TO: Illinois State Board of Education

FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
       Lee Patton, Interim Director, Teaching and Leadership

Agenda Topic: Action Item: Visiting International Teacher Certificate

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Purpose of Agenda Item

- To inform Board members about issues related to visiting international teachers and the NCLB requirements for being “highly qualified.”
- To consider the proposed Visiting International Teacher Certificate.

Expected Outcome of Agenda Item

- Final Board action to establish a Visiting International Teacher Certificate.

Background Information

Teachers from other nations are often employed in Illinois on an exchange or visiting teacher program. Chicago has made the most extensive use of these international visiting teachers, but other districts have also recruited teachers from countries throughout the world.

The State Board now issues certificates to teachers educated in other nations based on a review of their transcripts by one of five private evaluation services. These evaluation services must provide a detailed evaluation of the candidate’s educational background, listing each course completed with its semester hours and a statement of degree equivalence. By state law, a candidate must have the equivalent of a United States bachelor’s degree and 120 semester hours of credit for any of the standard certificates.

Based on the evaluation provided by the evaluation service and a review of other credentials, such as citizenship status, the State Board, has issued one of three types of certificates.
• If the candidate meets Illinois requirements and passes the appropriate tests (including the Basic Skills and content knowledge tests, the State Board will issue a full certificate.
• If the candidate does not meet the full requirements, the State Board will issue a Provisional Certificate that is effective for a maximum of two fiscal years. However, the candidate must pass the necessary tests within 9 months.
• If the candidate wishes to teach bilingual education, he or she may be given a Transitional Bilingual Certificate (Type 29) valid for six years, with the option for renewal for an additional two years. Holders of these certificates are expected to participate in continuing education that will qualify them for full certification in a regular or bilingual setting.

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige recently raised the issue of whether certificates issued to teachers educated in other countries, particularly those who are visiting international teachers, can be considered “highly qualified” under the provisions of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has been raised with states by. Secretary Paige wrote in a March 24, 2003 letter:

“The Department has learned of some concern that the “highly qualified” teacher requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), seem to limit participation in international teacher exchange programs. We at the Department value these programs and understand how strongly they support and complement the four priorities I announced during International Education Week.”

“…States whose local educational agencies (LEAs) employ visiting international teachers may consider establishing, for these individuals, a separate category of full certification that would differ from emergency or provisional certification in that the State would not be waiving any training, experiential, or other requirements, but would adapt those requirements to fit the circumstances applicable to foreign teachers.”

Mr. Paige also indicated that:

“Consistent with State procedures, a State may adopt these types of certification requirements…, provided that the State is satisfied that the international teachers that would be certified are as qualified to teach in their subjects as other qualified teachers.”

Based on this direction from the federal government, State Board staff have held extensive discussions with representatives of the Chicago school district and representatives of foreign consulates. Those discussions led to development of the proposal for a new Visiting International Teacher Certificate, as described in the attachment.
The State Teacher Certification Board will discuss this issue during its May 9, 2003 meeting and provide a recommendation to the State Board

**Analysis and Policy Implications**

The State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Teacher Certification Board, has the power and authority to establish standards for the issuance of new types of certificates (Section 5/21-0.01(4).

The proposed Visiting International Teacher Certificate would be valid for three years and would be non-renewable. Standards for the certificate will require that the candidate meets the following qualifications:

- Hold the equivalent of a United States bachelor’s degree;
- Have an acceptable level of English language proficiency
- Have had teacher preparation equivalent to the level of the desired certificate
- Have appropriate subject matter competence.

The procedures for establishing that the candidate meets these requirements depend on actions by the employing district or its representative. This approach allows such districts to determine whether a candidate can meet Illinois requirements before the individual comes to Illinois (this has been a problem for about 10% of the candidates) and it avoids the necessity for State Board staff or its testing company to conduct testing on-site in the foreign country.

Because of the importance of these local district actions, the chief administrator will be required to submit a signed assurance that the procedures are being carried out in compliance with SBE guidance. However, the final decision regarding the issuance of this certificate will be by the State Board of Education, based on the totality of information provided for its review.

The proposed certificate is designed for international teachers who come to the United States in response to a local district recruitment plan. Certification of teacher candidates who have been educated in other countries but who are not part of a formal recruitment program will continue to be based on the procedures outlined above.

**Superintendent Recommendation**

- The State Board should review the background and issues related to the proposed Visiting International Certificate.
- The State Board should consider the conclusions and recommendations of the State Teacher Certification Board; and
• The Board should adopt a Visiting International Certificate and appropriate standards.
• An annual analysis of data and procedures related to the Visiting International Certificate should be conducted to determine its effectiveness in meeting district needs and state standards for assuring “high quality” teachers.

Next Steps

• Based on State Board action, the staff will develop procedures and forms necessary for the implementation of this plan.
• State Board staff will work with the Chicago Public Schools and other local school districts to implement the plan.
• The new certificate will be incorporated into the Illinois criteria for meeting the federal requirements for a “highly qualified” teacher.
Proposal for Visiting International Teacher Certificate

Introduction

Foreign teachers participating both in teacher exchange programs and in other programs to bring foreign teachers to Illinois for three years or less are not considered to be highly qualified under current ISBE certification practices. Many of these teachers are teaching in Chicago in subject areas where there is a shortage of highly qualified teachers. Others are employed in teacher exchange programs across the state, but the Board does not currently regulate utilization of exchange teachers.

The state has multiple interests in such persons as classroom teachers in the public schools.

- Although there is no specific state requirement for English proficiency for regular classroom teachers, we need to ensure they have the necessary comprehension of and speaking ability in English.
- We need to know they have sufficient knowledge in their subjects to meet state and federal requirements.
- We need to know they have completed a teacher preparation program for the grade level to which they will be assigned that is comparable to one received in the United States.

Most of the international visiting teachers have passed an examination in their home countries that leads to a diploma that serves both as a degree and a teaching credential. The degree programs for such individuals typically require a great deal of the students’ careers be spent concentrating on their major areas. They therefore have more than met the requirement of No Child Left Behind for a major area of concentration in the subjects they are teaching.

Proposal

To provide school districts with assurance their teachers are highly qualified by NCLB standards, Illinois should create a Visiting International Teacher certificate that is valid for no more than three years.

During this time, each teacher will be given support by the school district in dealing with differences in the educational practices of Illinois and their home countries and assistance in improving their teaching skills. If the certificate holder so desires, he or she could use the three year validity period for this certificate to move to full certification. Moving to full certification would require the passing of all examinations and requirements currently in place.
Authority for Visiting International Teacher Certificate

The authority to create the proposed certificate derives from the School Code in 105 ILCS 5/21-0.01 (4) which gives the State Board of Education, in consultation with the State Teacher Certification Board, authority to “establish standards for the issuance of new types of certificates.” The State Board has the additional authority to “promulgate and enforce” reasonable rules to permit teacher exchange programs in 5/21-1.

Certificate Requirements

1. **Ensuring English Language Proficiency**

Although there is no state requirement for English language proficiency for other than bilingual teachers, it is reasonable to assume that all school districts who wish to employ persons teaching in programs other than bilingual programs would seek some assurance of their language proficiency. This should therefore be a baseline requirement for the certificate.

Requiring foreign teachers to come to the United States before their English abilities are identified as acceptable would impose hardship and uncertainty on the teachers. Therefore, a process should be in place to assess their language skills in their own countries and provide immediate determination of their English language skills. Since it is not practical to administer the current proficiency test used by the State Board for transitional bilingual certification (i.e., on-site, real time scoring is not possible), it is proposed that the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and the English language oral proficiency examination utilizing the ACTFL scoring standards be accepted for this purpose.

Many of the employees of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have already been trained in such assessments and could be sent to the foreign test site to administer and score the tests while the candidates wait. CPS could agree to administer such tests for other school districts interested in participating in such programs and in teacher exchange programs, or these districts might wish to do their own recruiting and English-language testing of potential visiting international teachers.

2. **Ensuring Subject Matter Knowledge**

When foreign teacher preparation programs are converted to semester credits, they generally show a concentration in the subject area equal to or exceeding a major in the United States. This would meet the NCLB requirement for subject area competence.
In addition, most foreign countries require either a comprehensive examination at
the end of the student’s career or multiple examinations completed at various
stages of the student’s career. These examinations should be accepted as
meeting federal and state requirements for subject area competencies during the
validity period of the certificate.

An exception to this use of the foreign country’s program/examinations for
meeting the “highly qualified” definition would be for a visiting international
teacher whose assignment is to teach the language and culture of his or her
country or another language in which he or she is proficient. These individuals
typically have completed a teacher preparation program, often in English-as-a-
Second-Language, so they are familiar with the methodologies for teaching
language. If they were not also trained as teachers of the language of the
assignment (e.g., Spanish, Italian), they must pass the Content-Area Test for the
language within nine months of receiving the Visiting International Teacher
Certificate. (This parallels the requirements for out-of-state teachers to receive a
certificate in Illinois.)

3. Ensuring Equivalent Teacher Preparation

To ensure that foreign teachers have undergone preparation for teaching at a
grade level equivalent to the grade level of employment in Illinois, the credentials
of each candidate who submits an application for a Visiting International Teacher
Certificate would be reviewed on-site by representatives of the employing district.
Utilizing reports of foreign education systems furnished by the National
Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA) and the American Association of
Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), these individuals
would determine whether the teacher has been prepared at the level for which
certification will be sought in Illinois.

The representatives of participating districts will then furnish a copy of a report
describing the teacher education system of the teacher’s country with the
teacher’s application for the certificate, as well as the results of the English
proficiency examination and transcript, diploma and examination copies for each
student. The submitted materials must include an English translation of each
document in a foreign language. (This has been a long-standing requirement for
review of foreign teacher candidate credentials.)

4. Assurances from Participating School Districts

The CEO of Chicago Public Schools and the superintendents of other
participating districts will be required to provide a signed assurance that all the
procedures will be followed as described and that trained staff of the districts will
administer the examinations, provide effective evaluation of degree and grade
level preparation equivalence as indicated, and give appropriate counseling and guidance of staff employed with these certificates.

**Visiting International Teacher Certificate - Summary of Proposed Certificate Standards**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Assured By</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Validity</td>
<td>Valid for 3 Years – non-renewable</td>
<td>Issuance date on certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English-language proficiency</td>
<td>Candidate meets state standard for English-language proficiency</td>
<td>Trained district representatives administer the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and the English language oral proficiency examination using the ACTFL scoring standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring subject matter knowledge</td>
<td>Candidate demonstrates subject-matter knowledge at level expected for Illinois teachers</td>
<td>Review of credentials by local district team to determine that the candidate has completed a program that, when converted to semester hours, shows a concentration exceeding a major in the U.S. OR has passed a comprehensive examination or multiple examinations in the subject area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring subject matter competence</td>
<td>To teach a foreign language, the candidate demonstrates subject area knowledge within 9 months of certification</td>
<td>Candidates must pass the State of Illinois subject-area test for each language to be taught by the Visiting International Teacher – can be done after candidate has been employed and come to Illinois.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring equivalent teacher preparation</td>
<td>Candidate has completed teacher preparation program appropriate for level of teaching</td>
<td>On-site review of teacher credentials based on reports of foreign education systems by various official groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate Issued</td>
<td>Candidate meets all requirements</td>
<td>SBE verification through review of all supporting documentation, including an English language translation of foreign language documents</td>
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