

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COUNCIL FOR TEACHERS

Annual Report
April 2005

Mission

In 1997, Wisconsin Act 298 created the Professional Standards Council for Teachers (PSCT) under the direction of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The Council consists of 19 members appointed by the State Superintendent of Instruction and confirmed by the Senate; professional associations or institutions nominate seventeen members. Additionally, a parent representative and a student representative are included. (Appendix A)

In the words of the Wisconsin Legislative Staff memorandum in 1998:

“The primary focus of the council is on classroom teaching. The purpose of the council is to ensure the quality of the profession of Teaching by recommending to the State Superintendent a set of high standards for licensing that maintains quality classroom teaching, addresses the changing needs for the instruction of pupils in the state And provides the continual professional development of teachers.”

The Act provides a statutory mechanism to review, propose, or revise teacher preparation policies and to assist the State Superintendent in improving teacher preparation, licensure, and regulation. (Appendix B)

Consistent with the statutory duties of the PSCT to “report annually to the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature on the activities and effectiveness of the council”, the Council respectfully submits this report.

To ensure the quality of the profession of Teaching by recommending to the State Superintendent a set of high standards for licensing that maintains quality classroom teaching

The primary work of the PSCT continues to be the implementation of PI34. Since the rules went into effect in August of 2004, the rules are now in effect for teachers and school districts. The implementation has been guided and supported by the Department of Public Instruction. The implementation has been discussed by the PSCT with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Prior to this year, work on PI 34 implementation began. The following list includes some of the initiatives done to help the process begin.

- Title II funded work teams to develop “best practice” guidelines for mentoring and the initial educator stage, templates for the Professional Development Plan used for teachers, administrators, and pupil service individuals, and the guidelines for the Wisconsin Master Educator license.
- Training and monitoring of districts participating in the pilots for mentoring. The money for the pilots was approved by the legislature and distributed by the Department of Public Instruction.

- A task force was convened to discuss the challenges and implications in the new special education licenses.
- Pilots were developed for the Professional Development Plan. From this pilot the template was developed that will be used for training teachers in how to complete the plan. The legislature approved funding for the pilots and the money was distributed by the Department of Public Instruction.
- University program approval has been changed to coincide with the standards based format of PI 34.

This year, more work has been done to aid implementation of PI 34.

- School districts have been asked to submit reports of their current action in the three areas of the initial educator license for which they are responsible: providing a qualified mentor, ongoing orientation, and support seminars.
- Professional development plan pilots continue.
- Training for Professional Development Teams has been drafted and piloted in each CESA district in the state.
- License renewal centers have been established in areas around the state to services professionals who need to be licensed but do not belong to a school district and teachers who would like to renew using a professional development plan before 2008.
- The use of the PRAXIS tests, a high stakes content test, for licensing of initial educators. Most colleges and universities have made PRAXIS II a requirement for student teaching.

Addresses the changing needs for the instruction of pupils in the state

- Through the Department of Public Instruction, the instruction needs of pupils of Wisconsin have been addressed through the “New Wisconsin Promise” about the achievement gap for students. The PSCT hears about these initiatives during our sessions with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Part of the current educational picture includes testing of students, according to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This is another topic discussed during the reports from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Provides the continual professional development of teachers

- The professional development of teachers is inherent in the licensure requirements of PI 34. The purpose of the new rules is to provide ongoing professional growth for teachers, administrators, and pupil service personnel.
- Having the professional development plan include the kind of professional growth for which it is intended is part of the development of the training of educators to complete the professional development plan and of the teams who will approve the goals of initial educators and verify the completed plans of the initial and professional educators.

As a Council, we know that there are still some issues or challenges to be overcome if PI 34 is to be the positive change in professional growth of teachers that it was intended to be. Some of those challenges are:

- Dissemination of information about PI34. These rules went into effect in August. The information that educators have about the changes is far from universal. Continuing to inform educators of their new opportunities is ongoing.
- Training about the Professional Development Plans and the Professional Development Teams. The pilots that have occurred have helped to decide the content of the training. Having the training delivered to all parts of the state will take planning and coordination.
- Equalizing the National Board Certification for Teachers and the Wisconsin Educator route to the Master Educator license. Currently the requirements for the two routes are different and that is something that may not be amendable. There needs to be the same kind of recognition for the two routes. Currently there are grants available for NBPTS certification but not for the Wisconsin Master Educator plan.
- Support for School Districts during the process. There have been models and guidebooks developed to help but there is no requirement for uniformity of implementation. The DPI can help with training and support. There will be some funding needs for districts.
- Personnel needs for implementing the new rules. The need for mentors and members of verification teams in both the initial educator and professional educator stage will be a challenge for school districts. Finding new approaches will require discussion and sharing amongst districts.
- The inclusion of university personnel in the teams for approval of initial educator professional development plans. The universities are meeting to discuss how to include their personnel in this phase of the rules.
- The use of technology for creating and verifying plans. There are numerous plans in the developmental stages – from school districts, CESAs and professional associations – that have the potential to help teachers be more organized in creating their plans and to provide efficiency in verifying them.

Another area of responsibility includes the implications of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) with regard to state responsibility in general and PI 34 implementation in particular. PI 34 has put Wisconsin ahead of the curve for the “highly qualified” educator requirement in the ESEA. We continue to discuss the coordination of PI 34 with the ESEA.

Conclusion:

The membership of the Professional Standards Council for Teachers is representative of the entire teaching and school district community. This diversity is its strength. It allows us to have discussions and make decisions that are responsive to many different perspectives.

This report is one of the responsibilities of the Council. We are pleased to submit it to the Assembly and Senate Education Committees. We would like to suggest that, in addition to this written report, we have the opportunity for some meetings between the Council and the Senate and Assembly Education Committees. Discussion of concerns and successes with PI 34 could be of much value to both parties.

Appendix A – Statutes creating the Professional Standards Council for Teachers

Appendix B – List of membership of the PSCT (current and past)

Appendix C – The Wisconsin Standards

Appendix D – Copies of minutes from 2004

Appendix E – Copy of motions and actions taken