

1. **“Show Me” Alternative Certification/Tuition Reimbursement**
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6. **Abstract:**

“Show Me” Alternative Certification/Tuition Reimbursement

In response to the “critical needs” in staffing special education classrooms, and “no child left behind” legislation, the state of Missouri has initiated a temporary certification program. Cooperation with teacher education programs and public school districts, the program enables persons with college or university degrees to fill special needs classrooms while completing state certification requirements. In addition, state funding is allocated for reimbursement of fees required to complete special education certification for persons with either paraprofessional experience of teacher certification in areas other than special education.

Hawaii International Conference on Education

Proposal

Title: “Show Me” Alternative Certification/Tuition Reimbursement

Topic Area: Special Education

Keywords: Teacher Certification and Tuition Reimbursement

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“Show Me” Alternative Certification/Tuition Reimbursement

Professionally qualified special education teachers are at the top of the list of critical needs for the Teaching Profession. The teacher education program at Central Missouri State University in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is providing an alternative route to special education teacher certification for persons holding a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and wishing to work with special needs students.

The program requires a “joint application” between a school district and the certification candidate and a “program of study” from an accredited teacher education program to identify the certification requirements. Once these requirements are met, the candidate is issued a one-year “temporary authorization certificate” and is assigned to a classroom of students with mild and moderate disabilities. During the first and succeeding years of teaching, the candidate must complete nine semester hours of credit on the program of study to continue the teaching assignment and temporary certification. This process continues until the candidate reaches the professional level of teacher certification.

Persons who have been employed by a school district for two years as a paraprofessional in a special needs classroom, and are recommended by the school district, will qualify for tuition reimbursement to complete the special education certification requirements. Also, persons holding teacher certification other than special education will qualify for tuition reimbursement if recommended by the school district.

This innovative program is an attempt to staff special needs classrooms with college-degree persons wishing to provide quality instruction to special students, and decrease the number of classrooms without qualified teachers.