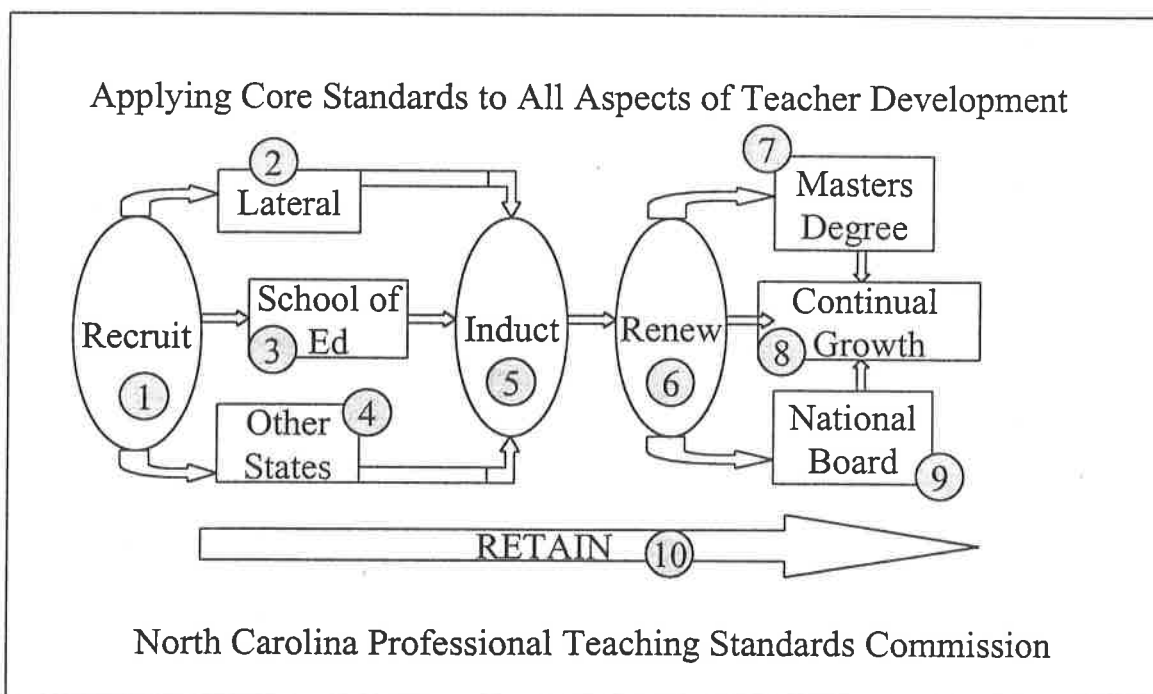


**Annual Report of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission
Submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and
The North Carolina State Board of Education**

December 1, 2002

I. **INTRODUCTION.** During the 2002 calendar year, the Commission focused on the implementation of the Core Standards for Teachers in all aspects of their preparation, induction, evaluation, and professional growth. These Core Standards were developed by the Commission following an 18-month period of involvement and input from thousands of educators and other citizens throughout the state. The State Board of Education adopted the Core Standards in November 1999. Subsequently, they were published in a booklet entitled, "Every Child's Teacher in North Carolina," and distributed widely. These standards have become a focal point of conversations pertaining to developing quality teachers. A copy of these standards is attached (Appendix I) to this report for your information and review.

The following diagram continues to serve the Commission as an organizing tool as we implement our legislative mandate.



II. **AREAS OF FOCUS.** Although the Commission remains involved in all aspects of the development of quality teachers, its primary work in 2002 revolved around three major strategic priorities:

- **Working Conditions and Teacher Turnover;**
- **Professional Development and License Renewal; and the**
- **Teacher Evaluation Instrument.**

This Annual Report will examine the work within each of these priorities.

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

The Commission determined that a major impediment to implementing the Core Standards is the teacher shortage facing North Carolina as well as the nation as a whole. In addition, the shortage of quality teachers is magnified in certain geographical areas of our state and in specific content areas. Local school districts frequently find they must hire the best available candidate of the current applicant pool, rather than apply a set of minimal standards in the selection process. As a result, many at the district and school level perceive that implementing standards for teachers will tie their hands and result in their inability to staff our schools.

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 greatly 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 resulting from poor working conditions. This is the area in which we decided to focus our attention.

Standards for Working Conditions. Last year, the Commission developed and adopted Standards for Working Conditions in our schools. These standards were developed through research, focus groups, and the experience of the Commission members. The Standards (attached as Appendix II) 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 within the following categories: use of time, facilities and resources, quality leadership, professional empowerment, and access to quality professional development.

In the Spring of 2002, the Commission developed and administered a pilot instrument to measure working conditions in 60 schools, compared to the standards. Based on the

results of the pilot survey, we modified the instrument. With the support of the Governor's Office and the North Carolina Association of Educators and with a grant from the Bell South Foundation, the Commission printed and sent working conditions surveys to every public school teacher and administrator in the state. We received and scanned over 40,000 responses.

The Commission will present two different series of reports of this work. Every school with at least 40% of their teachers responding will receive a report of their working conditions compared to the district and state. Every district will receive a report of the responses of the teachers in the district compared to the state, and district teachers compared to district administrators. At the state level, we will present findings for all teachers and all administrators on each of the questions of the survey.

The second series of these reports will be correlations. We will determine what, if any, relationships exist between different aspects of the working conditions and issues as the following: student achievement, teacher retention, proportion of students on grade level, district wealth, and other significant factors relating to quality schools. We will identify exemplary schools and highlight best practices in specific areas, such as schools where teachers believe time is sufficient to individualize instruction and to collaborate with colleagues.

Goals of the Working Conditions Initiative. The Commission hopes to accomplish several things with this project. First, we hope to highlight best practices in creating positive working conditions. We believe working conditions are not only an issue of resources, but also the 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 provide schools with data-based evaluation of their working conditions and a comparison with similar schools across the state. This information should encourage them to examine their own situations and determine how they can make improvements. Thirdly, 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 the most qualified candidates. The information will also help “raise the bar” for all schools and communities as they seek to attract a high quality teaching force.

Overall, the Commission's goal is to improve student achievement by improving the working and “learning” conditions in our schools, increase the retention rate of teachers, and help pave the way for holding teachers to the high standards our citizens expect.

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

The Commission developed a proposal to improve professional development for teachers by linking professional development 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 linked to the first three Core Standards. Teachers would be expected to earn renewal credits in increasing the knowledge of the content they teach, in successful techniques for teaching their content, and in successfully teaching a diverse student population.

In addition, teachers would be able to obtain credit for a limited number of renewal activities linked 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 linked to student learning; based on research; connected to school, district and state goals; planned collaboratively; and, implemented according to recognized adult learning techniques. The Commission is working on these issues through its participation in the State Board of Education Teacher Quality Committee also through the Task Force on Professional Development recently established by the State Board and the Department of Public Instruction.

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

Current teacher evaluation instruments in use are not linked to the six Core Standards for Teachers. The Commission convened a working group of highly accomplished teachers and administrators to develop and field-test a teacher evaluation instrument based on the Core Standards. The instrument under development will focus on professional growth, identifying areas in which individual teachers would benefit from additional education or training. The instrument will also incorporate a process for developing a plan for teacher improvement based on the evaluation. Unfortunately, this initiative is currently on hold due to budget restrictions. The Commission hopes the project can be revived in 2003.

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). The Commission worked with the North Carolina Business Committee for Education and the DPI Center for Recruitment and Retention to review and make suggestions concerning the teacher recruitment web site.

Lateral Entry (2). The Commission worked with the Teacher Quality Committee to streamline and standardize lateral entry procedures. We have been advising the Committee on the establishment of the Regional Alternative Licensure Centers. In addition, members

of the Commission worked with the NC-TEACH program to bring qualified mid-career professionals into 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 and approved 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. During 2002, standards were completed and approved for Exceptional Children, and standards were developed in Career and Technical Education. Hundreds of teachers and IHE Professors in Education and in Arts and Sciences have been involved in this effort.

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

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 National Board Certified Teachers. Five of them serve on the steering committee for a state-wide professional coalition promoting teacher leadership and quality teaching.

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 former 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's effectiveness is limited by having all 16 members serving concurrent two year terms. Experience on the Commission needs to be assured by creating a system of rotating terms. We request a change in the Commission appointment procedure to incorporate staggered three-year terms as appointments are made (G.S. 115C-295.1 (c))

VII. CONCLUSION.

The Executive Director of the Commission resigned effective November 1, 2002. An interim part-time Director has been contracted to coordinate the search for a new director and to continue the major projects of the Commission. It is expected that the new Executive Director will be named and on board by the early Spring of 2003.

Th members of the Commission and its staff 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.