

High Tech High: District Intern Program and Graduate School of Education

#2 in a series of ERN issue briefs on innovative approaches to teacher preparation

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

High Tech High (HTH) opened as a single-site public charter school in 2000 and has grown into a network of 14 schools serving 5,200 K-12 students in San Diego across four campuses. HTH utilizes a project-based learning model and is guided by the design principles of equity, personalization, authentic work, and collaborative design. Almost 90% of HTH alumni are still enrolled or have graduated from a postsecondary institution. HTH alumni earn postsecondary degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) at twice the rate of the general population of college graduates (34% to 17%). Nearly three-quarters of those enrolled in HTH are students of color and 50% are from low-income families.

HTH was the first charter school in California to obtain authorization to credential its own teachers and now operates two teacher training programs, the HTH District Intern Program and, through its affiliated graduate school of education, the GSE Teaching Apprenticeship.

Location	San Diego, CA
Program Length	2 years
Credential Awarded	Initial teaching license Master's degree (Apprenticeship)
Cost to Participants	\$6,000 (Intern Program) \$20,000 (Apprenticeship)
Annual Enrollment	40 (Intern Program) 30 (Apprenticeship)
Total Program Graduates	200
Completion Rate	74%

The main impetus for creating the credentialing program was a California requirement that all teachers have either a credential or be enrolled in a program to get one.

“We perceived that as a barrier to entry for [many] people with deep content knowledge. I have a problem with the notion that having a credential is a predictor of being a good teacher.”

— LARRY G. ROSENSTOCK, CEO, HIGH TECH HIGH

Teachers at HTH schools come into the profession from diverse backgrounds and pathways, including those that aren't always traditional.

Mary Lau taught preschool at the SDSU Children's Center before she made the switch to teaching at a constructivist charter school and then High Tech Elementary.

Enrique Lugo is the proud son of Mexican immigrants, a visual artist, and San Diego native dedicated to progressive education, entrepreneurship, and community activism.

Katie Weisberg taught and led in middle schools, worked at the University of San Diego, and currently directs the Masters in Educational Leadership program at the HTH Graduate School of Education.

“All three lacked one key item on their résumé: a California teaching credential.

But that wasn't a barrier to hiring them. In 2004, High Tech High became the state's first charter-management organization to gain state approval to operate its own teacher credentialing program.”¹

HTH DISTRICT INTERN PROGRAM

In 2003, California began allowing charter schools considered as local education agencies to operate their own teacher credentialing programs. HTH applied for and was approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to offer the HTH District Intern Program in 2004, awarding preliminary single-subject certifications. In subsequent years, the HTH program was approved to offer preparation in multiple subjects (K-8) and education specialist certification areas.

The Intern Program is a job-embedded, two-year preparation program where participants serve as classroom teachers and complete coursework in the evening. The Intern Program teaches a project-based pedagogy and provides weekly mentoring. Participants must be hired to serve as the teacher of record at least 50% of the time, either in the HTH network or within San Diego County. Additional admissions criteria include a bachelor's degree, background check clearances, passage of the California Basic Educational Skills Test, and demonstration of subject-matter competency, either through passing the California Subject Examinations for Teachers or completing an approved subject-matter program. Approximately 40% of participants identify as people of color. Those who complete successfully are awarded a preliminary teaching credential, identical to the same credential awarded by a college or university.

GSE TEACHING APPRENTICESHIP

To be able to offer master's programs in teacher and school leadership, HTH opened the HTH Graduate School of Education (HTHGSE) in 2007. HTHGSE is an accredited postsecondary institution through the state of California and Western Association of Schools and Colleges, offering a master's in educational leadership. In 2018, it received preliminary approval from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to also offer a master's in teaching and learning through the GSE Teaching Apprenticeship.

Beginning with its first cohort in 2018-19, the Apprenticeship program is an embedded, hands-on two-year program. In the first year, participants serve as student teachers four days a week and complete coursework one day a week and in the evenings. At the end of the first year, participants earn their preliminary teaching credential. In the second year, participants serve as classroom teachers and complete coursework in the evenings, earning a master's degree in teaching and learning at the end of the year. Admissions requirements are similar to the Intern Program; applicants must have a bachelor's degree, pass state exams, provide references, and complete background check clearances. Approximately 55% of Apprenticeship program candidates identify as people of color.



Growth mindset is a core philosophy at HTH for both students and teachers.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Participants in the Intern and Apprenticeship programs complete similar coursework. Credential-related coursework is completed in the first year of the Apprenticeship program and spread over both years of the Intern Program. Apprenticeship program participants complete master's degree coursework over both years of their program.

Preliminary Teaching Credential

Coursework for the preliminary teaching credential is designed to provide participants with extensive opportunities to observe, acquire, and utilize important pedagogical knowledge, skills, and abilities. This is intended to support participants in transforming the major ideas and emphases developed in their coursework into actions in their teaching. Courses are aligned to the California Teacher Performance Expectations and topics include culturally responsive pedagogy, classroom management and structures, building relationships with students and families, equity and diversity, instructional methods, English language acquisition, differentiation and inclusive environments, assessment, and subject-specific methods.

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The HTHGSE aspires to be recognized within the country and around the world as a hub of progressive practice. This aspiration reflects HTHGSE's special and unique capacity as a graduate school embedded in highly effective and innovative K-12 schools to bridge the worlds of theory and practice, of scholarship and action.²

Participants are assessed in multiple ways, including formal and informal observations, formative and summative assessments, and Put It To Practice assignments. All participants must also pass the California Teacher Performance Assessment to earn their preliminary teaching credential. Participants earning multiple-subject and education specialist credentials must also pass the Reading Instruction Competence Assessment, which assesses knowledge of effective reading instruction.

Master's Degree

Apprenticeship program participants complete additional coursework around putting theory into practice, including using education research to improve practice. Coursework supports participants in developing, implementing, and analyzing a leadership change project at their respective school. Project culmination includes writing an academic journal article, creating a useful product, and demonstrating leadership to move the work forward. The journal article also serves as the master's thesis for the program.



Clinical Practice

Intern Program participants complete 120 hours of pre-service over six weeks in the summer before serving as classroom teachers for the entirety of the program. Participants meet regularly with experienced teacher mentors who provide intensive guidance, support, and coaching throughout the program.

Apprenticeship program participants spend the first year of the program as student teachers, working alongside experienced cooperating teachers four days a week. Over the course of the year, participants gradually take on greater teaching responsibilities, including co-teaching and serving as the lead teacher. Participants receive regular feedback from cooperating teachers and program supervisors. Program supervisors are experienced educators serving as clinical faculty at HTHGSE. In the second year of the program, after earning a preliminary teaching credential, participants serve as classroom teachers, continuing to receive coaching and feedback from program supervisors.

Pictured Left: The HTH Teacher Center Authentic Student-Led Assessment Improvement Group has been working to test various ideas in an attempt to dig deeper and gain a better understanding of how best to assess students.

COST

The two-year program cost for participants is \$6,000 for the Intern Program and \$20,000 for the Apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship program participants are eligible for financial aid programs, including grant-funded fellowships and federal loans. Intern Program participants, however, are not eligible for financial aid.

While in the Intern Program, participants serve as classroom teachers with HTH or partner schools and earn a teacher's salary plus benefits in both years of the program. In the Apprenticeship program, participants serve as unpaid student teachers in the first year of the program and as classroom teachers with HTH or partner schools, earning a teacher's salary, in the second year.

OUTCOMES

Approximately 74% of participants successfully complete the Intern Program. Most participants who exit do so due to employment termination.

Almost half of Intern Program completers earn a secondary subject certification, 32% earn a special education certification, and 19% earn a K-8 certification.

Certification Area	Percent of Participants
Education Specialist Mild/Moderate	32%
Multiple Subjects (K-8)	19%
Secondary Art	14%
Secondary Science	14%
Secondary English	5%
Secondary French	5%
Secondary Spanish	5%
Secondary Math	5%

SOURCES

High Tech High (<https://www.hightechhigh.org>)

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (<https://www.ctc.ca.gov>)

- 1 "Learning Where They Teach," Eric W. Robelen, *Education Week*, July 17, 2017. Retrieved online at: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/07/18/43hightech.h26.html>
- 2 California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, *Educator Preparation Committee, Initial Institutional Approval, February 2018*. Retrieved online at: <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/agendas/2018-02/2018-02-4a.pdf?sfvrsn=4>