

The making of a National Park

read our environmental coverage at csmonitor.com



MARCH 17, 1999

EDUCATION WEEK on the WEB

EDUCATION WEEK

IN CONTEXT

THE ARCHIVES

TEACHER MAGAZINE

THE DAILY NEWS

SPECIAL REPORTS

PRODUCTS & SERVICES



New Teachers Abandon Field At High Rate

By Jeff Archer

Across the Nation

This is the second installment of a five-part series about the nation's supply of and demand for qualified teachers. Read ["About This Series,"](#) below.

HELP WANTED:

2 Million Teachers

Read our story, ["Riley Outlines Licensure Plan for Teachers,"](#) Feb. 24, 1999.

Long Beach, Calif.

For much of last year, Tammy Carsten was on the verge of becoming a statistic. Working with an emergency permit, scant education courses, and no student-teaching experience to her credit, the fledgling educator was at her wits' end soon after stepping in front of her class at Harte Elementary School in north Long Beach.

["Teaching Partnership Regroups To Define Mission and Survive,"](#) Feb. 3, 1999.

Struggling just to keep the 1st graders in their seats, she felt completely inadequate to the task of teaching them the elements of reading and arithmetic. Many nights, she went home and cried. Quitting was often on her mind.

About This Series

Part 1: ["States' Uneven Teacher Supply Complicates Staffing of Schools,"](#) March 10, 1999

Part 2: "New Teachers Abandon Field at High Rate," March 17, 1999

Part 3: March 24, 1999

- While the shortage of teachers for most subjects is being felt in pockets across the country, the scarcity of special education teachers is nearly universal.
- One of the nation's fastest growing districts is cultivating its own supply of special education teachers by paying paraprofessionals' tuition and salaries while they go to school.
- A Virginia college offers long-distance learning to train teachers for special education.

Part 4: March 31, 1999

- Otherwise qualified teachers are routinely assigned to teach

The findings, which Mr. Ingersoll has yet to publish, jibe well with earlier estimates that as many as 30 percent of new teachers quit within their first five years, he said.

What he has uncovered comes as little surprise to experienced educators, especially in an era when new state standards are demanding more of teachers, when student populations are more diverse than ever, and when more teachers are entering the profession before taking education classes or engaging in practice teaching.

"They're not adequately prepared, and they're put into a situation completely unsupported," said Barnett Berry, who directs the Southeast office of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.

'Just Heartbreaking'

Our *Quality Counts '99* story, ["Zeroing In on Teachers,"](#) Jan. 11, 1999, examines how accountability measures affect retention and recruitment efforts.

["Uneven Distribution Contributes to Teacher Shortages,"](#)

[Study Warns.](#)
Nov. 4, 1998.

subjects for which they have little or no academic preparation, a practice under fire nationwide.

Part 5: April 7, 1999

- As standards for students go up, schools are under pressure to reduce the number of people without professional training who are hired to teach.

The California Commission on the Teaching Profession, a task force created by the legislature, realized as much in the late 1980s when it proposed researching better ways to evaluate and support novice educators. The resulting California New Teacher Project spawned dozens of local induction programs that gave added support to novice educators. In 1992,

["Report Suggests Alternative Paths as Solutions to Teacher Shortages."](#) Oct. 21, 1998.

the project's offspring, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program, became a permanent state initiative run jointly by the state education department and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Though districts aren't required to operate a program, the offer of state aid has prompted about half of California's systems to start their own or participate in joint ventures with other districts. For districts that take part, the support program promises \$5,000 for each new teacher--\$3,000 coming directly from the state, the other \$2,000 to be raised locally.

["New Teachers Are Hot Commodity."](#)
Sept. 9, 1998.

Districts, or groups of districts, use their support-program money to subsidize one-on-one mentoring, intensive summer-orientation programs, and training workshops for first- and second-year teachers. The money pays for substitutes, freeing mentor-teachers to conduct model lessons by teaching occasional classes for new recruits. The new teachers also are able to visit the classrooms of veteran teachers in other schools.

["States Raising Bar for Teachers Despite Pending Shortage."](#) March 25, 1998.

Each local program's design is guided by a set of state standards that spell out the knowledge and skills the novices should gain; the guidelines are closely aligned with the new California standards for the teaching profession.

"It was a program that was designed to overcome the problems that we know were leading teachers to leave the profession," said Suzanne Riley, a member of the state task force that oversees the support program. "Most people who go into teaching have some sense of mission, and to think that the isolation and the lack of assistance led people to leave when they really wanted to teach is just heartbreaking."

In our Commentary, ["The Real Teacher Crisis."](#) Oct. 29, 1997, author Chester E. Finn questions the reality of the teacher shortage, saying the problem has "... nothing to do with quantity and everything to do with quality."

No statewide study has been completed, but Ms. Riley said many local programs report that, after five years, between 85 percent and 90 percent of teachers who have gone through the induction remain in the profession.

Time To Learn

While the support program serves the state's purpose of grooming California's next generation of educators, school leaders say it's a godsend for districts struggling to find new teachers. Each new teacher they can hold on to, they say, is one less that must be hired later.

For background, past stories, and related Web links, please see our Issues Pages on [Teaching as a Profession](#) and [Professional Development](#).

"It's so competitive to recruit teachers," said Janet Reece, the assistant superintendent of personnel in the 17,000-student Baldwin Park Unified schools in Los Angeles County. "The new teachers coming out are very bright, they know how stressful the job will be, and they want something like a BTSA program."

One of the state's oldest support programs, Baldwin Park's initiative now serves 122 first- and second-year teachers. Along with the mentoring and opportunities to visit other classrooms, the program runs an annual "new teacher academy," a weeklong series of intensive training sessions. Nearly every eligible first-year teacher attends the voluntary training, even though there is no financial remuneration.

The benefits of such training are obvious in the teaching style of novice educator Gabriela Lara, now in her second year at Baldwin Park's De Anza Elementary School.

One recent morning, in the portable unit that serves as her classroom, she had her 20 2nd graders break up into "reading centers," small groups of three to five children who work together on different activities. The popular technique is supposed to encourage children to work cooperatively while freeing their teachers to circulate among groups. But many new teachers say that running reading centers can be like trying to keep 20 marbles from rolling off a pingpong table.

The 25-year-old Ms. Lara pulls it off without a hitch, however. She points to a small paper wheel divided into different colors. Already knowing which one represents their group, the children stand up, gather their materials from around the room, and quietly reorganize themselves into clusters.

"It's a lot of disjointed little parts that have to work all at the same time," Silvia Acevedo-Gilkeson, Ms. Lara's mentor from last year, said as she watched the scene unfold. "But look at them. They're self-directed and self-motivated."

Ms. Lara said she didn't dare try reading centers her first year, but through her district's beginning-teacher support program she got advice from other teachers on the approach, and saw how they managed the technique when visiting their classrooms. "Sometimes you need someone to tell you you don't have to do it all at once," she said. "That if you don't pick it up this year, you can the next."

Growing Pains

Despite its success, the state's support program still finds itself struggling with the realities of teacher recruitment in California--and with state politics. For one thing, the program wasn't intended for new teachers with emergency permits--those, like Ms. Carsten and Ms. Lara, who still need to complete coursework and student teaching before they can earn full credentials.

"The idea was that if you start with people who are fully credentialed,

then you are taking them to the next level instead of just giving them survival training," said David Lebow, an Advanced Placement history teacher in the Montebello Unified schools. Montebello, which is also in the Greater Los Angeles area, launched its own support program this year.

But Mr. Lebow, who served on a state committee that pushed for the support program's expansion, also knows that of the 160 new teachers in his district's support program this year, only 19 have regular state credentials. "In this district, we've sort of fudged it a little because of the necessity of our type of hiring," he said.

About 19,000 of California's 48,000 first- and second-year teachers had emergency permits as of 1996, the last year for which such data were collected, according to the state education department.

The state has now given all the participating districts one year to turn their programs into initiatives geared exclusively for the fully credentialed new teacher. But state officials pledge they won't leave teachers with emergency permits high and dry. While the support program's budget has grown, lawmakers have also increased from about \$8.5 million to \$22.8 million the annual funding for local programs that help new hires who lack the standard qualifications.

Meanwhile, a statewide peer-review plan also could shake up the beginning-teacher support program.

Gov. Gray Davis wants districts to use teacher input in evaluating the performance of veteran educators. Just last week, the California Senate's education committee passed a bill that would withhold money for the support program from any district that failed to implement peer review. With many teachers' unions and their members still uncomfortable with peer review, some local educators are worried the measure could jeopardize support programs for beginning teachers just when they were set to expand.

Interest on the Rise

Despite the support program's growing pains, national observers say California deserves credit for at least having a statewide initiative. Although 27 states had induction programs on the books as of the 1996-97 school year, only seven both mandated and financed them, according to a two-year survey of such efforts soon to be released by Recruiting New Teachers Inc., a nonprofit group based in Belmont, Mass., that seeks to improve the teaching pool.

But, the group reports, interest is on the rise. Mississippi lawmakers are considering plans for a pilot mentor program this year, and Nebraska education officials are designing a statewide support plan for new teachers. Wisconsin has also just started allocating \$500,000 annually toward training as many as 1,000 veteran educators to mentor new teachers.

"Induction is re-emerging in the late 1990s after a kind of quiet decade," said Elizabeth Fidler, a co-author of the Recruiting New Teachers report. "There is growing recognition of teachers' needs for support and assistance, and there's growing attention to induction as a strategy for reducing attrition, weeding out unfit teachers, and encouraging competent teachers to stay and thrive."

But for such programs to make a significant dent in the teacher-supply problem, the University of Georgia's Mr. Ingersoll argues, policymakers must do more than recognize their importance: They'll have to make them central to their reform efforts.

"Most of the reforms out there are still increased-supply-type approaches, when you could also be decreasing demand by dealing with turnover," he said. "Well-respected, well-supported, well-paid professions never seem to have problems with retention."

On the Web

[Facts](#) about the teaching profession from [Recruiting New Teachers](#). Includes: ["Teacher Shortages in America"](#) and ["Minority Teacher Demand."](#)

Read the executive summary of ["What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future,"](#) the special report from the [National Commission on Teaching & America's Future](#).

The [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) presents its view on ["What Teachers Should Know and Be Able To Do."](#)

In ["Teacher Mentoring: A Critical Review,"](#) Sharon Feiman-Nemser casts a critical eye at this *en vogue* form of retaining first-year teachers. From the [ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education](#), where you can also find links to related resources.

PHOTO: Gabriela Lara, in her second year as a teacher at De Anza Elementary in Baldwin Park, Calif., finds she greatly benefited from the intensive training and mentoring programs her district provided to support her.

From left, veteran educator Patty Nagano helps Tammy Carsten learn the ropes at Harte Elementary School in Long Beach, Calif. Gabriela Lara, a second-year teacher at De Anza Elementary School in nearby Baldwin Park, benefited from the intensive training and support that her district provides to new educators.

SUBSCRIBE	ABOUT THIS SITE	FEEDBACK	SEARCH THE SITE	JOBS	HOME
© 1999 Editorial Projects in Education			Vol. 18, number 27, page 1, 20-21 23:12:43		