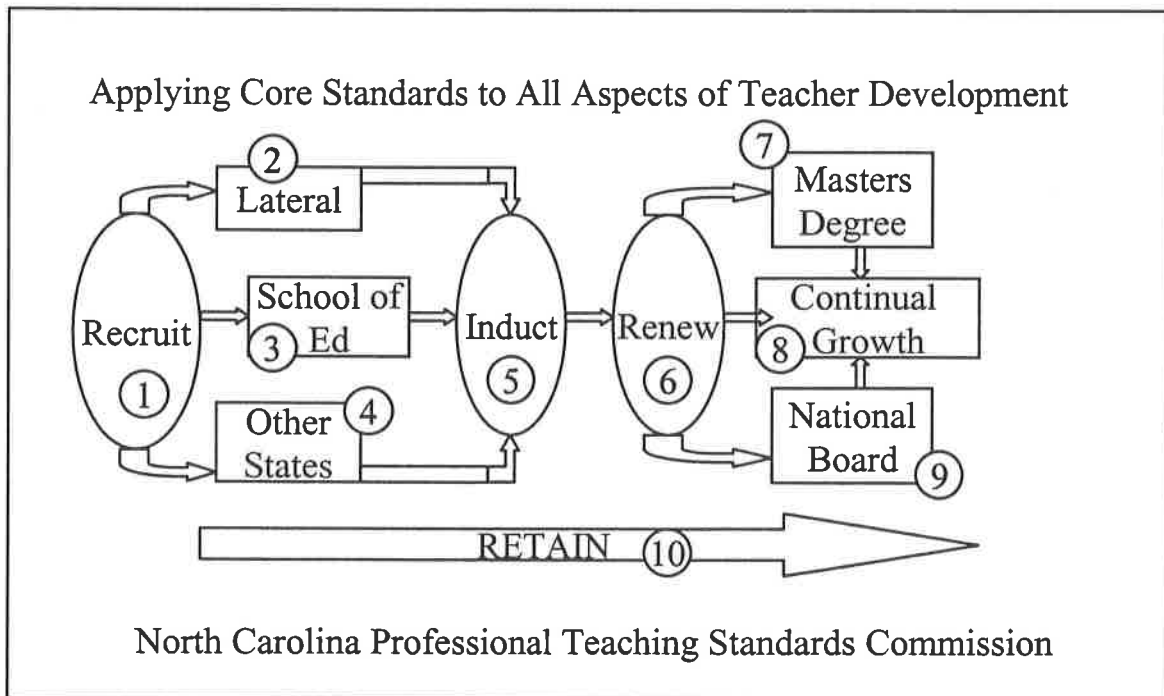


Annual Report of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission
Submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and
The North Carolina State Board of Education

December 1, 2001

I. **Introduction.** The focus of the Commission's work during 2001 was the implementation of the Core Standards for Teachers in all aspects of the preparation, induction, evaluation, and professional growth of teachers. These standards, developed by the Commission during an 18 month period, and involving thousands of educators and other citizens, were adopted by the State Board of Education in November, 1999. They were published in a booklet entitled "Every Child's Teacher in North Carolina" and were distributed widely throughout the state. A copy of these standards is attached to this report.

The following diagram serves the Commission as an organizing tool as we continue the tasks of implementing our Legislative mandate.



II. Areas of Focus.

The Commission is involved in many aspects of teacher development. However, we have adopted a strategic focus on three projects for 2001.

Working Conditions and Teacher Turnover. Focus area: Retention. (10 on the chart).

One of the greatest challenges faced by the Commission in our efforts to implement the adopted standards for teachers is the shortage of qualified applicants for many of the available teaching positions. Local districts frequently feel they must hire the best available candidate of the current applicant pool, rather than apply a set of minimal standards. As a result, many at the district and school level perceive that implementing standards for teachers will tie their hands and result in the hiring of large numbers of long-term substitutes.

In order to move forward in implementing the standards, the Commission initiated an effort to reduce teacher turnover and increase retention. We have set an informal goal of reducing the current rate of teacher turnover from 14% annually to the national average of employment turnover for all jobs, somewhere closer to 11%. If we can accomplish this, the teacher shortage will be significantly reduced and our efforts to implement the Core Standards will be enhanced.

Our first step in addressing the issue of teacher retention is to evaluate why teachers leave their jobs. Numerous studies and surveys have been conducted nationally and in North Carolina on this question. In addition to the reasons beyond our influence, such as retirement, moving out of state, and leaving the workforce to raise children, a number of reasons are cited which can be loosely grouped together as morale issues based on poor working conditions. This is the area in which we decided to focus our attention.

Standards for Working Conditions. The Commission proceeded to define standards for optimum working conditions for our teachers. This was done through research, focus groups, and the experience of the Commission members. The Standards (attached as Appendix I) were validated through surveys and small group discussions, notably at the Distinguished Teacher Forum conducted by the Department of Public Instruction. The Working Conditions Standards fall in the categories of sufficient time, appropriate resources, quality leadership, professional empowerment, and access to high quality professional development.

Our second step was to develop an evaluation instrument which will help teachers assess working conditions in their schools. Thousands of these surveys have been distributed to more than 70 schools throughout the state in an effort to pilot the surveys and the standards. If we determine that the survey results are an accurate measure of the standards, we will take the package to the State Board of Education for adoption as the working conditions standards toward which our schools will strive. We expect to be able to correlate quality

working conditions in schools with high student achievement and low teacher turnover. As one of the presenters to the Commission expressed, “Working conditions for teachers are the learning conditions for students.”

Goals of the Working Conditions Initiative. We hope to accomplish several things with this project. First we hope to highlight best practices in creating positive working conditions. We believe this is not strictly an issue of resources, but also of creative use of those resources. Schools which rate highly in working conditions will be asked to describe what they do so that others may adopt or adapt their practices. Secondly we will be able to provide schools with data-based evaluation of their working conditions, and a comparison with similar schools across the state. We believe this will assist them in making improvements. Third, we will offer schools and districts which score highly a recruitment tool—schools will be able to publicize that they are “ranked in the top 10% in working conditions in the state.” This will help them attract qualified candidates.

Overall, our goal is to help improve the working conditions in our schools, increase the retention rate of teachers, and help pave the way for holding teachers to high standards and improving student achievement.

Professional Development and License Renewal. Focus area: Renewal (6 on the chart)

The Commission has developed a proposal to improve professional development for teachers by tying it to the Core Standards and to teacher license renewal.

The proposal, which is being circulated for comment, would require teachers to complete a minimum number of renewal credits in three categories in order to renew their license. These categories are tied to the first three Core Standards for teachers. Teachers would be expected to earn renewal credits in increasing the knowledge of the content they teach, in successful techniques for teaching the content they teach, and in successfully teaching a diverse student population.

In addition, teachers would be able to obtain credit for a limited number of renewal activities tied to technology, to leadership development and to being reflective and analytical about the results of their teaching. These correspond to Core Standards four through six.

The Commission has also proposed standards for the quality of professional development. To be credited for license renewal, professional development activities must be tied to student learning, based on research, tied to school, district and state goals, planned collaboratively and implemented according to recognized adult learning techniques.

Teacher Evaluation Instrument. Focus area: Continual Growth (8 on the Chart)

Current teacher evaluation instruments in use are not tied to the six Core Standards for Teachers. The Commission has convened a working group of highly accomplished teachers and administrators to develop and field-test a teacher evaluation instrument tied to

the Core Standards. The instrument being developed will focus on professional growth and development, identifying areas in which individual teachers would benefit from additional training. The instrument will also incorporate a process for developing a plan for teacher improvement based on the evaluation.

This instrument will be piloted and taken to the State Board of Education for approval to be added as an option that local schools or districts may adopt.

III. **Other Initiatives.**

In addition to the major initiatives described above, the Commission members and/or staff of the Commission have been involved in many other initiatives to improve teacher quality in North Carolina. These activities are briefly described below, along with corresponding references to the chart above.

Recruitment (1). We worked with the State Board of Education Teacher Quality Committee to develop a plan for a Center for Teacher Recruitment and Retention. This proposal fell victim to the budget difficulties, however a scaled-down version of this Center has been implemented within the Department of Public Instruction Human Resources Division.

Lateral Entry (2). The Commission worked with the Teacher Quality Committee to streamline and standardize lateral entry procedures. Members of the Commission work with the NC-TEACH program to bring qualified mid-career professionals to the teaching profession.

Teacher Education (3). The Commission continued to coordinate the processes to revise standards for program approval for the schools and colleges of education in North Carolina. These revised standards are aligned with the Core Standards for Teachers, as well as the standard course of study, state and national standards of content organizations, documents of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and other relevant standards. Revised program approval standards have been completed in 14 areas (Science, Math, Social Studies, English Language Arts, Pre-K, Elementary, Middle School, Art, Music, Theatre, Dance, PE, Foreign Language, and Technology). In addition, diversity standards for teachers have been developed. Hundreds of teachers and IHE Professors in Education and in Arts and Sciences have been involved in this effort.

Currently the Commission is working with panels to develop standards for Workforce Development and Exceptional Children programs.

Commission Staff also assisted with the ratings for the IHE report card.

Out of State Reciprocity (4). The Commission completed an analysis of teacher license requirements for other states, and determined that eight states have license standards which are essentially the same as in North Carolina. We developed a recommendation to

automatically and immediately grant NC licenses to teachers from those eight states to assist in recruitment. This proposal was sidelined by legal opinion.

Induction (5). Commission members continue to consult and advise on Performance Based Licensure issues.

Masters Degree (7). Commission members and staff continue to act as reviewers for revised Masters Degree Programs as needed.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (9). Seven members of the Commission are Board Certified teachers. Five of them serve on the planning group for a state-wide NBC teacher leader organization.

IV. Liaison to State and National Groups.

The Commission is in the process of formalizing a role as liaison to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, in partnership with the Governor's Education office. The Commission Director is on the Advisory Board for the Southeast Commission on Teacher Quality. Members of the Commission are very active in promoting and supporting National Board Certification on the state and national level, serving as mentors and as workshop facilitators. We continue to maintain relationships with other state teacher standards boards, and are supporting an effort to develop a national organization of state standards boards. A member of the Commission is on the planning team for the Hunt Institute, and another is a member of the Standards and Accountability Commission.

V. Budget

The Commission budget has been reduced by approximately 11% to \$207,000. Costs of operating the Commission (office expenses, staff salaries and benefits, Commission meetings, substitute and travel arrangements for teacher members of the Commission) are approximately \$170,000 per year, leaving the Commission approximately \$37,000 for projects and initiatives for the fiscal year.

VI. Legislative Issues.

The Commission operation is hampered by having all 16 members serving concurrent two year terms. We request a change in the Commission appointment procedure to incorporate staggered three-year terms. (reference 115C-295.1 (c))

VII. Conclusion.

Members of the Commission would like to thank members of the General Assembly for their support during the recent legislative term. We are always interested in dialogue and collaboration with the members of the General Assembly and the State Board of Education as we work to improve the quality of teaching for every North Carolina child.