

**ILLINOIS FRAMEWORK FOR RESTRUCTURING THE
RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION, LICENSURE AND CONTINUING
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS**

**Proposed to the
Illinois State Board of Education
October, 1996**

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THE PROBLEM

Good teachers are the most important element of successful learning and capable teachers should be a child's birthright.

These conclusions from the new report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future reflect a truth which parents have always known, but it is a truth which is especially important at this critical juncture in public education.

As the 21st century approaches, the public is demanding significant improvements in the quality and character of student learning. At the same time, schools are facing unprecedented challenges, including the breakdown of family and community structures, increasing levels of violent behavior among young people, the rapid creation of new knowledge, and advances in technology which can literally transform traditional teaching and learning processes. **The most critical variable in determining whether the schools will be able to succeed in meeting these demands and challenges will be the competencies and commitments of their teachers.**

The current system for preparing, certifying and continuously improving the quality of Illinois teachers was established in the first half of this century. It is a system which has served the State reasonably well for most of this time, and it must be stressed that Illinois has thousands upon thousands of excellent teachers whose knowledge and skills reflect positively on their preparation, their personal competencies and commitments, and the support of their school districts. However, since the 1983 *Nation at Risk* report, serious questions have been raised about whether the current system of teacher preparation and continuing professional development is adequate for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

In January 1995, the Joint Education Committee of the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education described the current teacher preparation system in Illinois as complex and inconsistent, marked by curriculum requirements that are not aligned with the knowledge and skills needed by classroom teachers. The Committee's statement also asserted that current teacher preparation program approval criteria and processes reduce program coherence and effectiveness; that continuing professional development is neither coordinated nor integrated with the state's education goals; and that Illinois is one of the few states requiring neither additional education nor teaching experience for certificate renewal. School teachers, like other professionals, must continue to learn throughout their careers to keep current with new knowledge and new technological developments, yet there are no State incentives to do so.

These criticisms of current practice cannot be significantly addressed through minor adjustments. In Illinois, as in the nation, if we are to assure the presence of excellent teachers for all children, we need a *comprehensive restructuring* of the State's system for teacher preparation, certification and continuing professional development.

THE NEW DIRECTIONS

In planning for changes to the State's system for professional development and licensure of teachers, it will not be enough to simply address the criticisms of the past, such as those identified by the Joint Education Committee and many others. Although those criticisms must be considered, the plan must also factor in the understandings which have been gained in recent years about learning in general and the professional development of teachers in particular. In addition, the plan must consider those trends in our society, and in the teaching profession, which can help us anticipate the needs of the future.

Among the variables which must define the new direction for professional development and licensure of teachers are the following:

- What teachers know and are able to do is the most important determinant of what students learn. Therefore, there must be a direct link between our expectations and standards for student learning and our expectations and standards for teachers.
- The professional development of teachers must reflect and be linked to State and local priorities for students and schools, including the education of all students within a framework of common learning standards, accountability for learning results, development of the school as a learning community, and the integration of technology into the teaching and learning process.
- There is no single best way to prepare and develop competent, caring and qualified teachers. On the other hand, there is a circumstance in which professional development can best occur - the local school site and work-sites (beyond the classroom) where these students may eventually enter.
- The professional development of competent, caring and qualified teachers is a career-long process. Initial preparation is not sufficient to meet the ever-changing needs of individuals, communities, the state and the nation.
- Beginning teachers (which include those in preparation programs and those who are in the first two-three years of their teaching careers) must have the support and guidance of carefully selected mentors, whose expertise will assure that the beginning teachers' professional growth is based on reflection and best practices.

There are three other considerations which must also shape the new direction for professional development and licensure of teachers in Illinois.

The first centers on the fact that assuring the availability of excellent teachers for all students is not possible if we do not begin to break some traditional paradigms.

- * We need a process for recruiting teacher candidates which reflects the importance of the teaching profession to the future of our society. That process must be aggressive, well-coordinated and highly creative.

- * We need professional development and licensing options which reflect the fact that individuals increasingly have multiple careers within their lifetimes. That system must encourage and support nontraditional candidates to meet the standards for teachers and to enter the teaching profession.
- * We need meaningful strategies to retain those good teachers who are now leaving the profession in frustration and/or in search of better opportunities.

The second consideration centers on the difficulty and complexity of the task before us. Effective recruitment, preparation and continuing professional development of teachers cannot occur through isolated initiatives. They require planned, actively promoted and adequately supported partnerships between the State and its educational institutions, between schools/school districts, Regional Offices of Education and colleges/universities, between individual teachers and their schools, between schools and their communities, and between the educational community and the business community. The creation of such partnerships must be a priority during the proposed restructuring activities.

Finally, the professional development of Illinois teachers must reflect the best thinking of the nation's educators. Therefore, restructuring of the Illinois system of professional development should consider the directions established by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future and by national associations such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

THE FRAMEWORK

The framework presented in the following pages describes the basic components for comprehensively restructuring the state's system for recruiting, preparing, licensing and continuously developing the professional expertise of school teachers. This framework has been developed within the context of the new directions described above and represents the study and recommendations of many groups, including the following:

Council of Chief State School Officers,
 State Board of Education Professional Development Team,
 Joint Education Committee of the State Board of Education, and
 the Board of Higher Education,
 Joint Task Force of the University of Illinois at Chicago and
 the State Board of Education,
 State Board of Education Project Team on Professional Development,
 National Commission on Teaching and America's Future,
 National Board of Professional Teaching Standards,
 Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium,
 National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and
 National Staff Development Council.

The framework addresses eight areas of Council of Chief State School Officers priority:

Professional Standards	New Teacher Induction Program
Teacher Preparation Programs	Continuing Professional Development
Assessment	School Cultures
State Licensure System	Recruitment

Within these areas, there is admittedly much emphasis on regulation. Assuring that teachers are adequately prepared for their responsibilities to children is the State's responsibility to its citizens, and regulation provides strong leverage for change. However, regulation alone will not be sufficient to improve the professional development of teachers. In particular, the cultures of our schools need to be changed so that they provide an environment in which teacher learning is valued as highly as student learning.

This framework provides a context for change, but it deliberately does not provide the specifics of the new system. Those details must be worked out through much more discussion among educators and other interested parties.

Therefore, implementation of the framework should be accomplished within the context of a five-year plan. That plan should be developed through the Joint Education Committee and its member boards, with involvement of the Illinois Policy Group for the Commission on Teaching for America's Future Project, the educational community and other interested parties. Throughout the implementation period, the plan should recognize the dynamic environment of the late 20th century and respond to changing conditions and circumstances.

CAVEATS

The proposed restructuring of the State's system for professional development of teachers is intended to assure a high level of competency and commitment among all teachers. Implementation planning should observe the following caveats.

- * Individuals currently enrolled in a teacher preparation program should not be expected to meet new requirements.
- * Individuals now licensed (certified) as teachers in Illinois should be given a reasonable amount of time to meet new requirements for continued licensure.
- * Licensure/certification decisions should be separate from local school district decisions regarding employment issues such as hiring, granting of tenure, compensation and dismissal.

FRAMEWORK GOAL

All Illinois public school students will have access to schools and classrooms with highly qualified and effective professionals who ensure that students achieve high levels of learning.

FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS

I. Professional Standards

What is the issue?

Standards establish a level of expectation and provide a common reference point for determining whether those expectations have been met. Illinois has no standards which describe what we expect teachers to know and be able to do, except as may be inferred from the content of required preparation courses and the assessments of basic skills and subject matter expertise.

What needs to be changed?

- The State of Illinois, through the State Board of Education, should adopt professional standards for teachers which clearly indicate what teachers are expected to know and be able to do. These standards should include the standards which have been developed by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium and the State Board of Education Strategic Agenda Team on Professional Development (see Exhibits I and II in the Appendix).
- These professional teacher standards should be the foundation on which the State bases its system for the preparation, licensure and continuing professional development of teachers.
- The role and responsibilities of the current State Teacher Certification Board should be reconceptualized to include the development of recommendations for professional standards for teachers.
- The redefined Teacher Certification Board should also be responsible for developing recommendations for related standards, including standards for approval of teacher preparation programs, induction programs, continuing professional development, and licensure.

Discussion/Implementation Note

The standards for Illinois teachers must reflect the standards which are adopted for Illinois students. This will include both the academic and occupational standards now under development.

The reconceptualized Teacher Certification Board should continue to function in collaboration with the State Board of Education, which has - and should continue to have - sole responsibility for the Licensure of teachers. Establishing an autonomous agency

would serve no compelling need, but it would fragment the system and create an additional state-level bureaucracy.

Developing a specific plan for the reconceptualization of the State Teacher Certification Board should include a review of the traditional responsibilities of that Board, an evaluation of their relevance to the restructured system of professional development, and an assessment of the practices through which these responsibilities have been carried out. The review should also include an examination of the teacher standards boards which have been established in other states.

II. Teacher Preparation Programs

What is the issue?

Teacher preparation programs should reflect the highest professional standards and provide a balance between the development of (1) expertise in academic/content areas, (2) technological skills for supporting student learning and professional development in the information age (3) understanding of applications to the world of work (4) understanding of learning theories and developmental stages, and (5) pedagogical skills as an instructor and coach. However, current teacher preparation programs are driven by rules and approval procedures which limit their creativity and effectiveness in meeting these goals.

There is particular concern about the effectiveness of clinical or practicum programs, which do not consistently provide teacher candidates with meaningful clinical experiences.

What should be changed?

- The current course-based requirements for the design of teacher preparation programs should be eliminated. Instead, teacher preparation institutions should be given flexibility in designing preparation programs which assure that their graduates meet professional teacher standards and the standards for licensure.
- During the redesign of teacher preparation programs, priority attention should be given to the development of comprehensive clinical experiences which effectively link theory and practice and is reflective of settings their students may eventually enter in the work world. Critical elements of this clinical experience should include (1) early opportunities for the prospective teacher to learn whether he or she is temperamentally suited for teaching; (2) a clinical teaching experience which extends throughout a school year; and (3) mentoring by an experienced teacher whose classroom expertise is enhanced by special training and support for the mentoring role. The proposed changes to clinical experience should be integrated into the time frame of current preparation programs (i.e., the four-year undergraduate model and the one- or two-year graduate model).

- Teacher preparation institutions should establish formal partnerships with regional offices of education and local school districts. These partnerships should support the professional development of teachers through creative strategies which include, but are not limited to, professional development schools.
- Teacher preparation programs should develop high-quality alternative pathways which will allow individuals in nontraditional circumstances (retirees, career changers) to meet professional teacher standards adopted by the state. These pathways should acknowledge the prospective teacher's relevant knowledge and prior experience.
- State approval of teacher preparation programs should be aligned with standards developed by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (see Exhibit III in the Appendix). However, institutions do not need to become members of that organization.

Discussion/Implementation Note

Use of the NCATE standards and procedures for the approval of teacher preparation programs in Illinois has been recommended by the State Teacher Certification Board.

III. Assessment

What is the issue?

State assessment is a condition for licensure in Illinois, with prospective teachers required to pass a test of basic skills and content knowledge. There is no required assessment of the individual's teaching performance.

What should be changed?

- The current State test of basic skills should be administered prior to admission to a teacher preparation program, and the results should be used to develop remedial strategies for candidates who may need such assistance.
- The current State assessments of teacher knowledge in subject or content areas should be reviewed and revised as necessary to align with the new State teacher licensure standards in both rigor and focus.
- A State assessment of teaching performance should be developed, and successful performance on that assessment should be a condition for initial licensure.

Discussion/Implementation Note

Additional discussion will be required regarding the standards and procedures for the proposed teaching performance assessment; however, the starting point for those

discussions should be the work of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). Discussion will also be needed regarding the agent for administration of the performance assessment, which could be accomplished through teacher preparation institutions or a completely different system.

IV. State Licensure/Certification System

What is the issue?

The State is responsible for licensing teachers to practice their profession in Illinois, just as it is responsible for licensing other such other professionals as physicians, dentists, engineers and architects. This is a gate-keeping responsibility and serves the interests of both the public and the profession. However, the current system of licensing teachers in Illinois is a hodgepodge of certificates and endorsements which do not adequately assure that all teachers are appropriately qualified for their teaching responsibilities.

What should be charged?

- The current certification structure should be replaced with a three-tiered system which reflects stages in the professional development of teachers and promotes their continuing growth as educators – i.e., an Initial License, a Standard License and an Advanced License:

- 1) The "Initial License" should be issued to a beginning teacher based on evidence that he or she meets the basic professional teacher standards.

⇒ Criteria for the Initial License should include the following:

Acquisition of the required competencies and skills, as demonstrated through one of the following:

- * completion of an approved teacher preparation program in Illinois;
- * licensure by a state with which Illinois has a reciprocal teacher licensing agreement; or
- * a to-be-defined process for evaluating the individual's professional preparation (e.g, a revised transcript/experience evaluation)

PLUS

Successful performance on a State assessment of the prospective teacher's:

- * mastery of subject content
- * knowledge and skills essential to the profession of teaching
- * application of those skills and content in the classroom

⇒ The Initial License should qualify recipients to teach in Illinois schools in the designated subject areas and grade levels while participating in a new-teacher induction program.

- 2) The "Standard License" should replace the Initial Teacher License after the recipient has completed a two-three year new-teacher induction program.
 - ⇒ The Standard License should be valid for five years, and renewable upon evidence of meeting the requirements for continued professional development.
 - ⇒ The Standard License, appropriately renewed and endorsed, should qualify recipients to teach in Illinois schools in the designated subject areas and grade levels throughout his/her career.

 - 3) The "Advanced Certificate" should be available to Standard Teacher License holders who choose to demonstrate their teaching expertise through the process developed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, or a similar Illinois process to be created as needed.
 - ⇒ The Advanced Certificate should be optional, valid for seven years, and subject to renewal upon evidence of continuing professional development.
 - ⇒ The Advanced Certificate should serve as a public recognition of teaching excellence and give recipients priority, but not exclusive access to new leadership roles within teaching.
- Standards for licensure should be developed which reflect what teachers need to know and be able to do at various grade levels and in specific subject or teaching areas. The current grade level/subject area classification of Illinois certificates should then be revised within the context of these standards.
 - Current procedures which have been created to respond to special circumstances or needs - i.e., the Substitute, Provisional, Temporary and Emergency certificates - should be reviewed and revised within the context of the State's responsibility to assure appropriately qualified teachers for all students.
 - The licensure of other professionals to be employed by local school districts (including administrators, librarians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, occupational and physical therapists, social workers and speech pathologists) should be also reviewed and revised within the context of the State's responsibility to assure appropriately qualified school staff.

Discussion/Implementation Note

The creation of licensure standards and a grade level/subject area classification system which is aligned with those standards will require discussion among many people. The classification system used by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards should be used as the starting point for discussion of this revision of certificate classifications; however, since there are evident problems with some aspects of that classification system (e.g., one endorsement for special needs), the final product of these

discussions will undoubtedly be different from both this model and the current Illinois system.

Once a new classification system has been established, a process must be developed which provides for the transfer of existing certificates into the new system. This process should be minimally disruptive and require no cost to the teachers whose certificates are being transferred.

The issue of requirements for substitutes (as well as for other teachers who fill special needs) pits the reality of school-level difficulties in staffing against the need to assure the quality of teachers for all students. Several proposed alternatives to current practice suggest that further discussion may identify solutions to this apparent conundrum.

The issue of requirements for other professionals working in the schools is one which needs attention. However, since this issue has not had the depth of discussion given to the professional development of teachers, this framework recommendation simply puts the topic on the table for consideration during the overall licensure restructuring process.

V. **New Teacher Induction Process**

What is the issue?

Beginning teachers are seldom provided with the support and guidance needed to effectively deal with the challenges of their new responsibilities. Even less frequently is such support provided in a systematic way which will ensure that the new teacher becomes a reflective practitioner.

What should be changed?

- The State of Illinois should develop standards for new-teacher induction programs which will provide appropriate support, guidance and continuing professional development for beginning teachers.
- Each school in Illinois should be required to implement a new-teacher induction program, using State standards to design a program which provides systematic support and guidance for beginning teachers over a two-three year period.
- New-teacher induction programs should be viewed as an investment in the quality of Illinois teachers. To that end, the State of Illinois and local school districts should make available the resources (time and money) which will assure that induction programs are implemented in an effective manner.

Discussion/Implementation Note

The purpose of the induction period is to ensure that new teachers are successful both in the classroom and as reflective practitioners who use their experience as the basis for

growth as a professional. It is not intended as a probationary period and there should be no link between the induction process and district decisions about continuing contractual service (i.e., tenure).

The Committee on Induction Activities, a statewide committee of individuals with a strong interest in induction and mentoring, has developed suggested guidelines for such programs. These guidelines should be used as the starting point for discussion about standards for induction programs.

Some school districts, especially schools with few staff may have difficulty in providing an appropriate induction experience for their new teachers. The planning and implementation of induction programs should consider how the efforts of such schools could be complemented and supported through state and regional entities and/or institutions of higher education.

VI. Continuing Professional Development

What is the issue?

Teachers need continuing professional development which assures that (1) their content expertise keeps pace with the creation of new knowledge in the field and (2) their teaching abilities are continuously expanded. The State has no requirements nor incentives for such continuing development and local requirements/incentives are typically based on the traditional model of courses and workshops.

What should be changed?

- The State of Illinois should give priority to the continuing professional development of teachers by making it a condition for renewal of the Standard and Advanced Certificates and establishing reasonable procedures for demonstrating that the requirement has been met.
- The State should establish standards for continuing professional development which assure the (1) the teacher's content expertise keeps pace with the creation of new knowledge in the field and (2) the teacher's teaching abilities are continuously expanded.
- The State of Illinois should acknowledge that the best arena for professional development is the local school and/or work site. Funding and other support should be provided to local schools to promote the development of learning communities which will bring about school improvement and professional growth. This should be linked to the Quality Assurance process.
- Local school districts should be expected to make an investment of time and resources for continuing professional development of their teachers.

- The State of Illinois should foster the development of new resources for professional development, such as teacher academies, school-university partnerships and learning networks which transcend school boundaries.

Discussion/Implementation Note

Substantial discussion will be needed to determine how the proposed continuing professional development requirement can be effectively implemented. Although current options such as university courses, regional workshops, and subject area conferences should be part of a new process, that process must also reflect new professional development strategies, such as teacher academies, learning networks, etc. In particular, the new process must recognize and support those professional development activities which occur through the school (or a department or a grade level of a school) acting as a learning community. The concept of an individual professional development plan is one which should not be linked to individual teachers. The system may also need to include the option of group plans for professional development.

Because the issue of continuing professional development must be kept separate from the issue of teacher evaluation, the professional associations which represent teachers will need to be formally involved in the design of this implementation plan.

VII. School Cultures

What is the issue?

Continuing professional development is not only - or even primarily - a matter of workshops and college courses. Teachers learn from and are nurtured by each other, yet most schools provide few opportunities for teachers to work together or engage in joint inquiry.

What should be changed?

- Local schools should be encouraged to develop a shared vision of what they hope their school will become and a shared commitment to working together to move the school in that direction.
- Local school districts should structure their schools and their instructional day in ways which will promote collaboration, collegiality and mutual support. These values should be given high priority in the work of the school.
- The technical assistance resources of the State, the regional offices of education, and the institutions of higher education should be targeted to assisting schools in the development of learning communities. This should include the identification of schools which can serve as models and mentors for the development of learning communities.

- New roles for teachers should be created which will recognize and take advantage of professional expertise and simultaneously provide leadership and support for schools which are learning communities.

Discussion/Implementation Note

This aspect of professional development may be the most difficult to impact, since it involves so many interlocking factors. However, the development of learning communities within schools is already beginning to happen in Illinois - sometimes as the result of a purposeful action and sometimes as the byproduct of another initiative, such as schools within schools. These fledgling efforts should provide valuable insights about how to implement this part of the framework.

VIII. Recruitment

What is the issue?

Bringing the best and brightest individuals in our society into the teaching profession is a goal whose attainment we have generally left to chance. In fact, our system of preparation and licensure often serves as a barrier to nontraditional candidates who wish to become teachers. Although the State has provided financial incentives for recruiting teachers in identified areas of need, these efforts have been limited.

What should be changed?

- The State of Illinois, in partnership with the Illinois business and education communities, should develop an aggressive, well-coordinated and creative plan for recruiting talented individuals into the teaching profession. Special attention should be given to increasing the ethnic and gender diversity of the teacher corps.
- The State of Illinois, in partnership with the Illinois business and education communities, should expand and replicate programs such as the Illinois Scholars Program, which provides students with a unique introduction to the teaching profession and creates a bridge between high schools, community colleges, and universities.
- The State of Illinois, in partnership with the Illinois business and education communities, should create new incentives to recruit teachers for high-need subjects and locations.
- High-quality alternative pathways to teaching should be developed for recent graduates, midcareer changers, paraprofessionals already in the classroom, and military and government retirees. This should include the identification of strategies which assure that information about these pathways is available to potential candidates.

- These "alternative pathways" must be consistent with the high quality and rigorous standards required for all new teachers.

Discussion/Implementation Note

The business community is specifically addressed in this component because good teachers are essential to the education of the future workforce.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

Each of the components of the proposed framework is related to all other components, and together, these components will transform the system from one that is a hodgepodge of course credits and contact hours to one which is based on standards and best practices for what teachers should know and be able to do at different stages in their careers.

The diagrams on the following pages depict the current system of professional development and the way it might look after the implementation of this framework.

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