

PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

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The following are some important considerations for Subject Matter Preparation Major (Track II) students for planning to become a teacher. Make sure you understand these considerations well before you plan and before you see your advisor. In sum, there is no “straight line” or “best” way for you to become a teacher. Rather, it involves a careful consideration of your time, your money, your family needs, your ability to move elsewhere, and your interests.

The Hutchins Program is the academic background for a Multiple Subject K-12 (also through 14) self-contained classroom credential. You are legally eligible to teach in any school, from elementary to high school (and adult school) where instruction is in a self-contained classroom. That phrase means where you are the instructor who teaches a number of subjects. The only exception to this is the Early Childhood Credential, which allows you the same range and enables you to teach pre-K through 14.

The academic programs in the School of Education at SSU, as well as Dominican College and Chapman College, offer a course of study, which focuses on K-6 (or pre K-6). The course of study enables you to teach in those grades; the credential allows you to teach in ALL the grades in a self-contained classroom. It is important to note the difference, because you are eligible for a job in any school district, which will hire you for a self-contained classroom. That means you can teach middle school, junior high, and high school self-contained classrooms. This point is crucial because California and many other states have moved to middle and high schools which have self-contained classrooms. You should realize the versatility of your credential, which allows you to adapt to changing conditions in the district in which you work. And, as a Hutchins student who has learned to think interdisciplinarily, you should seek these schools out.

This leads to the question of a concentration. You should pick out a concentration which is both marketable and in which you have some interest. Usually, math and sciences are the most marketable. Concentrations become more important if you plan to teach higher than third grade. Schools will use you as a resource person or “expert” in that area. If you are planning to teach fourth grade and up, you should pay special attention to your marketability. School districts are the ones that determine this market, not the Ed schools, not the waiver program, not the State of California.

As you think about choosing your concentration, you should also think about enhancing your marketability and flexibility another way. Some concentrations can be turned into a single subject credential. By taking several more courses in that concentration, as set out by your concentration department, you can then apply for a single subject supplemental credential on top of your multiple subject credential. You do not need to retake any other education courses. If you do it this way, you can then teach both elementary schools and in single-subject classrooms in secondary schools. You should think about this in terms of your time, your money, and your flexibility.

You have several other considerations to ponder. Usually, most students finish their last semester here and then go to a School of Education at SSU, Dominican College, Chapman College or other programs throughout the State of California, as post-BA students. It is at that point that you complete your 30 units post-BA for your complete credential. You have several other possibilities. First, you can go to a school district or state, which is in desperate need of teachers, and receive an emergency credential to teach. You can take your education classes either at a nearby university or on-line through the CSU or similar programs in other states. The advantage of this approach is that you are working, you are not going into (further) debt, and you can deduct educational expenses off the top of your taxes. Other states usually accept the California credential. They may require you to take a course in state and/or local history. You should check the Career Center on campus here as well as the Departments of Education in other states.

Complicating these post BA options is the following: the CSU and UC programs which offer credentials are prevented by law from counting those courses as graduate courses. That is not true of private schools. Dominican, for example, counts your credential courses as graduate courses. If you go to a private school that counts your courses as graduate courses, then you can be on your way to a Masters of Arts in Teaching or whatever MA that program offers. Additional classes past your credential classes then count toward a higher degree. Many school districts do want people with c.a.'s, others do not. M.A.'s are paid more money. It may be worth it to go into debt to get the MA because of the status and money it provides.

You should also check programs at other CSU and UC campuses. They offer credential programs, which can then lead into MA programs with another year of schooling. Minority students are well advised to see what options they have. Often some of these programs put you immediately into a classroom and pay you to teach.

Lastly, if you are not going for a B-CLAD credential, but a CLAD credential, you should consider developing a verbal fluency in a foreign language. If you are fluent in Spanish, for example, you should list that in an obvious place in your resume. A final suggestion: you should also make a special effort to not just write legibly but well. School districts will often give you a written test before an interview; they want to see your handwriting.