

Title II of the *Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA)*, as amended in 2008 by the *Higher Education Opportunity Act*, requires states to report annually on key elements of their teacher preparation programs and requirements for initial teacher credentialing, kindergarten through 12th grade. *Title II News You Can Use* is a series of issue briefs on key data collected through the Title II HEA data collection. This issue brief provides information on the characteristics and trends of alternative teacher preparation programs.

## Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs

### Alternative programs offer a different pathway to earn an initial teaching credential

Alternative teacher preparation programs first emerged in the 1980s, offering a new pathway for individuals seeking to earn an initial teaching credential. While traditional teacher preparation programs often attract individuals who enter college with the goal of becoming a teacher, alternative programs often attract candidates who already hold a bachelor's degree in a specific content area and may have prior work experience but are seeking to switch careers. Alternative programs are often considered more nimble and can specifically focus on recruiting teachers in hard-to-staff subjects or to hard-to-staff schools in large cities and rural areas (Bireda & Chait, 2011).

*Alternative programs are often considered more nimble...*

Each state determines its own requirements for alternative routes to a teaching credential, allowing alternative programs to vary significantly from one state to another. For instance, California defines alternative programs as “commission-approved intern programs including participation in required support and supervision activities and employment as the teacher of record” (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2015).

Texas, on the other hand, defines alternative programs more broadly as “a nontraditional route to certification that may allow you to teach while completing the requirements” (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

Despite differences in state requirements and classifications, most alternative programs share some similar characteristics, outlined below.

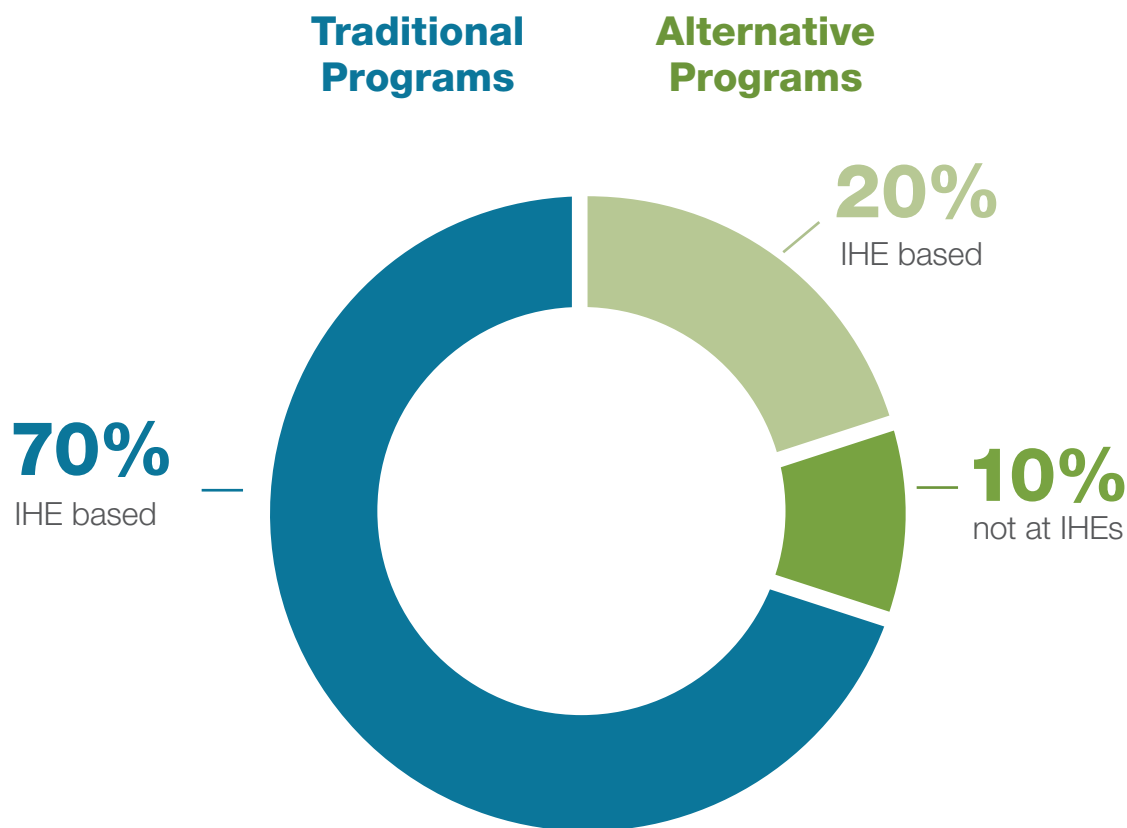
## Traditional Programs Compared to Alternative Programs

|   | <b>Traditional Programs</b>  | <b>Alternative Programs</b>  |
|---|--|--|
| At what level are programs offered?                         | Traditional programs are typically undergraduate programs, although Masters of the Arts in Teaching (MAT) programs are also often considered traditional programs.                   | Alternative programs are almost exclusively post-baccalaureate programs that require a bachelor's degree for admission to the program.   |
| What types of organizations offer programs?                 | Institutions of higher education (IHEs)  | IHEs, private or nonprofit organizations, local education agencies (LEAs), state education agencies (SEAs), or partnerships of entities  |
| What type of candidates do programs tend to attract?        | Traditional programs often attract individuals who enter college with the goal of becoming a teacher or select teaching as a career while still enrolled in college.                 | Alternative programs often attract individuals who already hold a bachelor's degree in a specific content area and may have prior work experience but are seeking to switch careers.         |
| What do programs focus on?                                  | Traditional candidates typically receive instruction in the specific content area they plan to teach while the program simultaneously provides instruction in pedagogy and practice. | Since alternative candidates often already have expertise in a specific content area, alternative programs often focus less on a specific content area and more on pedagogy and practice.    |
| Can candidates become the teacher of record in a classroom? | Teaching candidates generally do not become the teacher of record while participating in traditional programs.   | In many states, teaching candidates may become the teacher of record in a classroom while simultaneously completing their teacher preparation in an alternative program.                     |
| What about supervised clinical experience?                  | Traditional programs often require various types of supervised clinical experiences, such as observations and student teaching.  | Alternative programs generally move qualified candidates into the classroom on a fast-track basis; thus, supervised clinical experience may take the form of a residency year or internship. |

## Nearly one-third of teacher preparation programs are alternative programs

In 2014, states reported a total of 673 alternative teacher preparation providers offering 8,075 unique programs—accounting for 30 percent of the 26,589 teacher preparation programs across the country.

Of those, 5,325 (20 percent) alternative programs were based at an IHE, and 2,750 (10 percent) alternative programs were based outside of an IHE.



## Texas leads the nation in offering the most alternative teacher preparation programs

In 2014, 47 states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands reported having state-approved alternative routes to a teaching credential. Only three states—Ohio, North Dakota, and Wyoming—and six jurisdictions—American Samoa, Guam, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, and Palau—do not have approved alternative routes to a teaching credential.

Of the states that offer alternative programs, Texas has the most alternative teacher preparation providers and programs, with 139 alternative teacher preparation providers offering 3,602 unique alternative programs. Texas also boasts the highest number of program completers from alternative programs. Texas produced 16 percent of the nation’s program completers from alternative teacher preparation programs based at IHEs and 48 percent of the nation’s program completers from alternative teacher preparation programs not based at IHEs.

### Top Teacher-Producing States for Alternative Programs\*

| Alternative<br>IHE based | Alternative<br>not at IHEs |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Texas 16%              | 1 Texas 48%                |
| 2 California 9%          | 2 New Jersey 11%           |
| 3 Florida 9%             | 3 Florida 4%               |
| 4 New York 8%            | 4 Oklahoma 3%              |
| 5 Louisiana 7%           | 5 Georgia 3%               |

\* Alternative IHE-based programs represent 20 percent of all teacher preparation programs nationwide. Alternative programs not at IHEs represent 10 percent of all teacher preparation programs nationwide. The percentages shown for each state are the percent share of program completers for that type of program nationwide.

## Alternative programs produce proportionately more teachers in high-need subject areas

Alternative teacher preparation programs tend to produce higher proportions of program completers prepared to teach in high-need subject areas and STEM fields compared to traditional programs. While only 7 percent of program completers from traditional teacher preparation programs are prepared to teach mathematics, 12 percent of program completers from alternative programs not based at IHEs and 8 percent of program completers

from alternative programs based at IHEs are prepared to teach mathematics. Similarly, while only 2 percent of program completers from traditional teacher preparation programs are prepared to teach general science, 8 percent of program completers from alternative programs not based at IHEs and 4 percent of program completers from alternative programs based at IHEs are prepared to teach general science.

### Teacher Preparation Program Completers by Subject Area

| Traditional<br>IHE based               | Alternative*<br>IHE based    | Alternative*<br>not at IHEs            |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| 42% Elementary Education               | 24% Elementary Education     | 26% Elementary Education               |
| <b>16% Special Education</b>           | <b>20% Special Education</b> | <b>17% Special Education</b>           |
| 13% Early Childhood Education          | 9% English/Language Arts     | 13% Early Childhood Education          |
| 9% English/Language Arts               | <b>8% Mathematics</b>        | <b>12% Mathematics</b>                 |
| <b>7% Mathematics</b>                  | 7% Early Childhood Education | 11% English/Language Arts              |
| <b>6% English as a Second Language</b> | 5% Social Studies            | <b>8% General Science</b>              |
| 5% Social Studies                      | <b>4% General Science</b>    | <b>7% English as a Second Language</b> |

High-need subject areas are in bold

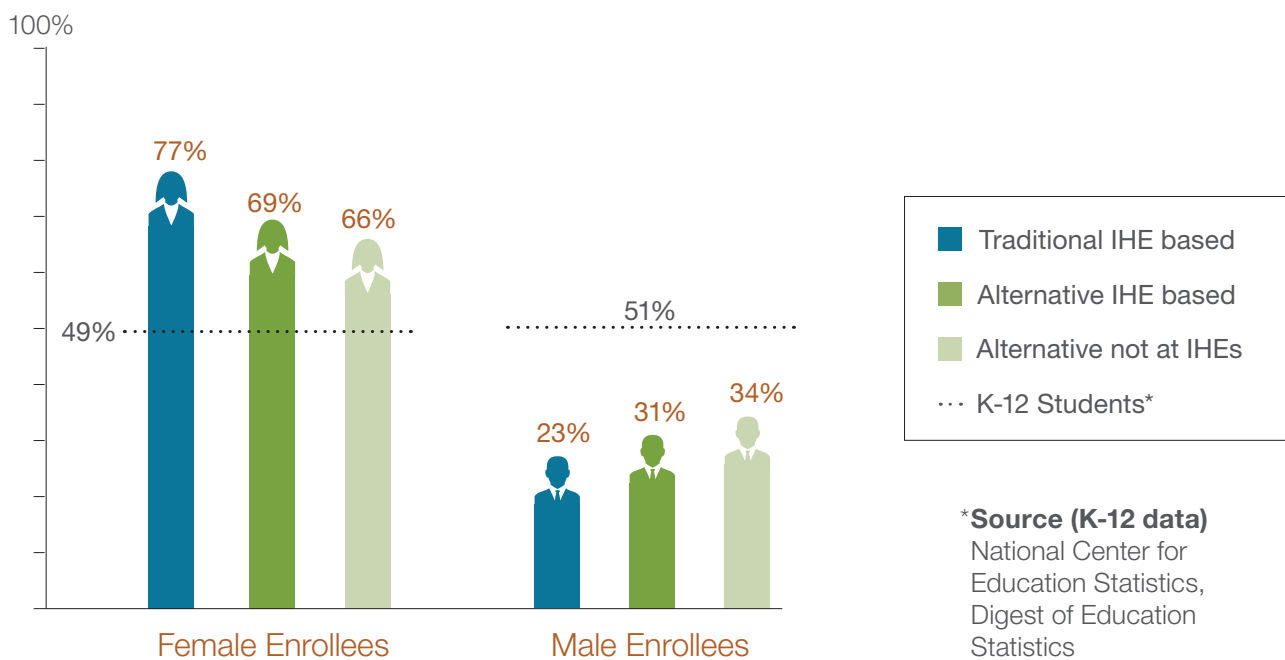
\* Alternative programs prepare a higher proportion of teachers in high-need subjects, including STEM subjects.

## Alternative programs tend to attract a more diverse group of teaching candidates

In addition to producing higher proportions of program completers prepared to teach in high-need subject areas and STEM fields, alternative teacher preparation programs also tend to enroll a more diverse group of teaching candidates whose demographics more closely match that

of the K-12 student population. While less than a quarter (23 percent) of teaching candidates in traditional programs were male in academic year (AY) 2012–13, over a third (34 percent) of teaching candidates enrolled in alternative programs not based at IHEs were male.

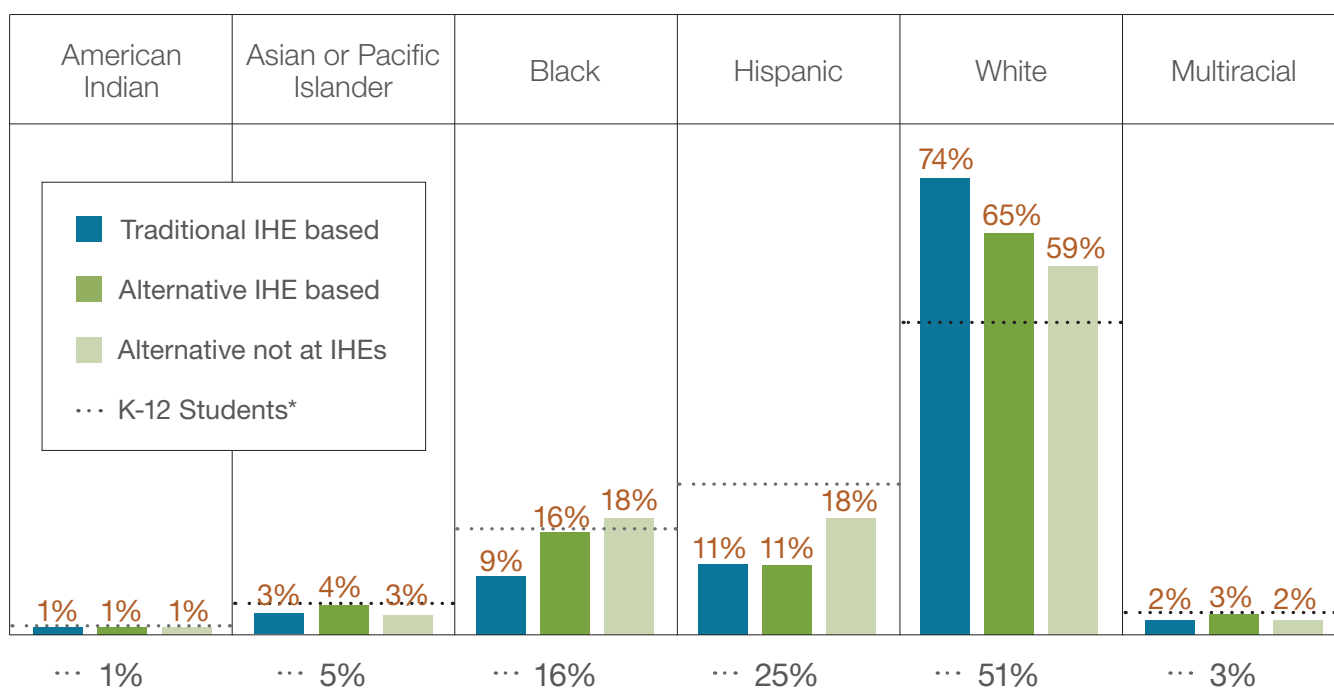
### Gender of Enrollees by Program Type\*



Similarly, alternative programs tend to enroll a higher proportion of minorities than traditional programs. In AY 2012–13, 16 percent of individuals enrolled in alternative programs based at IHEs and 18 percent of individuals enrolled in alternative programs not based at IHEs were black or African-American,

compared to only 9 percent in traditional programs. Eighteen percent of individuals enrolled in alternative programs based at IHEs were Hispanic/Latino, compared to 11 percent in traditional programs.

## Race/Ethnicity of Enrollees by Program Type\*



**\*Source (K-12 data)**

National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics

## The landscape for alternative teacher preparation program accountability is changing

In some states, alternative programs have different requirements from traditional programs for state program approval and accountability. Policymakers at the state and federal levels are considering ways to improve alternative teacher preparation program effectiveness and accountability. The Texas Senate recently passed SB892,<sup>1</sup> which would ensure that prospective teachers in alternative programs have a more rigorous path to the classroom. Under the new bill, the entire entering class would need an average GPA of 3.0 and have 30 hours of classroom training. The bill also would establish that a program graduate can attempt the certification test a maximum of only five times. In addition, the bill would require that alternative teacher preparation programs report on the number of candidates that successfully complete their programs and how well they do in the classroom, to help the state determine the quality of alternative programs (*Houston News*, 2015). Teacher organizations have voiced strong disapproval for the bill (Rangel, 2015).

The U.S. Department of Education (the Department) has also proposed more rigorous standards and accountability measures in its proposed regulations for teacher preparation program accountability under Title II, HEA. The proposed regulations would require states to collect and report on several outcome-based measures of both traditional and alternative teacher preparation program performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), an organization that has released teacher preparation program ratings for traditional programs in recent years, has also recently evaluated and rated alternative programs for the first time. The ratings for both traditional and alternative programs were generally low across the board and thus were received rather contentiously by the teacher preparation field. In its evaluation of alternative teacher preparation programs, NCTQ reviewed 85

randomly selected alternative teacher preparation programs in 23 states and the District of Columbia, reviewing program curricula, applicants' GPAs,

*The U.S. Department of Education...proposed... regulations...that would require states to collect and report on several outcome-based measures of both traditional and alternative teacher preparation program performance.*

and the amount of support received in internships. Of the 85 alternative programs evaluated, NCTQ rated 63 programs (74 percent) with a "D" or an "F" grade rating. Of the 40 alternative programs evaluated in Texas, not a single alternative program was rated with an "A" or a "B" grade rating (NCTQ, 2015). NCTQ's vice president voiced concerns that alternative programs are not selective enough and do not ensure that teachers have an appropriate level of content expertise for the subject in which they plan to teach (Kamenetz, 2015).

However, while the results of NCTQ's evaluation finds many faults with both traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs, the ratings are considered controversial within the field. The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) suggests that the NCTQ report misrepresents data because they only evaluate a small portion of teacher preparation programs (Robinson, 2014).

<sup>1</sup>As of June 2015, the bill was still being considered in the Texas House of Representatives.



## References

- Bireda, S., & Chait, R. (2011, November). *Increasing teacher diversity*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2014). *California alternative route to certification (intern programs)*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/intern/>
- Houston News*. (2015, April 7). Senate approves changes to teacher training, evaluation. *Your Houston News*. Retrieved from [http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/sugar\\_land/news/senate\\_approves\\_changes\\_to\\_teacher\\_training\\_evaluation/article\\_94d28473-fd92-5b95-8700-6bc3948277e0.html](http://www.yourhoustonnews.com/sugar_land/news/senate_approves_changes_to_teacher_training_evaluation/article_94d28473-fd92-5b95-8700-6bc3948277e0.html)
- Kamenetz, A. (2014, September 12). *For teachers, many paths into the classroom... Some say too many*. NPR.
- National Council on Teacher Quality (February 2015). 2014 teacher prep review: A review of the nation's teacher preparation programs. Retrieved from: [http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher\\_Prep\\_Review\\_2014\\_Report](http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher_Prep_Review_2014_Report)
- Rangel, E. (2015, March 3). Seliger files bills for controversial reform plan. Amarillo, TX: *Amarillo Global-News*.
- Robinson, S.P. (2014, June 18). *Statement on NCTQ Teacher Prep Review from Sharon P. Robinson, Ed.D., AACTE President and CEO*. Retrieved from <https://aacte.org/news-room/press-releases-statements/462-statement-on-nctq-teacher-prep-review-from-sharon-p-robinson-ed-d-aacte-president-and-ceo>
- Texas Education Agency. (2015). Becoming a certified Texas educator through an alternative certification program. Austin, TX: Author. Retrieved from <http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=7073>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Improving teacher preparation: Building on Innovation*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from: <http://www.ed.gov/teacherprep>
- 

## Data Notes

For the purposes of the Title II data collection, an enrolled student is defined as a student who has been admitted to a teacher preparation program, but who has not yet completed the program during the academic year being reported. An individual who completed the program during the academic year being reported is counted as a program completer and not an enrolled student.

Unless otherwise noted, the data in this issue brief reflect AY 2012–13 data reported through Title II HEA by all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands.

For more information, go to [title2.ed.gov](http://title2.ed.gov).



Data as of July 17, 2015.  
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education. *Higher Education Act Title II Reporting System* (2015).