One May afternoon in Boston, 85 teachers in training arrived at the bayside campus of the University of Massachusetts for a three-hour class called Family Partnerships for Achievement. The instructors had invited several public school parents to come in and offer the future teachers advice. Take advantage of technology, said one parent. Among mobile families in poverty, home addresses and telephone numbers may be incorrect. Cell phones are a better bet. Text messaging really works. Take a walk around the neighborhood. Another suggestion: find out where your students shop and hang out.

Look parents in the eye, added an instructor. Say, “Hi, It’s great to see you.” It’s difficult to discuss academics or ask parents to do anything for you before you get to know them.

Family Partnerships for Achievement is not a course typical of most master’s programs in education. The course was designed with one overriding goal: to prepare teachers to be effective in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). This goal drives every aspect of the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), a district-based program for teacher training and certification that recruits highly qualified individuals to take on the unique challenges of teaching in a high-need Boston school and then guides them through a specialized course of preparation.

BTR is one of a new breed of teacher training initiatives that resemble neither traditional nor most alternative certification programs. By rethinking the relationship between training and hiring, these programs have found promising new ways to prepare educators.

Traditional teacher-training programs, which are usually completed through a college or university, are viewed by most as a vehicle to state certification: you take a standard list of courses and exit with a license to teach and, in some cases, a degree. Such programs, however, have long been derided as impractical: Future teachers learn few skills applicable to real classrooms, and the time and cost necessary to complete the training and certification can discourage people interested in the profession.

BY KATHERINE NEWMAN
When the alternative certification movement began, with the launch of New Jersey’s Provisional Teacher Program in 1983, it famously broke the link between traditional teacher training and certification. Although certification was still the goal, the training was reduced and accelerated in the hopes of creating a “streamlined way to get ultra-talented people into the classroom quickly,” says Sandi Jacobs, vice president for policy at the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). There are now 485 alternative certification programs across 47 states.

But in more than half the states, says recent research, so-called alternative routes to certification are all but indistinguishable from traditional programs (see “What Happens When States Have Genuine Alternative Certification?” check the facts, Winter 2009). And as with traditional programs, quality varies widely. Of the alternative certification programs the NCTQ surveyed for a 2007 report, only one-third require a summer teaching practicum and one-quarter provide weekly mentoring for teachers once the school year starts. One-quarter of the programs “take virtually anybody” who applies, says Jacobs, which is alarming considering that alternative programs prepare one-fifth of new teachers nationally.

BTR is implementing a model that emphasizes training teachers on-site in actual classrooms with students and lead teachers, similar to the way medical residents grow into effective doctors by working directly with patients under the guidance of veterans. Instead of following a typical list of course and credit-hour requirements, the organization sponsoring the internship or residency-style program tailors coursework to meet the needs of the particular school or type of school in which the teacher will be employed.

Highlighted in the following pages are three such programs. They have rigorous selection processes, practical coursework, and tremendous field-based support—and each has an innovative twist.

- In 2004, San Diego–based High Tech High (HTH) became the first charter management organization (CMO) approved to certify its own teachers. The Teacher Intern Program enables HTH to hire individuals best suited for its project-based, interdisciplinary curriculum.
- The Alliance for Catholic Education’s (ACE’s) Teacher Formation program at the University of Notre Dame is the Teach For America of parochial schools. High-achieving recent college graduates make a two-year service commitment to teach in struggling Catholic schools across the southern states.
- The Boston Teacher Residency was introduced above. For an entire year before becoming teachers of record in Boston public schools, residents apprentice in the classrooms of skilled veterans, who gradually increase the residents’ teaching responsibilities.

None of these programs is meant to supplant all others. The crisis facing teacher training is that currently one model does dominate. Licensure rules in many states hamstring experimentation by requiring that teacher training programs be run by universities. Those states should revise their requirements to support models such as those profiled here and others that customize teacher training to fit the challenges of particular schools and districts.

High Tech High: Teacher Intern Program

When Anne Duffy applied to teach science at HTH in 2007, she had already completed a master’s degree in chemistry at the University of California San Diego, taught organic chemistry to undergraduates, and begun work toward a doctoral degree. She had led kindergarten and 4th- and 5th-grade science enrichment classes. Yet she was barred from working as a public school teacher because she lacked a state teaching certificate.

HTH—with its emphasis on integrating academic and technical education through project-based learning—attracts a number of people like Duffy with “deep content knowledge who had very successful academic careers and wanted to work in an urban school at a time of profound teacher shortage,” says founding principal Larry Rosenstock. And HTH was eager to employ them in the HTH “village,” which includes six schools on the original Point Loma site. But a 1999 compromise approved by the California legislature required that charter school teachers earn a credential comparable to certificates held by public school teachers, in return for lifting the cap on charters across the state. HTH fashioned a solution and, with state approval, began to certify its own teachers.

On a structural level, HTH’s Teacher Intern Program operates like other alternative certification programs. For three weeks over the summer, interns begin cost-free coursework and
create a syllabus and unit of study for the beginning of the year. They participate in professional development with veteran staff at the school that hires them as official teachers of record. Interns earn the same salary and benefits as other HTH teachers. During the school year, coursework resumes in the early evening. HTH assigns each intern a mentor, who guides and supports the trainee’s development.

In their second year, interns wrap up program requirements with state-mandated teaching performance tasks called the California Teaching Performance Assessment (CA-TPA). Through four tasks—written responses to prompts and one videotaped lesson—new teachers are expected to connect state standards to effective teaching practices. After successfully completing the tasks, interns are recommended by the HTH Governing Board to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

One hundred eight staff members are engaged in official mentoring and/or adult learning at HTH, says Rob Riordan, the spirited director of instructional support for all HTH schools. Interns and mentors, who share grade level and/or content area, watch each other in action as often as possible. Mentoring, Riordan says, is an ongoing “professional development conversation” made possible, in part, by an inventive schedule. HTH built an hour-long common planning period into the beginning of every school day, before students arrive. When Rosenstock initially experimented with the sacred morning hour during his days as a principal in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he found that “there was something about first period that let [teachers] think about four years from now.” The credentialing program also takes advantage of the hour: The fall semester class called Classroom Management and Assessment, which is facilitated by the interns’ mentors, meets over six Monday mornings during the 7:15–8:15 AM block.

While the Teacher Intern Program is not a degree-granting program, HTH does offer master’s degrees through its Graduate School of Education (more on that below). In both programs, HTH values practical coursework. HTH keeps interns in classes for as little time as possible. At most universities, according to Jennifer Husbands, founding director of the HTH Graduate School of Education (GSE), one unit or credit equals 10 or 15 hours of class time and 5 hours of independent work.

**Notre Dame’s Followers** (Figure 1)

*Service programs modeled on the Alliance for Catholic Education now train more than 400 teachers a year for Catholic schools.*

Note: Programs shown are as follows: Urban Catholic Teacher Corps (UCTC), Boston College; Pacific Alliance for Catholic Education (PACE), University of Portland; Educational Partners in Catholic Schools (EPICS), Seton Hall University; Lalanne, University of Dayton; Remick Fellowship Program, Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota; Lutheran Educational Alliance in Parochial Schools (LEAPs), Valparaiso University; Teachers Enlisted to Advance Catholic Heritage (operation TEACH), College of Notre Dame of Maryland; Providence Alliance for Catholic Teachers (PACT), Providence College; Partners in Los Angeles Catholic Education (PLACE Corps), Loyola Marymount University; Magis, Creighton University; LaSallian Association of New Catholic Educators (LANCE), Christian Brothers University; and Loyola University Chicago Opportunities in Catholic Education (LU-CHOICE).

Additional UCCE programs have recently been established: Learning Through Understanding by Mentoring and Engaging New Teachers (LUMEN), University of Great Falls, Montana; Gulf Region Academy for Catholic Educators (GRACE), University of St. Thomas-Houston.

**SOURCE:** University Consortium for Catholic Education (UCCE)
“We kind of flip that on its head,” she says. At HTH, one credit equals 5 hours of class time and 10 hours of independent work, or time with students. “It makes sense for an intern program” to structure coursework this way, says Husbands. “They are getting credit for their time spent teaching in the classroom.”

In a typical fall semester, interns take six classes, which sounds far too demanding, but each one differs in credits and hours. Teaching Methods, Curriculum Design, and Classroom Settings is worth three credits and meets on just four Tuesdays in October from 4:15 to 7:15 PM. Technology in Portfolio Development, one credit, takes place on a Saturday from 8 AM to 1 PM. Interns complete an accelerated course of study in one year, and program staff make sure that every aspect of a streamlined course directly relates to interns’ work with students.

Critics will point out that HTH has the rare luxury of developing a tight-knit, practical teacher preparation program in-house: It has enough talent on staff to teach the intern classes. Its mentor pool grows each year, as newer teachers gain experience with the HTH design principles.

Is the Teacher Intern Program too HTH-oriented? (The program only accepts teachers employed by HTH, although it hopes to invite outside applicants in the future.) Aren’t we looking for examples of effective alternative routes to replicate or take “to scale,” as they say? Not really, says Rosenstock: “Let’s unscale…. When we standardize the curriculum and we standardize how teachers get prepared, we just suck the oxygen out of the system.”

The HTH GSE opened in the fall of 2007. Its mission is to prepare experienced teachers, through a master of education degree (M.Ed.) in either school leadership or teacher leadership, to spread innovation and develop high-expectations learning environments for all students. The GSE currently serves 30 master’s candidates, 20 teachers from within and 10 from outside HTH.

Graduate students take courses but spend most of their time—as in the credentialing program—putting theory to practice in the HTH community, where they work with administrators, teachers, and students. Training and empowering educators to put best practices in place as staff leaders in their home schools, says Stacey Caillier, director of the Teacher Leadership M.Ed. program, is one way HTH can “become scalable and sustainable and actually cause change.”

Alliance for Catholic Education: Teacher Formation Program

With the dishes drying and another tough day of teaching at Memphis’s inner-city Catholic schools behind them, five young teachers settled into deep couches in their living room. They gathered there most nights to “vent about the day’s ridiculousness,” joke around, or watch humorous YouTube clips—anything to “break up the monotony” of lesson planning and grading student work, said Patrick Manning.

The group had met seven months earlier, in June 2007, when they arrived at Notre Dame’s campus for an eight-week training session, the first leg of the Alliance for Catholic Education’s two-year Teacher Formation Program. ACE was founded in 1993 to attract to Catholic schools talented college graduates who did not necessarily major in education. ACE’s leaders view the program foremost as a service experience but harbor the underlying hope that graduates will continue working in education after completing their commitment, much like recruits to Teach For America. Both programs run accelerated, no-frills courses over the summer before sending new teachers to high-need classrooms. Both programs offer support through a cohort model: ACE teachers must live in small groups, whereas TFA corps members frequently room together by choice. The ACE teachers in one house are typically spread across two to four schools in the area. ACE runs 32 houses in the 14 mostly southern states the program serves.

Memphis Catholic High School employs a new batch of ACE teachers every 2 years and has for the past 10 years. The principal sends ACE a request form listing subject-matter vacancies, and ACE fills the need. Like many schools in which ACE places teachers, Memphis Catholic would struggle to replenish its highly transient staff without the program (see “Can Catholic Schools Be Saved?” features, Spring 2007). ACE characteristically sends its teachers to inner-city schools, although a few go to rural communities. Overall, 85 percent of ACE teachers serve poor students.
ACE is highly selective, accepting only one in four candidates, but acknowledges that a high GPA is not always a prerequisite for great teaching. The interview is vital to the selection process. “ACE staff spends substantial time talking to potential applicants about the program to help them discern whether ACE would be a good fit,” wrote ACE director John Staud in an email.

ACE participants earn a cost-free master of education degree from Notre Dame and are eligible for an Indiana teaching certificate upon completion of the program. Neither a master’s degree nor certification is required to teach in Catholic schools, but ACE has long believed that capability in the classroom derives from teachers’ knowledge of curriculum development, instructional strategies, and assessment tools, along with classroom-based training. The fact that the master’s degree provides a “route to public school certification,” wrote Tom Doyle, ACE’s academic director, is “a side benefit.”

As at HTH, the distribution of credit hours values teaching time over time spent in university classrooms. In the first week of summer, teachers take a course on classroom design, management, and communicating with parents. A course on the history of Catholic education is also completed in the first week and a course on technology by the second.

A two-credit summer school practicum begins after the second week and typically lasts six weeks. ACE students co-teach from 8 to 11 AM in public and Catholic school classrooms with a summer instructor and are observed and advised by a master teacher.

“Some people learned what not to do” by watching mediocre instructors, says Laura Farrell of her summer school experience. Others, like Patrick Manning and colleague Robbie Rhine-smith, were thrown into lead teaching positions and, though it initially overwhelmed them, they welcomed the challenge.

Over half of all credits are accumulated during the two summer sessions. The only coursework teachers are responsible for during the fall semester is Clinical Seminar, which is taken all four semesters. Twice a month students email reflections to one of six university faculty members who are assigned to 30 ACE students each. In their reflections, new teachers describe one of their practices, discuss why they’re using it (linking it to specific research) then use supporting evidence to explain the results of the practice and where to take it next. Students’ reflections and supervisors’ responses are automatically added to an electronic academic portfolio that can be accessed anytime.

In the second semester of year one, ACE adds an online course called Topics in Education Psychology. Students read assigned material, take online quizzes, and write summative papers, which they submit electronically for feedback, on four topics the faculty feel are relevant, such as “intelligence and assessment” or “student motivation.”

Like alternative certification programs, ACE considers the teachers’ classroom immersion their teaching practicum, granting eight credits for an ongoing class called Supervised Teaching. ACE teachers receive support from a school-based mentor assigned by their principal. In addition to advising on curriculum, behavior management, and positive family engagement, says Doyle, mentors are supposed to “introduce ACE teachers to the local culture of the city and into the school itself.”

The Memphis teachers were generally lukewarm about their mentors. High achievers expect to excel as new teachers, and several of the new teachers desired more critical feedback from their mentors. Yet ACE encourages mentors to provide a “listening ear” and to leave constructive evaluations to principals. Manning suggested that at Catholic schools teachers “wear many hats” and tight schedules get in the way of assigned mentoring.

In addition, ACE university supervisors visit their teachers once a semester for at least two periods, sandwiched by pre- and postvisit conferences, which complement the Clinical Seminar course. Four visits over two years may not seem like much, but the two-year idea exchange between an ACE teacher and a respected veteran provides far more follow-up than most other alternative certification programs.

Although ACE provides many financial benefits—including the master’s degree, room and board for two summer sessions, $400 in travel stipends each year plus airfare to and from the December retreat, and health insurance—ACE teachers are paid considerably less than a typical Catholic school salary. ACE gives them a monthly stipend of $900 to $1,100 before taxes, which is adjusted for regional cost-of-living differences. From this, teachers contribute around $300 to rent, utilities, and shared food expenses.

Notre Dame funds the program with fees that participating schools contribute in lieu of paying the ACE teachers’ salaries. Grants and donations from foundations and private benefactors support the program as well. ACE has placed nearly 1,000 teachers in Catholic schools since its inception. The program’s success has led to replication of the model in a dozen colleges and universities (see Figure 1).

Boston Teacher Residency
When Sarah Benis Scheier-Dolberg stepped out of her classroom during a history lesson at the New Mission High School in Roxbury, Massachusetts, Joanna Taylor, a teaching resident, assumed control. She led the seniors through terms like “World Bank” and “International Monetary Fund.” Several students looked at her, confused.

“Who else is totally lost?” Taylor asked. Meanwhile, Benis Scheier-Dolberg reentered the classroom and saw hands rise.

“That’s okay,” said Benis Scheier-Dolberg. “Hold onto the confusion.”

The two women continued the lesson together. Taylor explained the group work assignment; Benis Scheier-Dolberg monitored student participation and fielded questions. They
had been shaping the curriculum together since the beginning of the school year. By late October, at the time of this lesson, they were co-teaching easily. In mid-November, Taylor completed a week of what BTR calls “lead teaching,” during which residents teach at least one class a day by themselves. Starting in February and through the end of the year, Taylor planned and taught two of Benis Scheier-Dolberg’s classes full-time.

The collaboration between Benis Scheier-Dolberg and Taylor illustrates the core of BTR’s model: provide aspiring teachers a year of hands-on experience under the guidance of a veteran educator.

BTR was launched in 2003 by the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) in a joint response to what then-superintendent Thomas Payzant saw as impediments to the district’s success. BPS was burdened by a turnover rate for new teachers of 50 percent in the first three years and, despite an abundance of university-based teacher preparation programs in the greater Boston area, lacked teachers of color, teachers equipped for urban school challenges, and those certified in the hard-to-staff areas of math, science, and special education.

BTR set out to recruit and prepare new teachers in ways that existing programs did not, and to provide enough support to retain them. Five years later, the program supplies BPS with more teachers than any other preparation program. Although the data are fairly green—teachers from the first cohort just entered their fifth year—just under 90 percent of all graduates still teach in BPS.

BTR has bloomed from a nascent cohort of 12 residents in 2003 to nearly 500 applicants for around 75 spots in school year 2008–09. To attract the diverse teachers the district badly wants, recruitment director Monique Davis organizes information sessions at community and afterschool centers and churches and in the homes of BTR graduates. She uses historically black colleges and universities with Boston alumni clubs to advertise BTR and make connections at institutions as far as South Carolina, for example, where she visited 10 schools in four days. Her team also mails a recruitment letter to every classroom paraprofessional with a bachelor’s degree in the district. The fact that BTR achieves diversity is in itself a recruitment tool, says program director Jesse Solomon: “I think having a cohort that’s half people of color makes a difference to other people of color coming to that program.”

BTR provides residents a stipend of $11,400 during the training year and automatically loans residents the $10,000 program tuition, forgiving one-third for every year graduates teach in Boston’s public schools. Residents also receive a $4,725 Education Award from AmeriCorps upon completing the program, which many use to pay back the $4,000 in tuition costs for the University of Massachusetts master’s degree. Other perks include need-based childcare funds and health insurance.

BTR is highly selective compared to most teacher preparation programs, accepting one in six applicants. According to Solomon, the selection process has four stages. Making the four-year commitment to Boston—one resident year followed by three years of induction, assuming graduates want full tuition forgiveness—is the first stage: “They’re not right for our kids if they’re only going to teach for a year or two,” says Solomon.

The second stage involves the traditional paper trail: a résumé, essays, transcript, and recommendations. Solomon admits that BTR’s commitment to high-need areas such as math and science means rejecting many candidates with impressive grades and leadership experience. BTR shapes enrollment so that more than half of residents at the secondary level earn their certification in high-need areas.

BTR then invites promising applicants to a selection day at one of its host schools. Over the course of the day, candidates teach a five-minute lesson, go through two rounds of interviews, and complete a writing assessment and group problem-solving exercise. By the end of the day, nearly 20 different “raters,” including human resources representatives from BPS, BTR mentors, site directors, former residents, and BPE staff, have observed candidates for evidence of “leadership ability” and “persistence,” says Solomon.

The preparation year becomes the fourth stage of the selection process. During the 13-month residency, residents spend four full days a week at their host schools, primarily in the classroom of a mentor.
hire and oversee a range of instructors and design its own program of study.

BTR starts the initial two-month summer session with instruction on classroom management and lesson planning. Residents then break into grade-level and subject-area groups for content-specific instruction. During the school year, residents take a typical load of reflective seminars and methods courses in addition to a few innovative yearlong courses that meet less frequently and address equity and achievement in the urban school context. Ever responsive to the district’s needs, residents graduate with a head start on coursework toward a special education license in addition to earning a Massachusetts Initial Teacher License. BTR will soon offer coursework for ESL licensure as well.

Urban residencies like BTR are great, people say, but can we fund them? Solomon and Anissa Listak, executive director of the recently founded Urban Teacher Residency Institute (UTRI), insist that investing in teacher preparation up front will save the staggering sums wasted by teacher turnover. According to the UTRI, “the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future pegs the average cost to recruit, hire, and lose a teacher at $50,000.”

The urban residencies currently running in Boston, Chicago, and Denver were initially funded by venture capitalists and entrepreneurs including Martin J. Koldyke, founder of the Golden Apple Foundation in Chicago, Boston’s Strategic Grant Partners, and the Boettcher Foundation in Denver. The programs operate on budgets of various sizes. Chicago pays its residents a stipend of $32,000, while Denver residents receive $10,000. Programs also pay mentors differing amounts and employ varying numbers of support staff.

Four new programs, in New York, Chattanooga, Philadelphia, and Denver, will open in 2009. Bills pending in Congress would expand federal funds for teacher residency programs. In the long term, collecting data that could link student achievement to resident teachers will be important for sustaining interest in and support for residency models. BTR is pleased to have Harvard professor of education and economics Thomas Kane “working on a value-added model study for us,” says Solomon.

The study will help BTR improve, says Solomon, “but it also allows the district to have leverage with other teacher education programs.” In other words, a “conversation about who’s preparing teachers and how well they’re being prepared,” says Solomon, should lead to a revitalizing competition between all types of preparation programs.

Katherine Newman, a former New York City Teaching Fellow, is a writer and teacher at KIPP Academy Nashville.