Bridges to Teaching: A Transition to Teaching project is in its third of a five-year $1.25M grant to the Dallas Independent School District's Alternative Certification Department. The grant was authorized in September, 2006, under Title II, Part C, Subpart 1, Chapter B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In its first year (2006-07) the program recruited 158 participants for 2007-08 (Cohort 1). The second cohort (Cohort 2) of teachers (2008-09) included seventy-nine participants.

During its first two years the Bridges to Teaching grant provided funds for creation of training courses: *Literacy Development*, *Second Language Acquisition*, and *Intensive English Grammar*. This year the grant provided registrations at local colleges for two continuing education courses: *Accent Improvement* and *English as a Second Language*.

The primary purpose of the evaluation of the Bridges to Teaching project was to compare the first-year effectiveness of groups of first-year teachers and interns. The groups under comparison were Bridges interns, other district-trained interns, external interns, and certified teachers, all of whom were to have received only the district required support. A secondary purpose of the evaluation was to ascertain the effectiveness of the courses developed with grant funds.

**District Required Support**

As district required support, beginning teachers, as well as interns, must earn 63 credits of professional development. The professional development department maintains a database of courses completed, from which it was learned that sixty-two percent of Bridges teachers completed at least 63 credits, while only 42 percent of other district alternative certification interns, 18 percent of outside interns and 37 percent of certified new teachers completed the district-required professional development. The amount of professional development credits earned by each group is shown Figure 1: DISD Required Training (63 Credits). The evaluator was unable to determine whether there were consequences for teachers who did not complete the requirement.

**Retention**

The terms of the Bridges grant required that an intern remain for three years of service to the district. During the first year of each cohort, Bridges had 91.4 and 92.2 percent retention rates, despite losing five percent of Cohort 2 to a reduction in forces in October, 2008.

**Course Evaluation**

The grant paid for the three courses to be developed for the Alternative Certification Department. The evaluator reviewed printed and online documents for these courses and found that these courses did not have clearly stated or measurable objectives. What passes for a course objective is a vague reference to Texas Education Agency rules and even those are not in the course, nor could the novice teacher have easily found objectives in the rules.
Teacher Effectiveness

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each of the four groups in the evaluation: math, science, and bilingual first-year teachers, producing the result of no statistically detectible difference in the four groups. At the district level, possible CEI scores range from zero to 100 with a normed mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 (variance of 100). Beginning teachers might be expected to score on the lower half of the scale, and that is what we found for each group, except the bilingual teachers in the external intern group where the mean of their CEI scores was 50.7.

The variance in CEI scores was much tighter than in previous years when the range of scores ranged from 2 to 99. In 2008-09 the range of scores in the four groups was from 19.7 to 77.0 with the low score in the traditionally certified teacher group and the high score in the external intern group. The range for Bridges interns in bilingual classes was 22.0 to 63.6. The mean scores for first-year interns and teachers in bilingual classes are shown Figure 3.

The CEI scores for first-year science teachers ranged from 25.7 to 68.5, with the low mean provided again by traditionally certified teachers but the high mean earned by internal interns (other than Bridges interns). The range of scores for Bridges interns was 34.7 to 53.2. The means of CEI scores for the four groups of science teachers are shown in Figure 5.

Last year there were no differences in the groups when examined by grade level. This year the range of scores is even narrower than last year, so the conclusion was that there were no differences in the groups this year.

Recommendations

Quantifiable, clearly stated objectives need to be developed and added to the three courses developed for the Alternative Certification by the grant. An evaluation of the courses could be made based on surveys of students regarding the meeting of the objectives. Alternatively, program management needs to decide how the effectiveness of the courses could be measured.

If 63 credits of professional development are required for first year teachers but none are completing the requirement, the requirement should either be changed or enforced. Further, whether the courses included in the 63 credits are helping a first year teacher to become a high performing teacher could be ascertained.