TO: Illinois State Board of Education
FROM: Robert E. Schiller, Superintendent
        Lee Patton, Interim Director
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Agenda Topic: Streamlining the Teacher Certificate Renewal System

Materials: Issues Related to the Teacher Certificate Renewal System

Potential Strategies for Streamlining and Improving the Teacher Certificate Renewal System

Staff Contact(s): Lee Patton

Purpose of Agenda Item

• To present the potential strategies for streamlining the teacher certificate renewal system for Board Committee discussion.

Expected Outcomes of Agenda Item

• To secure Committee reaction to the potential strategies for streamlining the teacher certificate renewal system.

Background Information

The attached materials have been developed in response to a request from the State Teacher Certification Board (STCB).

Earlier this fall, when the STCB engaged in a meta-review of activities to evaluate this system, it became apparent that the system has many problems which require immediate policy attention. The Certification Board therefore asked staff to identify the issues that are of concern, identify potential solutions to these concerns, and to identify whether legislation would be needed to make such changes, or whether they could be accomplished by only making changes in regulations and/or procedures.

The list of issues/concerns about the teacher certificate renewal system was drawn from the various evaluation reports, as well as conversations with Certification Board members, teachers, LPDC members, and representatives of the teacher associations. It is organized in four sections: teacher concerns, LPDC concerns, professional development activities, and system concerns.
The list is not all-inclusive and it is understood that there will not be agreement about whether the problems are accurately portrayed – or in fact, whether any given concern truly constitutes a problem. This document is intended only as a springboard for considering changes to the certificate renewal system.

The potential strategies for streamlining the certificate renewal system have been chosen because they maintain the state’s commitment to continuing professional development while responding to many of the issues outlined in the separate document. The strategies focus on key changes that, if put in place, would eliminate the need to address specific issues. All of these big-picture strategies would require legislative action.

Please note that the strategies are not a recommendation from State Board staff. They should be regarded only as a stimulus to discussion and the development of specific proposal.

Certification Board Response

These documents were discussed with the State Teacher Certification Board (STCB) on November 7, 2003. The STCB responded very positively to the concepts that respected the teacher as a professional, and the members generally agreed with the potential strategies. This included the elimination of the required submission of a plan and related activities and the changes related to certificate renewal purposes.

However, the Certification Board indicated that the chart did not include an important issues -- the lack of support for and engagement in the certificate renewal process by local administrators.

Concerns regarding the potential strategies focused on the following:

#4 – Certification Board members agreed that the periodic submission of claims for credit should be eliminated; however, they wanted to assure that teachers could consult with the LPDC and/or seek response on an ongoing basis so they would be certain that their activities could be counted.

#8 – Certification Board members understood the rationale for this idea, but were concerned about potential conflicts between LPDCs and any other person who might be involved in the process. They asked that further work be done to improve this strategy.

#10 – This issue prompted a lively discussion about the current system, what is needed and how to effectively screen out the charlatans. Further work is needed to address a wide variety of concerns about provider approval and review of professional development offerings.

#13 – This potential strategy was included to address a variety of issues related to the school district/administrator/LPDC relationships. However, it does not yet have substance and the STCB asked for specific strategies.
Superintendent’s Recommendation

The Committee should discuss this document and respond to staff about the potential strategies and the concerns raised by the Certification Board.

Next Steps

Staff will develop a formal, incorporating reaction from the State Board, the State Teacher Certification Board and others, for presentation in December. It is assumed that the resulting policy decisions will be used to develop legislation for consideration during the spring 2004 session of the General Assembly.