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Association**

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National Education Association

**Remarks of Linette Branham
Director, Policy & Professional Practice
Connecticut Education Association**

***Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee
S.B. No. 108, AAC the Creation of an Educator Professional Standards
Board Task Force***

March 13, 2012

Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

I'm Linette Branham, the Director of Policy and Professional Practice for the Connecticut Education Association. I'd like to comment on Senate Bill 108 regarding the creation of a task force to design an educator professional standards board. You've heard from educators within the state about the desire and need to create the task force. I'd like to submit letters of support from three sources outside of Connecticut, and a document presented to the State Board of Education on March 8 of this year. The letters of support are from the following:

- The Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, which has been in operation since 1990;
- The Minnesota Board of Teaching, which is one of the oldest educator professional standards boards in the country, having been in existence since 1973; and

- The National Independent Educator Standards Boards Association, which is a special committee of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC).

Each of these entities believes that educators from a variety of arenas should work collaboratively to set standards for educators in our profession, and have expressed their support for Senate Bill 108 and the approach it takes to design a standards board. Coincidentally, on March 7, 2012, the State Board of Education approved the creation of an Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC). This advisory council would meet over the next year to advise the State Board of Education in developing a system for the approval, quality, regulation, oversight, and accreditation of educator preparation programs in our state. The Council would include a representative from the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), the American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut (AFT-CT), the CT Federation of School Administrators (CFSA), the CT Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), the CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE), and representatives from higher education institutions.

The work that would be done by the proposed Educator Professional Standards Board Task Force would provide a natural avenue through which the work started by this Advisory Council would continue on a permanent basis, assuring continuity in creating and maintaining high standards for all Connecticut educators. I hope you'll consider this, and the support of those who have been part of successful standards boards in other states, in the same light, and support raised bill 108.

Thank you for your time and interest in helping to move our profession forward.



EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD

Steven L. Beshear
Governor

100 Airport Road, 3rd Floor, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Phone: 502-564-4606 Fax: 502-564-7080
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Phillip S. Rogers, Ed.D.
Executive Director

March 6, 2012

Dear Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe:

Thank you for the opportunity to write in favor of the establishment of an education professional standards board in Connecticut. In 1990, the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board (KyEPSB) was established to govern the preparation and certification of Kentucky's public school teachers as part of Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). KERA was notable because it completely revised how education was funded and administered in Kentucky. With the passage of KERA, educators were given the authority to determine the future for their profession.

Prior to 1990, there was an advisory council that was mostly made up of representatives of educator preparation programs who reported to Kentucky's State Board for Elementary and Secondary Education. Now, all decisions related to the preparation and certification of teachers are governed by the KyEPSB which is made up of seventeen (17) members who represent the various aspects of the education profession. There are nine (9) classroom teachers, two (2) administrators, one (1) representative of a locally elected school board, three (3) deans or chief academic officers of educator preparation programs, and two *ex officio* members, the Commissioner of Education and the President of the Council on Post-secondary Education. Fifteen (15) members of the board are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate.

As an independent standards board, KyEPSB has the ability to focus on improving the teaching and administrative staff while still working as a collaborative member of the education community. In the last twelve (12) years, KyEPSB has re-designed the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program, the Masters of Education degrees, principal preparation programs, and the admissions process for educator preparation. All these program changes were successfully implemented because all the constituent groups were represented at the table when the decisions were made. Classroom teachers and administrators provided input to improve preparation programs, preparation programs were able to voice concerns if changes were impractical, and the representatives of the school districts, the department of education, and post-secondary education offered valuable information as to what skills teachers in Kentucky's public schools will need in the future.

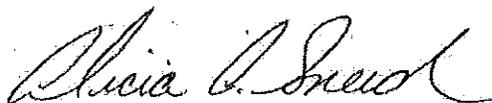
The KyEPSB is not only responsible for setting the standards for obtaining and maintaining a public school certificate, it is also responsible for policing the profession. In 1994, the board

established the Professional Code of Ethics for Kentucky Certified School Personnel, a concise code of ethics that governs each certified member of the profession. KyEPSB reviews allegations of violations of the code of ethics and issues penalties when certificate holders are found to have committed a violation. Prior to the establishment of the KyEPSB, certificate revocation was a rare occurrence. Since 1990, 373 certificates have been revoked and 342 individuals have been suspended from the practice of teaching.

In Kentucky, the establishment of an independent professional standards board for education has helped advance the profession and improved the quality of our schools. Allowing the profession to govern itself has provided for innovation to not only be accepted, but encouraged. Creating an independent standards board is a small investment, but it produces huge dividends from which a state's education system would benefit.

If you have any questions regarding the establishment of the KyEPSB or its programs and initiatives, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alicia A. Sneed".

Alicia A. Sneed
Director of Legal Services

NIESBA

National Independent Educator Standards Boards Association

March 6, 2012

PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

Senator Fonfara

Representative Rowe

RE: Connecticut Educator Professional Standards Board Task Force

Dear Committee Members:

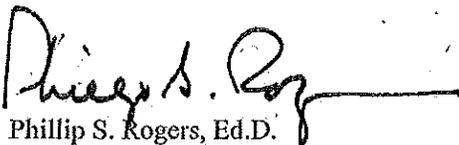
The National Independent Educator Standards Boards Association (NIESBA) represents thirteen states that have established independent educator standards boards. All of these states share the same simple logic: if the teacher is the most important factor within the school for student learning, then there is value in a dedicated group of professionals whose only focus is teacher quality.

In a report titled, "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future," the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) discussed the need to establish professional standards boards in every state. The report stated that "Developing coherent standards for teacher education, licensing, professional development, and practice requires a governing partnership between the public and the profession that is not vulnerable to constantly changing politics and priorities." The report further stated, "Such boards are the conscience of each profession; they develop and enforce ethical codes as well as technical standards of practice."

An independent standards board brings the invaluable experience and expertise of professional educators to the process of setting standards for the preparation of teachers, teaching, and professional conduct, which results in a coherence that is often missing from a less unified approach. On a final note, it has been my observation that independent boards also demonstrate an organizational nimbleness that permits a timely and stable response to the ever-changing landscape of public education.

Given the important work of teachers, it is commendable that you have taken the initiative to explore the value of establishing an independent standards board in Connecticut. NIESBA fully supports your proposed legislation to create a task force to design a semi-autonomous or autonomous standards board in Connecticut. If I may be of any further assistance in this important endeavor, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

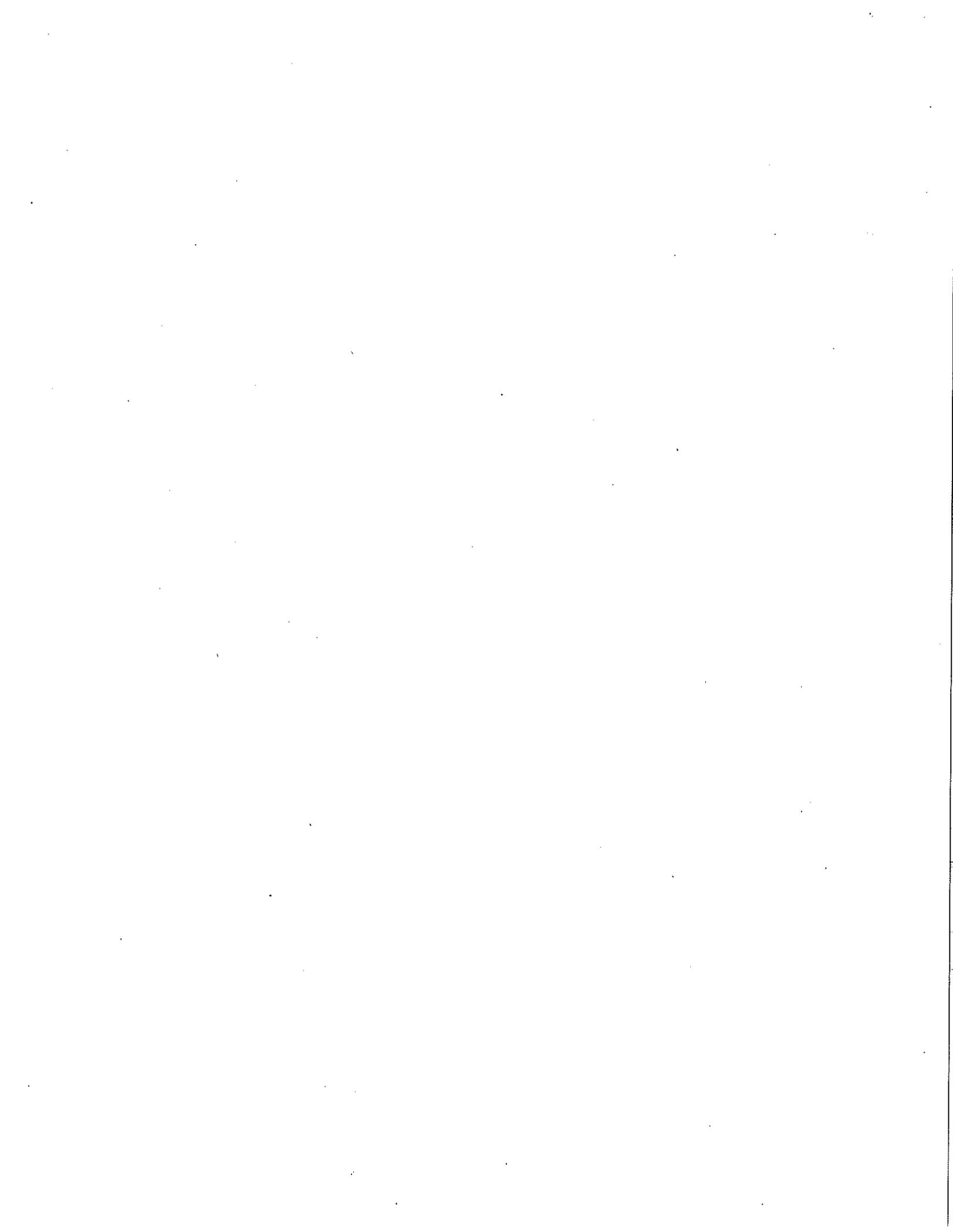


Phillip S. Rogers, Ed.D.

Vice Chair

Member states – California, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming

NIESBA, c/o NASDTEC, 1225 Providence Road, PMB #116, Whitinsville, MA 01588



CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO BE PROPOSED:
March 7, 2012

RESOLVED, that the State Board of Education authorizes the Commissioner of Education, working with the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education (or their designees), to take necessary action to establish the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) to advise the State Board of Education in developing a system for the approval, quality, regulation, oversight, and accreditation of Connecticut educator preparation programs—including but not limited to performance in the classroom as determined by indicators such as teacher evaluations and student achievement data; program graduates' retention, turnover, and dismissal rates in their schools; new graduates' preparation for work in high-need districts; the effectiveness of the preparation programs' recruitment efforts among top tier university students; and structured feedback from school districts on the readiness and effectiveness of preparation program graduates— with the intention of:

- Better preparing teachers and school leaders;
- Ensuring educator preparation programs are well-aligned with the needs of Connecticut's schools and districts;
- Recommending reforms to the state's educator certification regulations so that state policies align with an outcome-based system of accreditation and oversight;
- Establishing rigorous standards for acceptance into teacher and administrator preparation programs; and
- Meeting objectives articulated in the materials presented to the State Board of Education.

The Council will meet over the next year as determined by the Co-Chairs and Council. The Council will provide updates to the P-20 Council once per quarter throughout the year they meet in an informational capacity. The Co-Chairs of the Council will present the overall recommendations to the State Board of Education for consideration and further action by April 2013.

Approved by a vote of _____ this seventh day of March, Two Thousand Twelve.

Signed: _____
Stefan Pryor, Secretary
State Board of Education

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford

TO: State Board of Education Members
FROM: Stefan Pryor, Commissioner of Education
DATE: March 7, 2012
SUBJECT: Educator Preparation Advisory Council

As our team has traveled around the state, many superintendents, principals, and teachers shared their concern that new teachers arrive on the job without the skills they need to be successful in the classroom. Similarly, new school leaders lack the practical training they need to manage effective organizations. Despite the best of intentions, our educators report a mismatch between what is taught in our state's education preparation programs and the skills and competencies that are actually needed to lead classrooms and schools. This sentiment is consistent with a national concern about the quality of our schools and colleges of education. In response, just this past month the U.S. Department of Education launched a multi-billion dollar effort to, among other things, improve the quality of such training programs nationwide.

In our efforts to improve the quality of our state's schools and close the achievement gap, the importance of well-trained and adequately prepared educators cannot be overstated. A large body of research shows that the single most important school-level factor impacting student achievement is the quality of a student's teacher. A similar consensus supports the notion that schools cannot be great without great leadership.

Given that the State Board of Education accredits all education preparation programs in Connecticut, we have an important opportunity and ability to improve the quality of prospective teachers and leaders. Yet at present, accreditation processes place a heavy emphasis on school inputs, such as program design and compliance with state regulations. This approach does not put sufficient emphasis on the quality of the graduates as measured by their ability to raise student achievement.

At the Governor's request, the Department proposes the creation of the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) to advise the State Board of Education in developing a system for the approval, quality, regulation, oversight, and accreditation of Connecticut educator preparation programs.

Council Structure and Membership:

Co-chaired by the Commissioner of Education and the President of the Board of Regents for Higher Education (or their designees), membership of the Council shall consist of one representative from each of the following associations:

- Connecticut Association of Boards of Education,
- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents,
- Connecticut Federation of School Administrators,
- Connecticut Education Association,

- American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut, and
- Persons selected by the Co-Chairs including but not limited to representatives from teacher and administrator preparation programs in public and independent colleges and universities and from alternate route programs.

The Council will provide updates to the P-20 Council once per quarter throughout the year they meet in an informational capacity.

Charge of the Council:

Advise the State Board of Education in revising regulations and policies regarding standards and procedures for the approval and continued accreditation of Connecticut teacher and administrator preparation programs. The Council's work will be focused on:

- Available research regarding effective preparation of teachers and administrators;
- Reducing the reliance on input- and other compliance-based mechanisms of oversight and accreditation; and
- Shifting to a system of oversight and accreditation that includes multiple indicators of program performance such as
 - Performance evaluation of graduates in the years immediately following graduation, based on multiple measures including but not limited to indicators of student learning,
 - The quality of entering students as measured by academic achievement, personal accomplishments, recruitment efforts among top tier university students, and professional dispositions,
 - Feedback from school districts regarding the quality of student-teacher candidates,
 - Graduation requirements, including pass rates and attempts on Department-required exit examinations,
 - Rates of employment for graduating students, with consideration of employment rates in hard-to-staff and low-performing districts, and
 - Retention rates, both within districts and the education profession, for graduating students.

Final Report

The Council will meet over the next year as determined by the Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs of the Council will present the overall recommendations to the State Board of Education for consideration and further action by April 2013.

The recommendations of the report should aim to:

- Increase the rigor of teacher and administrator preparation programs;
- Hold teacher and administrator programs accountable for recruiting and preparing highly qualified and effective teachers and administrators;
- Provide guidance for the development and dissemination of indicators of the quality of teacher and administrator preparation programs;
- Establish rigorous standards for acceptance into teacher and administrator preparation programs;
- Elevate existing standards for obtaining a teacher or administrator certificate;
- Require high quality clinical experience as a part of teacher and administrator preparation programs;

- Link acceptance into administrator preparation programs to the results of teacher and other evaluations from prior service;
- Require use of measures to ensure the competency and effectiveness of teachers and administrators;
- Provide for effective implementation and enhancement of alternate routes to certification; and
- Recommend revisions to State certification regulations so that state policies are in alignment with an outcome-based system of accreditation and oversight.

Through the work of the Education Preparation Advisory Council, we hope to develop a new vision and strategy for improving the way we prepare educators so that all of our students have well-prepared teachers and school leaders.



MINNESOTA BOARD OF TEACHING

To Whom it May Concern:

It is my pleasure to provide information for your consideration regarding the possible establishment of an independent standards board in Connecticut. The Minnesota Board of Teaching has existed and provided leadership for teacher preparation and licensing for over three decades.

Our authorizing language is found in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 122A. Specifically, the Board's composition is set forth in Minn. Stat. §122A.07, which requires the following membership to the Board:

- (1) six teachers who are currently teaching in a Minnesota school or who were teaching at the time of the appointment and who do not qualify under clause (2) or (3), at least four of whom must be teaching in a public school;*
- (2) one higher education representative, who must be a faculty member preparing teachers;*
- (3) one school administrator; and*
- (4) three members of the public, two of whom must be present or former members of school boards.*

Board members are appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate, and serve four-year terms. Each member is eligible for up to two terms.

This structure and composition has served the Minnesota Board of Teaching well for several reasons:

- Board members represent a diversity of educational experience and perspectives.
- Because Board member appointments and terms are staggered, in most years the sitting Board members have been appointed across different administrations.
- The terms are sufficiently long enough for Board members to learn the work of the Board, to understand the complexities of teacher preparation and licensure, and to engage policy issues over time in strategic ways.

The Board of Teaching provides leadership in policy matters relating to teacher preparation and licensure and also establishes the regulatory infrastructure for these matters. Our purview includes:

- Rules, standards, and processes specific to institutional approval and approval of institutions that seek to prepare teacher candidates
Note: We currently have 32 approved institutions in Minnesota.
- Rules, standards, and processes specific to each licensure field and approval of individual licensure programs within approved institutions
Note: We currently have over 600 approved licensure programs in Minnesota.
- Rules and procedures for the licensing process, including provisions for special permissions when districts are unable to secure a fully licensed teacher
- Testing requirements for teacher licensure
- Renewal requirements and procedures for teacher licensure
- Disciplinary action against teacher licensure in cases where the Code of Ethics has been violated
Note: Disciplinary action is recommended by two BOT teacher members who serve on the Discipline Committee; as such, the model relies on a "jury of peers" to review and assess these cases.

In the last several years, the Board of Teaching has tackled a number of substantial policy topics and initiatives leading to reform, including:

- Significantly increased depth of reading preparation for Elementary and Early Childhood teachers and targeted preparation for content-specific teachers in 20 fields
- Increased depth of content preparation and clinical experiences required for middle level licensure
- Updated technology-related licensure standards for all teacher candidates
- Establishment of a voluntary paraprofessional credential
- Revision of all Special Education licensure standards to reflect evidence-based research, instructional design and practices, assessment, and collaboration strategies
- Establishment of two additional Special Education licenses: Autism Spectrum Disorders and Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS)

Note: The ABS license is a broad license allowing a teacher to serve students with mild to moderate needs in the areas of Autism Spectrum Disorders, Emotional or Behavioral Disorders, Developmental Disabilities, and Learning Disabilities.

As an independent standards board with open and standing rulemaking authority, we are bound to the processes set forth in state law requiring us to deeply engage stakeholders representing a diversity of perspective and experience in each of these initiatives. As such, our work in each of these areas has spanned multiple years and our end results have been viable and sustainable policy changes.

In addition to these rulemaking processes, the Board of Teaching initiated a redesign of our program approval system in 2008. Our goals were two-fold:

1. *Develop a comprehensive system for continuing program approval that is based on the successful demonstration of measures of candidate competence and performance data.*
2. *Develop a system of program approval that will allow for data analysis that will inform policy discussions and decisions as well as practices at the institutional level.*

After targeted work and collaboration with our higher education colleagues, we have developed a new system for approving licensure programs. This system, called Program Effectiveness Reports for Continuing Education (PERCA), will allow us to move away from an input-driven model to one that relies on actual candidate performance data and evidence that programs are engaging in continuous analysis and program improvement processes. The Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA) is central to the PERCA design. The TPA is an assessment similar to National Board Certification specific to pre-service teachers. It is a content-specific, classroom-based assessment that takes place primarily during student teaching. The TPA was designed and built by nation-leading researchers out of Stanford University and is a powerful classroom-based, content-specific assessment that captures teacher candidates' performance in planning, delivering instruction, assessment of student learning, reflection on their effectiveness in supporting student learning, and academic language.

The ability to work closely with our stakeholders over time is central to our success in any of these areas. Additionally, our ability to effect reforms that are sustainable and viable relies heavily on the fact that the Board of Teaching has purview over all teacher preparation and licensure policies; this allows us to work holistically, ensuring cohesion across systems, infrastructure, and communication efforts.

As such, we believe that the Board of Teaching serves a critical policy and regulatory role in Minnesota. We welcome any questions that you have about our structure and wish you the very best in your deliberations.

Best wishes,

Karen Balmer
Executive Director