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**STATE
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Alternative Educator Preparation Programs: Where Does Your State Fall?

By Carly Good

Introduction

In our world today, many professions require some sort of credentialing or certification process in order to legally work in the field. Whether it be a government license, a private certification, a college degree or another form of credentialing, this requirement is very common across the states in a variety of industries.

The education industry is among these professions. While the teacher certification requirements vary across the states, government regulations surrounding the teacher certification process can impose undue burdens on teachers and can subsequently limit the pool of qualified professionals in the field.

One potential solution to this is alternative credentialing programs.

Alternative Credentialing

Alternative educator preparation programs (EPPs) for teachers have grown in popularity in recent years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, a survey of teachers from 2007-2008 compared to 2011-2012 displayed an increase

from 13.2% to 14.6% of all teachers reportedly entering the workforce through these types of alternative credentialing programs.¹ The greatest increase occurred in teachers that hold a bachelor's degree or less.

These programs for aspiring teachers eliminate barriers to entry associated with the traditional "Bachelor's in Education" route,

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including excessive financial burdens and time commitments. These provide cheaper, more streamlined processes for aspiring teachers to enter the field from all educational and economic backgrounds.

Additionally, studies show that these alternative programs provide a variety of benefits across the education spectrum. Such benefits include a more diverse workforce as well as improvements in overall student achievement.²



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The Role of States

The availability and cost of these programs are directly controlled by policies imposed by the states. It would be beneficial for teachers if states aimed to foster a conducive environment for these types of programs so that more aspiring teachers are able to obtain their certifications more freely.

Nevertheless, the availability of alternative credentialing programs varies greatly across the states. Some states allow alternative EPPs to operate freely, others impose undue restrictions on the alternative credentialing process, and others prohibit alternative programs from operating altogether.

Policy Evaluation

This study evaluates data from a variety of sources to assess the status of each state regarding their policies on alternative certification for teachers.

To do this, each state’s policies were evaluated with regard to the following questions:

1. Does the state allow non-university alternative EPPs to operate?
2. Does the state’s teacher’s union support alternative certification programs?
3. Does the state require EPPs to be regional or national accreditation?
4. Does the state require alternative EPPs to partner with school districts?
5. Does the state require new teachers to have a bachelor’s degree in a specific content area?
6. Does the state require citizens to have a specific GPA in order to become a teacher?
7. Does the state require new teachers to complete a “Clinical Experience”?
8. Is there a pathway to certification for under \$2,000?³

After acquiring the data, the states were separated into three categories – Green, Yellow and Red – based on their allowance or ban of alternative EPPs.

The green color indicates the state allows alternative EPPs to operate and permits an especially low-cost option, which this study sets at under \$2,000. Yellow indicates the state permits alternative EPPs but maintains added red tape that poses additional barriers for aspiring teachers and for programs to operate. Finally, the red color indicates the state does not allow alternative EPPs to operate at all.

The study holds that the availability of a low-cost option is the second most important factor in this report to categorize a state as green. This is true even if the state reported negatively to some of our other questions listed above.

1. https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_2014_01_t1n.asp

2. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf>; <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25254>

3. <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/DataTools/Tables.aspx>; Individual State Department of Education Websites for each state; State Legislature Websites for all 50 States

State Results

Out of the 50 states evaluated, only 13 are categorized as green, while 23 fall under yellow and 14 under red.

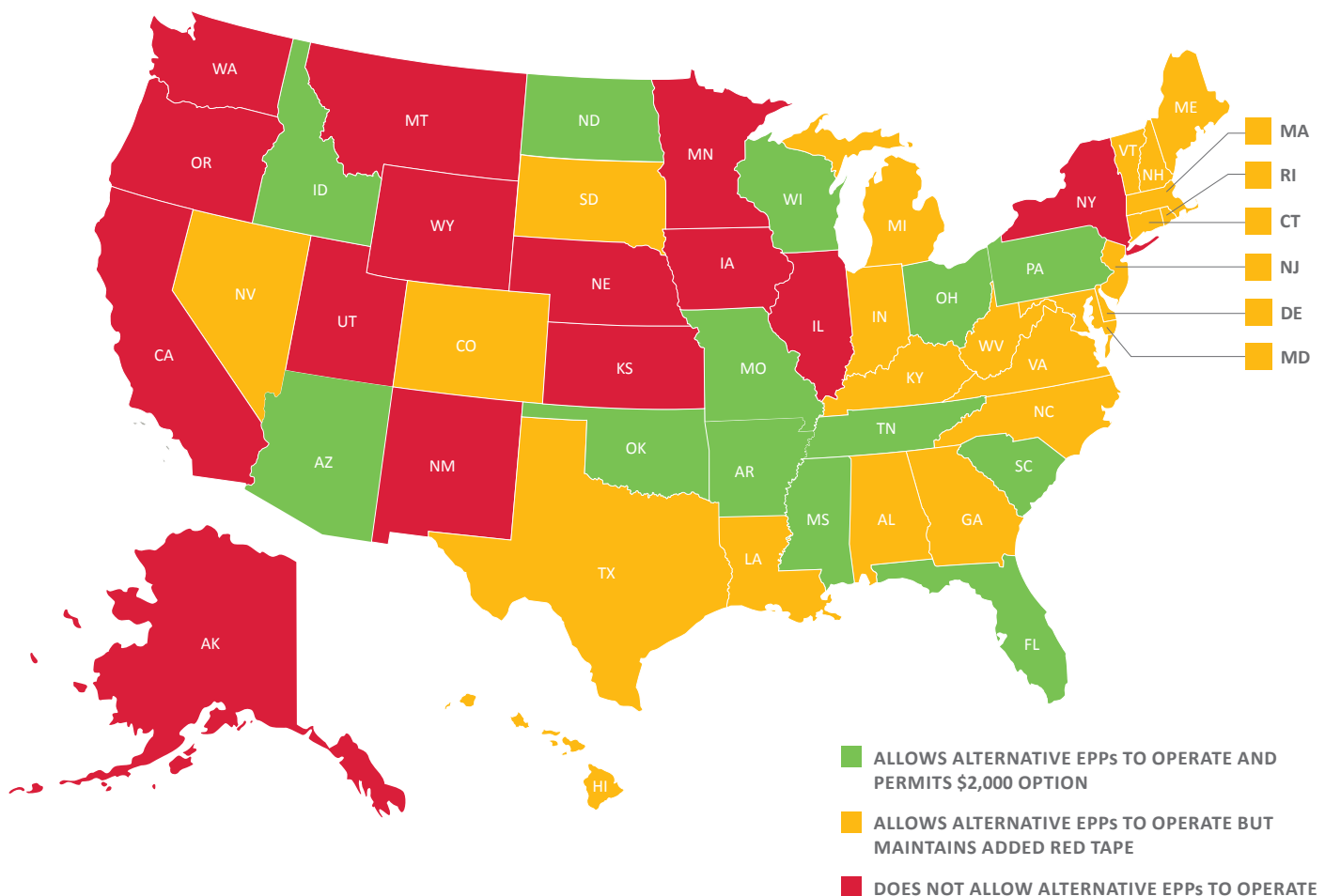
While most green states are completely free of additional restrictions on the alternative credentialing process for teachers, there are a few exceptions. For instance, according to the findings from the questions above, Tennessee requires alternative EPPs to partner with school districts, limiting the ability for these programs to operate freely and on their own terms. Additionally, Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio all require teachers to have a bachelor's degree and a minimum undergraduate GPA of 2.75, 2.75 and 2.5, respectively, to work as a teacher in the state. And finally, North Dakota requires teachers to complete a clinical experience prior to completing their certification requirements.

The yellow states all maintain multiple undue restrictions on the teacher certification process, while red states impose the most restrictions in prohibiting the practice of alternative EPPs overall.

Conclusions

Despite the exceptions noted above, the green states should serve as prime examples for other states to follow. Yellow states are on the right track in allowing alternative EPPs to operate but should use these data points to evaluate where they can cut unnecessary red tape for teacher certification. States in red, however, should truly take a hard look at their priorities. Permitting alternative EPPs could provide a multitude of benefits for the state, including achieving more equal access for teachers and better education outcomes for students. The full results of our analysis can be seen in the map below.

MAP | ALTERNATIVE EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS (EPPs) REGULATIONS BY STATE



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