

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Title II TQE GRANT

Executive Summary and Evaluation of the Connecticut Alternate Route to Certification (ARC)

Overview of ARC Programs and Candidate Demographics

The Connecticut Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) Program has been in implementation since 1988 and is now the third-largest teacher preparation program in the state, behind only Southern and Central Connecticut State Universities. All certification programs offered via the Connecticut ARC Program are evaluated and approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education during formal site visits and program reviews, following strict admissions and certification guidelines. ARC includes all mandated topics of instruction and clinical practice, such as special education, multicultural education, human growth and development, and methods of teaching in ways that are accommodating and reflective of the needs of adult learners. The program is administered by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education and is staffed by highly qualified public school teachers, collegiate faculty and education administrators.

Connecticut ARC candidates are unique and very talented individuals. They represent a variety of professions, such as law, health and medical practice, business, collegiate instruction, academic/scientific research and administration, government and policy administration, private and parochial school teaching, military practice and leadership, professional artistic and musical genres, engineering, technological fields, and media-related fields. A sampling of the accomplishments of the 2,696 graduates prior to enrolling in ARC includes performing surgery and saving lives, delivering babies, working with NASA, designing buildings and infrastructures, acquiring patents, publishing books, traveling the globe, working with the Peace Corps, heading multi-million dollar companies and successful businesses, exhibiting works of art in reputable museums, and performing in highly-visible venues. In 2002-03, the average age of an ARC student was 38; 46% of the candidates had master and/or doctoral degrees; and, 63% had received reputable academic honors of distinction and other awards.

At this point, many early ARC graduates are working as school administrators and have been recognized as district teachers-of-the-year. Many have been instrumental in starting new programs and strengthening technology initiatives for their school systems. Many have also been awarded fellowships to teach and study in other countries, with one graduate even being recognized as a national Milken Award recipient. The retention rate for CT ARC-trained teachers has been solid. Statistics compiled by the State Department of Education reported that 85.7% of ARC graduates who completed the program between 1993 to 1997 were still teaching after three years in the classroom, compared to 84.4% of teachers trained through traditional programs. After five years, 79.9% of the ARC trained teachers were retained compared with 78.7% of those trained in traditional programs.

Program Enhancements as a Result of Title II Funding

The expansion of Connecticut Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) Programs through funding provided by the Title II Grant allowed the program to increase admissions by 159 in 2002 (423 total) and 129 in 2003 (339 total) candidates. The funding provided by the Title II Grant helped offset rental costs, allowing the program to expand and offer satellite programs at various sites for the two-year period. In addition, the additional funds awarded for tuition waivers via the Diversity in Teaching Network Program allowed the ARC Program to recruit exceptionally strong minority candidates, many of whom are teaching in shortage areas. Since the Connecticut ARC Program is a self-sustaining entity with a minimal appropriation of \$27,000 from the State of Connecticut, this highly needed revenue has been pivotal in filling statewide vacancies in shortage areas with highly qualified educators, 16% of whom are of minority group demographics.

Using Title II funding, an urban satellite program was developed specifically for recruiting and training teachers for the school districts of Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport and New London, as follows:

- 52 candidates were trained in the Hartford satellite program, called the Hartford Teaching Fellows in conjunction with New York-based Teach for America;
- 236 candidates were trained in the New Haven, Bridgeport and New London satellite programs.

Of the total 288 above, 99 (34%) urban satellite graduates are teaching in these districts currently. This is compared to the overall program statistics for mainstay and satellite 2002 and 2003 programs which indicate that approximately 37% of all 762 graduates are recorded as teaching in statewide priority or transitional school districts. In all, 73% of the total 762 graduates are teaching in rural, suburban and urban schools throughout the state.

In addition, the Title II funds helped to start-up an alternate route in bilingual education, a program that has grown and recruited 29 talented teachers during the two-year period 2002 and 2003. Funds were used for recruitment and program development, including application and publicity materials, computer training, library materials, and faculty training and wages. ARC was also able to send its bilingual candidates to a state-sponsored bilingual education conference for two years in a row, allowing these teachers opportunities for networking and acquisition of updated teaching materials and methods training to enhance their instructional effectiveness in multi-lingual classroom environments. 72% of these bilingual candidates are teaching in New Haven, Waterbury, Meriden, Norwalk, Windham, Hartford, Danbury, Bridgeport, New Britain and Hamden, Connecticut. Their native languages support Albanian, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Polish and Portuguese students who are working towards the goal of total immersion in English-speaking classroom environments.

A combined 206 candidates who were trained in the urban satellite ARC programs are teaching in the shortage areas of bilingual education, math, music, science (biology, general science, chemistry, earth science and physics), and world languages. The additional 82 urban satellite candidates were trained in the areas of English, social studies and art.

New Directions for the Connecticut ARC Program

For its 2002 and 2003 graduates, ARC has launched an outreach program to provide classroom-based coaching and mentoring. A minimum of two observations during the first 90 days of teaching was offered to graduates of all programs. These visits were confidential and non-evaluative, providing a forum for observation, critique and conferencing between the ARC graduate and coach, with no involvement by ARC administration or employing district personnel. The coaches are education professionals who hold intermediate administrator and supervisor certification or department head certification. Most of the coaches are retired public school educators who have been trained in the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) induction program for observational assessments of beginning teachers and bring a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to new ARC teachers. The Alternate Route coaching module supplements the Connecticut State Department of Education's BEST mentoring program, as well as mentoring support being provided by the employing school districts.

In addition to the mentoring program, ARC has designed a year-long seminar program for recent graduates. These seminars have been designed to meet the needs of adult learners and focus on how they may utilize the experience and knowledge they brought into teaching to address situations that require spontaneous decision making and problem solving. The seminars offer support for many areas of growth and professional development, such as bringing closure to year one of teaching and using the summer for reflective practice; managing differential classroom environments; utilizing technology for student, personal and content management; effective parental communication; effective content planning and instructional enhancement; and, self-assessment of progress in the classroom.

ARC has also launched a new content session during its actual preparation program (mainstay and satellite) to prepare new teachers for professional development and lifelong learning as an educator. Finally, ARC now offers a mandatory pre-certification workshop in the first half of the program to prepare all candidates for policies and processes post-ARC, as well as their search for employment. ARC is also designing on-line support initiatives to supplement the coaching and seminar offerings in conjunction with collegiate institutions of higher education.

In October 2003, Connecticut ARC sponsored the *First Northeast Regional Conference on Alternate Routes to Teacher Certification*. The conference was well attended by education administrators and policy analysts from Washington, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maine and offered many sessions dealing with ARC research, program planning, funding issues, and support and mentoring. Special sessions were held to begin the formation of a regional consortium of states interested in pursuing ARC-related alliances and networking pipelines for the sharing of best practices among states and programs.

All of these new enhancements, inclusive of the new ARC website portal, have brought the ARC program to a new level. This contemporary holistic approach towards teacher

preparation has provided a well-rounded experience for the mid-career changers who are working tirelessly to become effective and highly qualified instructional leaders.

How Have ARC-Trained Teachers Rated the Effectiveness of Connecticut ARC?

The ARC Program has been collecting evaluative data from its graduates to measure the effectiveness of the program and seeks feedback for improvements and program enhancements at the close of each program. A doctoral candidate from Columbia University worked with CT ARC from 2000-2002 to write her dissertation on the effectiveness of the CT ARC Program. Mary Ellen McGuire, who has since completed her degree and works as the Education Policy Advisor for Senator Christopher Dodd, declared through collected data that overall 90.8% of surveyed graduates reported feeling prepared or better (well-prepared) for classroom teaching. In regards to some specific instructional details, 91.5% felt prepared or better to manage classroom behavior, while 87.9% felt prepared or better to plan appropriate instruction. It was determined that school settings (rural, urban or suburban) and a teacher's age are not significant predictors of feelings of preparedness as originally anticipated by some education administrators.

Internally, ARC continues to measure program effectiveness with on-going solicitation of evaluative feedback to prepare for future directions. In 2003, 90% of the summer graduates found content methods training and core training in the areas of special and multicultural education, classroom management and other key areas of preparation effective or highly effective. 87% of these candidates reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their clinical experience. Overall, 98% of the graduates felt well or fairly well prepared for classroom teaching, and the same percentage claimed they would do ARC again if they were to start the certification process over.

Future Planning

ARC will not continue with the expansion of their mainstay preparation programs due to limited financial resources, and will downsize its satellite operations in 2004. The program will continue offering strong support and high-quality teacher preparation, while addressing the shortage needs of the state and high needs districts wherever possible. Some new ARC initiatives under discussion are expansion of cross-endorsement programs in areas such as reading specialist and special education for teachers who already hold teaching credentials; an alternate route for certification in school administration to respond to the growing need for highly qualified school leaders; and, an alliance with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to pilot the first ARC Program in the nation aligned with NCATE standards. Connecticut ARC has come a long way since its first operation in 1988.

With the support of Title II and other federal grant funds, ARC has grown and improved its programs to train and support highly marketable and sought-after teacher candidates for Connecticut public schools, particularly in high need districts and in teacher shortage areas.