

ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION DISCUSSION –NOVEMBER 2014

A constituency group of Nebraska educators met to consider Nebraska's approach to utilizing alternative methods for individuals to qualify for a Nebraska certificate. Representation included: Jay Sears(NCTE/NSEA), Becky Schnabel (NCTE/Higher Education), Tom Wandzilak (NCTE/Higher Education), Sharra Smith (NCTE/NASPA), Eric Weber (NASPA), Dan Ernst (NCSA), Jon Habben (NRCSA), Kevin Peters (NCTE/NDE) and Sharon Katt (NCTE/NDE).

Topics of discussion:

- Nebraska's new approach to certifying individuals to teach in Nebraska, who may have completed a different type of teacher education program, should not result in a lowering of our standards for quality teachers.
- Teacher supply is an issue in certain content endorsements or geographic locales.
- There are a wide variety of approaches to, and standards for, alternative certification employed by other states. Certificates issued in other states may be difficult to judge if they are compliant with Nebraska standards. As individuals who have completed an alternative certification program seek employment in Nebraska, we need to be able to consider their unique experiences and academic credentials before extending licensure in Nebraska. Staffing needs in hard to fill openings and input from hiring officials were also considered.
- Nebraska will implement content testing for educators on September 1, 2015. However it is important to note that this change to licensure will be an indicator of content knowledge acquired by the candidate and should not be considered a complete measure of a highly effective teacher.
- Several Nebraska certificates currently exist to provide entry options for individuals who have not completed a teacher preparation program. NDE is revising Rule 21 to use "certificate" to indicate only the Initial, Standard, and Professional Certificates which have been issued as a result of the applicant having completed a teacher education program at a standard institution of higher education. Other licensure options will be designated as "permits".
- A draft of an Alternative Program Teaching Permit was shared for discussion. Characteristics of the new permit included:
 - The person must be hired first by a Nebraska school system.
 - The person must hold a current certificate from another state as the result of completion of an alternative program in that state.
 - The person must verify out of state employment as a teacher in an approved, accredited school.
 - The person must make a commitment to complete any statutory deficiencies or coursework listed on the negotiated plan between the person, NDE and the school district.

All attendees agreed to present this new topic to their respective organization members yet this fall.