MOVING TOWARD STANDARDS-BASED ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Alternative programs in special education are often developed in response to chronic personnel shortages. At issue, however, is the quality of alternative programs and their graduates. This paper describes the design, implementation and evaluation of a large special education alternative certification program that adheres to both professional practice and accreditation standards. Examples of performance assessments are presented, and data on candidate recruitment, preparation, and retention are discussed. Throughout, the authors argue that alternative certification programs must adhere to the same professional and accreditation standards as traditional programs and be evidence based.

Keywords: Alternative Certification, teacher quality, performance assessment, candidate recruitment

Professional and accreditation standards are typically used to define quality teaching practices, as well as quality teacher preparation and certification. In special education, the agreed upon knowledge and skills that define the profession are the standards of practice developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2003). In addition, state and national standards, including those of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2006), govern program design and curriculum, and are used for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs. However, despite the emphasis on standards in teaching and teacher education, Rosenberg and Sindelar (2001), in their review of

the literature, argue that alternative route teacher preparation programs in special education are seemingly "standards-free" (p. 20). With a few notable exceptions (Kenney, Hammitte, Rakestraw, & LaMontagne, 2000; Otis-Wilborn & Winn, 2000), they found little evidence of adherence to standards in either program development or candidate evaluation. Given the rise in the number of alternative routes to certification, and the acknowledged differences among non-traditional programs, it is important that alternative programs incorporate standards and be evidence based. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is, first, to describe the process of aligning and applying professional standards to an alternative special education program; second, to present evaluation data on the program and its graduates; and, third, to discuss implications for alternative routes to certification.

Alternative Route Teacher Preparation Programs

Since the mid 1990s, the number of alternative route teacher preparation programs has increased tremendously. Currently, all 50 states and the District of Columbia allow for alternative routes to certification with the number of participants growing annually. In 2003-2004, approximately 39,000 candidates were certified to teach through alternative programs; in 2005-2006, approximately 50,000; and in 2006-2007, approximately 59,000 (Feistritzer, 2007). Particularly in urban areas, these increases are in response to teacher shortages and the elimination of licensing practices no longer allowed under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, such as emergency or provisional certification. Thus, advocates argue that alternative routes fulfill a critical personnel need by expanding the pool of "highly qualified" candidates. In addition, alternative routes attract more diverse teachers, and other very capable and/or older candidates, who are either reluctant or unable to enroll in a traditional teacher preparation program (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005; Shen, 1998; Tyler, Yzquierdo, Lopez-Reyna, & Flippin, 2004; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). However, because in many alternative routes candidates enter the classroom early in their preparation program, critics contend that these programs diminish the profession by "communicating the dangerously misleading message that it does not require much special preparation to become a teacher" (Allen, 2003, p. 2).

The research literature offers some consensus on the key features of successful alternative route programs (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). These include meaningful partnerships between local education agencies and teacher education programs (Epanchin & Wooley-Brown, 1993; Gaynor & Little, 1997; Rosenberg & Rock, 1994), strong supervision and support from mentors while teaching (Burstein & Sears, 1998; Rosenberg & Rock), and a sound curriculum with sufficient coverage of teaching methods (Burstein & Sears; Evans, 2002; Rosenberg & Rock). There is less agreement, however, on the quality and retention of alternatively prepared candidates (Rosenberg & Sindelar; Sindelar, Daunic, & Rennels, 2004; Turley & Nakai, 2000; Tyler et al., 2004). Some researchers express concerns about insufficient support (Mata & Stone, 1998) and inferior teacher outcomes (Ashton, 1996); others suggest that graduates

of more intensive programs remain in the field (Haberman, 1999; Paccione, McWhorter, & Richburg, 2000) and are effective teachers (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004). In sum, research examining the efficacy of alternative routes, as measured by teacher competency is problematic, given the variability among alternative route programs, and an inadequate research base upon which to base judgment (Rosenberg & Sindelar).

Standards Guiding Alternative Certification in California

In California, 20% of all new teachers receive their credentials through state-funded internships (Chin & Young, 2007), an alternative route to certification that allows candidates to complete preparation programs while simultaneously employed in paid teaching positions. As described by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC, 2005), the state agency responsible for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs, the purpose of internship programs in California is threefold: to expand the pool of qualified teachers, including career changers and those from traditionally underrepresented groups; to respond to immediate K-12 personnel needs while providing professional preparation comparable to that in traditional programs; and to supervise and support interns so they will have the skills to succeed and stay in "hard-to-staff" schools and specialty areas. Consistent with these purposes, state-funded internships are required to meet the same accreditation and teacher performance standards as traditional programs. Therefore, for approval, university special education intern programs must write to the *Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Education Specialist Credential Programs* (CTC, 1996). Moreover, recognizing the unique preparation needs of interns, regulations specific to intern programs are embedded within several CTC standards.

While licensing standards from the CTC guide the design, implementation, and state accreditation of alternative route programs, many school districts use the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) (CTC, 1997) to evaluate and induct new employees, including special education interns. The CSTP are organized around the following six domains: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning; Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning; Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students; Assessing Student Learning; and Developing as a Professional Educator. Under each of the domains are five or six key elements further defining the standard. Finally, in order to receive national accreditation, university programs must adhere to the standards developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The CEC guidelines, *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines for Special Educators* (2003) are a comprehensive set of standards for professional preparation programs and their graduates. While similar in purpose, each of these four sets of standards (CTC, CSTP, CEC, NCATE) is organized differently, with some more specific to special education than others. Thus, a challenge for special education programs, whether

traditional or alternative, is how to align multiple standards and extend elements to address those issues unique to special educators (Otis-Wilborn & Winn, 2000).

Although standards define the profession by providing general expectations, they lack the specificity needed to describe and assess practice. It is for this reason that Darling-Hammond (2006) and Cochran-Smith (2001) recommend that evaluation of teacher preparation should provide evidence of candidate performance, perceptions of preparedness, and the impact of preparation on teaching practice and student learning. Consistent with this argument, NCATE (2006) emphasizes the importance of an assessment system in their Professional Standards for Accreditation that includes data on program quality and unit operations, and documents teacher candidates' competencies over time.

The CSUN Special Education Intern Program

The CSUN Special Education Intern Program is housed at one of the 23 campuses within the CSU system, the largest system of higher education in the nation. With an enrollment of nearly 34,000, CSUN is located 25 miles northwest of central Los Angeles in the San Fernando Valley, a metropolitan suburb with a multi-ethnic population of over 2 million. CSUN, one of the largest credential granting institutions in California, offers multiple pathways for obtaining credentials that include undergraduate, traditional, and alternative certification programs. Offered in partnership with over 50 surrounding school districts and a county consortium, the intern program accounts for approximately one-third of all CSUN special education credential candidates. Upon completion of the two year program, interns earn a Preliminary Level I, Education Specialist Credential in the specialization areas of Mild-Moderate Disabilities, Moderate-Severe Disabilities, Early Childhood Special Education or Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

All CSUN credential programs are designed to meet accreditation standards established by the CTC, the state body responsible for accreditation in California, and NCATE. In addition to standards established by California, CTC reviews programs according to national professional standards, with the CEC knowledge and skills standards used for the accreditation of special education credential programs. The CSUN intern program, designed to meet accreditation standards while addressing the unique needs of on-the-job teachers, provides a combination of traditional and alternative approaches to teacher preparation. As described previously (Burstein & Sears, 1998), the three primary components of the intern program are university coursework, seminars, and practica.

Coursework

Interns enroll in a rigorous course of study, just as do other teacher candidates at CSUN. The courses include generic classes in special education, specialization classes in a specific credential area (i.e., mild/moderate disabilities,

moderate/severe disabilities, early childhood special education, deaf and hard of hearing), general education credential classes that address reading and English learners, and curriculum and instruction. While specific requirements vary across specializations, all require over 40 units of post-baccalaureate coursework.

Seminars

Credential pathways at CSUN include seminars as a requirement and distinct part of every field experience. The inclusion of seminars reflects the belief that effective preparation for professional educators is dependent upon a well-sequenced integration of theory and practice in the preparation experience. In the traditional program, credential candidates complete two fieldwork seminars, one at the beginning of the program with an early field experience and the other as a part of student teaching. Interns, on the other hand, complete a series of four seminars, one each semester during the two-year program, and each aligned with a practicum experience. Each seminar focuses on a specific content area designed to address the developmental needs of interns: classroom organization and management in the first seminar, assessment in the second, curriculum and instruction in the third, and professional development in the fourth and final seminar. In addition, the seminar builds a network of cohort support, where interns share field experiences and discuss and reflect upon teaching practices.

Practica

The intern program is designed to provide ongoing support and supervision through four semesters of practica, aligned with the four seminars described previously. CTC program standards emphasize the importance of field experiences that are sequential in difficulty and have clearly stated, measurable objectives. To this end, interns are observed and evaluated by their university supervisor a minimum of two times each semester and a minimum of eight times over the two-year period. The university supervisor also serves as the seminar instructor, an arrangement that promotes the integration of coursework and practica. As specified by CEC standards (2003), university supervisors are faculty qualified and experienced in teaching in the area of specialization.

CTC program standards also state that cooperating districts must have field-based support personnel available for each intern in the employing agency. CSUN has established a memorandum of understanding with collaborating districts/counties, outlining educational goals of the intern program and the responsibilities of the university and collaborating district. Support personnel include on-site teachers, full-time released district support providers, and retired teachers, each of whom are expected to have weekly contact with interns, observe at least once a month, share resources, and assist the intern in assuming the responsibilities of their position.

Methods of Assessing the Program and Its Candidates

The purpose of the intern program is to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds, provide preparation that facilitates development and support while on-the-job, and prepare qualified teachers who remain in the field. To this end, data were collected to measure the recruitment, preparation, and retention of candidates.

Recruitment

Demographic data are collected each year on interns and stored in a database that includes age, ethnicity, academic background, and recruitment source. The database also contains the intern's place of employment, and contact information for support providers and administrators helping to facilitate communication between the university and school district personnel. Through the database, information on interns and the intern program is summarized yearly.

Preparation - Candidate Performance

Each semester of the two-year program, interns are evaluated by their CSUN university supervisor on two performance assessment measures, the Teaching Evaluation and the Teaching Portfolio. (See Appendix A, Special Education Teaching Evaluation Form and Figure 1, Summary of Portfolio Assignments.) As shown, both the portfolio and the teaching evaluation are organized around the six domains of the CSTP, the most performance based of the California standards.

Figure 1. Summary of portfolio assignments.

These items are required as Portfolio entries each semester of the intern seminar. In addition, each section must include a reflection on the standard.

	Semester 1 Classroom Organization	Semester 2 IEP Development Assessment	Semester 3 Curriculum Instruction	Semester 4 Professional Development
Standard I : **Engaging & Supporting All Students in Learning**	Ecological Project (Class/School Profile; Interest Inventory)	Lesson Plan (Based upon IEP goals and objectives)	Unit Plan lesson (Demonstrates variety of effective instructional strategies for diverse learners)	Self- selected artifact demonstrating recommended practice
Standard II: **Creating & Maintaining an Effective Environment**	Classroom Organization and Management Plan (Class layout; rules and routines;	Review / revise classroom organization and management plan	Unit Plan Lesson (Demonstrates variety of instructional arrangements;	Self- selected artifact demonstrating recommended practice

for Students	schedules behavior plans) Video/pictures		small, large, and cooperative groups)	
Standard III: **Understanding & Organizing Subject Matter Knowledge for Student Learning**	Semester Plan #1	Semester Plan #2	Unit Plan Lesson (Demonstrates differentiated instruction)	Self- selected artifact demonstrating recommended practice
Standard IV: **Planning Instruction & Designing Learning Experiences for All Students**	Lesson Plan (Draws upon students' interests as determined from the Inventory)	IEP goals and objectives System for addressing and monitoring goals and objectives	Unit Plan (Series of sequenced lessons that are standards based)	Self- selected artifact demonstrating recommended practice
Standard V: **Assessing Student Learning**	Assessment component of Semester Plan	Present Level of Performance Statement(s) (assessments analysis of results)	Documentation of student progress throughout Unit Plan	Self- selected artifact demonstrating recommended practice
Standard VI: **Developing as a Professional Educator**	Induction plan Learning Autobiography	Induction plan	Induction plan	Induction plan Professional Growth Project

A number of activities have been initiated to promote the reliable administration of these performance assessments. Specifically, guidelines for portfolio assignments, with accompanying scoring rubrics, are distributed to all university supervisors; supervisors attend monthly meetings for planning and discussion of student assignments and progress; and supervisors use an extensive rubric adapted from the CFASST Summary of Practice (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 1999) in assessing interns' performance. The rubric provides detailed observable examples of CSTP ratings 1, 2, 3, and 4 for each element on the evaluation form. Supervisor ratings by standards for both the teaching evaluation and portfolio are submitted each semester to CSUN's on-line data warehouse. The data warehouse compiles scores by credential pathway and specialization with findings shared with campus departments and programs.

Preparation-Intern and Employer Perceptions

Two externally administered statewide measures assess interns' perceptions of their preparation program. One, the CTC Exit Survey, is available to all state funded interns and is completed by them at the end of their program.

The CTC Survey asks questions regarding interns' perceptions of pre-service preparation, preparation and support while serving as the teacher of record, program coursework, and outcomes. Interns' responses are submitted on-line, with summaries provided to program directors by Commission staff.

A second measure of program satisfaction is administered system-wide by the Chancellor's office of the California State University. The CSU Follow Up Survey is completed by both employers and graduates one year after finishing the program. Scores on individual items are aggregated into Composite Scores, according to general topics or issues related to preparation. Composite Scores are reported as percentages of respondents who felt either Well Prepared or Adequately Prepared with 80% set as the CSUN benchmark.

Retention

At the end of each year, we track interns using the database. First, we contact each school to check on their employment. If they are no longer at the school, we check with the district to see if they are still teaching but at another school. Finally, if we cannot locate their employment information, we contact the former intern regarding their teaching status. Data are summarized, reporting intern retention in the same district, in another district in California, in another state, in an educational leadership position but not teaching, or not teaching.

Program and Candidate Evaluation Findings

Presented below is information related to the recruitment, preparation, and retention of interns.

Recruitment

One measure of program success is the ability to recruit candidates, and in particular candidates who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse. Since 1994, the CSUN Special Education Intern program has grown tenfold from fewer than 30 to a high of over 300 participants during the 2004-2005 academic year. While numbers have fluctuated, we have recruited over 80 new interns in six of the last seven academic years. (See Figure 3.) These figures suggest successful recruitment efforts. Furthermore, the number of diverse candidates is nearly 40%, a figure that is higher than reported national averages of both alternative and traditional programs.

Figure 2. Recruitment Numbers from 2001-2008
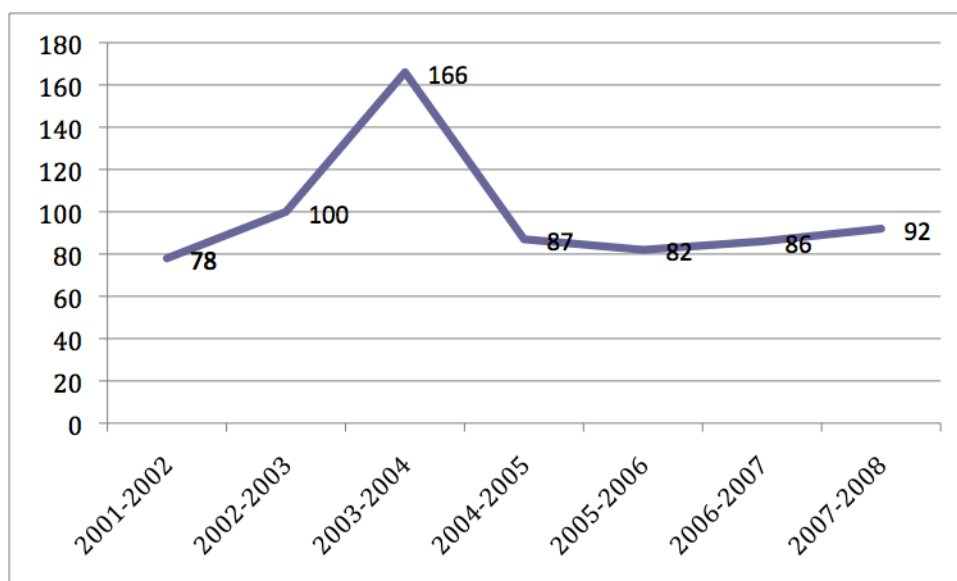
Preparation

Candidate Performance. A second measure of program effectiveness is the appraisal of interns on performance-based assessments, the teaching evaluation and portfolio. Average ratings on the teaching evaluation for the cohort of mild-moderate interns beginning the program fall semester 2006 appear in Table 1. Cross-sectional data, ratings each semester for different cohorts, are consistent with these longitudinal findings; i.e., semester three and four averages are higher than semester one and two. (See Table 2.) Overall, these numbers reflect development over time and are indicative of accomplished and competent graduates. Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, when compared with other CSUN special education credential pathways, ratings of competency for final semester interns are comparable to those in other programs for both the portfolio (a five-point scale) and the teaching evaluation (a four-point scale).

Program Satisfaction. Interns' perceptions of program effectiveness and implementation are reported in the CTC Exit Survey. In 2007, overall ratings of the program were very consistent with those reported statewide—73% of CSUN interns and 72% of all state interns reported their program as helpful or very helpful. In rating the effectiveness of coursework and seminars, 70% of CSUN interns reported these as being effective or very effective, compared to a statewide average of 63%. Further, it is important to note that 70% of CSUN interns reported communicating with their support providers at least once a week (13.2% one time per week, 42.1%, 2-3 times per week, 15.8% daily) and over 50%, at least once a week with their university supervisor (26.3% one time per week, 28.9% 2-3 times per week). Thus, CSUN interns report overall satisfaction with the program, that coursework is effective in developing the competencies

needed in the profession, and that program supports, both from the district and the University, are implemented as designed.

Table 1
Teaching Evaluations by Semester in the Program, Mild-Moderate Cohort 2006-2008

Standard	Semester	1 Fall 2006 N =35	2 Spring 2007 N=26	3 Fall 2007 N=38	4 Spring 2008 N=35
1. Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning		2.66	3.0	3.41	3.71
2. Creating and Maintaining An Effective Environment for Students		2.63	2.99	3.39	3.70
3. Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter Knowledge for Student Learning		2.69	3.03	3.43	3.72
4. Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students		2.64	3.01	3.40	3.75
5. Assessing Student Learning		2.54	2.92	3.35	3.68
6. Developing as a Professional Educator		2.66	3.10	3.34	3.62
Overall Average		2.64	3.02	3.39	3.70

Table 2
Teaching Evaluations by Semester in the Program, Mild-Moderate Interns Fall 2007

Standard	Semester	1 N = 29	2 N = 12	3 N = 38	4 N = 15
1. Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning		2.89	2.90	3.41	3.92
2. Creating and Maintaining An Effective Environment for Students		2.85	2.70	3.39	3.90
3. Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter Knowledge for Student Learning		2.75	2.72	3.43	3.92
4. Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students		2.65	2.79	3.40	3.92
5. Assessing Student Learning		2.50	2.81	3.35	3.89
6. Developing as a Professional Educator		2.78	2.79	3.34	3.89
Overall Average		2.74	2.78	3.39	3.91

Table 3
Average Portfolio and Teacher Evaluations: Fourth Semester Interns Compared to Final Semester Ratings For All CSUN Credential Pathways (Fall 2007-Spring 2008)

Standard	Interns		All Credential Pathways	
	Portfolio	Teaching Evaluation	Portfolio	Teaching Evaluation
1. Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning	4.31	3.77	4.38	3.74
2. Creating and Maintaining An Effective Environment for Students	4.29	3.76	4.43	3.66
3. Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter Knowledge for Student Learning	4.34	3.78	4.31	3.75
4. Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students	4.40	3.80	4.47	3.79
5. Assessing Student Learning	4.34	3.74	4.37	3.69
6. Developing as a Professional Educator	4.37	3.70	4.51	3.73
Overall Average	4.34	3.76	4.41	3.73

The CSU follow-up survey of graduates and their employers presents perceptions of preparedness one year after program completion. These data allow comparison of interns with all CSUN special education teacher candidates. As shown in Table 4, on all individual items the percentage of respondents feeling well prepared or adequately prepared was as high or higher than the group of CSUN graduates as a whole. While these data are encouraging, it is important to note that the numbers are quite low, with less than 20 responses for each intern group.

Retention

The extent to which recruitment efforts address personnel shortages, a frequently identified purpose of alternative certification, depends upon the number of alternatively prepared teachers who remain in the field. Follow-up data for the past five years appear in Table 5. These figures suggest that, overall, within five years of entering the program, 86% of CSUN special education interns remain teaching. Further, the vast majority of CSUN interns remain in their same district and/or in California. More specifically, retention for both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 cohorts is 80%, and for the 2005-2006 cohort, 85%. Retention in the program for the last two years is high, 99% and 93% for 2006-2007 and 2007-

2008, respectively. With national figures suggesting attrition rates of between 13% and 17% each year (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004), these figures are promising.

Table 4
CSU Evaluation Composite Scores: Education Specialist Graduates and Employers

Composite Item NE = Number of Employers NA = Number of All ES candidates NI = Number of Interns	All ES 2003-2004 NE = 22 NA = 37	Interns 2003-2004 NE = 17 NI = 19	All ES 2004-2005 NE = 23 NA = 39	Interns 2004-2005 NE = 10 NI = 15
Employers assess effectiveness of programs	81	84	75	82
Preparation to teach reading/language arts	77	80	72	78
Preparation to teach math	66	71	63	71
Preparation to plan instruction	84	88	76	81
Preparation to motivate students	87	93	80	83
Preparation to manage instruction	80	87	72	79
Preparation to use education technology	79	83	58	65
Preparation to use good teaching practice	84	90	76	79
Preparation to assess and reflect	86	92	78	80
Preparation for equity and diversity	84	88	77	80
Preparation to teach English learners	88	92	74	75
Preparation to teach special learners in inclusive schools	85	91	77	81
Overall value of professional coursework	89	93	84	84
Overall value of professional fieldwork in the credential program	78	86	82	83

Discussion and Implications

Taken together, the program evaluation data present an overall positive picture of the CSUN special education intern program. Specifically, the program consistently attracts large numbers of candidates, many from cultural and ethnic backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the teaching profession. Measures of interns' competencies reflect development over time and are comparable to those in other CSUN credential pathways. The program provides a course of study that is viewed by interns and their employers as worthwhile and relevant, and interns report receiving classroom support, from both the university and their employer. Finally, follow-up data indicate that the vast majority of interns remain in the field. Thus these preliminary findings suggest that the CSUN program addresses the goals of California internships: to expand the pool of qualified teachers; to

provide preparation comparable to traditional programs; and to supervise and support interns with the skills needed to stay in specialty areas. However, while promising, we concur with Keogh (2004) that "data do not necessarily equate to evidence" (p. 82). At a minimum, evidence awaits the examination of data over time in order to discern reliable and meaningful trends as well as the addition of qualitative measures, including follow up observations and interviews to confirm ratings of program satisfaction and efficacy.

Table 5
Retention Data for Intern Cohorts: 2003-2008

Teaching Status	Number of Interns by Teaching Status and Cohort Year					
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	Totals
Teaching in California and in same district	105	57	65	68	86	381
Teaching in California but not in same district	10	3	2	1	0	16
Teaching out of California	1	2	1	1	0	5
In leadership position	2	1	0	1	0	4
On leave	0	0	0	1	0	1
Not teaching	30	16	12	1	6	65
Status unknown	18	8	2	13	0	41
Total in cohort	166	87	82	86	92	513
Total teaching	118	63	68	72	86	407
Total not teaching	30	16	12	1	6	65
Total known status	148	79	80	73	92	472
Percentage teaching	80%	80%	85%	99%	93%	86%

As described in this paper, the accreditation and professional practice standards that guide traditional programs at CSUN are also used to direct the design, implementation, and evaluation of our alternative certification program. Interns enroll in a similar course of study that is of the same length or even longer than the traditional program, and they must demonstrate identical professional competencies in order to graduate. On-the-job experiences satisfy the early fieldwork and student teaching requirements, but do not replace campus-based instruction. This program is considered alternative only because students start teaching in special education, when or soon after they enter their credential program, rather than upon its completion. Therefore, we are an example of the difficulties in differentiating alternative from traditional teacher education, as what distinguishes one from the other is not clearly defined in the literature (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005).

We are fortunate that in California, licensing standards apply equally to all teacher preparation programs. For this reason, we do not struggle to reconcile different sets of standards for our alternative and traditional programs, or for teacher candidates (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2001). Furthermore, the state agency responsible for credentialing approves and maintains oversight of alternative route programs. This commitment to regulation reflects a view of teaching as a professional endeavor, and the recognition that alternative routes are not a "quick fix" for personnel shortages. Encouragingly, holding programs accountable to standards has not diminished their appeal. Since 1994, the number of funded programs has grown from 29 to consistently over 70, and the number of interns in California from approximately 1200 to over 8000 per year. Apparently, rigor is still competitive in the market place.

We do struggle, however, with knowing what constitutes adequate classroom support for on-the-job teachers. In our case, interns attend a bi-weekly seminar with other special educators, receive weekly assistance from a district support provider, and are supervised by the same university faculty throughout the two-year program. We believe strongly that these additional supports are essential in order to promote effective teaching during the credentialing process. However, done well, these supports require additional resources above and beyond those typically provided in traditional programs.

For the last 14 years we have received continuous assistance from the CTC in the form of a state intern grant. Funding from the grant has supported advisors and administrative staff, enabling us to admit and process large numbers of teacher candidates and to track their teaching status. Support from the state grant has enhanced our efforts in aligning coursework and performance assessments with standards and, perhaps most importantly, the grant has allowed us to develop a strong cadre of support providers, funding their training and providing stipends for their on-going efforts. Said directly, ours and other alternative routes to certification that include features of successful programs are not "an inexpensive substitute for traditional programs" (Allen, 2003, p. 1).

Universities are often criticized as being inflexible, highly regulated, and slow to respond to public practicalities. However, our experiences suggest that it is possible for a large public university to offer a teacher preparation program that meets the personnel needs of a local community while adhering to state and national standards. Our experiences further suggest that, if urban universities are to attract diverse candidates, teacher educators must provide multiple pathways for those interested in the profession. Therefore, there is reason to believe that alternative programs are here to stay (Chin & Young, 2007).

Few would dispute that the alternative certification option adds to the supply of teachers; however, questions regarding the quality of programs and their graduates abound. Adherence to the same standards that guide and accredit traditional programs, an example of which is described in this paper, and the

collection of data regarding the effectiveness and retention of program graduates, a process in progress at CSUN, has the potential to bring evidence of quality to alternative certification. Given the likely endurance and proliferation of alternative programs in special education, it is important that efforts such as these be expanded and disseminated. While alternative suggests different, alternative programs must be held to the same professional practice and accreditation standards as traditional programs, and they must aim to be evidenced based.

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Appendix A

California State University, Northridge
Special Education Intern Teaching Evaluation
Education Specialist Level I: Mild/Moderate Disabilities

Name_____**Semester**_____1 _____2 _____3 _____4

School_____**Level** _____elementary _____middle _____high

District_____**Class Designation** _____

University Supervisor_____**Date** _____

This form is designed to evaluate candidates on elements of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Additional items (see*) are included that reflect standards from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Council for Exceptional Children. The following criteria are defined by descriptions of practice found in the intern handbook.

I	1	2	3	4
insufficient evidence	practice not consistent with standard	developing practice	maturing practice	practice that exemplifies standard

Please rate candidates on each of the following items.

1. Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning	I	1	2	3	4
1.1 Connects students' prior knowledge, life experience, and interests with learning goals.					
1.2 Uses a variety of instructional strategies and resources to respond to students' diverse needs.					
1.3 Facilitates learning experiences that promote autonomy, interaction, and choice.					
1.4 Engages students in problem solving, critical thinking, and other activities that make subject matter meaningful.					
1.5 Promotes self-directed, reflective learning for all students.					

2. Creating and Maintaining An Effective Environment for Students	I	1	2	3	4
2.1 Creates a physical environment that engages all students.					
2.2 Establishes a climate that promotes fairness and respect.					
2.3 Promotes social development and responsibility.					
2.4 Establishes and maintains standards for student behavior.					
2.5 Plans and implements classroom procedures and routines that support student learning.					
2.6 Uses instructional time effectively.					
*2.7 Directs activities of classroom paraprofessionals, aides, volunteers, peer tutors.					
*2.8 Utilizes positive behavior support techniques.					
*2.9 Encourages interactions with typical peers across instructional settings.					

3. Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter Knowledge for Student Learning	I	1	2	3	4
3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of subject matter content and student development.					
3.2 Organizes curriculum to support student understanding of subject matter.					
3.3 Interrelates ideas and information within and across subject matter areas.					
3.4 Develops student understanding through instructional strategies that are appropriate to the subject.					
3.5 Uses materials, resources, and technologies to make subject matter accessible.					
*3.6 Adapts/modifies subject matter to meet students' individual needs.					

4. Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students	I	1	2	3	4
4.1 Draws on and values students' background, interests, and developmental learning needs.					
4.2 Establishes and articulates goals and instructional objectives for student learning.					
4.3 Develops and sequences instructional activities and materials for student learning.					
4.4 Designs short-term and long-term plans to foster student learning.					
4.5 Modifies instructional plans to adjust for student needs.					
*4.6 Develops and implements IEP goals to address students' individual needs.					

5. Assessing Student Learning	I	1	2	3	4
5.1 Establishes and communicates learning goals for all students.					
5.2 Collects and uses multiple sources of information to assess student learning.					

	I	1	2	3	4
5.3 Involves and guides all students in assessing their own learning.					
5.4 Uses the results of assessments to guide instruction.					
5.5 Communicates with students, families and other audiences about student progress.					
*5.6 Develops and administers nonbiased, nondiscriminatory assessment procedures.					
*5.7 Utilizes assessment data to develop Individual Education Programs (IEP).					
*5.8 Evaluates instruction and monitors progress of individuals with exceptional learning needs.					

6. Developing As A Professional Educator	I	1	2	3	4
6.1 Reflects on teaching practices and plans professional development.					
6.2 Establishes professional goals and pursues opportunities to grow professionally.					
6.3 Works with communities to improve professional practice.					
6.4 Works with families to improve professional practice.					
6.5 Works with colleagues to improve professional practice.					
*6.6 Assumes initiative and responsibility for tasks and assignments.					
*6.7 Collaborates with general education classroom teachers and other school and community personnel to integrate students across instructional environments.					
*6.8 Uses verbal, nonverbal, and written language effectively.					
*6.9 Upholds high standards of competence and integrity and exercises sound judgment in the practice of the profession.					

Please note: During the last field experience, interns must average a "3" in all items with no "1s".

Summary of candidate's strengths:	**Areas to be developed:**

Evaluation completed by:

University Supervisor Signature_____   Date _____

I have reviewed this evaluation with my University Supervisor

I accept this evaluation _____   I wish to submit an addendum _____

Intern Signature_____   Date _____