ILLOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
January 16, 2002

Agenda Topic: Final Draft: Certificate Restructuring and Content-Area Standards for School Service Personnel, Special Education Directors, and Middle Level Teachers

Materials: Middle Level Certification Report: Recommendations for Illinois Standards for the Certification of Middle Level Teachers (November, 2001)
Illinois Content-Area Standards for School Counselor, School Nurse, School Psychologist, School Social Worker, and Director of Special Education (November, 2001)
Advisory Panel Membership Rosters

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Purpose of Agenda Item

• Present final advisory panel recommendations for a modified certificate structure and associated standards for Illinois school service personnel, directors of special education, and middle level educators;

• Compare existent requirements with those proposed by the panels; and

• Provide staff recommendations on the modifications and standards.

Expected Outcomes of Agenda Item

• Understand the panel recommendations and their implications; and

• Direct staff to develop rules and appropriate legislation.

Background Information

The State Board’s adoption of the Illinois Framework in November 1996 marked the beginning of the transition from a course-based educator preparation system to one predicated upon standards. Acknowledging the need to revise antiquated requirements and recognizing the inadequacies of a certification structure based on semester hours and “seat time,” the Board adopted a comprehensive reform
policy focused on assuring quality educators in every school and every classroom.

Since the *Framework*, the State Board has authorized

- the development and implementation of the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, modeled on those designed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC);
- the development and implementation of the Illinois School Leader Standards, similar to those developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC);
- significant revisions to teacher and administrator certificates, including the elimination of nearly 40 endorsements;
- the adoption of knowledge and performance standards in 37 teaching fields, including endorsements and designations;
- administrative standards for principals, superintendents, and chief school business officers; and
- the utilization of NCATE 2000 standards and procedures for the recognition, accreditation, and approval of educator preparation institutions.

Before the teacher and administrator advisory panels completed their work in early 2000, public school, higher education, and parent representatives were selected to serve on another cohort of advisory bodies. In spring 2000, six panels were convened to draft the first version of standards and to develop certificate structure recommendations for directors or special education, four school service personnel endorsements (i.e., school social worker, school psychologist, school nurse, and school counselor), and qualifications for middle level educators.

The first iteration of the standards and recommendations was distributed in early 2001. More than 5,000 copies were shared with members of various professional associations, the IEA and the IFT, and the State Teacher Certification Board. The proposals were made available on the agency website, and nine public forums were held throughout the state to solicit feedback. Several advisory groups made formal presentations on the recommendations at conferences for state and national professional organizations. By May 2001, all comments had been collected and were shared with the panels, the State Teacher Certification Board, and the State Board.

The revised certification structure recommended by the advisory panels, coupled with the proposed standards will improve the quality and effectiveness of school service personnel, directors of special education and middle level educators. The standards reflect the work of other states, are attentive to the efforts of various national professional associations, are based exclusively on research
and best practice, and are designed to improve services and instruction for public school children, key factors in advancing student achievement.

The standards and indicators serve two purposes:

- to be approved, training programs must prove that their curricula meet each standard and indicator; and
- to demonstrate competence against each standard, candidates must evidence appropriate knowledge and performance capacities.

The first purpose will be assured through the Fifth-Year Review process that includes the examination of each program by trained national and state panels of public school and university educators, a campus visit by the site team, and scores on the relevant Illinois certification subject-matter knowledge tests. Results of these reviews will be presented to the State Teacher Certification Board and the State Board of Education. Institutions that fail to demonstrate compliance will be placed on probation or have their recognized status rescinded.

The second purpose, candidate competence against each standard, will be determined through the state certification testing system, multiple and varied performance and content evaluations conducted throughout the approved program as required by NCATE 2000, and independent verifications of the institution's assessment system by a campus review conducted by trained team members. Candidates who fail to evidence competence against the standards and associated indicators will be denied certification.

**Proposals and Analysis**

When the initial draft of panel recommendations was presented in May, 2001, Board members requested that the advisory groups give consideration to several issues. For instance, the panels were asked to determine what other states were doing in school service personnel, special education administration, and middle level certification. Board members also sought to learn the potential impact of high standards on existent shortages in some fields (e.g., counseling, school psychology, etc.). Finally, the panels were urged to identify the research and best practices that constituted the rationale for their recommendations. The reports submitted by the advisory groups in November 2001 addressed these issues.

**Other States**

Nearly all panels learned that their recommendations were consistent with the practices and expectations of other states, while at least one group found that their proposals, if adopted, would put Illinois at the forefront of reform. The School Counseling panel discovered that 41 states do not require a teaching
certificate as a condition for a counseling license, although nearly all demand additional study and internship in school-based issues.

The National Association of School Psychologists’ standards, recommended by the advisory group, are applied in 46 states. Panel members noted that this congruity could facilitate the acceptance of out-of-state credentials for Illinois’ certification.

The school nurse group learned that half of all states demand some form of certification, but that most requirements are not as rigorous as those proposed by the panel. A few states require simply a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree to serve in a school nurse capacity, while other states allow registered nurses to earn certification while employed in a school setting for a specified time.

The directors of special education discovered that most states do not require any specific certification for administering special education programming, although 20 demand an approval or endorsement. Curiously, a few states, including Illinois, do not require any training in special education for directors. Discussions with the Council of Administrators of Special Education of the Council for Exceptional Children revealed an interest in the work in Illinois as a potential model for the development of national director standards.

The middle level advisory panel confirmed that 44 states require a certificate, endorsement, or both to teach in the middle grades. This is nearly triple the number of states with similar requirements 25 years ago. The recent trend has been to eschew an endorsement and to establish a certificate because it allows the most concentrated training in working with young adolescents and because it acknowledges the unique structure of middle level schools.

*High Standards and Shortages*

Each panel deliberated continuously on this issue. Members were sensitive to the possibility of establishing professional standards that might turn some away from pursuing certification in Illinois. However, all panel members concurred that children deserve individuals prepared under the most rigorous standards and the highest of expectations.

The School Service Personnel advisory panels contend that their recommendations reflect not only national practices but also are closely linked to current Illinois program requirements. The application of the proposed national standards should not exacerbate any existent shortages because the programs must now meet requirements largely consistent with the standards. The primary difference between the standards proposed by the panels and the existent system is the deemphasizing of semester hours and clock hours and the
increased emphasis on the measured performance of prospective counselors, school psychologists, nurses, and school social workers.

The recommendations of two panels, however, are not reflective of current practice in the state. The directors of special education, for instance, propose a new endorsement that will require colleges and universities to design training programs consistent with the requirements. A survey performed by the panel revealed 75% of the respondents “favored the creation of a new endorsement specific to the position of director of special education.” The results would suggest a potential market and, consequently, a reasonable incentive for institutions to develop training programs that meet the proposed standards.

The middle level panel acknowledges the possible reluctance of some higher education institutions to develop specific offerings for middle grade certification. However, the members contend the recommended “grandfathering” provision and the five year “phase in” afford significant opportunities to acculturate colleges and universities to a new certificate and to design and implement preparation programs.

Research

The report of each advisory panel includes a section on references consulted, with the most extensive research developed by the middle level educator members. An examination of the references indicates the research is current, national, and reflective of best practice.

Panel Recommendations

Each advisory panel has been meeting since May, 2001, to prepare final recommendations on standards and indicators, and, where appropriate, to propose revisions to the existent certificate and/or endorsement structure. The following section updates the work of the panels, briefly describes the current requirements for certification, and highlights some of the recommendations. Staff comments follow each proposal.

Middle Level Educator Advisory Panel

The Middle Level Educator Advisory Panel began its work in February 2000 and presented its first set of recommendations to the State Board in December of that year. At that time, Board members asked the members to consider: additional expectations in writing and vocabulary; a requirement for depth in one content field rather than breadth in two disciplines; and an emphasis on family involvement in understanding the structure of the middle grades. The panel completed its deliberations in January 2001, and the report was submitted for public comment.
The May, 2001, report to the Board detailed the public reaction to the panel recommendations and described the changes initiated by the advisory group in response to the December document. Board members encouraged the advisory group to reconvene, to consider the public comments, to examine the practices of other states, to discuss potential shortages, and to issue another draft of their recommendations in November.

Current Requirements

Effective July 1, 1997, qualifications for a middle school endorsement on the elementary or secondary certificate demand

- 3 semester hours of study in middle school philosophy, curriculum and instructional methods for designing and teaching developmentally appropriate programs in the middle grades, including content-area reading instruction; and
- 3 semester hours of preparation in educational psychology focusing on the developmental characteristics of early adolescents and the role of the middle grade teacher in assessment, coordination, and referral of students to health and social services.

Subject-area endorsements (e.g., language arts, science, etc.) require 18 semester hours of coursework, although qualifications in a second teaching field demand only 9 semester hours, the equivalent of about three courses.

Panel Recommendations

- Develop a new Middle Level Certificate for teaching in grades 5 through 9, eventually redefining the elementary (grades K-6) and the secondary (grades 9-12) certificates;
- Expect teacher training institutions to include middle level certificate training for candidates pursuing a K-12 certificate;
- Phase out the current middle level endorsement on the elementary and high school certificates over five years;
- “Grandfather” individuals with the endorsement who stay with the same employer; those with the endorsement who change employers should be granted a two-year provisional period to earn the new certificate;
- Require all middle level teachers to be prepared in depth in one subject area, although the panel strongly advocates training in at least two broad subject areas;
- Demand appropriate training in the teaching of reading to young adolescents, particularly in the content area; and
- Require training programs to engage candidates in early and continuous clinical experiences in middle grade classrooms.
**Staff Comments**

The development of a certificate unique to the middle grades is long overdue. The current preparation provided to prospective elementary and secondary candidates who might be interested in working in middle level classrooms fails to offer sufficient knowledge and skills relative to the developmental needs of young adolescents. Existent elementary and secondary requirements also fail to demand clinical opportunities in the middle grades. Furthermore, the breadth of the elementary (grades K through 9) and secondary (grades 6 through 12) certificates militate against concentrated study on the needs and characteristics of early adolescents.

Despite the present six semester hour requirement for a middle grade endorsement, middle level educators are not adequately prepared to address the rapidly emerging physiological, psychological, and sociological transitions of the young adolescent. Research clearly underscores the dramatic changes in brain development, learning styles, and emotional development in children aged 10 to 14. Moreover, the literature establishes correlations between these changes and the ability to learn.

The panel understands that it is possible that some colleges and universities will choose not to develop a middle grade curriculum based on the proposed standards and indicators. However, staff suggests it is not necessary – or even advised – that all 57 institutions design middle grade programs. In fact, some consider the present plethora of elementary education programs (51) to be a shortcoming in that they divert potential resources from high need programming in such areas as special education, mathematics, and science. Quality programs provided by ten institutions should be sufficient to address the demand for certified middle level educators.

The “phase in” proposed by the panel is reasonable. It will allow sufficient time for institutions of higher education to design and implement middle level training programs and for school districts to adjust to the production and employment of a highly qualified, specifically prepared middle grade workforce. The recommended “phase in” also will accommodate current teachers with the six semester hour endorsement and assure their continued employment.

Finally, staff believes the December 2000 panel recommendation concerning content preparation in two board subjects should be supported. At the urging of the Board, the group agreed in January 2001 to advocate in depth preparation in one discipline, although most members continued to strongly support two fields. The group notes that the National Middle School Association requires content training in two disciplines.

If preparation is demanded in two areas, some of the teaching content fields will have to be reviewed in order to focus on standards and indicators more directly
related to the middle grades and to the Illinois Learning Standards applicable to middle grade students. To some extent, this adjustment already has been achieved through the adoption of broad preparation areas in science and social science, and some earlier panels (e.g., mathematics, etc.) identified content and performance expectations specific to middle level instruction.

Staff endorses the recommendations of the Middle Level Educator Advisory Panel, including the development of legislation that would establish a middle level certificate and concomitantly reconfigure the current elementary and high school certificates.

Director of Special Education Advisory Panel

Current Requirements

Current requirements for securing an approval to be a director of special education are cumbersome, complex, and do not reflect the professional skills and judgments necessary for the position. A “state approved director of special education,” according to Administrative Rule, is a designation issued by the State Board of Education to a district or special education cooperative, not an individual.

The director must hold an Administrator of Special Education approval and be employed as the head of a district or cooperative. When that individual leaves the particular district or cooperative, the director’s approval does not move with him/her. As now structured, a special education director approval is bestowed upon a district or cooperative for a specific individual rather than an approval assigned to a person.

Qualifications for an Administrator of Special Education approval demand a valid Administrative Certificate, endorsed in any field, a master’s degree, and 30 semester hours of coursework distributed among five areas (e.g., survey of the exceptional child, methods in three areas of exceptionality, educational and psychological diagnosis of exceptional learners, etc.). Present requirements do not call for any prior training or experience in special education.

Panel Recommendations

- Develop a new endorsement for directors of special education on the Type 75 Administrative Certificate; and
- Require previous certification in one of the following:
  - Special education teaching (Type 10 or Type 03 and Type 09);
  - Speech language pathology (Type 10 or Type 73);
  - School psychology (Type 73); or
  - School social worker (Type 73)
Staff Comments

Although the panel’s recommendation does add a new endorsement to the Administrative Certificate, it is a reasonable means of assuring rigorous qualifications and preparation. The recommendation is predicated upon the core standards developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium and the Illinois School Leader Standards as well as the 1996 Standards for Special Education Administrators as proposed by the Illinois Special Education Leadership Academy.

Collectively, the proposed standards and indicators demand the facilitation of a vision for educational excellence, the promotion of a learning environment and instructional programming that support student achievement, an understanding of special education laws and regulations, the identification of students in need of services and the provision of those services, finance, management skills, and collaborative relationships with families, school districts, and the community.

Finally, because the recommendation requires the issuance of a certificate and qualifying endorsement to an individual, future directors will have the portability of a license that they may use in other districts and cooperatives. Holders will also be obliged to engage in professional development (e.g., Administrator’s Academy, etc.) thereby insuring ongoing knowledge and skills.

Staff supports the proposals of the Director of Special Education Advisory Panel.

School Counselor Advisory Panel

Current Requirements

Requirements for the present Guidance endorsement on the School Service Personnel (Type 73) certificate include possession or eligibility for possession of a teaching certificate and a master’s degree from a recognized teacher training institution with an approved program in guidance. Study qualifications demand the accumulation of 30 semester hours in various areas, such as human growth and development, social and cultural foundations, the “helping relationship,” appraisal of the individual, research, professional orientation, and more. Candidates must complete a 100 clock hour practicum and an internship of 600 clock hours, although 300 hours may be demanded if the student has two or more years of teaching experience.

Panel Recommendations

The School Counselor Advisory Panel indicates the standards and associated proposals are based on National Standards for School Counseling programs and the 2001 Standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. Members also consulted the Developmental Counseling
The panel has developed 23 standards across six thematic domains (e.g., comprehensive delivery system, planning, assessment, and evaluation, fieldwork, etc.). Members have issued recommendations on the certification process, practicum and internship experiences, advanced certification, and more. The recommendations propose:

- changing the name of the endorsement from Guidance to School Counselor;
- three options for earning the endorsement:
  - completion of an approved program based on the recommended standards and indicators and passage of the state test in counseling;
  - possession of a master’s degree and certification as a school counselor from another state, a minimum of two years of full-time experience as a school counselor in the other state, and passage of the Illinois Certification Testing System content examination in school counseling; or
  - completion of a master’s degree in counseling, submission of transcripts to an Illinois approved counseling program for analysis, the completion of any coursework identified as deficient, and training or career expertise in child and/or adolescent development, classroom management and instructional methods, school climate, and the needs of exceptional children.
- a practicum of at least 100 clock hours, with 40 in direct service with clients, and a 600 clock hour internship of which 240 hours must be in direct service with clients;
- a compensated internship under the close and competent supervision of a certified school counselor;
- a mandate funded by the State Board of Education that places school counselors in all elementary, middle, and secondary schools;
- a state requirement that all schools maintain a student to counselor ratio not to exceed 250 to 1, as opposed to the 800 to 1 now found in Illinois;
- advanced certification to those who have achieved national certification as a school counselor with compensation appropriate to the national distinction; and
- certificate renewal for school counselors based on continuing professional development activities with guidelines established by the State Board and national certification boards.


**Staff Comments**

The School Counselor Advisory Panel has issued a complex and comprehensive array of recommendations, but many carry a substantial political and/or financial burden. The various options to earning the School Counselor endorsement are creative and recognize the importance of experience in working with children in a school setting rather than a clinical environment. The panel chose not to abandon the requirement for possession or eligibility for possession of a teaching certificate. However, two options provided by the panel would allow Illinois certification without a teaching credential.

The proposed system for bringing clinical counselors into the profession through transcript evaluation, the removal of cited deficiencies, and training in specified school-related areas (e.g., growth and development, classroom management, etc.) has merit and could serve to reduce the shortage of school counselors. This option also would assure some level of competence in working with children in school settings.

The school counselors were insistent upon requiring a minimum number of clock hours for the practicum and internship experiences. Their rationale was that the national accrediting association, CACREP, has established these minima and for programs to earn accreditation they must meet the requirements.

Staff acknowledges the importance of national accreditation; however, the premise of a standards-based system resides with demonstrations of competence through performance not the accumulation of clock hours. Therefore, staff would suggest the semester hours and clock hours recommended by the panel should be observed by programs seeking accreditation or as guidelines in program development. However, they should not constitute state requirements for program approval or the issuance of endorsements. State approval should be contingent upon a curriculum clearly aligned with the standards as well as candidate performance that assures competence against the standards and indicators.

Under the School Code, school districts may seek reimbursements of up to $8000 for school psychologists performing internships. The panel’s recommendation to compensate school counselors “like other professional school service providers” does not apply to the statute that permits such reimbursements. It is also likely that districts will not be interested in hiring non-certified counselor interns as salaried employees. Moreover, this recommendation could severely limit the availability of internship sites. Staff does not support the panel’s proposal to compensate interns.

Similarly, a State Board funded mandate to place counselors in all elementary, middle, and high schools can not be endorsed by staff. While research and best practice clearly confirm the importance of counseling services for children in all
grades, the hiring, placement, and compensation of personnel is an issue of local control. All districts should be encouraged, but not required, to provide appropriate counseling services in all buildings.

A counselor to client ratio of 1 to 800 is untenable, and the State Board should support as best practice a reduction to 1 to 250, as recommended by the panel. However, districts should be allowed significant time to adopt this guideline, a task made difficult by the current shortage of counselors. According to the 2001 Supply and Demand report, projections suggest the state will need to produce approximately 600 counselors in the next three years. Colleges and universities have produced an average of 115 each year for the past five years. A dramatic reduction in the counselor to client ratio could triple the demand over that time.

Finally, the Board should consider a multi-tiered certification system for counselors and other school service personnel. In this system, continuing professional development could be demanded for certificate renewal. Moreover, advanced certification could be rewarded.

In sum, staff recommends support for:

- the proposed standards and indicators;
- the change in the endorsement title;
- the three options to earning an endorsement;
- the option of a compensated internship at district expense;
- the reduction in the counselor to client ratio as a best practice guideline; and
- the adoption of a multi-tiered certification system that requires renewal and the option of advanced licensure.

However, staff does not endorse:

- a required number of clock hours for practicum or internship; or
- any statewide mandate that imposes a potential financial burden on local school districts or the State Board.

School Psychologist Advisory Panel

Current Requirements

Minimum requirements for a School Psychology endorsement on the School Service Personnel Certificate currently include a master’s degree or doctorate in psychology or educational psychology with a minimum of 60 semester hours of coursework, field experiences, and internship. Other qualifications demand proficiency in the assessment and diagnosis of children, adherence to a code of ethics, and good character.
Panel Recommendations

The advisory panel members have issued recommendations based on standards developed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The report notes that each of the eight currently approved School Psychology programs in Illinois is approved by the NASP thereby making the adoption of the proposed standards less problematic.

The other recommendations of the panel include

- a reaffirmation of the duration and expectations of current practicum and internship experiences;
- the issuance of time limited provisional certificates for individuals undergoing “re-specialization” training to become a school psychologist;
- the adoption of continuing professional development requirements for retention of the school psychologist endorsement;
- the allowance of nationally certified school psychologists to practice in Illinois without additional qualifications;
- “automatic” Illinois certification for individuals licensed as school psychologists in other states;
- an increase in the state reimbursement rate for school psychology interns; and
- the provision of transcript reviews of out-of-state applicants by approved Illinois School Psychology programs, with a subsequent certification recommendation to the State Teacher Certification Board.

Staff Comments

Like the School Counselor Advisory Panel, the school psychologists want to reaffirm the semester hour and clock hour requirements of the current endorsement. Also, like the counselors, the school psychology panel members seek to maintain these quantifiable requirements because they are consistent with the national accrediting body, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The panel reasons that because all current school psychology programs are NASP accredited, it is in the best interests of the programs to meet the requirements established by NASP in order to retain their accreditation status.

As noted in the “Staff Comments” section under school counselor, the imposition of semester hour and clock hour requirements is not consistent with a standards-based system. Credit hours and the number of contact hours are “input” measures that do not assure competency. Simply accumulating semester hours and clock hours provides no substantive evidence that the candidate has the skills and abilities to perform the duties of a school psychologist.
Staff suggests accredited school psychology programs be allowed to employ the requirements of the accrediting association. However, to earn approval in Illinois, staff recommends the adoption of the standards and associated indicators proposed by the advisory panel. As with all programs, approval is contingent upon the demonstrated performance of the candidates.

The development of a provisional certificate to accommodate individuals pursuing “re-specialization” through an approved program seems to be a variant of the panel’s recommendation to increase the state reimbursement rate. However, under the provisional certificate proposal, the full salary of the “intern” would be paid by the district rather than the state.

Staff understands the state reimbursement rate for interns and others has not been reconsidered in several years (i.e., FY87). The advisory panel reports that the $8000 in state funds is not supplemented by school districts that “employ” interns to provide multiple professional responsibilities. When the State Board next examines the rate, staff encourages a consideration of its application to school psychology interns.

The recommendation to support transcript reviews performed by school psychology programs to determine possible preparation deficiencies in out-of-state candidates is presently allowable. In fact, the State Board has encouraged institutions to engage in this process. Candidates who satisfy any identified deficiencies can be recommended for certification by entitlement by the approved university program.

Allowing nationally certified school psychologists to practice in Illinois without any additional requirements should be examined carefully. Illinois at present does not have reciprocity agreements with other states for school service personnel; however, using nationally certified applicants as a test case would seem prudent and beneficial to the state.

Similarly, the “automatic” issuance of an Illinois School Service Personnel certificate to school psychologists licensed in another state should be studied, particularly if the other state requires training based on standards aligned with the National Association of School Psychologists. Passage of the Illinois Certification Testing System examination in school psychology should be demanded as well.

Finally, the panel’s recommendation for continuing professional development as a condition for the retention of the school psychology endorsement on the School Service Personnel certificate has merit. Legislation establishing a multi-tiered certification system for all school service personnel should be pursued.
Staff endorses the panel proposals on

- certificate portability;
- the role of approved programs in reviewing transcripts from out-of-state candidates;
- a statutory requirement for certificate renewal contingent upon continuing professional development; and
- the application of standards aligned with the National Association of School Psychologists for program approval.

Staff further recommends additional study of the proposals regarding provisional certification and the eligibility of school psychologists licensed in other states to practice in Illinois. Additional information on the practices of other states should be developed, particularly to assure appropriate reciprocity.

Finally, staff does not support

- an immediate increase in the state reimbursement for school psychology interns; and
- the use of semester hours and clock hours as determinants in program approval and program completion.

School Nurse Advisory Panel

Current Requirements

To be certified as a School Nurse, the candidate must possess a license as a registered professional nurse, have a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution, and have completed a minimum of 30 semester hours of study from an approved School Nurse program. A one-year internship and successful completion of the applicable state certification tests also are demanded.

Coursework is required in seven areas (e.g., theory and practice of nursing, human growth and development, educational psychology, introduction to sociology, etc.). Remaining preparation may be selected from as many as ten areas, some of which do not relate directly to school nursing practice (e.g., school administration, curriculum design, etc.).

Panel Recommendations

The School Nurse Advisory Panel consulted standards developed by the National Association of School Nurses, the Nursing and Advanced Practice Nursing Act of 2000, and a position paper on professional school nursing filed by the Illinois Association of School Nurses. The proposed standards represent
current research and best practice in the field and provide a framework redesigning approved programs.

The panel recommends 12 standards and accompanying indicators that

- replicate those for teachers (i.e., the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards); and
- underscore the instructional responsibilities of the school nurse, particularly in the delivery of wellness information to students.

**Staff Comments**

The school nurse standards are thorough and represent a comprehensive framework for evaluating candidates and developing approved programs. The panel’s proposal does not refer to the option school districts presently have to hire registered nurses instead of certified school nurses under specified conditions. However, the standards establish a clear delineation between the roles and responsibilities of certified school nurses and those who are registered nurses.

Staff supports the recommended standards for the School Nurse endorsement.

**School Social Worker Advisory Panel**

**Current Requirements**

In order to be qualified to serve in Illinois public schools as a school social worker, an individual must possess a Master’s degree in Social Work and complete a 55-semester-hour approved program. The program must be recognized by the State Board of Education and accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Study must be completed in human behavior, social welfare policy, social work theory, methods, and practice, research methodology, characteristics of exceptional children, and social work practice in the schools. The supervised field experience must total at least 400 clock hours, and an internship of a minimum of 600 contact hours in a school setting is demanded.

**Panel Recommendations**

The School Social Worker Advisory Panel has developed proposed standards based on those promulgated by the CSWE and the Standards for School Social Work Services as presented by the National Association of Social Workers. The recommendations reinforce the role of the school social worker as a member of a team, working with teachers, administrators, other school service personnel (e.g., counselors, psychologists, etc.), and service providers outside the school. The suggested standards include
alignment with the core standards for teachers (i.e., the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards);
acknowledgement of the code of professional ethics adopted by the National Association of Social Workers; and
knowledge and performance expectations on content, service delivery, planning, assessment, consultation and collaboration, advocacy and facilitation, the school as a learning community, diversity, and professional development.

**Staff Comments**

The recommended school social work standards will not adversely impact professional shortages because they are very similar to national standards set by the Council on Social Work Education. Current college and university programs in Illinois must meet CSWE requirements. The proposed standards provide a framework for the evaluation of candidate competence in relation to knowledge and performance.

The reference to semester hour and clock hour requirements, like those from the school counselors and school psychologists, remains in the panel’s recommendation because these requirements are consistent with the national accrediting body. However, requirements of semester or clock hours are “input” measures and contradict the fundamental basis of a standards-based certification system. Staff suggests that accredited school social work programs be allowed to use semester/clock hours for program development and to meet national accreditation requirements, but that the accumulation of “hours” not be employed to constitute state program approval.

**Implications for Policy, Budget, Legislative Action, and Communications**

**Policy**

The recommendations issued by the six advisory panels complete the standards and indicators for each of the major teaching (i.e., early childhood, elementary, secondary, and special [K-12]), administrative, and school service personnel certificates. Policy issues for Board consideration include

- a new endorsement on the Administrative Certificate for Directors of Special Education;
- a new certificate for middle level education and the concomitant adjustment of the grade ranges for the elementary and secondary certificates;
- the development of a multi-tiered certification system for school service personnel and the associated requirements for continuing professional development and certificate renewal; and
the level of reciprocity recognized for out-of-state school service personnel applicants.

Certificate Renewal

Each panel member was a strong advocate for continuing professional development. Independent of the design of the standards and indicators, the conveners of the panels began meeting to outline professional renewal expectations in each of the school service personnel fields.

A few common themes emerged:

- certificate renewal requirements should reflect the expectations of the various national associations;
- multiple levels of certificates, similar to those developed for teachers, represent a reasonable and appropriate means of assuring the continued vitality of the educator and the profession; and
- extraordinary skills should be recognized with an advanced certificate and appropriate compensation.

The panel conveners should be encouraged to conclude their discussions on this issue and to prepare a report for Board consideration and action.

Reciprocity

The school counselor and school psychologist panels have developed recommendations that would facilitate the credentialing of individuals from other states. Each of these school service personnel fields is experiencing critical shortages, and the number of approved programs in the state producing candidates is not expanding. Moreover, most programs are now constrained by limited resources thereby frustrating their ability to prepare more candidates.

With the high demand for counselors and school psychologists, panel members are concerned that individuals not trained in school settings and working with children will be allowed to serve in buildings in place of certified personnel. Not long ago, the General Assembly developed legislation that allows registered nurses to serve in place of certified school nurses under specific conditions. Some fear that non-certified counselors and psychologists might be allowed to fill a similar role.

In response, the panels have issued proposals that would allow appropriately certified individuals from other states to earn certification in Illinois without completing the entirety of an approved program. The members also contend that the standards they have recommended mirror national standards used for certification in other states. For instance, the school psychologists learned that 46 states use standards aligned with the National Association of School
Psychologists, and the school counselors reported that Counseling and Counseling Related Educational Program (CACREP) standards are common in other states. This information seems to form a sound basis for a policy that provides true reciprocity.

**Legislative Action**

Pending Board authorization, legislation would be required to develop the middle level certificate and to institute a multi-tiered certification system for school service personnel. Middle grade legislation also must include a redefining of the grade ranges of the elementary and high school certificates. “Grandfathering” provisions for individuals with current middle grade endorsements should be specified.

The development of initial, continuing, and advanced certificates for school service personnel should incorporate requirements for the renewal of the continuing license. Recognition of advanced certification should be codified as well.

Other recommendations issued by the panels can be addressed through rules. The current statute on the Administrative Certificate (105 ILCS 5/21-7.1) gives the State Board, in consultation with the State Teacher Certificate Board, the authority to develop the director of special education endorsement and to set standards for it.

**Budget**

Providing support to teacher training institutions in their transition to the standards through program redesign should not generate a significant financial outlay, although available human resources will be stretched. Few colleges and universities now offer training in most of the school service personnel fields; therefore, technical assistance will be focused. Staff anticipates approximately eight to ten institutions will choose to develop programming for the director of special education endorsement.

Assistance to institutions seeking to develop middle level certification programs will require more intensity. Only a few middle grade programs now exist, and some of these will need to be redesigned to meet the standards. Colleges and universities seeking to develop “ground up” offerings will require dedicated support from staff.

**Communications**

As has been mentioned in previous reports on a standards-led system, an effective and comprehensive communication strategy needs to be designed. The development of multiple communication approaches (e.g., print, electronic, etc.)
is needed to assure frequent and accurate information for higher education institutions, partner agencies (i.e., Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board), public school practitioners, citizens, and the media.

The design and implementation of proactive communication models are necessary to effect a smooth transition to the new requirements and to generate support for a more rigorous preparation model. The message must aggressively articulate the rationale for the standards-based model, detail implementation timelines, and discuss implications of the change. School districts must be advised of reforms that are presented as guidelines versus those that are mandated.

**Superintendent’s Recommendations**

The Board should

- adopt the certificate changes proposed by the panels and endorsed by staff; and
- authorize staff to commence rule writing and to develop legislative language necessary to effect the new standards and structure.

**Next Steps**

Under the direction of the State Board, staff will begin:

- to develop legislative language establishing a middle level certificate and refining the grade ranges of the elementary and secondary certificates; and
- to develop legislative language that creates a multi-tiered certification structure for school service personnel and to requires continuing professional development for renewal.