



## **National Association for Alternative Certification External Talking Points**

**Overview:** These messages are intended for members of the National Association for Alternative Certification (NAAC) to use externally when speaking with policy makers as well as with the broader public, with the goal of positioning the teachers affiliated with NAAC as passionate, highly qualified and committed to the teaching profession. These talking points can guide members when communicating over the phone, in emails and when speaking publicly on behalf of alternative certification programs.

### **What is the National Association for Alternative Certification?**

- **The National Association for Alternative Certification (NAAC) is the professional organization that advocates for standards-driven nontraditional educator preparation leading to effective school staffing. NAAC provides a unified voice for alternative certification programs, for which there are more than 650 providers across the country.**
- Our member's programs provide job-embedded, high-quality teacher preparation. More than 60,000 teachers were enrolled in these programs across the country in 2015-16
- Thirty percent of all teacher preparation programs are alternative certification programs. This vital pipeline provides the country's teaching force with bright, talented individuals, often second-career professionals, with deep levels of expertise who might not have entered the profession if not for this pathway.
- **PLACEHOLDER:** Describe your own local alternative certification program, as a member of NAAC, and how it serves local needs for high-quality teachers.

### **What is alternative certification?**

- Alternative certification is the ideal way for mature individuals with established professional and/or life experience to segue into teaching. With deep content knowledge and expertise, candidates can teach in the classroom while simultaneously earning their teaching credential.
- Highly selective, alternative certification programs provide rigorous training before the teacher steps into the classroom and continue to provide training and support throughout the program. This ensures every one of these highly-committed, highly-skilled teachers is exceptionally prepared.
- Alternative certification programs hold candidates to the same rigorous standards and levels of coursework that all teachers in the state are required to meet.

### **Why alternative certification?**

- **Our teachers are talented and highly-skilled professionals, many of whom desire to change careers to teach in our public schools.**  
Teachers who come out of an alternative certification program often tend to be second-career professionals who possess valuable professional experience and who are eager to teach in our

public schools. These talented educators bring with them deep subject matter competency and life experience when they enter the classroom.

➤ **Our teachers are highly skilled in the subjects in which they teach.**

As the country's public schools struggle with a shortage of math, science and special education teachers, alternative certification programs are providing qualified teachers in each of these critical subject areas.

- Our programs provide a way for laid-off teachers to be retrained in high-demand areas, such as special education.
- **PLACEHOLDER:** A local data point can be inserted regarding how your local program is meeting specific local demands (for example, in special education).

➤ **Our programs are nimble enough to quickly meet the ever-changing needs of individual schools, school districts and the students they serve.**

The alternative certification pathway distinguishes itself by being “market sensitive,” allowing these highly qualified teachers to seamlessly enter the classroom where they are needed most.

➤ **Our programs allow teachers to implement best practices *as they learn*.**

Teachers in our programs are implementing theories while simultaneously receiving ongoing supervision and support from seasoned educators. In fact, many of our candidates enter the classroom with previous teaching experience.

➤ **Our programs are as rigorous as any traditional teacher preparation program.** Our candidates must meet rigorous pre-service requirements and meet all state requirements for teacher certification. Our candidates are held to the same high standards, including levels of coursework, as all teachers in the state in which they teach.

- **PLACEHOLDER:** Local programs - please describe your coursework that meets both pre-service requirements as well as any additional coursework you would like to see highlighted for your local constituents.

**Our rigorous programs produce quality teachers:**

➤ **Our programs are selective – with rigorous pre-requisites that ensure only the *best* teachers are matched with the students who need them most.**

In order to meet the individual needs of each community, alternative certification programs are selective when choosing new teachers.

- **PLACEHOLDER:** Local programs – please feel free to add your program's specific details regarding requirements for admittance to your program.

➤ **Our programs are comprehensive, with demanding requirements that all prospective teachers *must* meet and complete.**

- Alternative certification programs require candidates meet rigorous pre-requisites in order to enter a program.
- Our programs offer rigorous training that enables prospective teachers (who meet rigorous pre-requisites and have established professional experience) to teach in our public schools while simultaneously earning their teaching credentials.
- Of the 658 alternative certification program providers in 2015-16, 455 were based in institutions of higher education and 203 were non-IHE based programs.
- Many of our programs have earned the deep respect of the school districts by cultivating close working relationships with them.

- **Our teachers are *choosing* to work with the students who need them most.** Teachers who receive their teaching credential through an alternative certification program are committed to improving public education for all students and *choose* to be placed in schools that reside in underserved communities.

### **The demand for qualified teachers:**

- **The U.S. needs teachers.**  
NAAC programs are recruiting and training talented individuals and second-career professionals with deep content expertise and professional experience.
- **The number of students in our country is projected to grow steadily.**  
This will require more teachers over the next decade. Demand is especially strong in fields such as special education, math, science and English language development, as well as in many schools that serve high-poverty students.
- **Our programs are serving school districts in rural and urban communities.** Rural and urban districts often have difficulty meeting their teacher needs, and our programs provide these schools with talented individuals.
  - **PLACEHOLDER:** A local data point can be inserted regarding how your local program is meeting specific local teacher needs. Are you in an area with unique needs (such as a rural or urban school district)? How has your program helped solve these needs?

### **How we are solving the demand for highly-qualified teachers:**

- **Alternative certification programs are meeting the nation's teaching needs on multiple fronts.**
  - STEM: The nation faces a persistent shortage of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) teachers. Alternative certification programs prepare a higher proportion of math and science teachers than traditional certification programs.
    - 9% of enrollees in non-IHE-based alternative programs were prepared to teach math and 7% were prepared to teach science
  - Special Education: The nation is also facing a shortage of special education teachers. Special education is in the top five initial credentialing areas for alternative certification programs, and these programs prepare a higher proportion of special education teachers than traditional education teachers.
    - 22% of enrollees in IHE-based alternative programs were prepared to teach special education
- **Our programs are preparing teachers for the Common Core and/or State Standards.**

### **Successes of our programs:**

- **Our impact can be felt in school districts across the country.**  
Alternative certification programs have a strong track record of placing highly-qualified teachers in schools.
  - Alternative certification programs had over 32,700 completers in 2015-16
  - Many are hired in the same schools in which they complete their program
- **PLACEHOLDER:** A local data point can be inserted. For example, local statistics on teacher placements.

- **Our teachers stay in the profession longer and remain in our public schools.** Our programs attract individuals who are looking to make a long-term commitment to teaching for the greater good of public schools. NAAC retention research shows a 92% retention rate for completers of the 2011-12 cohort of teacher candidates who found positions.
- **Alternative certification teachers are diverse and reflect the student population they are teaching.**

Alternative certification programs are attracting more males and underrepresented minorities to the teaching profession than other teacher certification programs, enhancing students' academic experience in the classroom.

  - Our teachers are often from the communities they serve.
  - We have more diversity. Forty-three percent of alternative certification program enrollees are non-white as opposed to 28% of enrollees in traditional programs.
  - We recruit more males than traditional programs. Thirty-four percent of alternative certification candidates are male as opposed to 22% of traditional program candidates.
- **PLACEHOLDER:** A local data point can be inserted regarding how your local program is meeting diversity needs in area classrooms.

**Note:** Statistics are taken from Title II data available at: <https://title2.ed.gov>.