



Before the Board

Education news from around the nation



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Casting a wide net for teachers

The triple whammy of retiring teachers, booming enrollments, and higher standards has some states scrambling for warm -- and qualified -- bodies to put in classrooms. Colleges of education insist they're graduating more than enough qualified teachers every year, but the new teachers aren't showing up in the rural, low-paying, and fast-growing school districts that need them most. So some states are looking for new teachers in nontraditional places.

North Carolina hopes to find teachers among nine-to-fivers now following other career paths. The [University of North Carolina System](#) and the state [Department of Instruction](#) received a three-year, \$3 million federal grant to design an alternative teaching certification program that will provide six weeks of summer training for professionals in other fields who want to teach.

In their first year of teaching, participants in NC TEACH -- North Carolina Teachers of Excellence for All Children -- will work with mentors, attend biweekly seminars, and keep journals on their classroom experiences. At the end of the year, a successful new teacher will have 18 graduate credit hours and be eligible to take exams to earn a permanent teaching license.

Proponents of NC TEACH say they hope it will cut down on the traditionally high burnout rate among people moving from another career to education. The program is expected to bring in about 300 new teachers a year -- a small dent in the 80,000 teachers the state is expected to need over the next decade.

Still, NC TEACH looks more promising than some of the proposals floating around other states. North Dakota, for instance, was considering a plan to keep older teachers working in classrooms while they collect retirement benefits -- until the state's Retirement and Investment Office warned that the proposal might change the tax-exempt status of teachers' retirement fund earnings.