Why Now?
Factors Associated with Choosing Teaching as a Second Career and Their Implications for Teacher Education Programs

By Antonio J. Castro & Michelle Bauml

"One night this feeling came over me. It was as clear as day," explained Ken,[1] a retired sergeant in the U. S. military, recalling an epiphany he experienced while fighting in the Afghan Mountains on December 6, 2006. "Inspiration basically said, 'When you go back [home] you're done. This is your last mission. You are going to be a teacher in the inner city.'" Although Ken had never considered teaching before, he had adopted a mentoring role for younger troops in the field. Six days after the epiphany, he returned home and began investigating a career change into teaching. Ken found a website for a school district's alternative route to teacher certification and discovered an information session scheduled for the next evening. "If it [the session] had been put off until the summer time, I would have been like, 'I can't do this…I can't wait that long.'" Ken attended the information session and soon embarked on a path toward becoming a second-career teacher.

Despite his nearly seamless transition from the battlefield to the classroom, a closer look at Ken's story reveals several factors that influenced his decision to become a teacher. With a projected shortage of 2.2

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million new public school teachers needed for the 2008-2009 school year (Hussar, 2000), policymakers, school district personnel, and teacher educators need to understand such factors and their implications for recruiting career changers. Several researchers note that graduates from university-based teacher education programs often choose not to teach in high-demand fields or in urban or rural school districts (Darling-Hammond & Cobb, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ng, 2003; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

As a result, a report by the College Board (2006) urged educators to "welcome talented midcareer professionals" into the classroom. Indeed, recent scholarship has reported an increase in the number of second-career teachers, especially in urban settings and in high-needs content areas such as math and science (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). However, studies of these teachers have failed to focus on the factors related to transitioning into teaching as a second career (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Instead, the literature on career switchers highlights characteristics and skills of second-career teachers, such as time management, work habits, problem-solving (Chambers, 2002; Mayotte, 2003), maturity, self-confidence, and assertiveness (Dickar, 2005; Haipt, 1987-88; Manos & Kasambira, 1998; Resta, Huling, & Rainwater, 2001; Rodriguez & Sjostrom, 1998). The purpose of this article is to present findings from a qualitative study on the factors associated with transitioning into teaching as a second career and to discuss their implications for recruiting mid-career teachers.

We employ the tenets of transition theory, developed by Nancy Schlossberg and colleagues (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982; Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995), as our theoretical framework for investigating career changes into teaching. According to transition theory, a transition refers to "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (Schlossberg, et al, 1995, p. 27). Four interrelated systems affect a person's movement during a transitional phase: the situation or the context of the change, the level of individual support, the strategies she or he employs, and the personal characteristics and motivations a person brings to the change (Schlossberg et al, 1995). Because transitions, especially critical career changes, mark a "period of vulnerability" for individuals (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982, p. 13), knowledge of factors which impede or facilitate transitioning into teaching as a second career may inform both recruitment and retention of second-career teachers.

Making the Transition into Teaching:
Asking "Why Now?"

Capturing the motivations of teacher candidates is a frequent topic in the literature on recruitment. In the classic sociological work *Schoolteacher*, Dan Lortie (1975) proposed five themes underlying the job attraction of teaching, ranging from interacting with children and caring for others to being service-oriented and

receiving material benefits of the profession (e.g., job security, health care, retirement). Rife, Maloy, and Keefer (1988) reported similar findings in their mixed-methods study of career changers, adding that some career switchers felt bored and underutilized in their previous profession. Likewise, Dieterich and Panton (1996) determined in their content analysis of 90 written personal statements of second-career teachers that reasons for choosing teaching as a second career fell into two categories: internal reasons, such as making a difference and seeking fulfillment, and external reasons, such as career advancement. They concluded that internal reasons for becoming a teacher are more influential than external reasons.

Barriers to or disincentives for teaching—especially for potential urban and minority teachers—are also topics frequently explored in the literature. In their qualitative study of recruitment practices for urban school districts, Stotko, Ingram, and Beaty-O'Ferrall (2007) lamented how poor hiring procedures within some urban districts turned many second-career teachers away from teaching in high need areas. Waldschmidt's (2002) ethnographic study depicted barriers associated with acquiring a college teaching credential for three prospective late-entry bilingual teachers. Barriers included high costs of tuition, managing work schedules around classes, negotiating family and child care concerns, and language proficiency. In a similar study, Valencia, Weisman, and Flores (2006) related the concerns of six Latina paraeducators on the path to becoming certified teachers and found that participants struggled with managing the bureaucracy of certification requirements, acquiring financial assistance for program costs, and obtaining support from certification advisors, family, and friends.

Finally, reports from the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers investigated the role of program recruitment incentives for fast-track alternative route programs (Johnson, Birkeland, & Peske, 2005; Liu, Johnson, & Peske, 2004). Compared with traditional undergraduate certification, Johnson, Birkeland, and Peske (2005) described fast-track programs as "faster, less expensive, more practical, and more convenient training" (p. 27). Indeed, the accessibility of a certification program is more influential than financial incentives, as suggested by Lui, Johnson, and Peske (2004) when they wrote, "The chance to avoid the costs of traditional teacher preparation—both the costs of tuition and the opportunity costs of completing the course work and student teaching—play a far bigger role than the bonus payments [offered by the state of Massachusetts] in their decisions to enter teaching" (p. 218). These studies highlight the importance of program accessibility and opportunity costs for choosing teaching as a second career.

Despite previous researchers' fruitful insights about motivations for teaching, we have not found any studies specifically addressing either the timing of a career change into teaching or the factors associated with career transitions for second-career teachers. According to Schlossberg (1981), adaptation during career transitions influences a person's development and outlook about the career change. We believe understanding the process of transitioning can inform practices for retention

as well as recruitment. The present study adds to the current body of scholarship about second-career teachers by asking the question, "Why now?" We sought to investigate the circumstances which enabled career switchers to move from merely thinking about teaching to actually becoming a teacher. More specifically, we traced the factors that impacted a person's decision-making and transitioning from the context prior to the career change to entrance into an alternative route program.

Contexts for the Study

Participants in this qualitative study included new entrants in an alternative pathway to teaching sponsored by a large urban school district in the Southwest during the spring of 2007. This alternative certification program partnered with a local university to provide rigorous graduate-level coursework for its interns. In addition, the program also offered extensive mentoring during the first year of teaching. Because this program attracted a large pool of second-career teachers interested in teaching in urban schools, we felt it was an appropriate site for our investigation. Furthermore, our prior experience as supervisors in urban-based alternative programs enabled us to gain access to this site as well as to ask questions specific to transition issues associated with alternative certification programs.

We conducted a two-hour focus group with 14 program participants and selected nine second-career teachers, or individuals who averaged at least three to five years of prior working experience, for one-hour follow-up interviews (See Table 1). During the focus group, we led participants through a process known as affinity clustering

Table 1
Appoximate Age and Previous Career of Second-Career Teachers in the Study

Name	Approximate Age	Previous/Current career
Angela	30	Artist, 5 years (now substituting)
Barbara	47	Computer industry, 23 years
Becky	40	Foster parent, 5 years; grant supervisor, 5 years (now substituting)
Brad	30	Medical sales, 5 years; actor, 5 years
Gloria	30	Administrative assistant, 3 years; adjunct instructor 3 years
Ken	43	Sergeant, US Military, 12 years (now substituting)
Lisa	26	Administrative assistant, 1 year; Marketing coordinator, 1 year; Retail internship, 6 months
Lorraine	26	Apartment manager, 3 years
Patti	29	Ticketing manager for Broadway shows, 3 years

or diagramming, in which group members brainstormed thoughts they associated with the process of choosing teaching as a second career and wrote these items on index cards before collectively organizing them into clusters, or affinities (see Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). One cluster identified by the focus group, *inspiration*, included index cards with some of the following words: *my passion, fulfilling a dream, inspiring others*, and *making a difference*. Clusters formed the basis for the interview protocol. In the follow-up interview, participants were asked to elaborate on how these affinities captured some of their own experiences. Participants also described their process of transitioning between careers.

Data from the focus group and interviews were audio-recorded. Immediately following the focus group, we took extensive research notes, referring to the audio-recordings as needed. Only the interviews were transcribed. After coding the data for information related to aspects of transitioning into teaching as a second career, we recorded each coded unit of data onto index cards and arranged them into themes that emerged across the data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We discussed our codes and themes and reached consensus about our findings.

Findings

We found a variety of internal and external motivations for pursuing a teaching career; however, here we focus exclusively on factors associated with the actual transition into teaching. Although the career changers in this study reached a point of decision to make a career change, their actual entrance into the teacher education pipeline was mediated by a series of "Why Now?" factors which include: resource availability, latitude, commitment readiness, and program accessibility.

Resource Availability

Two types of resources emerged as significant for a career change into teaching. First, all participants reported having knowledge about teaching or how to become a teacher. Four participants had experience teaching in some capacity—in after-school programs, as a substitute teacher, at the college level and/or in religious education. Five other participants spoke of having close friends or family members who were teachers. Second, having the support of friends and family provided another valuable resource for changing careers into teaching. Two participants received financial assistance from parents for tuition, while others spoke extensively about the encouragement provided to them by friends and family. The experiences of three participants, Gloria, Lisa, and Lorraine, illustrate the impact of these resources on the decision to become a second-career teacher.

Gloria worked as an administrative assistant at a local community college. When given an opportunity to teach evening classes in computer literacy at the college, she instantly fell in love with the idea of teaching. Friends and colleagues encouraged her to think about becoming a public school teacher. She explained,

"My friends kept telling me I needed to be in the classroom, and I ignored them until recently." Gloria described an incident while teaching computer literacy that marked the turning point in her decision to pursue a teaching credential. A student in the class, eager to share that she figured out how to work a computer application, yelled excitedly, "I got it!" "Everyone rushed to her to see what happened," Gloria remembered, "and they wanted to go back to their desks and see it happen and do it themselves." Gloria recalled, "Seeing the excitement…on her face…that was a turning point for me [to choose teaching as a career]." When she admitted this to her friends, they replied, "Gloria, we've been telling you forever [to become a teacher]." Gloria was spurred onward towards her career change by both her knowledge of the way teaching can impact students and the support of her friends. The shift from administrative assistant and adjunct instructor to public school teacher seemed like a natural choice to Gloria's friends and colleagues.

Lisa, also an administrative assistant, recognized her mother's influence as a first grade teacher on her decision to make the transition. Growing up, Lisa's mother would constantly ask her, "Why don't you become a teacher?" but Lisa felt she did not have the patience. Instead, she pursued a degree in graphics design and marketing. However, when Lisa's nephew was born a few years ago, her opinion of herself changed: "It really did change my perspective on a lot of things; I'm actually a lot better with children than I thought I would be, and I've helped [my mom] out in her classroom a couple of times, and it kind of comes as natural." Although Lisa claimed that her mother was not her main inspiration to choose teaching, she reported having insider knowledge about her mother's life as a teacher and a connection to other teachers. For example, Lisa accepted an offer from one of her mother's colleagues to borrow study materials to prepare for the certification exams. Lisa's mother continued to challenge her to think seriously about committing to be a teacher, suggesting she might want to explore more occupations other than marketing or graphic design. "That was your passion before. Why isn't it now your passion?" she questioned. Eventually recognizing that she could combine her passion for graphic design and her love of working with children in a classroom, Lisa recalled, "I finally said to her, 'Mom… I want to take the art test and possibly teach art.'" Lisa's mother had indeed been a support, a model of the teaching life, a connection to other teachers and resources, and a career counselor.

For Lorraine, an apartment complex manager, the support of her friends—many of them teachers—was an essential factor in her journey towards becoming a teacher. Although Lorraine had considered teaching in the past, she never took the necessary steps toward acquiring a teaching certificate. Lorraine described the encouragement her friends gave her: "They had known I had always put it [pursuing teaching as a career] on the back burner…I was getting bored at work, just drained. So I think they saw it; so they just mentioned it." Although Lorraine expressed concern about the low pay for teachers, her friends continued to support her shift into teaching. "My friend was explaining," Lorraine said, "if you get to the

right school you can tutor after school and those types of things, and do summer school [for supplemental income]." These options helped Lorraine see teaching as a viable career move. Lorraine entered the same alternative certification program many of her friends had attended to become certified teachers. "At least I know I am not alone in this," she reflected. The support of friends had a powerful impact on Lorraine's decision to pursue a career change into teaching.

Having knowledge about teaching and the support of friends and family facilitated these participants' transition into teaching as a second career. Significantly, many participants in the study reported having insider knowledge about the profession of teaching either because of prior work experiences in educational settings and/or from friends and family who were teachers. Thus, we believe that teaching as a career becomes an attainable option when it is considered through either lived experience or close association with those who teach. The support of friends and family aided these career changers during times of uncertainty and vulnerability. In many cases, encouragement and other types of support made the career change possible.

Latitude

Latitude to pursue a career change was also a key factor in participants' decisions to enter the teacher pipeline. We define latitude as having both the financial means and time availability to incur the opportunity costs associated with pursuing the continuing education necessary for switching careers into teaching. As anticipated by these participants, tuition and living expenses between jobs presents financial difficulties for a number of would-be second-career teachers. Without financial latitude, it is likely many potential program candidates never realize their vision for teaching as a second career. In addition, a flexible schedule also offers would-be teachers with latitude needed to attend training sessions and interview for teaching positions. Issues surrounding latitude occurred among several participants. Here we briefly describe the circumstances of Becky, Brad, and Barbara as a way of exploring the significance of finances and time availability on the decision to change careers into teaching.

Acquiring the financial means to pursue a teaching career proved to be a difficult undertaking for Becky, a foster mother. Originally educated as an operations manager, she worked as a grant supervisor for a state agency for five years before quitting that position to raise foster children. When the children became older, Becky sought a return to the workforce. Her husband, a high school teacher, encouraged Becky to consider various options; however, they struggled to find the money for the change. "It just came down to finances," Becky admitted. She had taken odd jobs in an attempt to garner greater income, but those opportunities were minimal and short-lived. Eventually, Becky became a substitute teacher and borrowed money from her parents to pay for initial program enrollment fees. Becky chose this particular alternative route to certification partly because the program featured a deferred payment plan in which applicants could deduct the cost of tuition from their paychecks after acquiring a teaching position. Support from her parents and

the flexibility inherent to substitute teaching allowed Becky to attend certification classes, search for a job, and prepare for certification examinations.

Both finances and time availability impacted Brad's decision to enter an alternative certification program and his transition toward becoming a teacher. Brad had been an actor for several years before beginning work in medical sales. As a salesperson, Brad volunteered with school programs that taught inner-city youth about acting and reading. Inspired by these opportunities, Brad investigated becoming a teacher; however, he discovered that the salary would be substantially less than that of his current sales position. As a result, Brad chose to remain employed in his current position while attending teacher certification classes. He explained,

> It must be that I'm offered the job before I quit, because you are looking at for me a 75% reduction in pay. So it is already going to be challenging to go from one to the other…Part of what I'm doing is setting aside money to supplement any budget. Right now, I don't budget any money at all. I'm going to have to live on a budget when I teach school, which is fine.

Brad recognized that maintaining his job took time away from his ability to search for a teaching position. "A lot of people that I am hearing [about in the program] are substitute teaching; they are able to get out there more [to look for a teaching position]." By remaining in the sales position while attending certification classes, Brad consciously chose to increase his financial latitude at the expense of time availability.

Another participant, Barbara, expressed increasing concerns for her financial future. At the time of her enrollment in the certification program, Barbara had the latitude to pursue a career change. Employed in the computer industry for 23 years, Barbara eventually became a victim of corporate down-sizing. In 2005, when she was released from her last position, Barbara sold her house and purchased a smaller town home. Barbara explained, "I sold my house and bought this house because I was able to cut my expenses in half, and I sat around like a lump of clay and said, 'What am I going to do?'" Since losing her corporate position, Barbara described how she enjoyed being unemployed: "I just really enjoy not working…I would go to lectures all the time. I would travel. I learned how to speak French…I really lived the life that I envied…I was engaged with the world and I was having a grand old time."

However, as her savings began to dwindle, Barbara returned to the prospect of teaching, something she had considered years ago as a college undergraduate. When she enrolled in certification program, Barbara began substitute teaching as a way to learn more about the profession and to provide a means of income. She also held a part-time teaching position with an online university and reported that "the money [to pay program expenses] has been put aside since I entered the program." Unlike Becky or Brad, Barbara's decision to enter the teaching profession was not hindered by a lack of financial resources or time availability. She possessed the latitude to incur opportunity costs associated with a career change into teaching.

Latitude in both financial capital and time availability appear to be highly influential in the decision to become a second-career teacher. Most of the informants we interviewed indicated varying degrees of latitude. Two participants borrowed money from parents to pursue the career change. Others took positions in jobs with flexible schedules. For example, Lisa stated that she had saved up all of her vacation hours as an apartment complex manager so she could take time off to observe classroom teachers, which is a requirement of this certification program.Flexible schedules allowed these participants to complete required training and university courses in such a way as to minimize disruption of their lifestyles while maintaining financial stability through continued employment.

Commitment Readiness

The notion of being ready to make a commitment to become a teacher emerged across several participants. Because a career change presents tremendous uncertainty and risk (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982), the career changer must feel mentally prepared to endure hardships associated with this type of life transition. For example, Angela, an artist, struggled with commitment when she first began thinking about being a teacher. She had just turned 30 and ended a destructive relationship. "I was still getting out of being submerged in an artist's life and in making that transition," Angela recalled. She quickly moved out of the warehouse she had been living in and into a more traditional apartment. Angela had experience working with school children in after-school programs, and she had an in interest in becoming an art teacher, but initially she decided against teaching as a possible career. She explained:

> I was interested in teaching about a year ago…I did have the opportunity to be an art teacher, but just didn't think I was mentally ready to take on that challenge and to make that commitment. I didn't want to go into it and leave because I wasn't ready...Now it's been a year in between that time. So I kind of made that transition away from doing the art thing…I made a decision to do it [become a teacher] and now I am ready.

Angela's concerns with being ready to pursue a career change impacted the timing of her decision to change careers. However, once she felt ready for the change, she demonstrated a strong sense of commitment to the process of becoming a teacher.

Other participants in our study also expressed a strong degree of commitment toward transitioning into teaching and determination to wade through the challenges and obstacles associated with the decision to do so. These individuals expressed themselves in the following ways:

> If I've gotten this far, I can challenge myself to go even farther. (Lisa, marketing coordinator)

> Even when it's hard…you got to give it everything you can. (Becky, foster mother, former grant supervisor)

> I will do what it takes to get certified, to be able to teach…There's no hurdle too high. (Ken, retired sergeant in U. S. military)

Angela's experiences and these statements above indicate these teacher candidates recognized a sense of challenge associated with changing careers. Furthermore, participants noted the need for internal strength to endure a career change. Phrases such as "I've gotten this far," and "give it everything you can," and "no hurdle too high" communicate that commitment readiness also implies internal determination and hardiness. Feeling a sense of commitment readiness may be an essential factor for making any major life change.

Program Accessibility

Participants spoke about their perceptions of being able to transition into the alternative route to teaching quickly and easily. Ken described this phenomenon best:

> I think for a lot of us making career changes, we need that sense of security…In offering lots of information sessions and getting people into the program, it is almost like you got to grab them now. It is like if you were a salesman, the person is ready to buy. You got to get them when they are ready to buy. They can't get sold on a deal and say, okay we will deliver it in six months, because by then they will change their mind. They kind of got us into the pipeline real quick, at least for me. I am in the pipeline so I see the end of the tunnel.

Here, Ken spoke about the need for career changers to move seamlessly between careers. Summarizing the mood of several participants, Lorraine offered, "I love that you can go so quickly and just jump into your career. Like it's not dragged out for a year or two years." The ability to move forward in a career change promoted this career changer's sense of agency and decreased feelings of uncertainty that might have added undue stress during the transition process (Schlossberg, 1981).

Participants also expressed the importance of having immediate access to information about pathways into teaching. All participants we interviewed mentioned using both the Internet and friends as means for investigating teacher education programs quickly. Lisa recalled, "I think I just looked online….[A] friend of mine had done [this alternative certification program] a couple of years ago, and…there was a guy I was dating at the time who had done [another alternative certification program]." Within two weeks, Lisa utilized the Internet to obtain an application for the program and gather all the necessary application materials to meet the registration deadline. Another participant, Patti, worked as a theater ticketing manager. She relied on family members who had attended the program for information about applying. Patti stated, "I have heard good things. I have a sister-in-law who is a teacher…She went through [this program]. I have a brother-in-laws who is a principal. He went through [this program]." Patti's family strongly encouraged her to consider becoming a second-career teacher and provided immediate information about the program they attended as well as assistance in understanding the certifica-

tion process. This data indicates that program accessibility weighs in heavily on a person's decision to enter teaching.

A Question of When: Discussion

Data from this study suggests timing plays a crucial role in determining whether someone will change careers and whether she or he will choose *teaching* as the next option. Given our findings, we have made two conclusions about second-career teachers.

First, a person's access to resources impacts the timing of a decision to pursue a career change into teaching. According to transition theory, resources can be both internal psychological resources and external support systems (Schlossberg et al, 1995). Commitment readiness, the dominant internal resource for participants in this study, may contribute to career changers' sense of resiliency and adaptability needed for critical career changes. Participants often reported falling back on their strong sense of determination and commitment to teaching when confronted with challenges such as difficult certification tests, bureaucratic obstacles, or financial setbacks.

Knowledge about teaching or how to become a teacher provided another internal resource. Informants in this study reported having close friends or family members who were teachers. Several participants had been teaching in some capacity in their current job or had volunteered with after-school programs or church-related education. Some had experience teaching at the college or university level, and some were substitute teachers prior to pursuing the career change. Being familiar with the teaching field enabled participants to not only learn about the challenges and possibilities of being an educator, but also to envision themselves as a teacher—an important precursor for pursuing a career change.

In addition to internal resources, participants relied on external support systems as they acted on the decision to become a teacher. Resource availability and latitude stand out as important types of external resources for a career change. The external resource network for participants in this study included supportive family members, encouraging co-workers, flexible work schedules, monetary resources, and teacher friends. A person with access to various external resources and with the latitude necessary to change careers will be more likely to work towards being a second-career teacher.

Second, when career changers are ready for a change, availability of educational programs plays an important role in choosing to enter the teaching pipeline. Obstacles in locating a certification program, registering, and attending certification classes can thwart potential career changers' needs for agency. "I want to know that I am making the transition, going on to that other job," said Angela. Her comments, echoing those of other participants in the study, stress the importance of being able to move forward in one's career change. Therefore, program accessibility at the time career changers begin exploring routes to certification dramatically impacts

their decision-making. When it comes to recruiting second-career teachers, many teacher education programs ask the question, "Where are they?" Instead, the findings of this study suggest that we should also be asking, "When are they?" Because the timing of a person's decision to change careers is beyond the control of teacher education programs, increasing program accessibility for potential second-career applicants must become a priority.

A few limitations affect our findings. First, the initial focus group included four recent college graduates, which may have skewed our findings. Additionally, all participants in our study were accepted to an alternative pathway to teaching connected with a large urban school district that also required a minimum of nine hours of master's-level coursework. Because participants had to demonstrate the ability to complete graduate coursework, enrollment requirements may limit the transferability of our findings. Future studies might consider tracking participants as they enter into their first year of teaching to determine the possible influence of transition factors, as well as motivations for teaching, on their career change.

Implications and Recommendations
for Teacher Preparation Programs

Many options exist for teacher preparation programs seeking to recruit and support second-career teachers. The following recommendations are based on our understanding of these participants' experiences transitioning as midcareer teachers.

First, teacher education programs can promote latitude by decreasing opportunity costs. Programs can minimize up-front costs, provide avenues and resources for financial assistance (e.g., financial aid, grants, loans, etc.), develop tuition-payment plans, or set up payroll-deduction agreements with candidates. Some programs, such as continuing education programs, might form partnerships with local banks or lending agencies that support continuing education. Post-baccalaureate programs at colleges and universities can also link required coursework with graduate degree programs so applicants can be eligible for financial aid.

Programs may also increase accessibility by maintaining an easy-to-navigate website, holding frequent information sessions, and implementing rolling admission or interviewing policies. Programs with frequent entry points may be more successful at recruiting career switchers experiencing a pivotal point in the decision to teach. In addition, teacher education programs might consider scheduling classes in the evening or on weekends or offering a combination of online and face-to-face courses. This allows for greater flexibility and increased latitude for career changers who may need to work while they earn their teaching certificate.

Teacher education programs can also assist second-career teachers with the varied demands placed on them by work, home, and program courses first by providing clear, specific, and accessible information about exam dates and other requirements. Connecting second-career teachers with a mentor or supervisor early

in the program sequence can contribute to an additional sense of support during the transition. Additionally, teacher educators might invite alumni to speak about their experiences and answer new entrants' questions from an insider's perspective. Programs might also develop cohort support systems in which second-career teachers share resources or form study groups to prepare for certification exams.

All of the participants in our study expressed their desire to make a difference. As Brad explained, "It's like ants building a hill. Everyone has their job. Everyone needs to make an impact and everyone can have an impact." As teacher educators, we ought to remember our role in supporting career changers in accomplishing their dreams. We must play our part in building the hill.

Note

[1] All names in this article are pseudonyms.

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