



**TESTIMONY OF
Jennifer Mulhern
Vice President at TNTP**

House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

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Chairman Hunter, Ranking Member Kildee and committee members, I am Jennifer Mulhern, and I serve as Vice President of TNTP, a national nonprofit that has been working for fifteen years to increase access to great teaching for high-need students.

Our work is driven by the knowledge that teacher quality plays a greater role in student success than any other school-based factor. But the students who need great teachers the most are the least likely to get them, especially in chronic shortage areas like math, science and special education. To address this challenge, TNTP partners with school districts across the country to streamline the path to teaching for accomplished career changers and recent graduates, building a pool of talented teachers specifically for high-need schools and subjects.

To date, TNTP has recruited or trained approximately 49,000 teachers in partnership with more than 200 districts in 31 states. We estimate that these teachers have influenced the education of roughly 8 million students.

The majority of these teachers entered the profession through our Teaching Fellows programs, which are among the most recognized and highly selective alternative certification programs in the country. In 2011, just 10% of all applicants to these programs were accepted, making them as difficult to get into as some Ivy League universities.

Our Teaching Fellows benefit from rigorous training that is specifically designed for people without formal education backgrounds with a focus on mastering the fundamentals and a great deal of practice and coaching designed to lead to gap-closing performance. Our goal is to ensure

that only Fellows with a proven ability to raise student achievement enter and remain in the classroom.

Our focus on effectiveness begins before Fellows enter the classroom. We start by aggressively recruiting top candidates and rigorously screening applicants to ensure that they have the attitudes, skills, and expertise needed to be successful in the classroom. Each candidate is assessed against both skills and essential traits through a three-phase selection process that includes a day-long interview and demonstration lessons.

We then provide intensive pre-service training so our Fellows arrive on the first day of school having mastered specific, foundational skills that enable them to be immediately effective as new teachers. Only candidates who demonstrate proficiency in these skills are granted the privilege of teaching students.

Once the school year begins, teachers enroll in TNTP Academy, attending bi-weekly evening seminars led by outstanding local teachers with a record of success raising student achievement. At the heart of TNTP Academy is our unique *Teaching for Results* curriculum, which uses approaches proven to improve outcomes in high-need schools where students often lag several grade levels behind. *Teaching for Results* focuses on three core areas of teacher proficiency: content, assessment and instruction. The curriculum is immediately relevant to teachers' work in the classroom, so they can apply what they learn in the evening with their students the very next day.

Just as teachers set high standards for their students, TNTP Academy sets a high bar for earning certification: a proven track record of success in the classroom. While teachers' qualifications and training tell us something about their likelihood of teaching effectively, performance once they get in the classroom tells us much more. We have a responsibility to track teachers' performance carefully, use what we learn to help them develop and make smart decisions early in their career. That is why we are among the first teacher preparation programs in the country to require participants to demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom in order to be recommended for state certification.

TNTP uses the Assessment of Classroom Effectiveness (ACE) to ensure that all Fellows are on track to become great teachers. Through ACE, we strive to create the fullest possible picture of each teacher's performance using multiple measures such as principal evaluations, classroom observations, student surveys, and –where available – student achievement data.

ACE helps Fellows be more successful by giving them insights on their practice. ACE observations identify each teacher's strengths and weaknesses so they can improve their teaching and take advantage of professional development opportunities that address their individual needs. Our staff also uses this information to provide targeted, personalized support through seminars and coaching sessions.

At the end of our Fellows' first year, we review evidence from ACE to assess Fellows' performance; only those teachers who earn a passing score and who successfully complete all program and state regulatory requirements are recommended for certification. Fellows who fall short but demonstrate potential are granted an extension year to continue improving. Fellows who struggle and show limited prospect of improvement are removed from our program without earning certification. We set high expectations, and we enforce them.

The strongest evidence for the value of alternative certification can be seen in the results our programs have achieved to date:

TNTP's ten-year partnership with the New York City Department of Education has profoundly transformed teacher quality in the nation's largest urban district. More than 9,100 Teaching Fellows – 11 percent of New York's teaching force – work in the city's schools, most serving low-income students. Fellows now account for more than 20% of New York's math, science, and special education teachers, and a 2007 Urban Institute study found that Fellows are largely responsible for a "remarkable narrowing" of the gap in teacher qualifications between high- and low-poverty schools.

In Louisiana, for four straight years, a state-sponsored study of traditional and alternative route teacher-preparation pathways has found that TNTP-trained teachers are consistently among the most effective in the state. TNTP Academy has received more top ratings for individual subject areas than any other institution in the state, and new teachers trained through our program have outperformed even experienced teachers in raising student achievement in several core subjects. In math, results have been particularly consistent and noteworthy, with TNTP Academy teachers achieving a positive impact on student learning that may even outweigh the negative effects associated with poverty.

Alternate route programs like ours also provide instrumental support to high-need districts in addressing their most critical staffing needs and do so at scale. Twenty to thirty percent of all new teachers hired annually are trained by alternate route programs, bringing effective teachers into the classroom that would have otherwise been unable to join the profession. In fact, 54% of people who came to teaching as a career changer say they would not have become teachers if an alternate pathway to certification had not been available to them.

Alternate route programs increase the diversity of the teacher workforce. For example, in our programs, on average 37% of all 2010 Teaching Fellows are people of color. This exceeds the national average; nationwide, approximately 12% of all teachers are Black or Hispanic, according to 2004-5 data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Finally, alternate route programs are also a particularly important source of new teacher talent in math, science, and special education, where many schools face chronic shortages. In Texas, for example, nearly 40% of individuals obtaining secondary mathematics certification and about 55% of individuals obtaining secondary science certification came through alternative certification programs in 2007. In contrast, about 20% of math teachers and 8% of science teachers entered the profession through traditional pathways. Our programs alone have supplied over 9,000 math, science and special education teachers since 2005.

Most importantly, rigorous research shows that teachers certified through alternate routes are as effective as traditionally certified teachers.

- A 2009 nationwide, randomized study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education found that, “There was no statistically significant difference in performance between students of alternative route to certification teachers and those of traditional route to certification teachers.”
- A 2009 analysis that compared educational outcomes in states with “genuine” *alternative* certification against those that have it in name only found that, “Students attending schools in states with genuine alternative certification gained more on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between 2003 and 2007 than did students in the other states. The finding holds, even when one adjusts for changes in the ethnic composition, free-lunch eligibility, class size, and education expenditures for each state.”

Ultimately, what matters most is not how a teacher got into the classroom, but whether their students learn and grow. We should value teachers for their actual effectiveness in the classroom, not their paper qualifications. The teachers we recruit and train are talented, dedicated, diverse, and capable of delivering high-quality instruction to the students who need great teachers most. Unlike traditional route programs, alternate route programs like ours are also able to consider actual classroom performance before awarding certification and the privilege of making a career in the classroom. Sustaining alternative pathways to teacher certification remains essential to ensuring that all students have access to the most important resource in education: an effective teacher deeply invested in their academic success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.