



SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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November 4, 1999

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. R. Austin Gilbert, Jr., Chairman, and Members,
Commission on Higher Education

From: Ms. Dianne Chinnes, Chairman
Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

DC/gmr

**Consideration of Recommendations of the
Graduate Teacher Education Task Force**

Background

The Graduate Teacher Education Task Force has been meeting regularly during FY 1998-99 to examine a variety of issues related to the professional development of teachers. Members consist of representatives of public as well as independent institutions, and Department of Education, State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, and CHE Academic Affairs staff. Institutional members include deans of education, graduate deans, education faculty members, and one vice president for academic affairs.

The Task Force has worked to develop policy to address an issue identified as a problem by several institutions, and that is how to enable students and institutions to distinguish between 1) graduate courses that are offered within the context of an approved program of study leading to a graduate degree and 2) graduate courses that are offered as continuing education or professional development but are not necessarily part of an approved program of study leading to a graduate degree. Often these courses are taken for certificate renewal.

The inability to distinguish between these two kinds of courses, both of which serve legitimate but frequently distinctive purposes, has led to frustration, confusion and misinformation among students and between and among institutions. Students have enrolled in professional development courses and have assumed that these would automatically be credited toward a graduate degree or transfer as degree credit to different institutions. In attempting to evaluate courses for degree credit, institutions have not always been able to determine with accuracy what level of course was offered.

To reduce confusion and enhance communication, the Task Force has unanimously approved the following policy:

1. All state institutions will adopt a course professional development (PD) designation to distinguish professional development courses offered in education from other graduate or undergraduate courses offered by the institution. The designation "professional development (PD)" must appear in the course prefix, number, or title. The independent colleges and universities are requested to adopt a similar methodology.
2. The professional development course designator will apply to courses that are offered primarily for inservice staff development at the request of schools, school districts, other educational agencies.
3. Individual institutions will determine whether or not professional development course credit may be applied to their degree programs.
4. To be accepted for graduate degree credit, professional development courses must be authorized for inclusion in an approved program of graduate study. It is the student's responsibility to confer with an appropriate advisor to ascertain whether any given professional development course may be applied to the student's approved program of graduate study leading to a graduate degree.

The Advisory Committee on Academic Programs approved this policy at its meeting on October 12, 1999. Most of the public institutions are already in the process of implementing this policy.

In addition, the Task Force developed a proposal which was submitted to the State Department of Education for establishing a career ladder path for teachers. At present, the only career ladder path for teachers in South Carolina involves a methodology for awarding salary step increases based on either completion of a new degree at a higher level (e.g., Master's) or certain blocks of accumulated graduate credits (e.g., Master's plus 30 credits). The credit hours or degrees do not have to be in the teaching field under the present system. I have enclosed for your information a copy of the proposal, which is conceptual in nature (**Attachment 1**). The notion of career ladder is being discussed by the Teacher Quality Commission.

Recommendation

The Committee recommends that the Commission approve the proposed policy concerning graduate courses in education favorably to the Commission for immediate implementation and recommends that the institutions publish this policy in appropriate vehicles such as transcripts, catalogues, and course syllabi.

Attachment (1)

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**A Concept Paper: Restructuring the Professional Development
of
Teachers in South Carolina**

**Report of the Graduate Teacher Education Task Force
of the
South Carolina Commission on Higher Education**

Summary Recommendation

Continuing professional development is a primary and vital means for assuring that teachers maintain and improve competencies in instructional techniques and content knowledge. The timing is right for South Carolina to improve professional development of teachers with a new Governor and State Superintendent of Schools who have made improving teacher quality a top priority. U. S. Secretary of Education Richard A. Riley asked that "local schools, colleges and universities, state legislatures, and elected officials work together to build a system of preparation and support that serves a teacher's professional needs throughout his or her entire career."

In order to assure that professional development for South Carolina teachers meets Secretary Riley's challenge and the Governor's emphasis on improving education, a planned, coherent, and supervised career continuum must be developed for South Carolina teachers. The responsibility for development of a career continuum lies with the South Carolina Legislature, the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, colleges and universities, local school districts, and teachers. Therefore, we recommend that the State Department of Education and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education jointly develop a process to involve all stakeholders in creating a professional development and reward structure for South Carolina teachers that links teacher preparation and student achievement.

Discussion

A nation-wide survey of more than 4,000 teachers by the National Commission on Education Statistics found that the most common form of professional development activities continues to be the kind that teachers say are the least beneficial – the "one-shot" workshops that last no more than a day and often carry little relevance to the classroom. The present process for the professional development of teachers in South Carolina can only be described as "hit and miss." First, there is no required advising provided to teachers for developing a planned program of professional development. As long as teachers complete six semester hours every five years, they can retain certification. Six hours of coursework in one or two fields will renew a teacher's certification in ALL of the fields in which they are certified, and there is no requirement that courses be chosen to address issues of minimal preparation or out-of-field teaching. If teachers pursue the Bachelor's + 18 hours or the Master's + 30 hours, there is no assurance that the hours earned for these certificates are part of a structured, planned, and supervised program that is related to the teacher's classroom assignment.

Accountability is a priority for taxpayers in South Carolina; however, at the present time, pay increases for teachers are not based on completion of a cohesive, structured program which benefits the teacher, the school, the school district, and, most importantly, the students of South Carolina public schools. The current compensation for teachers provides no rewards for above-average performance or student learning outcomes. Higher salaries are only paid for higher degrees or for the completion of a specified number of courses, even if the courses and/or degrees are not in the field in which the teacher is teaching. And currently, there is no salary recognition provided for teacher effectiveness.

In September 1996, a report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommended that districts, states, and professional associations cooperate to make teaching a true profession with a career continuum that places teaching at the top and rewards teachers for their knowledge and skills. The commission maintained that if teaching was organized like other professions with licensing requirements, standards of practice, and methods for assessments of expertise, the reward system should be tied to professional growth and development.

In November 1997, the same commission issued a report stating that schools have few means for encouraging outstanding teaching or rewarding increases in knowledge and skill. Non-certified teachers are paid at the same levels as those who enter with highly developed skills. Mediocre teachers receive the same rewards as outstanding ones. Teachers must leave the classroom to get promoted. Therefore, the commission reiterated the need for a career continuum.

North Carolina passed the Excellent Schools Act of 1997 which enacted nearly all of the recommendations of the National Commission. The Act ties higher salaries for teachers to higher standards as it strengthens licensing by creating a three-tiered system of initial, continuing, and advanced certification tied to performance assessments. The Act establishes rewards for knowledge and skills by providing additional salary increments for passing assessments for a continuing license after 3 years, passing tenure review after 4 years, obtaining National Board Certification, and earning a master's degree.

The redesign of teacher education in Maryland in 1995 provided a career-long approach to teacher growth and development, "beginning with initial preparation and continuing throughout teachers' careers." Other schools districts, such as Cincinnati, Ohio, and Rochester, New York, have developed career pathways that tie evaluations to pay increments at key stages of a teacher's career development. In these states, teachers move from their initial license, through a period as a resident teacher under the supervision of a mentor, to designation as a professional teacher.

In 1998, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education formed a Task Force on Graduate Teacher Education. The task force held focus groups in which South Carolina teachers, administrators, and teacher educators were asked to consider the impact of a career ladder on South Carolina teachers. While not all teacher responses to the career ladder proposal were favorable, there was support from teachers for a career continuum. The following favorable comments were selected from focus group interviews:

"Teachers and administrators prefer a career ladder based on competencies developed, not on years of service and courses taken."

"Other types of professional development should be recognized as well as the earning of degrees."

"A career ladder should be the result of a personalized career plan developed for an individual teacher focusing on a teacher's strengths and weaknesses and outlining development of professional expertise in new areas."

"Mentoring by experienced, skillful teachers of other teachers should be rewarded as part of a career ladder as well as recognition of development of expertise in content."

Components of a Career Continuum for Teachers in South Carolina

Secretary Riley recommends that professional development of teachers be changed to recognize the stages of a teacher's development. He put forth a model that offers a three-step approach, starting with one license and one set of standards for beginning teachers. The next step sets challenging standards and requires peer review in a process that allows the more experienced teachers to earn a professional license. The third step would be a more rigorous set of standards for voluntary, advanced certification that would recognize master teachers through efforts such as National Board Certification. Secretary Riley acknowledged that other models would emerge, but the central point is that the licensing process should relate to performance and to the standards of the profession. Increases in pay must complement these higher professional development standards as well.

Components of a career continuum can be seen in recent legislation and in recent proposals of the South Carolina State Department of Education. The Education Accountability Act of 1998 mandates that school districts work with teachers to develop professional plans to improve teaching effectiveness. The concept of the career continuum could be integrated with the development of those plans for improving performance in the classroom. Additionally, the State Board of Education approved a recommendation supporting application by South Carolina educators for National Board Certification at the April 1998 meeting. This would be the pinnacle of a career continuum approach to professional development.

The concept of a career continuum is in keeping with South Carolina's system for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT). ADEPT assures that all first-year teachers will get special assistance through local induction programs. Induction programs will provide opportunities for professional growth, including working with a mentor teacher, observing other experienced teachers, interacting with other first-year teachers, and receiving formal written feedback during the induction year. Under ADEPT, a continuing teacher participates in a goals-based evaluation. Teachers write goals in the areas of content, instruction, technology or assessment, and professional responsibilities.

At the Crossroads: Teacher Licensure in South Carolina, a report of The Teacher Licensure Steering Committee appointed by the State Board of Education in August 1995, recommends that a master teacher license be awarded to teachers demonstrating advanced professional competency. The document states that recognition as a master teacher should neither be based upon time in service nor on the attainment of advanced degrees. Instead, a comprehensive assessment system that begins with a candidate's application and presentation of a professional portfolio and formal evaluation by a team of professionals is recommended. Significant additional compensation should be provided master teachers to encourage their continued service in classrooms.

A Suggested Career Continuum for South Carolina Teachers

A career continuum for South Carolina teachers is based on the assumption that the initial salary for teachers is fair and competitive and that the salary would facilitate entrance into the profession. A conceptual framework for a career continuum is presented below; however, particular details and specifics would be determined with the participation of all stakeholders. It is critical to note that the emphasis in this proposed career continuum is not solely on earning of degrees or completion of coursework but on accomplishment of a wide range of criteria, including student achievement.

(1) After acquiring initial licensure, all teachers would complete an induction period, under the auspices of ADEPT, during which the teacher develops a professional growth plan which includes activities such as individually guided learning, observation and application of effective teaching strategies, peer coaching, school committee work, collaboration with colleagues, and formal graduate coursework. A shorter induction period might be required for a teacher entering the profession with a master's degree. Upon successful completion of the induction period and requirements outlined in a teacher's professional development plan, the teacher achieves the title, **Professional Teacher**, and a significant pay raise.

(2) After serving a specified number of years as Professional Teacher, the title, **Master Teacher**, can be earned upon completion of a pre-determined set of criteria including earning of a master's degree, if the teacher does not already have a master's degree. In order for the master's degree to have the potential for affecting student achievement, the master's degree must be in the teaching area in which the teacher is teaching. The recognition could include specific titles such as "Master Teacher in English" or "Master Teacher in Elementary Education." An additional pay raise will accompany the title of Master Teacher.

(3) The capstone of the teacher's career could be application for **National Board Certification**. The State of South Carolina would cover the cost of the national certification process and provide additional compensation upon successful completion of the process.

States adopting the career continuum for teachers generally base the criteria for progression through each level on performance evaluation and evaluation of knowledge of subject matter; verified student achievement; demonstration of effective class management techniques; experience; level of education; leadership activities; and assumption of additional professional responsibilities. Sources of information on teaching competencies can include classroom observation, a professional portfolio, teacher interviews, principal interviews, peer interviews, student questionnaires, and tests on knowledge of subject matter. From experiences shared by other states, a career continuum seems to work best if teachers and administrators have active involvement in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the process. The role of school administrators, teachers, and college faculty as mentors in the success of a career continuum for teachers cannot be overestimated. Reviewers external to the local system, also, should be involved in the process. A parallel process for the professional growth of administrators should be developed as well.

Benefits of a Career Continuum for Teachers

The career continuum addresses the problem of advancement opportunities for classroom teachers since it reshapes compensation, professional development, and evaluation structures to better use and support teachers' efforts at various stages in their careers. It can be a powerful strategy for achieving more effective classroom instruction.

Opportunities for teachers to advance on the pay scale, incentives for teachers to continue their professional growth, and rewards for outstanding accomplishments are a few of the outcomes of a professional development program based on a career continuum. A career continuum will help attract high quality students into colleges of education and retain them in the profession.

The concept of a career continuum is aligned with national recommendations that teachers' salaries be differentiated by quality of performance. An effective career continuum for teachers involves more pay for better work. Each step brings increased compensation with increased responsibilities, such as assisting other teachers, designing curriculum, or leading specific instructional improvement efforts. Each step on the continuum is based on systematic evaluation. Further, appropriate compensation and elevated professional status will encourage teachers to remain in teaching, and more varied work responsibilities will help dispel boredom and burnout.

Finally, the construction of a teacher career continuum based on a sound evaluation process leads to better administrator-teacher communication, consensus on instructional and school goals, improved student performance, and increased public confidence in the school system.

In conclusion, in order to raise student achievement in South Carolina, a quality, well-educated professional teacher must be in every classroom in our state. For this to happen, a planned program of professional development for teachers must be implemented. The time is right! The time is now!