

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Hartford

Ad Hoc Committee on Educator Certification Meeting Of October 29, 2009

Draft Minutes

I. Call to Order

Commissioner of Education Mark K. McQuillan called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

In addition to Dr. McQuillan, the following committee members were present:

- Dr. Louise Feroe, Sr., Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Connecticut State University System;
- Ms. Janet M. Finneran, Vice Chairperson, State Board of Education;
- Dr. Maureen McSparran Ruby, Assistant Professor, Eastern Connecticut State University;
- Mr. Michael Meotti, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education;
- Dr. Yuhang Rong, Assistant Dean, School of Education, University of Connecticut; and
- Dr. John Voss, State Board of Education

Others in attendance:

- Deputy Commissioner George A. Coleman;
- Dr. Carlota Schechter, Department of Higher Education;
- Attorney Jennifer Widness, State Department of Education;
- Dr. Marion H. Martinez, Associate Commissioner;
- Nancy Pugliese, Bureau Chief; and
- Georgette Nemr, State Department of Education Consultant.

Commissioner McQuillan opened the meeting by welcoming the committee and introducing Dr. Louise Feroe.

II. PowerPoint presentation of *Operational High Standards Achieve Real Accountability for Initial Educator Preparation*

Dr. Feroe began the presentation with highlights of two research questions as posed by Commissioner McQuillan which are included in the PowerPoint presentation handouts. She emphasized that certification is a tool that the state can use to ensure that initially certified teachers have the required knowledge, skills, and dispositions to begin their careers. In reviewing the regulations, it is revealed that there are some redundancies with national and professional standards. Dr. Feroe indicated that they are not trying to undo what others have already done nor are they trying to slow down the approval process. The attempt is to ensure real accountability.

Dr. Feroe asked Dr. Yuhang Rong to continue with a technical analysis of the current regulation and the proposed regulation. Dr. Rong began with the Confucius quote of "Teach all children." He proceeded to an observational exercise whereby he invited Commissioner McQuillan and Deputy Commissioner Coleman to remove their suit jackets and place them on a table. He then instructed them to pick up their jackets. His point was that both men picked up the jackets by the collar which is the point at which all parts of the jacket are connected. While all parts of the jacket (sleeve, pocket, etc.) are important, it is not functional unless united.

The presentation continued with slides which outlined many of the following points:

- current state standards for initial educator preparation;
- overview of struggles with the system;
- current program approval;
- presentation of Commissioner McQuillan's assumptions and goals for new certification regulations;
- discussion of currently proposed language: CGS, CCT, program approval standards, initial education certification regulations, CSBE education competencies;
- questions regarding how proposed elementary certification regulations will ensure highly qualified teachers as compared to national standards; and
- comparison of math requirements between CT and ACEI.

Dr. Maureen McSparran Ruby was called upon to explain comparison of reading and language arts regulations between CT and ACEI.

Commissioner McQuillan's research question number two was discussed regarding educator competencies, what to promote, how candidates have these competencies and how we can hold the preparation programs accountable for competencies.

Discussions ensued regarding candidate competencies and how the state's pass rate is high but scores may be lower than the national standards. Presentation continued with discussions of: (1) rationale; (2) relationship of NCATE/SPA standards/SDE certification regulations/competencies/CCT/CGS; and (3) rigor/review.

The presenters proposed an option for consideration by the State Board of Education. The proposed option reflects what is currently required by the state program approval regulation [Section 10-145d-9] and the practice of certification regulation enforcement. Specifically:

- Candidates who graduate from CT approved planned programs and pass CT required licensure exams are eligible for CT certification in the appropriate area.
- Candidates who graduate from NCATE accredited programs from other states and pass CT required licensure exams are eligible for CT certification in the appropriate area.
- Candidates who graduate from all other out of state programs must satisfy CT requirements.
- Align continuous teacher development with valid, reliable, and consistent competencies, from pre-service, to provisional, all the way through professional stages. The proposed competencies cannot just be defined as "pre-service." They must be required for all teachers.

Dr. McSparran Ruby stated her experience with a very recent NCATE visit. Her institution was fully involved and working together. Even when they had only received the informal report (not the final NCATE report), people already began working on the issues which she found to be a rewarding process.

Deputy Commissioner Coleman posed a question about not getting rid of courses and credits. Dr. Rong clarified that courses and credits may not be relevant in this context. The real question is can you truly **show** you have competencies to teach, such as inclusion of student work samples and other evidence.

Deputy Commissioner Coleman questioned the follow-up stages, including but not limited to: 1) review of students' performance in the class; 2) the need for institutions to provide evidence of improvement during both pre-service and follow-up; and 3) samples of students' subsequent classroom improvement as a direct result of the teaching modifications. Dr. Louise Feroe commented on this, indicating that we need to partner so that children are better educated and this is a circular collaboration between the SDE and DHE.

Deputy Commissioner Coleman questioned the aspects of this design and whether it gives us confidence that candidates have sufficient skills to work with all students and coworkers of all levels with a diverse background. Dr. Rong referred to NCATE unit standard 4 and indicated that IHEs must demonstrate what it expects from its candidates and how they assess their candidates in this area.

Commissioner McQuillan expressed his thanks to Drs. Feroe, McSparran Ruby, and Rong for their presentation.

III. Discussion of the presentation is opened up to Committee Members for input and questions

Commissioner Meotti related the following by using the NEASC model:

- The direction NCATE is going is intriguing. Don't hold the different colleges to differing standards. Self-study is the place where institutions can emphasize improvement. Cites Model 4.
- We do have several institutions that are not NEASC accredited.
- Weaknesses are found in institutions during the NEASC visit.
- Questions how we sustain continued improvement between NEASC visits.
- Also cites that assessments must not be susceptible to the image that it resembles the A, B, and C style of rating. Can we show that we are really driving continuous improvement?

Ms. Pugliese related that there is subjectivity with these assessments and how adjunct professors align their teaching with the approved curriculum; there must be supervision of this at the institutional level.

Dr. Rong shared that the NCATE visit is very different than NEASC. From state's point of view, there should be a mechanism to hold institutions accountable. Questioned how we look at assessments that are valid and reliable.

Dr. McSparran Ruby spoke regarding adjuncts and that the assessments are tied to courses...they need to be trained regarding the course and gate assessments. The students need to have this for a certain portfolio. It's up to all of us in this field to ensure that adjuncts meet this.

Commissioner Meotti comments further on the mindset of continuous improvement challenges. How do we do this in such a way that challenges institutions that this is "forever work" and not reserved for every three or four years or more.

Dr. Schechter stated that quality rests on process of assessments, and this model is consistent with the continuous improvement idea.

Dr. McSparran Ruby explained that assessment should not focus only on assessment literacy but on student literacy and faculty literacy—feedback loop; IHEs should be progress monitoring themselves.

Dr. John Voss questioned whether we could end up with many different approaches. How can we make this systemic from the very beginning? In answer, Dr. Rong quoted that NCATE standards have been stable since 2002/2003. Historical evidence has been that it has been very stable; the redesign is focused more on the continuous improvement process. Dr. Voss also referenced the NCATE process, and to what extent can we have confidence that the standards will be with us for some time and present them in an acceptable fashion. In reply, Ms. Pugliese commented on SPA standards, that they do change and we do not have control over that. Dr. Rong further elaborated that is okay but SPA standards have not REALLY changed.

Commissioner McQuillan then posed a series of questions (actually clarifications) on how to present it to the board. Assumption is that we need to make certain that we know that the state has already adopted NCATE standards as primary focus for accrediting institutions and approving programs.

Ensuring continuity:

1. Seems that the real audience is not as much the K-12 as it is the higher education people...IHE's should not concentrate on the courses but more on the competencies. This poses a challenge and a huge task for higher education to take on. Questions that there must be some disconnect in our regulatory environment that has made the operations of higher education programs difficult.
2. We are concerned that certified staff is not adequately trained to work with minority students...etc.
 - CGS 10-145d-9 was referred to.
 - We would have to treat candidates for certification differently if they did not complete NCATE.
 - How do we audit credits? Bureau needs to change its way about how we audit credits to hold institutions accountable without micromanaging.
 - We need to discuss and design processes with the IHE colleagues and understand how candidates do on their licensure test and how they do on their program based assessments.
3. Also, change in process internally, questions what Georgette sees in this. Discussion ensued and concerns cited included:
 - Ms. Finneran questioned if the initial package will be presented to the board next week? Is it all or nothing, or can board make changes? Discussion ensued among members citing concerns on when changes can be made, when changes will be presented for adoption, etc.

Commissioner McQuillan closed the meeting with thanks and an update on teacher quality initiative.

Dr. Voss expressed continued concerns about the 600 hours of internship in the proposed regulations for administrators. NCATE seems to have a richer view than what we are proposing.

IV. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m. and Commissioner McQuillan expressed gratitude to Drs. Feroe, McSparran Ruby and Rong for all of their hard work in this presentation.