

## **Better teachers? Proposed Missouri bill might have opposite effect, says expert**

By Neil Schoenherr

Feb. 28, 2008 -- The Missouri Senate approved a bill Feb. 27 that would make it easier for people to switch jobs to become teachers. But if enacted, would the bill increase teacher quality in the state?

Probably not, says an expert in science and mathematics education at Washington University in St. Louis.

"I think the concept fails as an attempt to support high quality education in Missouri," says William F. Tate, Ph.D., the Edward Mallinckrodt Distinguished University Professor in Arts & Sciences and chair of the Department of Education.

"My hope is that parents will be provided transparent information related to the nature and type of certification awarded to teachers. It strikes me that anything short of that would be dishonest," he says.

The bill's sponsor has indicated it would address a teacher shortage in Missouri. If approved by the House, the bill would allow people without teaching degrees to become teachers after being certified by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence.

"The measure is being pushed in order to 'help' students attending inner-city schools in Missouri," says Tate, author of "The Political Economy of Teacher Quality in School Mathematics: African American Males, Opportunity Structures, Politics and Method," which appeared recently in the journal *American Behavioral Scientist*.

"Thus, it appears these students will receive certified teachers but not necessarily qualified teachers," he says. "This is an unfortunate mistake in public policy with long-term implications for human development and educational attainment in the region."

Tate is director of the St. Louis Center for Inquiry in Science Teaching and Learning. He is interested in examining the relationship between a city's economic goals — in particular those goals that require significant technological advancement — and the civic actions that limit or accelerate human resource capacity to achieve the stated goals.

Understanding the state of affairs in mathematics and science education is a vital aspect of this work.

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