



State of Connecticut
Department of Higher Education

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News

New Teachers to Graduate Friday from 2010 Alternate Route to Certification Summer Program

HARTFORD, August 5 — Connecticut's Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) summer program will graduate 99 new teachers tomorrow, **August 6 at 1:00 pm.** at the Conard High School Auditorium in West Hartford. Michael P. Meotti, Commissioner of Higher Education, and Maria Davoodi, ARC Director, will address the group.

The 99 newest teachers include former engineers, researchers, scientists, business executives, medical professionals, journalists and paraprofessionals, among others. All have worked with youth in various capacities, and are active community volunteers. The average age of this year's graduating class is 42; some 15 percent are from minority groups.

Members of this graduating class are eligible to teach biology, Chinese, chemistry, English, history, French, general science, mathematics, physics, social studies and Spanish. Most will teach at the middle and high school levels. (*See profiles of 10 ARC graduates below.*)

"ARC candidates bring a unique qualification to teaching – the ability to help students connect what they are learning to real life and professional experiences," stated Commissioner Meotti. "ARC teachers expose students to a variety of career options, and bring a vast amount of expertise from their field of work and academic background. Of this year's class, 74 percent hold a master's or doctoral degree."

ARC is the sixth largest of the state's 21 teacher preparation programs. Administered by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, ARC has produced more than 4,000 teachers since its first class graduated in 1988. From 2001-2008, ARC has consistently been the state's largest preparer of teachers in 5-12 mathematics (78%), physics (48%), biology and chemistry (75%), Spanish (33%), French (55%), German (60%), Latin (58%), and other languages, such as Chinese and Arabic (92%); K-6 world language instruction (92%); and, PreK-12 bilingual education (98%).

Retention of ARC graduates is high. A survey of ARC graduates from 2002-2006 found that 86 percent are currently teaching, and 46 percent intend to continue teaching at least for 10 more years. During this past academic year, 75 percent of recent ARC graduates were employed in Connecticut schools. Since 2007, at least 26 graduates have received prestigious honors, including District Teacher of the Year, Connecticut Teacher of the Year, and the national Presidential Excellence in Teaching for Mathematics and Science.

ARC was created by the Educational Enhancement Act of 1986 as a time-intensive teacher preparation program for mid-career adult learners with strong content knowledge and work experience. In recent years, ARC's mission has evolved to help address teacher shortages, and to place highly qualified teachers in priority school districts. ARC offers training twice a year: 9 weeks of full-time study in the summer, and a part-time weekend program that runs from October to May. More information about the ARC program can be found at www.ctdhe.org/ARC or by calling 800-842-0229 or 860-947-1300.

Profiles of Selected 2010 ARC Graduates

Thomas Bienemann, of Granby, will teach history and social studies in **Hartford**. A former radio and television news reporter and anchor, Beinemann most recently was an account executive with AEG Worldwide. He volunteers with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Connecticut, for the Our Piece of the Pie Youth Development Organization, and as an interviewer for the Veterans Oral History Project with the Library of Congress.

Kristen Basiaga, of Rocky Hill, will teach physics at a **Hartford** magnet school. Most recently, Basiaga was a teaching assistant in the University of Connecticut's physics department and has done research in nano-materials and electronics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She has volunteered for the American Cancer Society, Habitat for Humanity, and Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

Xiaohui Cao, of East Lyme, will be a world language teacher specializing in the Mandarin Chinese language at **Norwich Free Academy**. Cao has been a bilingual and an ESL tutor and teacher in China, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Michigan. Most recently, she was a Chinese language teacher with the Southeastern Connecticut Chinese School in New London, and an interpreter for Language Line Services.

Hou Chen, of Salem, will teach chemistry in **Branford**. Chen previously was a senior principal scientist with Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Inc. where he specialized in global research. He earned his bachelor's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and his doctorate from the California Institute of Technology.

Richard Fisler, of Madison, will teach physics in **Westport**. He has worked for 22 years in product development and business management of CAT scan machines, MRI scanners, ultrasound devices, and genome sequencing devices as part of the Human Genome Project and protein based diagnostic devices. He is a co-founder of a point of care diagnostics company.

Maria Melendez, of Bridgeport, will teach world languages, specializing in Spanish, in **Bridgeport**. Melendez worked as a special education teacher in San Jose, Costa Rica before immigrating to the United States.

Omayra Ramos, of Waterbury, will teach Spanish in **Waterbury**. Ramos has worked as a paraprofessional in Waterbury, and as an ESL Counselor with Naugatuck Valley Community College. She spent several years volunteering with a missionary committee in the Dominican Republic.

Thomas Reilly, of Fairfield, will teach mathematics in **Fairfield**. Mr. Reilly previously worked for NBC Universal in a variety of capacities, and as a research assistant in the Mathematics Department of the State University of New York in Potsdam

Khari Saunders, of South Windsor, will teach middle school science at a magnet school in **Windsor**. Saunders previously worked as a special education paraprofessional, a juvenile case worker and sports writer for various media outlets.

Catherine Volpe, of Fairfield, will teach French in **New Haven**. A former Peace Corps member, she served in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, and West Africa. Most recently she was the associate director for operations and administration of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric Aids Foundation in West Africa, and a senior specialist in procurement for the Save the Children Federation, Inc. in Westport.

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