(mentor, principal, curriculum supervisor, designated colleague).

Both the alternate route teachers and the student teachers are supposed to observe their mentors and other teachers performing in the classroom. The data show that while 100 percent of the student teachers performed these observations, only 55 percent of the alternate route teachers did. The 53 student teachers performed 5.5 times as many observations (2641) as the 73 alternate route teachers (488).

The data suggest that much of the fault with the New Jersey alternate route program lies in its fundamental assumptions. Although former Commissioner Cooperman has a school district background, the program design does not consider the constraints under which school districts operate, especially urban districts, which are the heaviest program users (New Jersey Department of Education December 1989). The program assumes that school districts have the financial resources, available staff, and additional time to conduct novice teacher training on their own while school is in session. To expect this of school districts, especially large urban districts, is at best naive. The data in these two studies show that the vast majority of the alternate route trainees have not received the most intensive phase of their field-based professional training.

Quantity Doesn't Mean Quality

The program design of the Texas alternate route program operated by the Dallas Independent School District is

The Alternate Route: Testimonial from

DENAE FRANKE

"Beware careful," I playfully cautioned Renae, her fresh, eager face before me. "You'll fall in love. You will not be able to extricate yourself. It's very addictive, you know." The words out, I considered how they echoed typical advice given to a friend bent on a destructive relationship, one that could only leave her emotionally damaged, irrevocably hurt. Not exactly the message I wished to convey to this young woman with an interest in teaching—for, you see, teaching is my life, a love of mine.

I didn't require a university professor to instill this love or devotion. Always present, it waited only for my students to activate it. Fresh out of college, I discovered this love firsthand in the classroom without any of the "benefits" of Curriculum and Instruction or Educational Psychology.

I graduated with a B.A. in English with no idea of what career I might want to pursue. I was intent on leaving my options open, but soon found that all the "doors of opportunity" seemed closed. And I needed money—oh, how I needed money!

A friend, noting my pecuniary situation, advised me to go into teaching. I had considered this previously, but had discovered to my dismay that a teaching certificate would entail another full year of college. Since neither I nor my pocketbook could withstand this, I dismissed the idea as impossible. But one day, in the confines of a campus restroom, the SECRET was disclosed: Yes, you could teach with just a degree, without certification. Incredible!

Snatching the phone book from a nearby pay phone, I quickly dialed four school districts near our rural community. Two wanted to interview me, and one verbally hired me over the phone. They interviewed me 45 minutes later, and I left, incredulous, with an official contract, a license to teach English as a Second Language, grades 6, 7, and 8.

The Alternative Certification Program

I became an alternative certification intern in a program in San Antonio, Texas—its second class of new teacher graduates from the area. The experience gave me a sense of direction and provided me with a rewarding career full of personal challenge and the potential for advancement. That was five years ago, and yet, even though the alternate route program remains in place, countless individuals like Renae remain unaware of it, its benefits to both the individual and the public, its opportunities lying needlessly dormant.

Many individuals with content-specific knowledge shy away from pursuing a teaching certificate because of the 1-2 years of study often required by universities for a teaching certificate. They view the process as too time-consuming or expensive. At the same time, Texas suffers a critical teacher shortage (Texas Education Center 1990).

Alternative certification programs are implemented by teachers, district specialists, professors, and education service leaders. They offer a more accessible route to the teaching profession for a diverse population, including degree candidates with content-based qualifications, mid-career professionals eager for a change, and minority and male candi-
similar to the New Jersey program (Lutz and Hutton 1989). The Dallas program began with 110 alternate route teachers who were selected after a nationwide search. Of the 110 who began the program, only 59 (54 percent) were certified at the end of the first year. The Dallas experience is informative in other ways. The school district found that the training drained their resources and they are now training fewer alternate route teachers.

The New Jersey Department of Education boasts that 98 percent of those who began its program were certified at the end of one full year of teaching (Kuhles 1990)—it uses the 98 percent certification rate to prove the “success” of the program. But both my studies investigating the New Jersey program and my comparisons of the New Jersey program and the Texas program lead me to a different conclusion: The New Jersey alternate route program has standards so poorly enforced that it seems almost impossible for participants not to be certified.

This research has become quite controversial, especially since I served as the director of the largest number of alternate route academic centers under contract to the New Jersey Department of Education for the first five years of the program, a position which enabled me to gather the data presented here.

I have been, and continue to be, a proponent of alternative teacher certification. However, the way things have been going, the New Jersey type of alternate route will continue to make training demands upon school districts that are already financially strapped, under-

dates, who are largely underrepresented in the teaching profession. Programs like the Alternative Certification Program (ACP) in Texas allow such individuals the opportunity to become strong, self-motivated educators (Texas Education Center 1990).

**Candidate Requirements**

Entry requirements to ACP are straightforward and unwavering: Candidates must hold a bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited institution of higher education with a grade point average not lower than 2.5. They must pass all the domains (math, reading, and writing) on the TASP (a state-mandated basic skills test) and have the minimum or above of required semester hours in the field in which certification is sought (Texas Education Center 1990).

At the Education Service Center in San Antonio, the program involves a personal investment of approximately $2,500 deducted from the intern’s salary during the course of the school year. The intern’s responsibilities include payment for any extra coursework required for certification and securing employment within a participating school district (Education Service Center, Region 20 1991-92).

While interns receive beginning teacher salary, they must attend required seminars beginning each year in June and involving several Saturdays each month during the school year. These workshops focus on a vast array of educational concerns such as behavior modification, motivation, the lesson cycle, the appraisal instrument, and other targeted areas in public education (Texas Education Agency 1990).

To assist the intern, an on-campus supervising teacher periodically visits the classroom to offer constructive suggestions and classroom strategies. In addition, interns observe 20 hours of classroom teaching on their own campuses and at others within the school district. At the successful completion of the internship, the candidate is recommended for certification (Texas Education Agency 1990).

**Diversity for the Teaching Profession**

Perhaps the greatest advantage of the Alternative Certificate Program for schools hinges on the diversity of people brought into the teaching profession—individuals who, in many cases, have had high-powered, interesting careers and now have a strong desire to help teach the next generation. ACP interns include former attorneys, dentists, doctors, bankers, realtors, geologists, architects, and a host of other professional individuals who have a desire to shape the future (Texas Education Agency 1990).

That our young people can benefit from their expertise is abundantly clear. We, as educators, can also learn from their varied experiences. The future growth of education lies within the power of the fresh, eager faces like Renée’s—people who are intent on making a difference, who are willing to get involved. In many ways, ACP represents the future of Texas education.

**References**


Dena E. Franke is a 9th grade English teacher, Pleasanton Independent School District, 831 Stadium Dr., Pleasanton, TX 78064

---

**a Texas Teacher**
Copyright © 1991 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.