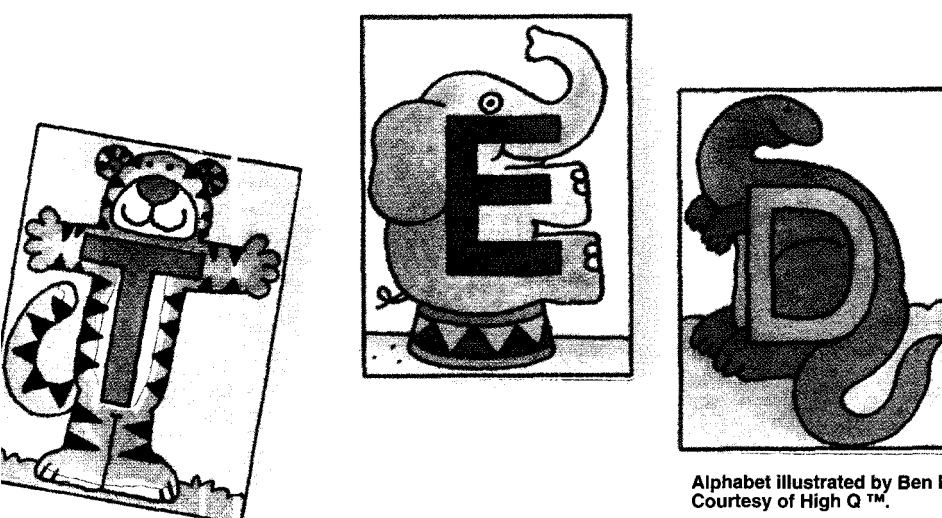
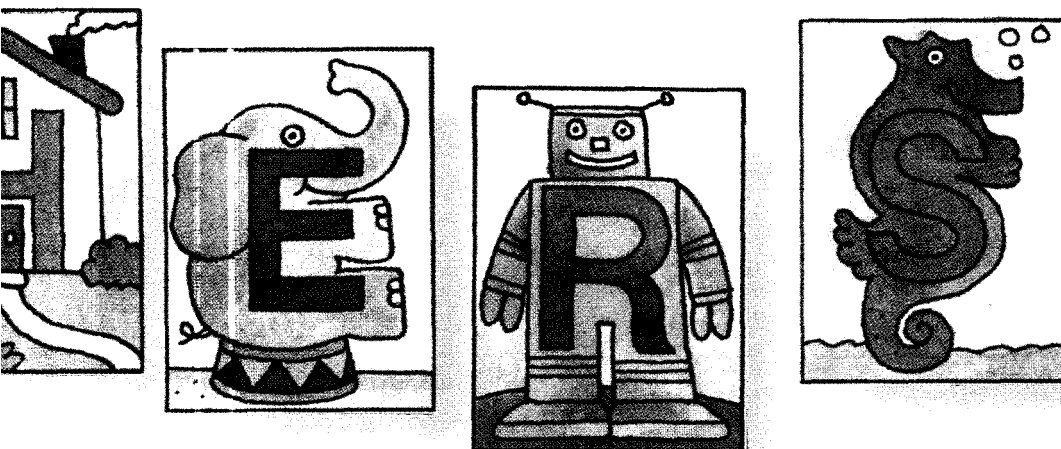


Politicians can discuss reform until they are blue in the face. But if California cannot attract enough qualified teachers, all the huffing and puffing will be for naught.

By Cheryl Miller and Greg Winter



Alphabet illustrated by Ben Mahan.
Courtesy of High Q™.

Along with crowd-pleasing proposals for graduate exit exams, high-octane reading programs and incentives for lagging schools, Governor Gray Davis' \$444 million education package offers something far more basic: A component to attract and retain well-qualified teachers in California.

Davis' budget funds a peer review and mentor teacher program, \$10,000 merit awards for teachers who earn rigorous national certification — and a 15-month credentialing and master's degree program through the University of California.

It's a plan well-grounded in both policy and politics. Since class-size reduction was introduced in 1996, California schools have relied upon tens of thousands of under-qualified teachers to fill classrooms.

Educators, including Gary Hart, Davis' education secretary, have warned that such dependence undermines efforts to raise academic standards. Teachers' unions, which poured millions of dollars into Davis' campaign, have also clamored for assurances that schools hire only fully credentialed teachers.

But for all the attention Davis focused on the problem of under-qualified teachers in the first weeks of his administration, the question remains: Will his efforts be enough? Teacher shortages are chronic in California, where uncredentialed teachers are embedded in the very fabric of most urban school districts. And while many education groups laud Davis' proposals, some educators say it will take a more

comprehensive and costly overhaul of the way teachers are recruited and trained to ensure that every public school student in the state has a qualified teacher.

A reality check

Anyone who thinks the problem will be solved quickly or easily should talk to Rene Carranza.

Each weekday, the principal of Grant Elementary School welcomes 836 kindergarten through sixth-graders to an aging campus in a poor, working-class neighborhood in the East Bay Area city of Richmond. And each day, more than one-third of those students walk into classrooms led by teachers who don't have the full credentials the state says they should have.

It's not that Carranza doesn't appreciate these so-called emergency teachers. They're energetic and eager to teach students, many of whom come from impoverished families where English is a second language. The problem, Carranza said, is that so many of these teachers are students of sorts themselves.

"Emergency teachers make a much tougher job," he said. "In essence, I have to teach them much of what they need to know. They're much needier professionals ... They have no framework in which to analyze what's going on in the classroom."

The situation at Grant is hardly an isolated one. Across the state, more than two-thirds of districts have turned to emergency teachers to fill class-

rooms. A booming school-age population, a high teacher turnover rate and class-size reduction have created a shortage of qualified K-12 instructors in California.

As a result, aides, substitutes, private sector professionals and others with wildly varying backgrounds are being ushered into full-time jobs as teachers, often with little or no formal training. Last year, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing issued a record 33,994 emergency permits and waivers to teachers who would otherwise not be allowed to teach a particular subject—or a classroom of students.

Severe shortages

The trend is a dangerous one, ex-

The latest source for California teachers? The Philippines.

In a state where school districts must scour the country, scrambling for certified teachers willing to come out West, Wilson Riles found a new way to round up qualified teachers for California's classrooms: He started recruiting in the Philippines.

This year, the former state superintendent's firm enlisted a group of eight Filipino teachers to work in Sacramento schools, enticing them with the allure of a three-year visa. And, while this initial undertaking will scarcely put a dent in the state's need for teachers, Riles is looking to expand, confident that countries like the Philippines offer untapped reserves of qualified teachers.

"We're hoping to do it all over California. . . and not just Sacramento," said Phillip Riles, the former superintendent's son and business partner in Wilson Riles & Associates, an education recruiting firm. "We're looking at Russia, too. We've made some contacts there. As we understand it, there are some good teachers there."

By Greg Winter



perts say, particularly in a state where politicians are consumed by talk of raising test scores. No one would argue that a credential guarantees a good teacher, but substantial evidence suggests that the most important thing a school can do to improve student success is provide a well-qualified teacher in each class.

"As long as emergency teachers occupy California classrooms, the rhetoric of strengthening academic standards will remain hollow and hypocritical," Hart said in a 1996 report issued by the Institute for Education Reform. A former high school teacher, state senator and most recently co-president of the institute, Hart says he stands by that statement today.

The use of emergency credentials

in California is nothing new; a statewide teacher shortage has existed to one degree or another for decades. Until the mid-1990s, the percentage of teachers serving on emergency permits and waivers remained consistent with the national average, peaking at 8 percent. With the introduction of class size reduction in 1996, however, the need for teachers in California's schools skyrocketed. Within two years, more than 28,000 new teachers were hired to lower student-to-teacher ratios in grades K-3, according to the California Department of Education.

In the first year of class size reduction alone, the CTC issued 55 percent more emergency permits and waivers, breaking the 30,000 total for the first time. By the end of 1998, roughly 13

percent of California's teachers served on emergency credentials.

Revolving doors

"Class-size reduction created an artificial gap between the teachers we have and the number we need," said Jim Zarillo, dean of California State University Hayward's school of education. "Now, it's going to be hard to close it."

Statistics support that claim. Between 35 percent and 40 percent of emergency teachers leave the profession after their first year, according to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. After three years, up to 60 percent of them will quit teaching, requiring a constant stream of new teachers to replace them.

Since 1996, when schools began reducing class sizes in grades K-3 California's teacher shortage has grown to unprecedented levels. Despite the efforts of more than 80 colleges and universities throughout the state, which graduate roughly 15,000 newly certified teachers each year,

California is short nearly 34,000 credentialed teachers. As a result, districts, non-profit groups, and consultants are relying on innovative recruitment techniques to woo teachers from out-of-state — and from out of the country — into the public schools.

Just as Silicon Valley capitalizes on immigration loopholes to import tech-savvy programmers from around the world, California's school districts are declaring a scarcity of teaching professionals. In response, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has issued an array of temporary visas, most of which can be renewed for up to six years, to thousands of teachers from other countries.

From Spain too

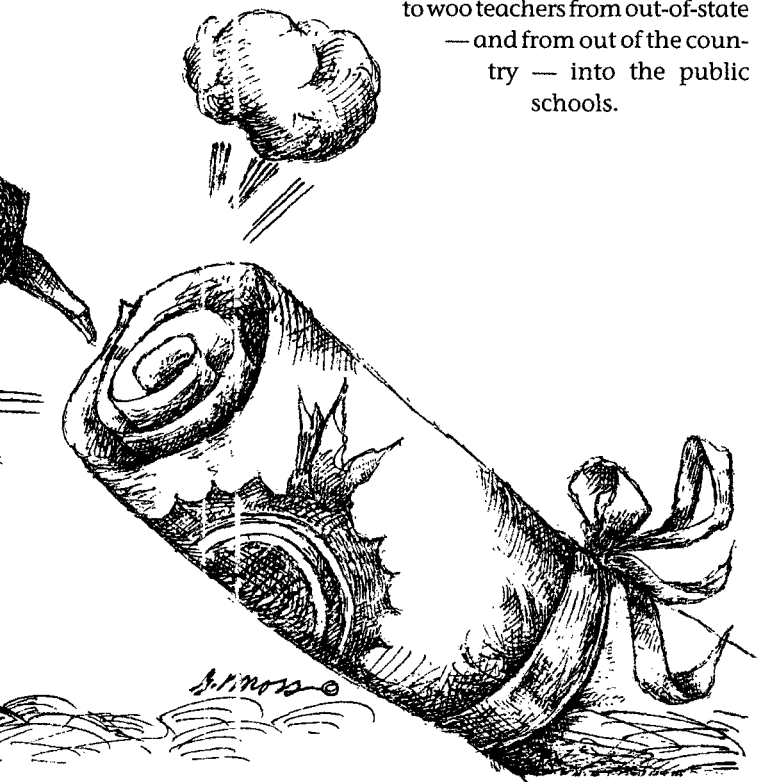
The majority of these international teachers come from Spain. In the past twelve years, roughly 1,000 Spanish teachers, fully credentialed, have come to districts up and down the state — much to the delight of participating schools. To begin with, their bi-lingual skills make them invaluable in a school system where Hispanic students comprise the largest ethnic group, according to the California Department of Education's 1998 figures. But, beyond that, these Spanish teachers are trained to teach math and science — subjects in which the teacher shortage is most pronounced.

"They're well-educated," said Harvey Hunt, who screened candidates from Spain for the CDE in the early 1990s. "Some of them are real scholars."

Schools need these teachers so badly, in fact, that representatives from 20 districts traveled to Spain last year to interview them. While the eager recruiters came from all over the state, they mostly represented poor, urban school districts, such as West Contra Costa and Compton.

These districts suffer from the teacher shortage the most. Not only is it tough to find certified teachers willing to venture into their inner-city schools, it is also hard to hold onto them once they get there.

"People here, they accumulate a few years of experience and then they figure 'I've paid my dues. I'm out of



"The revolving door of emergency teachers is enormous," said Mike McKibbin of the commission.

To make matters worse, California is already under pressure to put thousands of new teachers into classrooms each year. By conservative estimates, the state needs at least 21,640 new instructors annually — just to keep pace with a rapidly expanding student body and to replenish one of the oldest teaching populations in America.

On paper, California's patchwork approach to credentialing should be able to meet such a prodigious demand. Every year, university training programs, internships and opportunities for out-of-state teachers churn out roughly 23,000 newly certified teachers ready to engage California's schoolchildren.

But, in reality, the teaching profession leaks like a sieve, hemorrhaging thousands of both veteran and rookie teachers each year.

According to the California Teachers Association, half of all new teachers leave teaching within their first three years. Out-of-state teachers fair only slightly better, abandoning California's schools at a rate of 45 percent, mostly within the first few years.

A bottomless hole

"It's like trying to fill a bucket with a hole in the bottom," said Paul Shaker, dean of California State University at Fresno's school of education, which produces nearly 600 new teachers a year.

Given the high attrition rate, some studies predict that California will only

lose ground in the coming years. Six months ago, the Santa Cruz-based Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning projected that the shortage of credentialed teachers will grow by 21,000 in the next seven years. If Davis can't find a way to curb this shortage, the use of emergency teachers will persist and perhaps even expand.

"If something doesn't change, we could be relying on them for quite some time," said Hart.

This worries some education experts, who point out that California already has the third-smallest percentage of fully certified teachers in the country. That may not have been a problem decades ago when education was a sink-or-swim proposition, when students who excelled were geared toward college and those who fell behind could still find a well-paying job

here.' For some, they can't run fast enough.'" said Rene Carranza, a principal who relies on teachers from Spain to keep classes at his Richmond elementary school staffed.

In Marin, a surplus...

Not all districts actively recruit teachers from outside the country. In fact, some districts have to do very little recruiting, either at home or abroad, and still have enough qualified teachers to meet their needs. The Marin County Office of Education, for example, reports that for every teaching position that opens in its 19 school districts, 300 qualified teachers apply. And, when districts in the area hold a job fair, interested teachers show up from nearly a dozen states, as well as from other countries like Canada and England.

"Applications just come in the mail. Hundreds of them," said John Casey, of the Tamalpais Union High School District in Marin. "...We have to turn away fully credentialed teachers."

Teachers say the reason for this is simple: Marin's school districts are desirable places to live and work. After training as a teacher in Ireland, Elizabeth O'Sullivan and her husband drove 18-wheelers across the 48 states. Hauling everything from tin cans to computers, she got a close look at the country's cities, town and suburbs. So, by the time she decided to get back into teaching, she knew Marin was exactly where she wanted to be.



Wilson Riles



Phillip Riles

"The location was the most important thing," she said. "I picked a good place to live first, and then looked for work afterwards. I don't think I'd teach anywhere else in California. I can't imagine it gets better than this."

...not so in Coachella

A lot of other districts, however, don't have the benefit of desirable and scenic surroundings to attract their faculty. Recruiting teachers for their schools requires constant canvassing, tapping into states where qualified teachers are plentiful. Arlene Delgado of the Coachella Valley Unified School District, a remote, desert region with 15 schools, says her district looks for certified teachers throughout the southwest. But, the valley's lack of infrastructure — like housing and hospitals — keeps prospective teachers away.

"None of those things are available out here," she said. "Some of our schools are so isolated, we even have a hard time getting them substitute

teachers."

Experts say that the situation facing districts like Coachella Unified cannot be remedied solely by importing teachers from elsewhere. California's teacher shortage is just too large to be wiped out by an influx of foreign and out-of-state teachers.

"That's going to have to come from our colleges and universities," said Riles. 🏠

out of school.

But in California's high-tech economy, low-skilled jobs that pay well are scarce. Schools are expected to ensure that every child excels, which means teachers must be able to handle not only a lesson plan but also the learning disabilities, social problems and language barriers that so many of California's students bring to classrooms today.

Too many emergency teachers aren't trained to tackle those issues, said state schools Superintendent Delaine Eastin said. "The shortcomings of these teachers end up short-changing the students."

Teachers first

Studies reinforce that contention. Linda Darling-Hammond, a professor at Stanford University who many regard as a leading expert in the field of teacher training, found that the quality of a teacher is second only to a student's home and family life in affecting his or her academic achievement.

"The strongest predictor of student performance (at the school level) is the proportion of well-qualified teachers," Darling-Hammond said. "... Kids are entitled to have teachers who know what they're doing, not just by luck, not just by happenstance, but by civil right."

Californians seem to agree with that sentiment. A recent survey by Recruiting New Teachers, a Massachusetts firm, revealed that residents ranked high teacher quality second only to violence-free campuses as the most important factor in improving schools. Still, there are those who insist that what a teacher does in the classroom is far more important than the type of credential he or she holds.

Gloria Tejeda is one of them. The principal of Burbank Elementary School in Hayward oversees 34 classroom teachers, including 14 who have emergency or trainee permits. Tejeda actively recruits substitute teachers and other college graduates who she believes have what it takes to "do what's right for kids" and teach full time.

"Many times I've felt I'd rather deal with that than with someone

who's set and established in their patterns," she said. "... A credential doesn't guarantee success in the classroom."

But Darling-Hammond and others believe that many of even the best emergency teachers will grow frustrated in their first year or two — trying times for any instructor — because they just don't have the theory, practice or support they need.

Raising salaries

"The sad truth is that the eager, bright-eyed young teachers who come in and learn how to teach through trial and error leave the profession in extremely high numbers," Darling-Hammond said. "It's an absolute recipe for burnout."

As experts debate the impact of emergency credentials, they do agree on one thing: permits and waivers hit some districts harder than others.

With few exceptions, urban school districts — particularly those with a high percentage of poor students of color — rely more heavily on permits and waivers than their suburban counterparts. In many of these districts, emergency teachers lead more than 20 percent of all classes.

The same is also true for some rural districts, especially in agricultural areas with large, Latino populations.

These districts are often the worst place to put emergency teachers, experts say, because they present some of the most difficult teaching conditions. Their students traditionally post low test scores, and many of them speak limited English. Concentrating under-prepared teachers in these challenging environments virtually ensures that their students will continue to do poorly, experts say.

"It's the kids with the greatest needs who get the teachers with the least training," said Bob Sally of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. "The expectation of student performance is doomed to failure."

"We have kids at the door," said Mike Acosta, the employment operations administrator for Los Angeles Unified School District, which employs 6,500 teachers on permits and waivers. "What are we going to do? We

can't close the door and say, 'Sorry, we don't have enough credentialed teachers. You can't come in.'"

It is because of the continuing influx of students that California's attempts to curb its dependence on emergency teachers have been, at best, piecemeal. A comprehensive solution to the problem, many say, will have to focus on teacher pay.

The Recruiting New Teachers survey found that a majority of Americans would consider teaching if the job paid \$60,000 a year or more. That's a far cry from the average beginning teacher's salary, which usually runs below \$30,000.

"If we treated teachers the way we treat quarterbacks, there would be a long line of people waiting to get into the profession," said Eastin. "It should not have to be an oath of poverty." 🏠

Greg Winter and Cheryl Miller are graduate students at the UC Berkeley School of Journalism. Comments on this story may be e-mailed to editor@statenet.com.

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The New Mary

Gone are the golden tresses and that sun-kissed resort look. Sonny Bono's widow is donning a make-over that reaches beyond new cosmetics and hairdo. It says she's serious about her role as congresswoman. And why not? If Sonny could do it, so could she.

By Dana Wilkie



Illustrations by Sandra Hoover