or young adults; and
- Documentation verifying five years work experience in an area requiring application of the individual's postsecondary education.

Assessment of applicants will determine that:

- Applicant's transcripts show a minimum 2.5 (4.0=A) grade point average.
- Applicants exhibit through examination the levels of proficiency in writing and mathematics required of students in its undergraduate elementary education program;
- The applicant's academic, employment, and other experiential background enables the applicant to fulfill the equivalent of general education required in the undergraduate elementary education program.

Assessment during the admission process will determine the extent to which students' education, background, and experience fulfill the intent of general education requirements for the elementary certificate. In making this determination, Governors State University will use information developed from transcripts, CLEP examinations, midterm and final examinations used in existing GSU courses, videotapes, portfolios reviewed under the University's Credit for Life Experience Program guidelines and materials and performances required during the admission process.

To be admitted to the program, each student must meet communications and mathematics requirements through proficiency testing. Further each student must substantially meet the remaining requirements. The student must be able to meet any deficiencies by completing no more than nine semester hours of additional coursework.

In addition to other general education requirements, the student will document an area of expertise in the social sciences, humanities, mathematics or science. The evidence provided by the student will permit finding that the knowledge, skill, and understanding is at a level consistent with having completed significant coursework at the upper division level.

- Applicants demonstrate through case study analysis of a novel situation that they have sufficiently developed analytical and problem solving skills that they can successfully complete the academic and practical aspects of the program.
- Applicants demonstrate through interviews with experienced teacher educators and school personnel the personality traits and values necessary to succeed as teachers of children of poverty. This assessment will be supplemented with the use of instruments such as Haberman's Star Teachers of Children of Poverty or the urban teacher version of the Teacher Perceiver.
- The Assessment Committee will recommend admission of candidates to the Dean of the College of Education.

Program Sequence

The program sequence consists of the following components:

Core I (April-June)

During this segment of the program, students will complete the seven hour introductory sequence required of undergraduate elementary education students. The sequence includes the courses, The Future of American Education and Effective Teaching and Lab, a total of 7 credit hours. This component requires 15 hours of classroom observation.¹ The courses will be offered on the weekend to permit students to continue working while beginning the program.

Core II (June-August)

This segment of the program requires students to attend classes four days per week, six hours per day for six weeks, or a total of 144 clock hours. The content and experiences of this segment are organized into three courses:

- EDPD650 Strategies for Teaching in the Content Areas (4 hours)
This course will introduce the student to instructional strategies associated with reading, language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

¹ Students will be required to complete these experiences in regular public school classrooms outside of scheduled classtime. Employed students will be responsible for scheduling work so that they can complete these requirements.

- EDUC650A Theory to Practice (3 hours)
This course will introduce students to the psychological principles underlying successful teaching, with particular attention to learning theory, motivation, and classroom management. Emphasis will be placed on at-risk and special needs students.
- EDUC650B Field Experience (2 hours)
This course will require the student to demonstrate the ability to perform effectively as a beginning teacher in a classroom setting. This set of experiences will evolve from observation to responsibility for an entire class for a specified period of time.²

Core III: (September-June) Students will work under contract with a local district as full-time classroom teachers. During this period, students will be supported by mentors provided by the district and trained by the University. In addition, they will complete one seminar course each semester that focuses on developing analytic and reflective skills so that students can continue improving their teaching ability. The courses will be EDUC650C Reflective Teaching I and EDUC650D, Reflective Teaching II. These courses will pay particular attention to the continuing development of portfolios.

Core IV (June-August) During this period, students will complete EDUC650E, Seminar in Reflective Teaching III. In this seminar students will complete documentation, analysis, and interpretation of their experience in the program through completion of portfolios. In addition, as determined by prior evaluations during the program, students will, if necessary, complete an individualized professional development program consisting of three to nine semester hours; this program may consist of additional field experiences, courses in content areas, independent studies designed to respond specifically to the needs of the student.

Mentoring

Legislation establishing the alternative route to certification requires that a mentor support the provisionally certified teacher. Section 105 ILCS 5/21-5c in the Illinois School Code describes the second phase of the alternative program as "b) the person's assignment to a full-time teaching position for one school year, including the designation of a mentor teacher to advise and assist the person with that teaching assignment."

Governors State University has a rich history in induction and mentoring and therefore has capability to implement this component of the alternative certification program. During seven years of operating a Beginning Teacher Program, the University has trained more than 350 mentors. In addition to the strategies we have refined over this period, we will focus on a standards-based approach that supports portfolio development and performance based assessment. Every effort will be made to include nationally board certified teachers in the mentor training component.

Because mentoring is a critical component of the program, each full time equivalent mentor will assist no more than seven provisionally certified teachers. They will support and advise the novices and spend substantial time in each new teacher's classroom. Co-planning and co-teaching will be part of the developmental process. Ongoing formative assessment will be central to improving the practice of the new teachers. The mentors will not, however, be involved in the summative evaluation of their proteges.

Mentors will be outstanding retired or experienced district teachers. They will be selected by the Assessment Committee created by the Coordinating Council. Among the criteria that will be used for selection are an understanding of and experience in urban educational settings, demonstrated excellence in teaching, documented ability to work effectively with adults and satisfactory performance on the Star teachers assessment instrument and on the Hunt's conceptual level instrument.

² These experiences will be conducted in year-round schools or in summer school programs.

The University will train and supervise the mentors. The districts will pay them.

Mentor training will specifically focus on effective practice with diverse student bodies and at-risk students, teacher socialization theory, adult learning theory, coaching, standards-based feedback and performance assessment. Attention will be given to creating and assessing portfolios responsive to INTASC and NBPTS standards. Dr. Karen Peterson who has extensive experience in the area of mentoring will provide the training over a two week period prior to assignment as mentors beginning in September. In addition, Mrs. Carole Einhorn, a nationally board-certified teacher and coordinator of the Palatine School District mentor program has agreed to participate in the training of the mentors and development of the assessment process.

Formative and Summative Assessment of Candidates

Throughout the Alternative Certification Program assessment will be ongoing and standards based. The standards used will be the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards and the Elementary Education Content Standards. Assessment strategies will be based on the models of INTASC and National Board Certification portfolio development.

The assessment activities will be implemented and monitored under the general direction of an Assessment Committee established by the Coordinating Council. In addition to assuring that the assessment activities are carried out effectively, this Committee will resolve issues involving assessment of particular students and will recommend to the Dean whether students should be removed from the program or allowed to progress, the nature of any professional development work they need to do in Core I or Core IV, and, finally, whether they should be recommended for certification. At any point in time, a student may be referred to the Assessment Committee to determine the student's continuing status in the program.

Candidates will be taught to use reflective analysis in the development of a portfolio which will be central to the culminating assessment for initial certification. The Teacher Skill Development SelfAssessment Instrument or a similar model will serve as the basis of self reflection.

Comprehensive assessments will be conducted following completion of each of Core of the program. As a result of assessments during and at the end of Cores I-III, students' strengths and weaknesses will be identified. The identified weaknesses will provide the basis for the on-going Individualized Professional Development Plan that students present and complete during Core IV.

Minimum requirements will include:

- Core I: Students must earn a "B" in each course and be recommended by the instructor.
- Core II: Students must earn a "B" or better in each course and demonstrate the ability to teach with full responsibility for a minimum specified time. Students must also present evidence of passing the Basic Skills and Elementary examinations required under the Illinois Certification Testing System.
- Core III Principals in the school where the student teaches will evaluate the participant a minimum of four times, and a University supervisor will observe and evaluate the student's teaching ability two times each semester.
- Core IV: The student will present a portfolio to the Assessment Committee to demonstrate meeting the Illinois Standards for Initial Certification.

Staffing and Funding

Funding:

As noted above no funds currently allocated to support approved teacher education programs or other programs operated by the College of Education will be used to support this program. Funding for this program will be generated directly from fees paid by the participating districts. Each district will be responsible for the fee of \$4,000. The specific source of this revenue will vary from district to district, depending on agreements reached between participants and the District.

Anticipated Expenses		Anticipated Revenues	
Director	\$36,000	District Fees	\$100,000
		(25 students x \$4,000)	
Clerical	20,000		
Instructional Consultants	15,000		
Course Instruction	3500		
Mentor Training & Supervision	4500		
Travel	3000		
Overhead	8000		
Contractual	10,000		
Total	\$100,000		\$100,000

Using funds generated from agreements with participating districts and tuition and fees paid by students, the proposed program will be self-supporting. The program anticipates enrolling 25-30 participants. Thus, minimally, the program will generate \$100,000 annually in fees from districts.

Staffing:

Director: The Director of the program will provide overall supervision and coordination of the program and will assume teaching duties during all program segments except Core 1. The Director's primary duties and percentage of FTE effort are summarized below in chronological sequence:

- Developing and implementing of recruitment, assessment and admission of participants
- Developing and planning Core II and selection and training of mentors.
- Conducting Core II. This includes serving as instructor of record for the various courses offered during this period and supervising the various instructional consultants that provide assistance in these courses.
- Supervising Core III
- Teaching seminar and overseeing final participant assessment in Core IV.

Other Staffing Assignments:

- Core I will be taught by a full-time faculty member.
- Mentor training will be provided by consultants.
- Teaching consultants, drawn from full-time GSU faculty, school personnel and other sources depending on qualifications and availability, will be hired to teach instructional strategies for content areas and other topics.
- University and school personnel will be contracted with to provide expertise during the assessment of applicants at the beginning of the program and during the final assessment of participants at the end of the program.

Attachment A

Draft Document

Proposed Agreement between University and School Districts

Governors State University (hereinafter referred to as University) and School District _____ in _____ County, Illinois, (hereinafter referred to as School District) enter into this agreement for the purpose of preparing individuals for teaching certificates as outlined in an academic program approved by the State Board of Education on _____, 1999 (hereinafter referred to as Approved Program).

The University and the School District agree that:

The University will:

1. Provide the instruction and supervision outlined in the Approved Program document approved by the Illinois State Board of Education
2. Execute the documents necessary for those students successfully completing the Approved Program to become eligible for the appropriate teaching certificate awarded by the Illinois State Board of Education.

The School District will:

1. Pay the University \$4,000 per student in the Approved Program that the School District sponsors. The District agrees that this fee is non-refundable whether or not the student successfully completes the program.
2. Provide a mentoring teacher who will, along with University personnel, carry out the supervisory and mentoring functions outlined in the Approved Program.

The University and the School District further agree that they will:

1. Jointly recruit suitable prospective students for the Approved Program
2. Jointly review applicants and determine whether or not applicants meet the criteria for admission to the program as outlined in the Approved Program.
3. Establish and participate in a coordinating committee as described in the attached document describing the Approved Program.