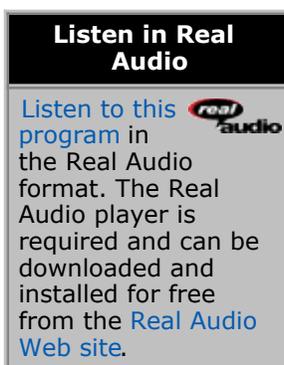


## Teacher Recruitment in the DC Metropolitan Area

Dan Goldhaber, Urban Institute

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** This is Public Interest. I'm Kojo Nnamdi. All around the nation, they're looking for public school teachers. And if they can't find them in the traditional sources, the traditional places, then they're looking at non-traditional sources [for] public school teachers. You may have heard it on Monday, discussed this issue, in our ongoing series with the Urban Institute.



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But then, we were talking about what's going on nationally. On this occasion, we want to talk about specifically what is happening in the Washington area, and how your children might be affected by this: looking for teachers in non-traditional places. And joining us in this hour to do that is Dan Goldhaber. He is senior research associate in the Education Policy Center at the Urban Institute. He joins us in our Washington studio. Welcome to you, Dan.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** It's a pleasure to be here, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** And Emily Feistritzer is president of the National Center for Education and Information. Thank you for joining us.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Thank you.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Joining us by telephone is Jeanne Embich, director of the GW Teaching Corps. Hi, Jeanne.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Hi. Thanks for having me, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** You too can join the conversation by calling 1-800-433-8850, or by e-mailing us at pi@wamu.org. Dan, now is the time of year when state budgets are being put in place, and education, we know, is always a big line item. When we hear about the lack of teachers to fill classrooms and the needs for additional money to hire more, and to hire better recruits, should we assume that this is something that's just happening this budget cycle, it's a pretty, fairly new phenomenon?

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** Well, Kojo, it's not a new phenomenon; teachers are obviously hired every year. But it's a situation where there's a combination of rising student enrollments and an aging teacher labor force. And, as a result, this is a year, and the last couple of years, and probably the next couple of years coming up, where the teacher labor market is very tight. So it's a situation that's a particularly difficult environment to hire enough high quality teachers.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** But Emily Feistritzer, it seems as if we hear about this every year, and just about every year, somebody somewhere says it's a crisis.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Oh, I think the crisis gets paraded out about every five years that we have this crisis, or you know, the sky is falling orientation to not finding enough teachers, and not having enough teachers. Our research and the hard data nationally, actually shows that we're turning out enough people to fill the demand for teachers. The problem really becomes one of, are we turning out the kind of people who want to teach, where the demand for teachers is greatest, like large inner cities, and special education areas, and mathematics and science.

So that national problem really does not exist. The data really doesn't even support it, that we have a shortage of teachers. It's really a mismatch problem. It's getting the people who want to teach to want to teach, and choose to teach, in the areas where we have the greatest demand for new teachers.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** In that case, how do Washington area regions fare in comparison to schools nationwide? Are we comparable, say, to other urban areas, or are there unique circumstances regarding

schools in this area?

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** Well, Kojo, I think there are unique circumstances to every area, but Washington and the District—well, the Washington area and the District, in particular, as an urban area, probably faces some more difficulties. The cost of living is higher. There are issues about moving into cities that may make teaching in the district difficult for some people.

And so, I don't think that it's really all that different than the situation that's faced by other urban areas. But the situation that urban areas face is different, generally, than what suburbs are confronted with.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Jeanne, can you tell us what gave rise to the GW Teaching Corps?

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Sure. Back in 1989, it was the Dewitt-Wallace Readers' Digest Fund that began supporting a development of model programs to help increase and diversify the supply of well-trained public school teachers. And, at that time, it was Teachers' College, at Columbia University in New York City, who began recruiting returned Peace Corps volunteers, and the Peace Corps Fellows U.S.A. program was born.

Since then, this fund has supported over 14 colleges and universities involved in recruiting and preparing returned Peace Corps volunteers to become teachers.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Well, sometimes we hear that teaching positions have been filled for an academic year. Should we be satisfied with that, or are there underlying, sometimes, hidden problems with the quality of teachers in our local districts?

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** I think the quality issue is, again, one of those really ambiguous things. We don't have any really good measures in this country, anywhere, of what a really good, quality teacher is. You know, we have sort of intuitive notions, but in terms of being able to measure whether or not a person is a so-called good, competent teacher or not, still begs the question.

So we use things like, is the teacher certified; and if they're certified, what type of certificate do they hold? And so on. And we wring our hands about how many people we have teaching on emergency certificates. When really, an emergency certificate could be issued to somebody that just lacked one course, you know, or it could be issued to somebody that never had a teacher training course in their entire lives, and everything in between. So I think the whole qualification, quality teacher issue, again, is one of those that just begs for definition.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** I agree with you, Emily. I would also say that something we've taken into consideration here, in terms of our admissions policy here, to the GW Teaching Corps Fellows' program, and that folks have to be admitted to George Washington University's masters' level program in order to receive the coursework and tuition support that we offer as part of the fellows' program here at GW.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** When we hear about non-traditional teacher recruitment programs that have been touted in the news media, people may not have an idea of just how extensive these programs are. It's my understanding that now, 45 states have developed alternative routes to certification. Does anyone have any idea about what the history of these programs is?

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** We've been tracking alternative routes for certifying teachers since 1983. Back in 1983, New Jersey, when Tom Kean was governor, and Saul Cooperman was the commissioner of education, they actually called a group of people together, and it was headed up by the former [...], Ernest Boyer, renowned leader in education, and I actually was on that taskforce.

And what they were doing in New Jersey was trying to come up with an alternative program for liberal arts graduates to come into teaching. These would be people who already had a bachelor's degree. And that really is seen as the beginning of the alternative teacher certification movement. And we, the National Center for Education Information, track through the state departments of education every year, what they're doing in terms of alternative routes.

And they've just mushroomed in just the last five years. There is hardly any state right now that is not aggressively looking at setting up an alternative program for non-traditional candidates. And these are people who already have a bachelor's degree, many of whom have worked in other careers, some of whom have retired from another career, military, transitioning people, people who got a bachelor's degree and decided later that they really would like to teach.

So that's the non-traditional market that we're talking about. And these alternative routes have sprung up all over the country to provide training programs that lead to certification of these people.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** What's the motivation behind people who have not been trained as teachers wanting to get involved in teaching?

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** The number one reason that these people give for wanting to get into teaching is the value and significance of education in society. They've just come to be concerned about our educational system, and want to contribute. The second most frequently given reason is, they want to help young people learn and develop. And then, down the ladder, not too far, are things like summers off and being home when your children are home.

So a lot of people who've been in fast track careers, and made a lot of money, really want to give something back, and they also want to spend more time with their own families. And the teaching provides that option for them.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Emily Feistritzer is the president of the National Center for Education and Information. She joins us in our Washington studio, along with Dan Goldhaber, senior research associate in the Education Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Joining us by telephone, Jeanne Embich, director of the GW Teaching Corps. You too can join this discussion. Just call us at 1-800-433-8850, or e-mail us at pi@wamu.org. Does training tend to be the same for most alternative programs?

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** No, actually. I think that some of what Emily was mentioning sort of illustrates that. The alternative programs differ dramatically. There are, in fact, many different routes in some states. And actually, I might mention, Kojo, that the traditional certification programs differ dramatically. Certification or licensure is a state function, and states have set up different rules governing the requirements to get into teaching. So no, there's quite a bit of variability in terms of the programs.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** If, indeed, there is this variability, is it possible, and is there any evidence, that programs that use, maybe, less training somehow get the same results as programs that have more training?

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** There is beginning to be some evidence about these programs, about specific programs, some of the larger ones. There's some new evidence from Teach for America, looking at the student outcomes in Texas. So we're beginning to get some evidence, but a lot of the programs are small and relatively new. So I think it's probably appropriate to reserve strong judgments about them.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Emily Feistritzer.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Well, some of these programs, though, have been around since the mid-1980s. The California alternate route program, Texas has been very aggressive in alternate routes, as has New Jersey. And in all three of those states, about a fifth of the students now come through alternate routes. And there are characteristics of alternate routes that, as time goes on, and more states start creating programs, they're really identifying the things that work best.

And they are things like putting people in classrooms early. They're really on the job, field based training programs. And teachers themselves, we've done surveys of teachers, and we've asked them: what do you think has been most valuable to you in developing competence to teach? And the number one thing that teachers, no matter how they were trained, say, is just doing it, they're own experience as a teacher. And the second reason they give is, working with other teachers. And the good alternate route programs capitalize on both of those things.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** I'm so glad you mentioned that, Emily, because we began the Peace Corps Fellows' program here at George Washington University back in 1990. And we sort of learned, through the process, that what these folks really needed, even though they had taught as part of their Peace Corps experience, what they really needed was some practice teaching, or student teaching, as many folks refer to it, at the beginning of their program.

It was so important for them to practice teaching with an experienced teacher, and to have graduate level coursework under their belt before they began teaching, before they had their own classroom. We found that that was a very important component.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** And Jeanne, you emphasized the second thing I was going to mention, besides getting them in classrooms. The second thing that's so important to that, you mentioned, is working with competent, experienced teachers, at least one. So that mentoring component with the field based component is really, I think, the key to not only recruiting these people, but ensuring that they have a really good training program.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Yes.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** We've been sort of focused on the input side in recruitment. But if school systems were able to hold down the attrition rate of individuals moving out of teaching, then there wouldn't be such a, at least a mentality of crisis, because there would not be so many slots to fill. And it's pretty clear that when teachers get more—one of the things that teachers, when they first get into the classroom, that they tend to lack, is classroom management practices. So probably getting them into the classroom earlier is better.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** We're going to take a short break. When we come back, we continue our conversation with Dan Goldhaber, Emily Feistritzer, and Jeanne Embich. We'll be right back.

[Program Break.]

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Welcome back to our conversation on teacher recruitment in the Washington area, from non-traditional sources. Jeanne Embich, why is the GW Teaching Corps program now focused on lower Montgomery County schools?

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Well, that's a good question, Kojo. We began this program with a lot of financial support, not only locally, Agnes Meyer, Cafritz, but also the U.S. Department of Education supported us early on. Then we received some funding from—and actually, quite a bit of funding from the DeWitt-Wallace Readers' Digest Fund, as part of the Pathways to Teaching Program.

When that DeWitt-Wallace money expired, we were in a position to institutionalize the program. George Washington University has been very supportive of this program. Dr. Trachtenberg, and our president, the president of the university has been very supportive of this program. We needed to institutionalize the program, and we needed to look for external funding.

George Washington University had an existing program called the Teachers 2000 program that has been working with Montgomery County public schools for the last five years. And we decided to roll our Peace Corps folks into that existing program. And then, I may be confusing: we are calling ourselves, now, the GW Teaching Corps. Because, in addition to returned Peace Corps volunteers now, we also recruit Teach for America Candidates, as well as AmeriCorps volunteers.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** So you're now in lower Montgomery County.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Yes.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** And you used to be in Prince George's County.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Yes.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Let's talk a little bit about the District of Columbia, in particular, and maybe inner city schools, in general. Is it particularly difficult for these programs to work in inner city schools? Dan.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** I don't know that it's particularly difficult for them to work. A lot of the specialized alternate route programs require teachers to sign a contract, where they are agreeing to teach in a urban, high need district. And they typically sign a contract that lasts for two or three years. So the programs tend to be targeted to make sure that teachers end up in those high need districts.

One thing that I think is important to do is just to clarify. There's a little bit of a distinction between an alternate program that is recruiting teachers from non-traditional paths, but that send them through a program where they emerge with a traditional teacher license, and an alternative license, or an alternative route program, where teachers may go through a different type of training program before they go into the classroom, and have a license that is other than the state or, in this case, the district standard license.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Kojo, I would answer your question a little differently. The really effective alternate route programs that have evolved over time are really effective, because they recruit people and train them in these areas where they're going to be teaching. And they're very effective in inner cities. The Los Angeles Unified School District has a huge alternate route program.

And we've done research that shows that these—we did a survey a few years ago of people who had expressed an interest in becoming teachers. And non-traditional people, the people that already had a bachelor's degree, many of whom were in other careers, want to teach in inner cities at a much higher rate than traditionally trained teachers. The typical undergraduate teacher education student is a young white female, who wants to teach within 50 miles of where she was born.

You only have about eight percent of those people even considering teaching in inner cities, and about 22 percent of all the kids in this country are in inner cities. So the alternate route programs that target these regions, like the District of Columbia, have no problem in getting recruits and interested people who want to teach in these programs. The District does have a Teach for America program.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** And I think Troops for Teachers also operates in the District.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Yeah, Troops to Teachers operates in the District.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** But Jeanne Embich, the District has often been criticized for its cumbersome public school bureaucracy. Is that still a problem?

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Well, from my experience, Kojo, we have found that the folks in the Teaching Corps Fellows' program are individuals who, for the most part, have moved to Washington D.C. to earn their master's degree, and teach for the required three years that this program requires them to teach. And many of them move back home. And so, they don't necessarily stay in the Washington metropolitan area.

But we have also found that individuals who do stay in this area may move to another school district, eventually, to teach, because of salaries, for example. There are school districts who pay more than other school districts in this area. And I think that that's a reason why folks move from some of the school districts, from Prince George's County, or they move from the District of Columbia.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Allow me to go to the telephones. The number again, 1-800-433-8850. Here is Steven in Washington D.C. Steven, you're on the air.

**CALLER:** Yes, I'm a part time—

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Steven, you're going to have to turn your radio down, and just talk to us on the telephone directly, because we're not hearing you very well.

**CALLER:** Oh, I'm sorry. I'm a part-time voluntary teacher. I teach one class per week. And I just noticed in the D.C. area, there's not a lot of advertisements for that, you know, getting volunteers in there, even just on a part-time basis. And I think that's one way to get alternative teachers in, especially people who are really into their careers, who can really teach these kids in real life situations.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Do you know anything about that at all, Jeanne, Dan?

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** I'd have to say I don't.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Well, I do.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** I'm sorry. [Laughter.]

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** The school districts around the country, the bureaucracy of public education has not been friendly to part-timers or volunteers. And I think, Steve, what you're doing is just outstanding. One of the ways to solve not only the quantity problem, having enough teachers, but the quality problem, I think, is to use part timers, is to use people who are in other careers, who are experts in their area, and who are willing and able—

**CALLER:** It's very exciting, yes.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Where do you teach, Steven?

**CALLER:** Oh, I teach a web class.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Where? What school?

**CALLER:** Oh, Roosevelt.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Oh, okay.

**CALLER:** Yeah, the biggest problem I've seen is just their attendance is a little hard to get, because some of the kids, they'll show up, you know, and sometimes, they're just not there. So I'll teach part-time, and I can't always—I've taught something, and the kids will lose it, because I don't see them for another month. So I'm not sure how hard D.C. has in attendance.

But I think that's definitely something we need to tap. You know, talk to the big companies, IBM, you know, I think we have HP in the area, and talk to those companies, and see if maybe the people there can come in part-time, and really give back to the inner city, or even Montgomery County or the other areas.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Steven, it sounds like a good idea. Thank you very much for your call.

**CALLER:** Thank you.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Jeanne Embich, I know that you have to leave us very shortly. Can you tell us whether there are any plans to expand your program, at this point?

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Well, I can tell you that as part of the larger partnership with Montgomery County, the Teachers 2000 partnership, we do recruit both general educators and special educators who are career changers. And so, that is another population that we are tapping and bringing into the teaching profession. But I can't stress enough how important it is to find individuals who are truly committed to teaching, and how important it is that even from the application and interview process, that we choose individuals who are prepared for—

Here at GW, it's a pretty rigorous program. And they do need to be prepared to give at least two years, full-time, to graduate studies and student teaching internship.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Jeanne Embich, thank you for joining us.

**MS. JEANNE EMBICH:** Thank you, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Jeanne Embich is director of the GW Teaching Course. She joined us for this discussion on teacher recruitment in the Washington area, from non-traditional sources. Let's go back to the telephone and talk with Raymond in Stafford, Virginia. Raymond, your turn. Hi, Raymond, are you there?

**CALLER:** Well, yes, hi. Good afternoon. How are you?

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Pretty good.

**CALLER:** Thank you for taking my call.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** You're welcome.

**CALLER:** I'm a regular listener to your show, and I'm a great admirer of your show.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Thank you. That means you get to ask a 15 minute long question. [Laughter.]

**CALLER:** I just have one question. I actually was working in an information technology field, up until recently, and I got downsized. And I'm currently looking into, I'm sort of thinking about a career switch, and teaching has always been one of my passions, although I've not had any formal training, or formal experience teaching. I was just wondering if your panel could offer me some advice of how I could get involved in the teaching profession. And I'll just leave it there, and I'll just listen to the advice.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** My advice to people such as you, Raymond—and you're not alone—I maintain there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who are in your situation. The first thing that I recommend that people do is identify where they might want to teach. If you know a school building level that you would like to teach in, that's exactly where I would start.

If you want to stay in the State of Virginia, Virginia does have an alternate route to teacher certification program that's getting increasingly aggressive. I don't recommend that people such as yourself start at the state department level. You know, start in Richmond, because generally, you'll get a run around. Your best bet is to start at the building level or the school district level.

I mean, if you want to teach there in Stafford County, go to the Stafford County district office, and let your

wishes be known. And they will tell you what you need to do in order to get into an alternate route program, or in order to get certified to teach in those districts. But you want to find out what your chances of getting hired are before you invest too much time or money. Because we're turning out vastly more people, going through colleges of education and getting certified to teach than there are jobs available for it, quite frankly. So you want to find out what your chances of getting hired are before you do anything.

**CALLER:** Can you just give me a general idea, in terms of what are the basic requirements for getting into a teaching profession? I do have a couple of masters, and I have eight years of experience in the IT industry.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Well, the basic criteria is that you have at least a bachelor's degree. So you certainly meet that criteria. Generally, in most alternate route programs, and it's certainly true for Virginia, you'll have to take a test, a teacher qualification type test, and it depends on which one the state offers. But with somebody with two masters' degrees, I think you could easily pass that.

And then, generally, what they'll do if you get into an alternate route program is that they'll put you into a school in a school district, and you go through a program where you have some classes, and or seminars, and you'll be working directly with a mentor teacher, in a school. And I can't remember off the top of my head whether Virginia's program lasts two years or one year. The programs generally go from just one to two years, at the end of which, you could be fully certified to teach.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Dan.

**MR. DAN GOLDBABER:** Well, Virginia actually has something that I believe is unique in the country. They allow local districts to license a certain percentage of their teachers—I believe 10 percent. And with local licensure, the license is good for several years, and that gives the individual with the local license time to satisfy some of the requirements that would be necessary to get one of the more conventional licenses and be in the classroom permanently.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Raymond, thank you very much for your call.

**CALLER:** Thank you.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Dan Goldhaber is senior research associate in the Education Policy Center at the Urban Institute. He joins us, along with Emily Feistritzer, president of the National Center for Education and Information. This is Public Interest. I'm Kojo Nnamdi. And joining us now by telephone is Jorge Osterling, who is principal investigator of the Bilingual Career Ladder Training Program at George Mason University. Jorge, welcome.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Thank you very much, Kojo. It's a pleasure to be with you this afternoon.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Thank you for joining us. Your program is in its relative infancy, so to speak, just about two years under your belt. Tell us what the Bilingual Career Ladder Teacher Training Program aims to accomplish, and how it got started.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Well, yes, we got started in the year 2000, thanks to a federal grant of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, from the U.S. Department of Education. OBM, as we all know, is going to be soon changing its name.

And basically, the Bilingual Career Ladder Teacher Training Program is a partnership between George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College, Arlington public schools, Fairfax public schools, and Prince William public school division. And it is aimed at training para-educators, teacher assistants, teacher aids, school staff that is chosen, selected, and nominated by their corresponding school divisions, to become certified K-12 teachers.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Why do you use the term para-educators? The term I'm more familiar with is para-professionals.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Well, with para-educators, we're emphasizing that all the candidates that are coming to either Northern Virginia Community College or to George Mason University, are experienced people working in the classroom, are people with extensive experience working in the school divisions, who are truly committed to teaching, and who basically live and work in the areas where they would like to continue working, no longer as teacher aids or teacher assistants, but as fully certified State of Virginia teachers.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** A lot of the candidates for your program are foreign born. Apparently, some of them have had problems with English language skills. How do you help them in that way?

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Yes, our program, as I commented earlier, is basically jointly funded by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, and by the university, Northern Virginia Community College, and the school divisions. Therefore, what we're doing with all our candidates, most of whom have extensive teaching experience, and some have academic training in the field of education, or other fields, is to try to help them improve their English skills, for example, or to get their associate degrees, or their bachelor's degrees.

And we have made several accommodations—more than accommodations—designed special programs to help our candidates develop their academic English skills. For example, both Northern Virginia Community College and George Mason University have—I mean with Language Institute, that trains and helps non-native English speakers improve their English skills. We have also offered a special advanced English composition course for our para-educators.

Most of our para-educators arrive to the university with basic interpersonal communication skills. They have excellent spoken English, but they still have a way to go with the development of their cognitive academic English language proficiency, and that is where we help them. And once we help them, we put them in the regular courses that any other future teacher, pre-service teacher, would have to undertake.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Jorge Osterling is principal investigator of the Bilingual Career Ladder Teaching Program at George Mason University. We're going to take a short break. When we come back, Jorge will still be with us, along with Dan Goldhaber and Emily Feistritzer, and those of you who called us, at 1-800-433-8850. Or e-mail us at pi@wamu.org. We'll be right back.

[Program break.]

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Welcome back. We're talking about alternative sources of finding teachers, especially in the Washington area, with Emily Feistritzer, president of the National Center for Education and Information, Dan Goldhaber, senior research associate in the Education Policy Center at the Urban Institute, and Jorge Osterling, principal investigator of the Bilingual Career Ladder Teaching Training Program at George Mason University. Allow me to go to the phone. And Don in Manassas, Virginia, thank you for waiting. You're on the air. Go ahead, please.

**CALLER:** Yes, Kojo, I'm very happy to talk to you today. I am a retired teacher, after 30 years, and I have a question for everyone included. After having taught for 30 years, have any of you taught?

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** I have. I taught for eight years, science and math in high school.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Why, Don?

**CALLER:** Why? Because after 30 years, it's a very rewarding, difficult, exhausting, low-pay[ing] job. And for a lot of education that's required, continuous education that is required, it is, in the long run, a very demanding, but yet, very unrewarding experience, because of the amount of time and necessity to put into a teaching career. And what I'm hearing here is that you're trying to get part-time people for a full-time job, and that's not going to solve the problem of retaining teachers.

Retaining teachers is going to have to be a little bit more economically viable opportunity for those people who come into the profession to stay in the profession.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** May I make a comment, Kojo?

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Sure.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Yes, well, first of all, I've been teaching on and off since 1968, both at the high school level, as well as the college and university level. Now, the Bilingual Career Ladder Teaching Training Program works with full-time school employees, tenured school employees, many of whom have between three, ten, fifteen years of experience in the schools as teacher assistants or teacher aids, many of whom have higher education degrees or credits, either in the United States and overseas.

So George Mason University, in its partnership with the Northern Virginia school divisions, is basically tapping on an existing school based resource. That's why we call it Career Ladder.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** And you're not talking about part-time teachers either, are you?

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** No, we're not talking about—we're talking about full-time, tenured school employees who are chosen and nominated to the program by the division superintendents of Arlington, Fairfax public schools, and Prince William public schools.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Sure.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** You know, I think Don raises a really important point. And that is that compensation is going to affect decisions. As Emily mentioned in the beginning, we tend to talk about the teacher shortage in very generic terms. There is a teacher shortage, there isn't a teacher shortage. When, in fact, there are areas in the teacher labor market that are tighter or less tight. And in part, it's because people have different opportunities in and outside of teaching.

On the whole, I think that one way that you can address the shortage—and there's a tremendous amount of disagreement about whether it's a good thing or not to allow people to come in-in mid-career through alternate paths. But to really change the fundamental salaries in teaching probably needs to change. And policymakers don't have any control over this, but it'd be nice if teaching were a more prestigious occupation. I think that status is probably quite important, and work environment.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** And we've heard that a great deal here on Public Interest. But we all know that has to confront the political reality that elected officials have to deal with. I don't know if, Emily, we have made any progress towards reevaluating the role of teachers and public school education in our lives, overall, in such a way that there could be a sea change, if you will, in the way teachers are compensated.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Well, I think that teachers are held in much higher regard than we often give them credit for, or that we like to publicize that they are. I, again, take a contrarian view on teacher compensation. Because if you—the data show that if you put teacher salaries on a per day or per week basis, they can bear very favorably with their colleagues who have comparable education levels, except for lawyers, doctors, and the highest paid computer specialists.

So if you factor in that teachers work a 180 contract year by choice, their benefit packages are better than the federal government, you know, in terms of retirement and health benefits down the road. Now, I'm not saying that teachers are paid enough. You know, I don't know if they are or not. I'm just trying to point out that by comparison to people of comparable education levels, factored in the length of their work year, they don't fair all that badly.

I know of a third grade teacher in Fairfax County that makes \$80,000 a year. I don't know a lot of journalists that make \$80,000 a year. So you know, you do have to put all of this, I think, in perspective.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** I suspect this is a debate that could be an entire hour here on Public Interest. Dan, thank you for your call. It's something that we will—

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** I want to add something, Kojo, on this issue.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Well, allow me to get another caller in, because we have quite a few waiting, Jorge. And I will get back to you on that issue, because our next caller, I think, has a similar issue to raise. Kathy in—Maryland, am I correct? You're on the air.

**CALLER:** Yes, sir. Thank you. Actually, a close friend of mine has been looking at switching into teaching. And this pay issue is a huge obstacle, especially because he's highly qualified in math sciences and computer programming, and so, he's looking at over a 50 percent pay cut. And in addition, with the provisional certification programs that are available in, I think, PG County and a few other places in Maryland, it's almost adding insult to injury, because there's an even larger pay cut to be undertaken if you go into one of these provisional certification programs.

So I just wondered if you think maybe unions have some play in why math and science teachers can't be paid more than other teachers, given the tightness of the market in these fields, or why there's such a lopsided compensation of math and science teachers, as compared to their value in the market for other services and jobs.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** Kojo, I think you're going to have to have another show.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** It seems that way. I don't know, Jorge, if this can be related to the point you wanted to make.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Yes. I wanted to share with you that in Arlington public schools in Northern Virginia, the school board and the superintendent establish a teacher excellence task force to study precisely the issue of teacher evaluation and compensation. And this morning, the ten member panel, the citizens' panel, we submitted, formally submitted to the school board, our opinions on how we can—what are to be the elements of teacher effectiveness, and how we could reward excellence and give our opinions about ongoing teacher evaluation and compensation issues.

And one of the big debates was whether we should or not support performance pay or married pay, or any of that. It is true that we're not done. This is a very long, ongoing issue, but there are some efforts working on it. The second issue that I think is closely related with the teacher evaluation and compensation issue, and that the caller has already indicated, is that the challenges and opportunities to face by the 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers, the K-12 teachers, are very different from those faced by previous generations of teachers.

When you consider the complexity of a classroom, the caller mentioned the issue of math and science. But let's keep in mind that we also have, because of the Individuals with Disabilities Act, special ed kids in the classroom. Through certain different programs, we also have non-native English speakers, and we have kids from all walks of life and socioeconomic levels. So it is true: teaching is a moral profession, where commitment to academic excellence and to the children is essential.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Okay, Kathy, thank you very much for your call.

**CALLER:** Thank you, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** On to Mary in St. Mary's County. Mary, you're on the air. Go ahead, please.

**CALLER:** Hello.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Hi, Mary, your turn.

**CALLER:** Hi, thank you. Yes, I'm a second year teacher, in the second career. And I want just to chime in that I know that I'll never be rich, but I'll always be enriched by what I'm doing. And I try to tell people who are considering a career in teaching to think about that, because it is so very rewarding.

I also wanted to reiterate the fact that—and encourage returned Peace Corps volunteers to look at their career in the Peace Corps, especially if they were in the education field...., to use that fact that they have done this in their interview. Because I was able to land a job at a parochial school here in southern Maryland at a much higher pay bracket than I would have as a first year teacher, because they counted that experience as life experience in the classroom. So I just encourage all of the return Peace Corps volunteers to think about that.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Mary, thank you very much for your call. It's my understanding that quite a few returning Peace Corps volunteers are, in fact, thinking about that, and signing up for these programs.

**CALLER:** Well, I highly recommend the field. I'm enjoying it thoroughly.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** This is Public Interest. I'm Kojo Nnamdi. Emily, the for-profit world is starting to get into the mix, with programs starting up at places like the University of Phoenix and the Sylvan Learning System. How will such programs work? How can they staff teachers in states halfway across the continent?

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** It's an issue, but if anybody can take it on, the private sector will. And what they're doing is creating online courses in teacher training, and they're working with state departments of education, which are the only people that can grant a license to teach. And by law, you can't teach anywhere in public education in this country without some kind of teaching license.

So they're working with state officials in states across the country to accept their curricula. In those states, if the person chooses, for example, to go through the Sylvan program, which is based in Baltimore, but the program is national, that if they wanted to teach in Nebraska, Nebraska will have to have signed on that they would accept their curriculum. Sylvan's program is in its second year, and it's still at a pilot stage.

The University of Phoenix has been going on for quite some time. And I actually am on a committee that I'm not going to be able to go to their meeting this weekend, but they're having a meeting to actually design the online curriculum for the University of Phoenix program. And more of those types of programs are going to spring up.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Dan Goldhaber, one of the issues I wanted to get into before the end of the show was, briefly, the relationship between quality and certification. You pointed out during one of our breaks that in the minds of most members of the public, certification means quality, and vice versa.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** Yeah, I mean, when you look at popular press, *The Washington Post*, or other newspapers, you often see that they are treated as synonymous. If you are lacking certified teachers, it is treated as a—fully certified teachers, it's treated as a bad thing. And it may be a bad thing. Personally, my view is that we do not know enough about how teachers who come through alternate routes do in terms of student outcomes to really form strong judgments about this.

But the issue of teacher quality—the fact that we have a teacher shortage is, in some ways, it's beneficial, because it focuses the minds of local educators on teachers. And it's very important to address the issue of teacher quality, whether or not there is a particularly tight labor market or not. And ultimately, you mentioned University of Phoenix, some of the other paths. The hope would be that local school officials would figure out which programs are producing really good teachers, and go back to those programs, so that if local school officials do a good job, then the programs that produced very good teachers will be the programs that sort of win out, ultimately.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Dan Goldhaber, who used to be a local school official, until last week, before he resigned from the Alexandria school board. But that's another story that we may have to get into another time. [Laughter.] Dan Goldhaber is senior research associate in the Education Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Thank you for joining us.

**MR. DAN GOLDHABER:** It's my pleasure, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** Emily Feistritzer, president of the National Center for Education and Information, thank you.

**MS. EMILY FEISTRITZER:** Thank you, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** And Jorge Osterling, principal investigator of the Bilingual Career Ladder Teacher Training Program at George Mason University, thanks and good luck to you and the program.

**MR. JORGE OSTERLING:** Thank you very much, Kojo.

**MR. KOJO NNAMDI:** This has been Public Interest. I'm Kojo Nnamdi.

[End of Program.]

## Other Publications by the Authors

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- [Dan Goldhaber](#)
- [Urban Institute](#)

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