

NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE PREPARATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

PREPARED BY

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The National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL), a professional association of leaders in the field of elementary and secondary foreign language education, endorses the emergent and promising output/performance model of integrated foreign language teacher preparation and ongoing professional growth. Linked to the student national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* within the field of foreign language education, yet sharing the vision of the *Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)* model standards for performance-based teacher licensing and supporting the rigorous standards for accomplished teaching of the *National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS)*, as well as the accreditation procedures of the *National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)*, NCSSFL backs the current reforms being promoted nationwide in the arena of teacher preparation, certification, and professionalism.

A Time of New Direction

Before the 21st century was officially ushered in, discussion and rhetoric in educational circles was already abuzz with intense dialectics centered around the new millennium and the changing needs to be addressed in preparing our nation's students to face the information society (A Nation at Risk, 1983; Carnegie Task Force, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; Hudelson & Faltis, 1993). As a result, the present era is witness to a great deal of national reform efforts in education. The standards movement, gaining momentum at national, state, and local levels, represents America's most readily identifiable response to the outcry of the past two decades for more and better-prepared high school graduates.

The current public sentiment, supported by research, indicates that teacher expertise is a critical factor in student achievement, thus propelling teacher preparation closer to the top of the national agenda (Zumwalt, 2000b; Minner, 2001; Ranbom, et al., 2001). Accordingly, the

standards movement boasts not only numerous subject-specific student standards preK-16, but also teacher initial licensing standards (*INTASC*), teacher professional standards (*NBPTS*), and standards for the accreditation of teacher preparation programs (*NCATE*).

However, it has become increasingly evident to educational researchers and policy makers that the reforms being promoted in the arena of teacher preparation, certification, and professionalism must also address the striking demographic and social changes that presently make up the American landscape. There is a growing diversity of America's school-age population in terms of cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and academic background (Kreeft Peyton, 1997). There is a mounting shortage of prepared teachers to face the present and emerging needs in our nation's classrooms (Zumwalt, 2000a). Qualified foreign language teachers are among those most needed, and there is a resulting widespread presence of non-standard licensed individuals teaching foreign language across the nation (source?).

Taken as a whole, there are many factors influencing teacher preparation reform, yet NCSSFL holds that:

- The increased use of certification tests, raised cut scores, and the threat of institutional penalties for teacher preparation programs failing to meet standards will increase accountability.
- Portable credentials, fast-track licensing, and other non-traditional pathways toward teacher certification will aid in addressing the teacher shortage.
- The sum of reforms in teacher preparation will produce better teachers, resulting in the desired changes in student performance in the classroom.

Highlights of the New Direction

The emergent model for teacher preparation which represents a significant philosophical shift from the traditional teacher training model, is highlighted in the following:

- A model of seamless professional preparation and growth: an uninterrupted continuum beginning with pre-service teacher training and continuing with ongoing professional development (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996)
- Integration of theory and practice: the blending of course content and teaching experiences, initiated from the outset of the teacher preparation program and continuing throughout all subsequent phases (Blair, 2001)
- Accreditation of teacher preparation institutions: an output model, based on standards of performance, will replace the traditional input model, based on prescribed coursework leading to teacher certification (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001)

The foreign language profession finds itself in the midst of formulating and proposing numerous goals and initiatives to forge pathways toward an improved model of foreign language teacher preparation. Some salient features are summarized below:

- An expanded foreign language teacher preparation model, highlighting (1) vertical alignment of preK-16+; (2) partnerships with ESL and bilingual education preparation programs; and (3) joint ventures between foreign language departments and colleges of education (Kreeft Peyton, 1997)
- Learner-centered preparation, standards-based preparation and certification, and performance-based preparation and certification

- The integration of technology throughout the training experience as well as instruction and practice in integrating technology in foreign language pedagogy
- Exposure to and experience with advocacy for foreign language education
- Explicit opportunities for the development of reflective practice
- Focused coaching/mentoring of teacher candidates and new teachers
- Broadly-based teaching experiences in elementary, middle and high schools in diverse communities and settings
- Total immersion experiences in the target language and culture
- New corollary foreign language teacher preparation models, i.e., specialized preparation programs for native speakers, temporary certification, and career changers

A Blueprint for the New Direction

Today, all states are facing the challenge of how to staff foreign language classrooms with qualified and certified teachers. For more than a decade, colleges and universities have experimented with numerous and varied programs to meet the changing needs and address the states' concerns for certification and re-certification. While no one prevailing model has emerged, several trends have influenced what foreign language teacher preparation looks like.

Teacher preparation programs in postsecondary institutions vary in design and duration. The three program designs most common today are: (1) the traditional four-year bachelor degree program with early field observation and practicum, and a culminating semester-long student teaching experience; (2) a four-year bachelor degree with a language major, followed by a one-year education masters degree with a student teaching experience; and (3) a six-year bachelor/masters degree with a paid year-long school internship. Another and most innovative

program model is that of the professional development school, where inquiry and practice co-exist and new teachers are prepared and mentored collaboratively by university faculty and classroom practitioners.

Regardless of the particular program model or type, the prevailing focus on the learner has significantly impacted teacher preparation because of its influence on instructional and curricular initiatives. This present emphasis on student learning is further evidenced in the curricular leadership provided by state educational agencies. Guided by research on the brain and emerging constructivist and cognitive learning theories, the educational reform movement has shifted the focus from teaching to learning. From this new conceptual framework, many Departments of Education have revised or developed statewide assessment systems, programs of study, content and performance standards, guidelines, benchmarks, and scholastic reviews/audits. Many states have also created, or are in the process of creating, their own foreign language standards or frameworks. The vast majority of these are based on the vision of the national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the Twenty-first Century: What students should know and be able to do in a multicultural world and global economy*. These standards documents have not only strongly impacted curriculum planning in local school districts, but have also provided the impetus and direction for change in teacher preparation programs. Accordingly, teacher candidates rely on university programs for adequate delivery of content knowledge as well as training in pedagogical skills, a preparation to support K-12 student academic standards.

Recruitment, selection, and certification of new teachers are renewed issues with state Departments of Education, many of whom have responded by crafting teacher quality plans to rethink, reorganize, and enhance their teacher preparation programs. Licensing agencies, also

faced with the challenge of responding to the short supply of and increasing demand for teachers, have reworked requirements for certification, many based upon the *INTASC* model standards for performance-based teacher licensing. The *INTASC* standards are expressed in the form of ten principles articulating the common core of new teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential to support quality learning experiences.

In terms of foreign language teacher preparation, increased attention to detail in articulating performance-based standards has necessitated the identification of language proficiency levels for initial certification and re-certification, assessment instruments for teaching performance and language proficiency, foreign language-specific professional development for re-certification, and certification options preK-12. To that end, *INTASC* is currently drafting model standards for licensing beginning foreign language teachers and *NBPTS* has developed a national certification program for teachers of World Languages other than English (WLOE), with the first class of teacher candidates seeking *NBPTS* WLOE certification in 2001-2002.

The initiative with the greatest impact on teacher preparation is that proposed by *NCATE*, articulated in the six new standards required for schools of education. These standards address both "candidate performance" in terms of learning outcomes as well as "unit capacity" in terms of the components of teacher education programs that support candidate learning. *NCATE* calls for improved teacher preparation and more rigorous standards by proposing performance-based accreditation that is awarded based on results that demonstrate what teacher candidates know and are able to do. Clearly, foreign language teacher preparation programs necessitate a collaborative relationship between the colleges of education and the foreign language departments in the colleges of humanities. In partnership with *NCATE*, the *American Council on*

the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is developing standards for foreign language teacher preparation that address *NCATE* standard #1, outlining the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be an effective foreign language teacher. These standards are organized into six topic areas as follows: (1) language, linguistics, comparisons; (2) cultures, literatures, cross-disciplinary concepts; (3) language acquisition theories and instructional practices; (4) integration of standards into curriculum and instruction; (5) assessment of languages and cultures; and (6) professionalism.

An Agenda for the New Direction

The challenge of accommodating teacher needs nationwide without forfeiting high standards for teacher preparation requires innovative approaches. No one teacher training model can serve the needs of our diverse population, but clearly recognizing what we expect teachers to know and be able to do can steer the choices for program design toward meeting that goal. The consensus in the profession that the following are essential elements of any program:

- Sound scrutiny of the academic components of the preparation program
- Blending of theory and practice in the teacher candidate experience
- Collaboration among the various stakeholders
- Prospects for mentorship
- Occasions for field experience in a variety of levels, communities, and settings
- Sufficient time and opportunity for teacher candidates to become proficient in their language and trained in pedagogical skills

There is a need for various pathways to teaching in order to attract more qualified candidates to the profession and to respond to the diverse lifestyles of today's professionals (Johnson, 2000; Grant, 2001; Okamoto, 2001). States adopting alternative certification routes to

attract native speakers and mid-career professionals into teaching are mindful that the fast track and endorsement programs they propose: (1) include adequate pedagogical preparation for the wide spectrum of teaching possibilities; (2) determine and capitalize on native speakers' and expatriates' proficiency in the target language; and (3) do not short-change potential teachers or their future students. It bears noting that many state and local agencies have signed contracts for international visiting teachers as a short-term solution to the foreign language teacher shortage. While this does not directly affect teacher preparation programs, it does affect delivery of instruction. If state and local educational agencies choose this option, they have an additional responsibility to provide some type of professional support for these teachers to facilitate an efficient and effective adaptation to the American educational context.

A proactive approach needs to be taken by the federal government, state departments of education, institutions of higher learning, and foreign language professional organizations to develop means to recruit and retain qualified foreign language teachers. In attempting to alleviate the shortage of foreign language teachers, the focus of current recruitment efforts has shifted to include non-traditional candidates, including mid-life career changers or native speakers aspiring to become teachers. Many higher education institutions have tried to accommodate non-traditional students by providing alternative methods to meet endorsement requirements, reconfiguring courses to make them meaningful in an abbreviated amount of time. Recruitment and retention will continue to be formidable tasks as schools compete with government and businesses who are actively recruiting foreign language teacher candidates and practicing teachers away from the classroom to utilize their skills and knowledge of the target language in the marketplace. Promises of higher salaries and less extended workdays make these offers appealing to foreign language teachers (Johnson, 2000; US Government Accounting

Office, 2002). It will take an aggressive effort among government and educational policymakers and the business community to influence prevailing attitudes toward (a) the necessity for internationalized education and (b) the inclusion of foreign languages in the model. Such an awakened consciousness would valorize the profession of foreign language teaching and all but eliminate the problems of recruitment and retention.

How teacher candidates are prepared to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn is determined by the content of their courses, the modeling of appropriate instructional techniques by their own teachers, and their experience with the target language and culture. Pre-service foreign language teacher programs should facilitate the development of language proficiency and cultural competency. Teaching candidates should be encouraged, and whenever possible, financially supported, to extend their academic preparation to include study in a country where the target language is spoken. Candidates should also be prepared for alternative modes of delivery, including: online courses, distance learning, and video course facilitation. In addition, an orientation to service learning should be considered for inclusion in foreign language teacher preparation programs, as working in the community with diverse groups supports the national student standards goal of “communities” and builds cultural competence.

Conclusion

The needs of future foreign language teachers will continue to evolve, but certain factors will remain the same. There will be enduring emphasis for foreign language teachers to attain a high level of proficiency and a deeper understanding of the knowledge and skills needed to develop student competency in the language and culture of study. As school districts will remain focused on school improvement, with standards, assessment, and accountability providing

direction, foreign language teachers clearly need to be adequately prepared to plan curriculum, diversify instruction, and implement a variety of assessments to meet the needs of students preK–16 in the development of articulated foreign language programs.

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