



Educator Professional Standards Boards

Background

In June 2011, the program review committee authorized a study to identify and describe educator professional standards boards used in other states, and analyze options for use in Connecticut. In addition, the study was to explore how regulation of educators through a board would compare to Connecticut's regulation of other licensed professions.

Educator professional standards boards can advise on or be responsible for setting a range of standards (e.g., certification, ethical expectations) that affect teachers, administrators, and other certified personnel who work in schools. In addition, boards may handle administration of certification and educator preparation program approval (as well as oversight).

In Connecticut, both the standards-setting and administration areas are ultimately the responsibility of the State Board of Education and its administrative arm, the State Department of Education. Two educator professional standards boards, one each for teachers and administrators, are advisory on standards.

To complete this study, PRI staff gathered information and viewpoints from Connecticut education stakeholders, the state board of education and education department, executive branch departments involved in the regulation of other professions, and stakeholders and education departments in seven states similar to Connecticut.

The full study report is available at:
http://www.cga.ct.gov/pri/2011_epsb.asp

Main Findings

Connecticut regulates professions similar to educator in a variety of ways. Professional standards boards, where they exist, have sole authority only over discipline; their role in standards-setting is advisory and few have their own staff. Among the 36 professions that require a bachelor's degree, as does an educator license, 58% have a standards board. The two professions with mainly unionized public employees have standards boards that are under an executive branch department.

PRI staff found no research linking educator standards boards to better teacher or student performance. It is unclear whether any standards board would raise teacher standards and how that might impact performance.

States similar to Connecticut regulate educators through a range of governance models. Educator governance models are defined by the standards board's level of authority. States that have an educator standards board are nearly evenly split between autonomous boards, which make final decisions (19 states), and advisory boards, which give recommendations to the state boards of education (21 states). Four states have semi-autonomous boards, which jointly make decisions with the state boards of education, while six states have no board.

Each standards board model has strengths and weaknesses. In addition, each requires a different level of resources. PRI staff explored the models used by seven states similar to Connecticut, to develop an understanding of how each model might work.

PRI Recommendations

In accordance with the study's authorized scope, PRI staff developed options – not recommendations – for reforming Connecticut's current educator standards boards. There is some dissatisfaction, among stakeholders, with the current boards; many expressed a preference for different model. No single alternative, however, would satisfy all stakeholders.

PRI staff developed seven options that either address intended aims or issues voiced by various Connecticut stakeholders during the study, or were found through the case study states research. The options vary substantially:

1. Strong policy advisory role
2. Strong policy advisory role & limited administration
3. Policy originating (advisory or semi-autonomous)
4. Policy authority & limited administration
5. Certification policy authority & certification administration
6. Broad policy authority & preparation program administration
7. Full policy authority & administration

Several areas that would apply to any option selected (if any), were also discussed: decision-making on disciplining certified educators, board meetings, and board membership.

Summary Table. Options for Replacing Connecticut’s Current Educator Professional Standards Boards							
	1: Strong policy advisory role	2: Strong policy advisory role & limited admin.	3: Policy originating (advisory or semi-autonomous)	4: Policy authority & limited admin.	5: Certification policy authority & certification admin.	6: Broad policy authority & prep. program admin.	7: Full policy authority & admin.
<i>Authority level</i>	Advisory		Semi	Autonomous			
<i>Certification policy</i>	Advisory	Advisory	Develop (and joint decision)	Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomous
<i>Certification admin.</i>	-	Cert. decision appeals	-	Cert. decision appeals	Autonomous	-	Autonomous
<i>Prep. program policy</i>	Advisory	Advisory	Develop (and joint decision)	Autonomous	-	Autonomous	Autonomous
<i>Prep. program admin.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	Autonomous	Autonomous
<i>Discipline</i>	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible	At least appeals	Possible	Autonomous
<i>Other educator-related policies</i>	Advisory	Advisory	Develop (and joint decision)	Possible	-	Possible	Possible
<i>Increase stakeholder voice</i>	√ Somewhat	√	√	√	√	√	√ Greatly
<i>Board with authority</i>		√	√ (if semi)	√	√	√	√
<i>Decreased State Bd. of Ed. authority</i>		√ Slightly	√ (if semi)	√	√	√	√ Greatly
<i>Emphasizes:</i>	Strengthening current system via mandatory comment	Resolving certification disputes	Developing proposals based on educator experience	Educators developing and setting policy	All certification issues	All policy affects prep. programs	Educators fully setting & administering policy
<i>Staff and funding</i>	None	None	Minimal	Limited	Some	Some	Most
Notes: “Autonomous” means the board would develop and set policies by itself. “Semi-autonomous” or “Semi” means the board would have joint decision-making power with the State Board of Education. “Prep.” is preparation; “Admin.” is administrative functions (not administrators). “Other Educator-Related Policies” includes: ethical standards; professional expectations; professional development; and teacher evaluation. Discipline (e.g., certificate revocation) could be handled by a board charged only with that task, any of the board options, or the education department. Source: PRI staff							