SURFING THE PIPELINE

Understanding Pathways into Teaching in Alternative Models of Schooling

Michael Q. McShane, Ph.D.

ed CHOICE

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EdChoice is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Our mission is to advance educational freedom and choice for all as a pathway to successful lives and a stronger society. We are committed to understanding and pursuing a K–12 education ecosystem that empowers every family to choose the learning environment that fits their children's needs best. EdChoice is the intellectual legacy of Milton and Rose D. Friedman, who founded the organization in 1996 as the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice. The contents of this publication are intended to provide empirical information and should not be construed as lobbying for any position related to any legislation

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1827, a chemist operating a small shop in the northeast of England mixed potassium chloride, antimony sulfide, and gum and affixed it to a small piece of wood. When he accidentally dropped it and it brushed against the rough metal of his hearth, it caught fire. The man was John Walker, and he had just invented the friction match.[1]

The imagery of "lighting a fire" has been used and overused in education to describe the fostering of students' desire to learn, but what is more interesting is the mixture that makes ignition possible. What are the components of a school that combine and ignite when struck? The list is long, but it is hard not to make teachers a large element of the admixture.

Landmark research in the last decade confirmed what anyone who has spent a moment in a school could tell you already: Great teachers matter. Researchers who linked the test scores of more than one million students to tax records and other sources of data found that students assigned to better quality teachers (as measured by value-added estimates of student performance) were more likely to attend college, earned higher salaries, and were less like to have children as teenagers.[2] Economist Kirabo Jackson found that teachers have effects on absences, suspensions, course grades, on-time grade progression that also predict later life successes.[3] Any way you measure it, great teachers matter.

So, if schools are going to be good, we need good teachers. That leads us to our next question. Where does America get its teachers?

According to the Secretary of Education's 2022 annual report on teacher preparation, in 2018-19 around 560,000 individuals were enrolled in one of the nation's 21,510 teacher preparation programs housed at 2,178 different institutions. Around 150,000 people completed a teacher preparation program that year. Just under three quarters of them attended a traditional, university-based preparation program. The rest attended alternative preparation programs, either housed at an institution of higher education or independently operated.[4] To give that a sense of scale, more individuals completed a teacher preparation program in 2018-19 than there were working as dentists (around 140,000), occupational therapists (149,000), veterinarians (83,000), and emergency medical technicians (139,000).[5] It is an enormous number of people.

The teacher labor market is an interesting one. For instance, nearly 60 percent of teachers work within 20 miles of where they went to high school.[6] Traditional public schools compensate teachers with "step and lane" pay scales that reward teachers for years of service and additional post-graduate coursework. These scales are blind to the fact that teachers in some specialties and grade levels are more in demand than others. Teacher pensions reward longevity and have been demonstrated to have "push" and "pull" incentives that encourage teachers to retire at specific points when their pension wealth spikes.[7] Some private and charter schools have adopted these practices as well.

Against this backdrop is the enormous growth in alternative educational models in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Microschools (which typically have fewer than 20 students), pandemic pods (similar to microschools), and hybrid homeschools (schools where children attend formal classes for part of the week and work from home part of the week) became more popular. They joined online schools, charter schools, homeschooling, and private schooling as challengers to the status quo of residentially assigned and school board-governed public schools.

It is difficult to estimate just how large this sector is. For charter and private schools, we have some reliable statistics, with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools estimating a total enrollment of 3.7 million students in 7,800 schools in the 2020-21 school year.[8] The federal government administers the Private School Universe Survey, in attempt to understand the number of private schools and enrollment therein. According to its most recent estimates, around 4.9 million students attend private schools, with 1.7 million attending Catholic schools, 1.8 million attending other religious schools, and 1.1 million attending non-religious schools.[9] There have also been efforts to estimate the homeschool

population, but it is challenging because many states do not require homeschoolers to register with any authorities. The population must be estimated from surveys and enrollment projections. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute pulled together data from several sources and arrived at an estimate of 3.1 million homeschooled students for the 2021-22 school year.[10]

Estimating the total number of students enrolled in microschools is also tough. Throughout EdChoice's polling during the pandemic, we asked a question about participating in a "pandemic pod." Consistently, around 12 to 15 percent of parents said that they were participating in a pod. One quarter of those parents said that they were using it to replace, rather than supplement, their child's traditional school.[11] Working out the math points us to an estimate around 3 to 4 percent of families participating in pods as a full-bore replacement of their child's typical school environment. More recently, we asked parents if they were microschooling their children. A shockingly large 10 to 15 percent of parents said that they were.[12] In an America of 55 million school children, that would represent an enormous 5.5 to 8.25 million students. Those numbers seem implausible, but they could perhaps serve as an extreme upper bound.

Let's tie these two strings—teacher quality and alternative methods of schooling—together.

If new school models are to grow and thrive, they will need a supply of great teachers. This is a challenge, for several reasons. First, upstart schools need to compete with existing schools for employees. Teachers may be skeptical of new school models or their staying power in a volatile marketplace. But the problem is deeper than that. Teacher preparation programs are geared toward preparing educators for traditional school models, which is reasonable, given that traditional models make up the lion's share of schools. But this means that the pool of talent available to alternative models might be small or nonexistent.

And there is at least anecdotal evidence that those models face a teacher shortage. Reporting by Wisconsin Public Radio found that private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program had 355 open vacancies in 2022, compared to just 230 in the much larger Milwaukee Public Schools and 140 in Madison.[13]

If nontraditional schools have to essentially create their own teacher pathways, or invest heavily in professional development and retraining, that puts them at continued disadvantage to existing schools.

If we want to support the growth of alternative school models, we need to develop pipelines to create and support new teachers. That is the topic of this paper.

This report aims to accurately diagnose the problem, using both polling data and an examination of educator preparation programs to show just how few educators are prepared for alternative models of schooling. Small islands of hope will emerge, however, and the next section of this report will highlight programs and courses preparing teachers for nontraditional school models. They are interesting first steps to potentially solving this problem, and we can learn from them. The report will close with some thoughts about what this all means, and what needs to be done.

With that, let's get to it.

HOW WE FOUND PROGRAMS THAT PREPARE EDUCATORS FOR ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF SCHOOLING

We tackled the relevant research questions in two ways.

First, we added two questions related to nontraditional school environments to our regular, nationally representative poll of teachers. Partnering with Morning Consult, we fielded a poll of 961 American teachers from April 26-May 6, 2023, asking them a battery of questions about the education system, education policy, and their own experiences.[14] The exact question wording is available below in the "results" section.

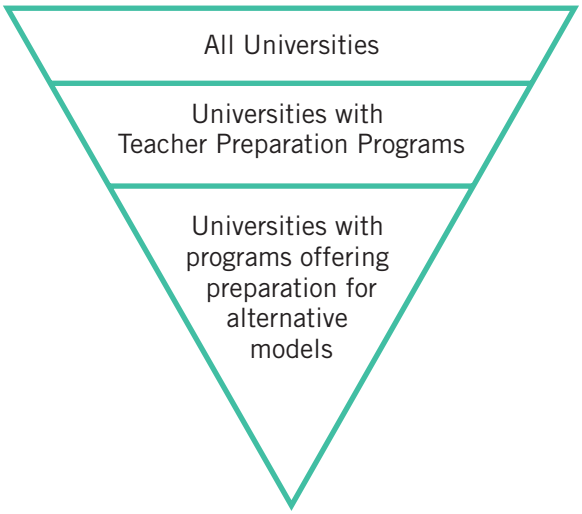
Second, we engaged the services of our longtime research partner, Hanover Research, to use a mixed approach to identify programs that might help prepare teachers to teach in nontraditional environments. Hanover took the top four states listed in the EdChoice publication "The States Ranked by Spending on School Choice Programs, 2022 Edition,"[15] and reviewed their institutions of higher education. Hanover examined institution websites to identify degree programs, certifications, or courses that are designed for nontraditional school preparation.

Hanover identified relevant Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes for the academic programs and filtered by institutions that offer these programs at the master's degree level. Using the generated list of institutions offering these programs, Hanover examined institutions' websites for those that had high conferral rates (i.e., number of students graduating with the degree type). They then identified programs related to nontraditional schooling. Figure 1 displays this process visually.

Put simply, Hanover started with all the universities in a state and selected those that offered a teacher preparation program. From there, it searched the schools for majors, programs, and courses related to alternative education models, including charter schools, private schools, online schools, and microschools.

What follows is both the overall counts of institutions offering such programs and descriptions of programs within those institutions.

FIGURE 1 The Identification Funnel



THE PROGRAMS: HOW MANY AND WHERE ARE THEY?

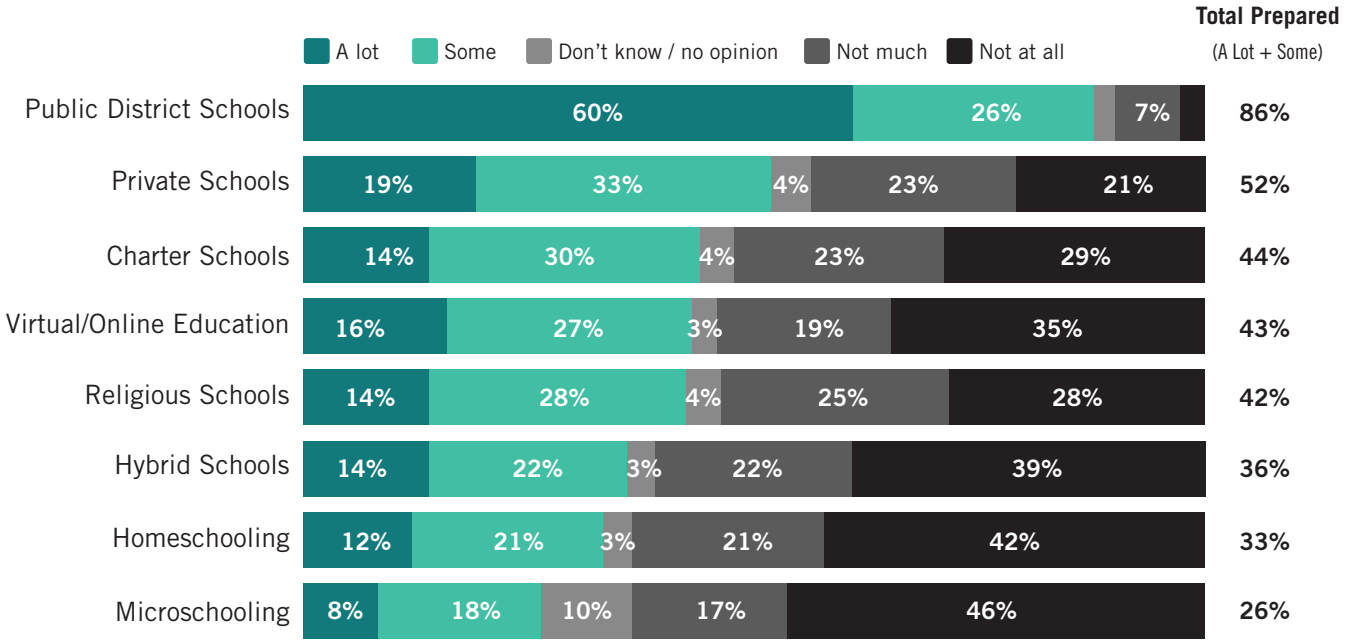
We will first present the results from our national poll questions. We first asked a general question about if and how much their own teacher preparation programs had covered different types of school models. Teachers were asked, "In your college education, graduate education, or other professional development, how much has the instruction and preparation covered the following?" Respondents were given these options: *public district schools, private schools, charter schools, virtual schools, religious schools, hybrid schools, homeschooling,* and *microschooling.* Teachers could select "a lot," "some," "not much," "not at all," or "don't know." Figure 2 displays the results.

Perhaps not surprisingly, teachers were most likely to say that their preparation covered public district schools, with 86 percent of respondents saying that public district schools were covered "a lot" or "some" while only 10 percent said that they were covered not much or not at all. Private schools came in a distant second, with 52 percent of teachers saying that their preparation program covered them, but 33 of those 52 percentage points were for programs covering them only "some" and only 19 percent were for those covering them "a lot." It drops off from there, all the way down to microschooling, which came in last with only 26 percent of teachers saying that their program covered them "some" or "a lot."

Being prepared to teach in a school takes more than simple awareness about specific kinds of educational settings. So, we asked a second question of teachers: "Thinking back on your college preparation for going into teaching, how much would you agree with the following statements? I feel prepared to teach in..." and then asked them to rate *public district schools, private schools, charter schools, virtual schools, religious schools, hybrid schools, homeschooling,* and *microschooling.* Teachers had these options: "strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "somewhat disagree," or "strongly disagree." Figure 3 displays the results.

FIGURE 2 Teacher Preparation Content

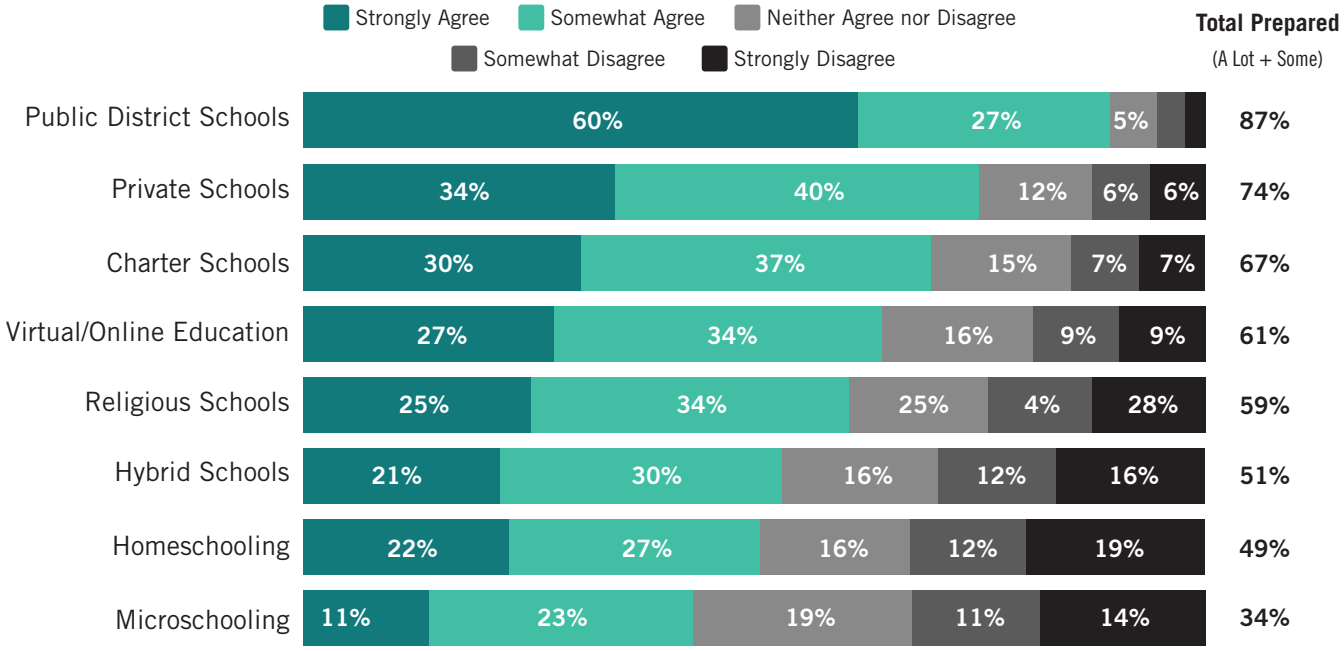
By far, teachers say that their education and teacher preparation covered teaching in a public district school school content.



Sources: Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor alterations, from: [1] "K-12 Scholarship Programs." Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. https://www.fldoe.org/-schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ [2] "Family Empowerment Scholarship." Florida Department of Education, January 26, 2022. https://www.fldoe.org/schools/-school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/fes/ [3] "Florida Tax Credit Scholarships." Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. https://www.fldoe.org/schools/-

FIGURE 3 Teacher Self-Reports of Preparation

Teachers feel most prepared to teach in public district schools based on their college preparation.



Sources: Figure contents quoted verbatim, with minor alterations, from: [1] "K-12 Scholarship Programs." Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. https://www.fldoe.org/-schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ [2] "Family Empowerment Scholarship." Florida Department of Education, January 26, 2022. https://www.fldoe.org/schools/-school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/fes/ [3] "Florida Tax Credit Scholarships." Florida Department of Education, October 16, 2020. https://www.fldoe.org/schools/-

Again, perhaps unsurprisingly, teachers overwhelmingly felt prepared to teach in public district schools. Unlike the previous question, the drop off to the second most confident answer was not as steep, as almost three-quarters of teachers either strongly or somewhat agreed that they were prepared to teach in a private school. More than three-quarters of teachers felt prepared to teach in charter schools and more than half felt prepared to teach in hybrid, virtual, and by a bare one-point margin, home schools. Fewer than half of teachers (also by a single-point margin) felt prepared to teach in religious schools and just over a third felt prepared to teach in a microschool.

Looking at the demographic breakdown of survey respondents yields an interesting wrinkle. Our sample had 385 teachers who stated that they had an undergraduate degree as their highest level of education, 577 stated that they had a postgraduate degree. When comparing reported levels of preparedness to teach in different school models, teachers with only an undergraduate degree felt more prepared than those with postgraduate degrees, regardless of the anticipated school setting.

Figure 4 displays the difference between post-graduate and undergraduate teachers who selected that they "strongly" or "somewhat" agreed with the statement that they were ready to teach in the particular school model. The numbers reported are simply the difference between the rate of undergraduate teachers and the rate of postgraduate teachers. The fact that all the numbers are negative shows undergraduates rating themselves as more prepared than postgraduates.

Can teachers who want specific preparation to teach in an alternative school model find it? To find out, we looked at the four states that EdChoice's own Drew Catt identified as spending the highest percentage of their budget on school choice programs: Florida, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Vermont. As described in the methods section, Hanover Research complied a list of all

FIGURE 4 Comparing Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Teacher Readines

Percentage point difference between teachers with graduate and undergraduate degrees reporting readiness to teach in each learning environment

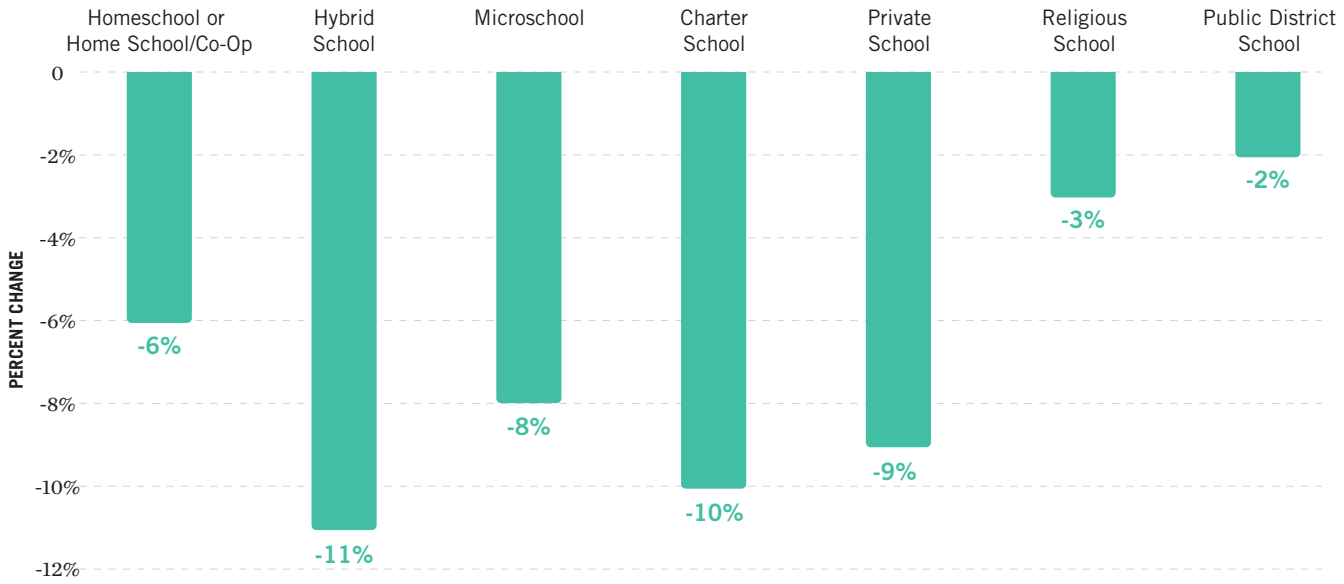


TABLE 1 Programs by State and Type

State	Total Universities in the state (NCES 2020-2021)	Microschool			Online School			Charter School			Private School		
		Degrees	Programs	Courses	Degrees	Programs	Courses	Degrees	Programs	Courses	Degrees	Programs	Courses
Florida	163	0	0	0	0	5	28	0	0	0	1	1	6
Wisconsin	67	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	0
Arizona	62	1	3	2	2	5	7	0	0	0	2	2	5
Vermont	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

institutions of higher education in these states, filtered them by schools that offered programs in educator preparation, and then searched for specific programs, majors, and courses intended to prepare students to teach in alternative schooling models.

So how many programs, majors, and courses are on offer? Table 1 lists them by state.

If jazz music is known by the notes that musicians don't play as much as the notes that they do, Table 1 might be the jazz of teacher preparation. While there are places here and there that do offer specific preparation for specific types of alternative school models, they are few and isolated. Given the number of institutions of higher education in these states, even the largest numbers represent a small slice of the pie.

To better understand the results, let's look state by state.

FLORIDA

Hanover Research identified six different institutions of higher education in Florida that offer preparation for alternative education models. That is 4 percent of Florida's 163 institutions. Table 2 lists those schools and programs.

Most of the courses were related to online learning. Given the long tradition of online learning in the Sunshine State, including the pioneering Florida Virtual School, this is no surprise. Hanover also found a specific private school preparation program at Trinity Baptist College, with courses such as "Curriculum Philosophy and Design in Christian Schools" and "Bible Principles and Classroom Applications." It did not find any courses or programs specifically related to microschooling or charter schooling.

TABLE 2 Education Preparation Programs for Alternative School Models in Florida

Universities	Progam, Degrees, Courses			
	Microschool	Online	Charter	Private
Florida State University	X	Online Teaching and Learning Graduate Certificate **Courses:** - Online Pedagogy and Course Design - Introduction to Distance Learning - Learning and Web Analytics - Design of Online Collaborative Learning - Web 2.0-based Learning & Performance - Design of Online & Digital Adaptive Learning - Courseware Development	X	X
St. Thomas University	X	Digital Instruction and Distance Education Certificate **Courses:** - Introduction to Instructional Technology - Multimedia Design and Development - Advanced Multimedia Design	X	X
University of West Florida	X	Online Teaching and Learning Graduate Certificate **Courses:** - Distance Learning Implementation - Distance Learning Policy and Planning - Emerging and Innovative Technology Systems	X	X
Trinity Baptist College	X	X	X	Master of Education - Educational Leadership **Courses:** - Bible Principles and the Classroom Applications - History of Christian Education - Christian Perspectives on Special Education - Technology Applications in Christian Schools - Principles of Biblical Leadership - Curriculum Philosophy and Design in the Christian School
University of Central Florida	X	eLearning Design, Development and Delivery Graduate Certificate **Courses:** - Digital Leadership and Systems Management - Instructional System Design - Multimedia for Education and Training - Distance Education: Technology Process Product - Interactive Online and Virtual Teaching Environments - Virtual Teaching and the Digital Educator	X	X
University of South Florida	X	eLearning Design, Development and Delivery Graduate Certificate **Courses:** - Interactive Media - Problems in Instructional Design for Computers - Development of technology-Based Instruction - Applications of Computers as Educational Tools - Distance Learning - Technology Project Management (with research option) - Instructional Graphics - Digital Video - Web Design	X	X

To dive more deeply into one of these programs, we can look at Florida State University's graduate certificate in online teaching and learning. According to its website, this certificate program:

> Will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to be an effective online instructor. This certificate is a great opportunity for people who are already teaching online or who hope to do so in the future, whether at the K-12, higher education, or corporate level. The certificate curriculum provides preparation in all areas of online instruction, including pedagogical frameworks and models for synchronous and asynchronous online learning, classroom management, instructional strategies, learning analytics, and assessment approaches.

The certificate consists of 15 instructional hours. Students complete six hours of the introductory classes "Online Pedagogy and Course Design" and "Open Learning," both three hours. They also pick nine hours of electives from courses such as "Introduction to Distance Learning," "Design of Online and Digital Adaptive Learning," and "Courseware Development."

WISCONSIN

Hanover Research identified two institutions of higher education in Wisconsin offering preparation for alternative education models. That is 3 percent of the 67 institutions of higher education in the state. Table 3 presents a list of the schools and their programs.

One program, at Concordia University, offers specific preparation for online teaching, with courses in blended learning and instructional design, which are part of a graduate certificate in "Digital Age Teaching and Learning." A second program, at Marquette University in Milwaukee, specifically prepares students to be Catholic school leaders. Hanover Research did not find any courses or programs specifically related to microschooling or charter schooling.

Marquette's educational leadership program for aspiring Catholic School Leaders is worth diving into. As its website states:

> In addition to the preparation that all future school leaders receive in the Educational Leadership (EDLD) program that leads to licensure for principals and/or directors of instruction, aspiring Catholic school leaders experience specific learning opportunities that prepare them to understand and demonstrate strength in the Defining Characteristics of Effective Catholic Schools.[17]

The program offers supplementary one-hour seminar courses specifically tailored for Catholic school leaders, including "Mission, Catholic Identity, and Faith Formation," "Operational Vitality of Catholic Schools," and "National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Schools and the roles religious communities and leaders played in shaping Catholic education." Interestingly, participants qualify for a two-thirds discount on tuition because the program works in partnership with the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

TABLE 3 Education Preparation Programs for Alternative School Models in Wisconsin

Universities	Progam, Degrees, Courses			
	Microschool	Online	Charter	Private
Concordia University-Wisconsin	X	Graduate Certificate in Digital Age Teaching and Learning **Courses:** - Digital Citizenship and Ethics - Theories of Learning and Design - Instructional Design - Applying Technology in Content Areas - Blended Learning - Digital Literacy	X	X
Marquette University	X	X	X	Educational Leadership Program for Aspiring Catholic School Leaders

ARIZONA

Hanover Research identified six institutions of higher education in Arizona offering preparation for alternative education models. That is 10 percent of the 62 institutions of higher education in the state. Table 4 presents a list of the schools and programs.

These included the only examples of microschool preparation in any of the states under review. Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, and Grand Canyon University all offer preparation programs for prospective microschool educators. Arizona also has multiple options for educators looking to prepare for the online classroom, with programs offered by Arizona State, Aspen University, and Rio Salado College.

International Baptist College and Seminary offers two different tracks for private school educator tracks, both a bachelor's and a master's degree in Christian education. Hanover did not find any courses or programs specifically related to charter schooling.

Grand Canyon University's microschool training is an interesting example of a program that prepares individuals for work in alternative schooling. It offers a no-cost, five-week program with a mix of in- person meetings and online modules. Described as a way to "help direct you on your journey to a successful microschool community,"[18] it offers 15 professional development hours credit for educators who successfully completed the training.

TABLE 4 Education Preparation Programs for Alternative School Models in Arizona

Universities	Progam, Degrees, Courses			
	Microschool	Online	Charter	Private
Arizona State University	ASU Prep Digital Training/Courses	Technology for Teaching and Learning Graduate Certificate Learning, Literacies and Technologies, PhD	X	X
Aspen University	X	Master of Education - eLearning Pedagogy Certificate in eLearning Pedagogy	X	X
International Baptist College and Seminary	X	X	X	Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Teacher Education Master of Christian Education **Courses:** - Law and the Christian School - Institutional Advancement and Effectiveness - Supervision of Programs, Facilities, and Personnel - Current Issues for the Christian Educator - Action Research for the Classroom teacher
The University of Arizona	Bachelor of Science in Literacy, Learning and Leadership: Community Education Emphasis **Courses:** - Learning in Informal Settings - Youth in Diverse Communities	X	X	X
Rio Salado College	X	K-12 Online Teaching Certificate **Courses:** - Classroom Management in K12 eLearning - Discipline and Behavior in K12 eLearning - Parent Communication and Involvement in K12 eLearning - Legal Issues in K-12 eLearning - Engaging K-12 eLearners - Methods of Building and Facilitating eLearning: K-8 - Methods of Building and Facilitating eLearning: 9-12	X	X
Grand Canyon University	Training for Microschool Communities	X	X	X

WHAT THE LANDSCAPE TELLS US

The most obvious takeaway from the preceding data is that there are not enough opportunities for educators looking for preparation to teach in alternative models of schooling. In states like Florida and Arizona, with hundreds of thousands of students in alternative schools, with potentially millions joining them soon, having a handful of programs at a smattering of institutions of higher education simply isn't enough. Professional development opportunities and one-off certificate programs are wonderful, interesting, and groundbreaking, but are not up to the task of supporting an entire sector of a state's school system.

We could not even draft a section on Vermont, as Hanover found no programs or courses related to alternative school models.

But to dig a bit deeper, it is worth making four points, two of which will be about the risks of the status quo and two will be about available opportunities.

Depending on Current Preparation Paths Could Force New Models of Education to Unlearn Status Quo Lessons

A fair response to what has been presented thus far is this: *Even without all of these programs that you say need to exist, alternative school models are growing. Maybe the current pipeline is fine. The proof is in the pudding.*

That may be right, though if you ask the people who are leading these schools, you might come to a slightly different conclusion.

But even if things look OK now, there is a subtle risk that the underlying philosophy and norms of traditional schools will creep into new school models. If alternative schools get their teachers and leaders from programs geared towards traditional public schools, they will have to push their educators to unlearn what they just spent years learning. The whole point of alternative education models is to do something different to traditional schools. Even if educators are open to that, they have been marinating in a key institution of the status quo, and their traditional programs' influence will likely linger even after they have decided to teach somewhere new.

That is not to say that it is impossible; obviously schools have been able to find these educators. Yet, if we can make it easier to find these educators, that shifts burden from nonpublic school leadership (which is hard enough in itself) and puts the burden where it should be, on the institutions that prepare teachers.

A Lack of Preparation Programs Weighs Down Schools and Teachers with Additional Expenses and Work

The second point is related to the first. If one sector of schools gets a steady stream of educators prepared for its norms, routines, and expectations and another does not, that heavily puts a thumb on the scale for the first sector. If one sector of schools must invest in large amounts of professional development to get educators up to speed and the other does not, that is only more of the same. Time is money. Professional development is not free. And making one sector invest much more than another tilts the playing field towards the status quo.

Put yourself in the shoes of a school leader, first as a traditional school principal, and second as the leader of an alternative school model. In the first instance, when you are looking for new teachers, you know exactly where to go. Every spring, the teacher preparation programs in your city or state will reliably graduate hundreds of potential teachers, and they usually facilitate interviews and applications to make the connections as smooth as possible. You know that those teachers have student-taught in schools roughly similar to yours in curriculum, organization, calendar, and the like. They will understand how your school works before they even step in the door. Sure, they'll still be new, and will need help to learn and grow into professionals, but they are already on the path.

Now think of yourself as the second leader. Where do you start? Maybe you try to see if any teachers from traditional preparation programs are interested in what you are doing. But you know that you're going to have to invest a great deal of time, energy, and resources to inculcate the skills and dispositions necessary to thrive in your school. Maybe you look to existing teachers, knowing that you'll have to do much of the same. Your job becomes looking for needles in a haystack, even as other people looking for needles get to use a magnet.

Perhaps the case can be made that charter and private school is analogous enough to traditional schooling that this isn't an issue. Some schools might have a specific focus or religious ethos that requires particular attention, but by and large, the guts of the job are the same. That is a fair point. Teachers working in these two environments report high levels of comfort, so it is possible for teachers who prepare in status quo institutions to adapt to new ones. But those examples do not necessarily hold out promise for teachers seeking to work in much less analogous educational models like microschools and hybrid schools.

Opportunity #1: The Enterprising Ed School Could Fill the Gap

Demographers project fewer college students in the coming years, as the millennial-to-generation Z baby boom dips into a trough,[19] institutions of higher education will compete with each other more intensely over for a shrinking potential population. Schools will not simply be guaranteed a steady or increasing flow of students. Colleges, like any organization in a competitive market, will need to innovate and be creative to maintain themselves or to grow.

Here is where an enterprising dean or department chair could make a difference for his or her institution. Creating a new program dedicated to preparing teachers and leaders for the panoply of alternative models that are proliferating in their geographic area could be a way to make them stand out, and it could lead to higher revenue. Creating new majors, certificates, or as institutions such as Grand Canyon University did, and creating professional development programs could be ways for university leaders to find new students and set themselves apart.

Arizona State University also deserves praise for creating its own network of charter, private, and microschools that it can use as a learning laboratory for its teachers. ASU Preparatory Academy offers a mix of in-person, hybrid, and online educational environments for more than 7,000 full-time students. The academy's campuses offer full-time, five-day-per-week in-person instruction. ASU Prep Casa Grade has a model of four days on site and one day at home. ASU Prep hybrid has three-days-on-site and two-at-home model. Students at ASU Prep Learning Pods and ASU Prep Local spend two days a week on site and three days at home. ASU Prep Experience has students work one day a week on site and four at home. ASU Prep Digital and Khan World School at ASU Prep have a five-days-at-home model.[20] ASU, then offers an incredible spread of experiences not only to students and families but also to prospective teachers.

The ASU approach could have a virtuous connection with the existing alternative school sector. Some schools with part-time schedules have trouble recruiting teachers because they cannot always pay them a full-time salary. If prospective teachers cannot find some other way to supplement their income (or have a spouse who is able to pick up the slack), they can't take a part-time job. Institutions of higher education have their own troubles recruiting because tenure lines have been restricted and instructors have to be hired part-time as adjuncts. And, even if there were tenure lines available, there aren't that many people who can get tenure and know much about these alternative school models.

See where this leads? Getting experienced educators to work part time as instructors in microschools or hybrid schools or other alternatives and part time as instructors in an educator prep program for those very schools could be a win-win-win solution. It is a win for educators, who can get full-time compensation. It can be a win for schools because they can get teachers for their schedule without asking them to forego a full salary. And it can be a win for institutions of higher education, who can get top-tier instructors with real-world experience within their own budgets.

Opportunity #2: Competition from Alternative Models Could Compel Ed Preparation Programs to Innovate

It seems clear that alternative school models have been a source of positive competition for traditional schools (both public and private). Some schools, for example, have begun to offer part-time options for students who want a hybrid schedule. Others have created online programs for students who do better in that environment. Public school districts have authorized their own charter schools. The list goes on and on. Conventional schools recognize that if they do not meet the needs of parents and children, particularly as more and more states make more and more funding available for families to select their preferred school, someone else will.

The same could happen in the educator preparation space. Of course, existing preparation programs need not and should not completely reorient themselves around preparing teachers for alternative educational models. For now, and for the foreseeable future, most teachers will be employed by traditional public schools, and preparing teachers for those schools is important and necessary work.

That said, educator preparation programs need to see what is coming down the track. This is true especially for programs in states where the population of students in charter, private, and online schools is starting to creep past the one-third and towards the one-half mark.

It would be wonderful if organizations, especially large and established ones, change of their own volition based on their careful study of the world that they exist in. But it's unlikely to happen. Most organizations change only when external pressure is applied to them and when continuing with the status quo means that they will lose revenue, power, or both.

There have been efforts upon efforts, stretching back decades, that try to improve the teacher preparation pipeline in various ways. One goal has been to ensure that prospective teachers know the necessary subject matter and be able to effectively teach it. Another has been for preparation programs to impart to future educators the most successful methods of teaching reading that research has uncovered. These efforts have met with success in isolated and episodic events, but on the whole, teacher preparation has resisted reform.

Growing interest in alternative models of schooling just be the thing that spurs positive change. Competitive pressure from a new sector that is looking for a new type of teacher, or at least a teacher with a different set of skills in their toolbox, will push preparation programs to innovate and change to meet those needs. Those that don't will lose market share, and the revenue that comes with it. They either adapt or decline.

CONCLUSION

The premise of this paper is straightforward. If we want alternative education models to grow, they will need teachers. Those teachers need to be prepared. There currently exist far too few preparation programs for them, which is both a problem and an opportunity.

It is to their credit that alternative models have been able to grow absent an established pipeline of human capital. But it has come with a cost. Schools have to spend time and money preparing their teachers rather than spending those resources on educating students. School leaders have had to learn on their own hard lessons that might have been avoidable, had they received some preparation. It is hard to calculate these costs because they are often hidden, but they are there.

Enterprising leaders of teacher preparation programs should see the opportunity here and partner with alternative education leaders to create programs, majors, courses, and professional development opportunities. It would be good for all parties involved.

Philanthropists should support these efforts which might not see a financial return until they have reached a critical mass of participants. Philanthropic support can get such programs started and keep them going until they become self-sufficient.

Legislators and policymakers should ask tough questions in their oversight capacity of their state's public institutions of higher education. When university leaders testify before state education committees (overseeing higher education or K-12), policymakers should ask why there are not more of these programs, given that legislators' constituents are sending their children to these schools and want great teachers.

The need is there. The opportunity is there. It is time to make it happen.

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