DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 302 SP 041 551

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TITLE Lessons Learned from Becoming an Independent Standards Board.
PUB DATE 2003-06-08
NOTE 10p.; Speech given at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (Seattle, WA, June 8, 2003).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Standards; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Public Education; *Teacher Competencies; *Teacher Qualifications ; Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS Professionalization of Teaching

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses lessons learned from becoming an independent standards board. It begins by explaining that teachers lacked adequate academic preparation during the two World Wars and shortly thereafter. At the end of World War II, public education had to deal with poor pay, little job security, inadequate pensions, and inadequate and divergent standards for teaching. The move toward improving standards for teacher preparation began in the mid-1940s. States began to include teachers in their deliberations on the establishment of standards for teacher preparation and licensure. Concurrently, there were efforts to make teaching a bona fide profession. Independent teacher standards and practice boards began in California and Oregon in the early 1970s. This paper describes characteristics of a profession, lists eight kinds of teacher boards, then defines boards of teaching: independent professional standards and practices board; independent professional standards board; independent practices board; semi-independent professional standards and practices board; semi-independent professional standards board; advisory standards and practices board; advisory standards board; and advisory practices board. The paper concludes that the primary lesson learned is that independent standards boards have chalked up the greatest accomplishments in their work concerning teacher standards and practices. (SM)

Lessons Learned From Becoming An Independent Standards Board

John C. Board

2003

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Lessons Learned From Becoming an Independent Standards Board

Good morning.

Before I begin my presentation, I would like to thank all of you here whom I may have contacted last year when I was working on the NEA's *A Report on the Status of Professional Boards of Teaching in the United States*. That report was issued in March, and every person with whom I had contact in the 50 states has received a copy. Without your help, that job could not have been accomplished, and I thank you again for your valued assistance.

When Sam Swofford asked if I would agree to appear on this panel, I could not find any reason not to do so. Besides that, Sam is one of those people who has consistently been supportive of my work in gathering the information for the report I have just mentioned. However, when I agreed to be here, I did not know that *Lessons Learned From Becoming an Independent Standards Board* would be the topic. As a consequence, I have been scrambling and trying to put together some remarks that might be relevant and make sense.

I was trained to be a history teacher, and part of that training was in historical methodology. And, although it has been 23 years since I last taught, I still find myself greatly influenced by history and historical methodology. As a consequence, I do not see how one can approach the topic of this session without placing it into an historical context, and it is from that frame of reference that I will begin.

Years ago, and probably before some of you were born, I learned in sociology the meaning of the term, "cultural gap." A cultural gap exists when what one perceives to be true does not match the reality of a situation. With that in mind, I submit that a cultural gap exists between what the public and even some public education policy-makers perceive to be true about teachers, and what, in fact, is true.

Take for example the issue of teacher quality. Every time there has been a "crisis" in public education, one of the first targets has been classroom teachers and their lack of adequate academic preparation. And that has been the constant theme, especially following World War I, World War II, the launching of Sputnik, and, most recently, after the release of *A Nation at Risk*.

That teachers lacked adequate academic preparation during World War I, World War II, and the launching of Sputnik can be verified. The same cannot be held as true at the time when *A Nation at Risk* was released. Let me illustrate.

Percent of Elementary School Teachers With Less Than Four Years of College Preparation, 1953-1954[1]

Arizona	2.5
Texas	4.0
Florida	5.2
New York	6.0
New Jersey	7.0
North Carolina	7.0
Oklahoma	8.0
New Mexico	13.0
California	15.0
Louisiana	15.0
Nevada	15.0
Washington	16.0
Michigan	20.0
Delaware	20.8
Colorado	23.0

[1] National Education Association, Research Division, Advance Estimates of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools for the School Year 1953-54.

Georgia	23.0
Connecticut	26.0
Utah	26.0
Alabama	28.0
Rhode Island	29.9
South Carolina	31.0
United States	*31.8*
Maryland	32.4
Indiana	35.0
Illinois	40.0
Idaho	40.0
Oregon	43.0
Virginia	44.0
Massachusetts	45.0
Ohio	45.7
Kansas	46.0
Arkansas	48.0
Tennessee	48.0
Mississippi	50.0
Wyoming	50.0
Pennsylvania	54.0
Wisconsin	55.4
Kentucky	58.0
Maine	61.0
New Hampshire	61.0
Vermont	65.0
Montana	66.6
Nebraska	70.0
Minnesota	73.0
Iowa	84.0
North Dakota	90.0
South Dakota	99.0

Selected Characteristics of Public School Teachers: Spring 1961 to Spring 2000[2]

Item	1961	1966	1971	1981	1991	2000[3]
Less than a bachelor's	**14.6**	**7.0**	**2.9**	**.04**	**0.6**	**0**
Bachelor's	**61.9**		**69.6**	**50.1**	**46.3**	**100**
Master's or specialist degree	**23.1**		**27.1**	**49.3**	**52.6**	**64**
Doctor's	**0.4**		**0.4**	**0.3**	**0.5**	**1**

[2] *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1993, p. 79
[3] *National Center for Education Statistics, 2001.*

FOCUS ON STANDARDS

At the end of World War II, public education was faced with some persistent problems — poor pay, little job security, and inadequate pensions. Another issue was inadequate and divergent standards for the teaching profession. According to Ralph W. McDonald of California, "The annual supply of professionally prepared teachers emerging from the colleges had fallen to a record low, providing less than one-seventh the number of qualified graduates needed merely for normal replacement in the elementary schools . . . Less than half the persons employed as teachers in the public schools were graduates."[4]

At the 1946 NEA Representative Assembly, there was created the National Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification. As a result, the move toward improving the standards for teacher preparation was launched.

Now, should the name, National Education Association, prejudice you, it is necessary to state that, at that time, NEA was comprised of 30 different departments with membership from every constituency in education — School Administrators, higher education, various curriculum organizations, instruction and specialized groups, credit unions, and teachers. At that time, teachers per se, had little voice and say in the governance of the Association. Many of today's recognized education organizations had their origin in NEA, such as the American Associations of School Administrators, Elementary School Principals, Secondary-School Administrators, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the American Education Research Association, and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Be that as it may, it is safe to say that, until the mid-1970s, the National Education Association was the pre-eminent voice for public education in the United States.

With the foregoing in mind, there emerged, as a result of the work of NEA's National Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification, improvements in teacher preparation and certification. Concurrently, states began to include teachers, primarily in an advisory capacity, in their deliberations on the establishment of standards for teacher preparation and licensure. The first state to do so was Nebraska in 1947, which was followed by Illinois in 1951. Other states followed suit with two additional states in the 1960s, seven additional states in the 1970s, 13 additional states in the 1980s, 12 additional states in the 1990s, and two additional states in 2000. Today there are only seven states that do not include teachers in their deliberations concerning standards for teacher preparation and licensure.

What began in 1946 as an overall, concerted effort to improve the standards for teacher preparation and licensure also resulted in an effort to make teaching a bona fide profession. That is, to establish by statute independent teacher standards and practices boards. As has often been the case in changes in major American domestic policies, change started in the American West. As examples, I cite Woman Suffrage, which began in Wyoming, and the eight-hour work-day, which began in Oregon.

Independent teacher standards and practices boards began with the establishment of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing in 1970, and the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission in 1973. It was those two states that gave impetus to the idea that teaching, like other occupations that required specialized education and training, should be recognized in statute as a profession.

It was, I believe, Socrates who said that before one could discuss anything rationally, one had to define one's terms. With that in mind, let us look at a definition of "profession" and at the "characteristics of a profession."

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[4] McDonald, Ralph W. "The Professional-Standards Movement in Teaching — Its Origin, Purpose, and Future" in *The Journal of Teacher Education*, September 1951, Volume II, Number 3, p. 164.

What is a profession?

Profession: A vocation or occupation requiring special, usually advanced, education, knowledge, and skills; e.g. law or medical professions. Also refers to whole body of such profession.

The labor and skill involved in a profession is predominantly mental or intellectual, rather than physical or manual.

The term originally contemplated only theology, law, and medicine, but as applications of science and learning are extended to other departments of affairs, other vocations also receive the name, which implies professed attainments in special knowledge as distinguished from mere skill.[5]

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PROFESSION

There are certain characteristics, which are universal to any occupation recognized as a profession. They are as follows:

A profession is a client-centered societal entity that exists . . .

1. to protect and ensure the integrity of the profession, and
2. to protect the public from incompetent practitioners.

A profession is an occupation-related societal entity, which has . . .

1. a unique body of knowledge,
2. a set of special behaviors and skills required for competent practice,
3. a specialized preparation program (e.g., a required course of study within a professionally-approved institution),
4. required standards for admission into the profession (e.g., tests, assessments, induction),
5. required standards for continuance in the profession (e.g., professionally-prescribed continuing education),
6. an altruistic commitment to service, and
7. a commitment to life-long learning and self-improvement of one's knowledge, behavior, and skills.

A profession requires that pre-conditions be met to ensure competent practice. These include, but may not be limited to:

1. rights and freedom for the practitioner (e.g., compensation, working environment, tools and resources necessary for practice),
2. authority to make decisions concerning service to clients, and

[5] *Black's Law Dictionary: Definition of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern* by Henry Campbell Black, M.A., (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1990), p. 1210.

3. autonomy in the operation and application of the practitioner's knowledge and skills in his/her practice of the profession.

A profession is established in state statute, a statute that provides for . . .

1. a self-governing board comprised of a majority of licensed members of the profession,
2. conditions for the board's membership, appointment, terms, number of terms, and reasons for the removal of members from the board,
3. powers and duties of the board,
4. authority to employ staff, and
5. authority to determine and implement its own budget.[6]

With the foregoing in mind, the question must be asked, "Is teaching a bona fide profession?"

I am prepared to state that "yes" teaching is a profession, but in only nine states — California, Oregon, Minnesota, Iowa, Kentucky, Georgia, Indiana, Wyoming, and North Dakota — all of which have independent standards and practices boards.

Two other states — Hawaii and Oklahoma — are close to having teaching as a profession with their independent standards boards.

Three states — Alaska, South Dakota, and Florida — have independent practices boards, and it is their job to act upon disciplinary matters according to the standards set by non-teaching state boards of education or legislatures.

KINDS OF TEACHER BOARDS

Currently, as defined by characteristics of authority, there exist eight kinds of teacher boards. They are as follows:

1. 9 Independent Standards and Practices Boards
2. 2 Independent Standards Boards
3. 4 Independent Practices Boards
4. 2 Semi-Independent Standards and Practices Boards
5. 3 Semi-Independent Standards Boards
6. 8 Advisory Standards and Practices Boards
7. 18 Advisory Standards Boards
8. 1 Advisory Practices Boards

BOARDS OF TEACHING: DEFINED

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES BOARD

An independent professional standards board is one that . . .

- has been established by state statute,
- is accountable directly to the state legislature,
- has authority to set standards for the licensure of K-12 teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,

[6] *Establishing A State Board of Teaching: A Guide for State Associations (Revised)* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, October 2002), pp. 6 and 7.

- has authority to set standards for the preparation program for teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,
- has authority to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and the authority to revoke, suspend, or reinstate a practitioner's license
- has authority to hire staff, and
- has authority for the establishment and administration of its own budget.

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD

An independent professional standards board is one that . .

- has been established by state statute,
- is accountable directly to the state legislature,
- has authority to set standards for the licensure of K-12 teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,
- has authority to set standards for the preparation program of teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,
- has authority to hire staff, and
- has authority for the establishment and administration of its own budget.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICES BOARD

An independent practices board is one that . . .

- has been established by state statute,
- is accountable directly to the state legislature,
- has authority to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and the authority to revoke, suspend, or reinstate a practitioner's license,
- has authority to hire staff, and
- has authority for the establishment and administration of its own budget.

SEMI-INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES BOARD

A semi-independent professional standards and practices board is one that . . .

- has been established by state statute,
- is accountable directly to the governor, state legislature, or state board of education, singularly or in a combination thereof,
- has authority to set standards for the licensure of K-12 teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,
- has authority to set standards for the preparation program of teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,
- has authority to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and the authority to revoke, suspend, or reinstate a practitioner's license,
- has authority to hire staff, and
- has authority to establish and administer its own budget.

A semi-independent professional standards and practices board's authority is limited. In at least one or all of the foregoing criteria it does not have independent authority. In such cases, it can only recommend. As is often the case, the state board of education can reject, modify, or veto recommendations sent to it for its review and/or action.

SEMI-INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARD

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- has been established by state statute,
- is accountable directly to the governor, state legislature, or state board of education, singularly or in a combination thereof,
- has authority to set standards for the licensure of K-12 teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,
- has authority to set standards for the preparation program of teacher practitioners and/or school administrators,

- has authority to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and the authority to revoke, suspend, or reinstate a practitioner's license,
- has authority to hire staff, and
- has authority to establish and administer its own budget.

A semi-independent professional standards board's authority is limited. In at least one or all of the foregoing criteria it does not have independent authority. In such cases, it can only recommend. As is often the case, the state board of education can reject, modify, or veto recommendations sent to it for its review and/or action.

ADVISORY STANDARDS AND PRACTICES BOARD

An advisory standards and practices board is one that . . .

- has been established by state statute, administrative code, state board of education policy, or by the action of the chief state school officer,
- is accountable directly to the body or person responsible for its establishment,
- is responsible for only those items assigned to it (including the responsibility to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and to revoke, suspend, or reinstate a practitioner's license),
- is charged with making recommendations to the body or person to whom it is accountable,
- does not have authority to hire staff, and
- does not have authority to establish and administer its own budget.

ADVISORY STANDARDS BOARD

An advisory standards board is one that . . .

- has been established by state statute, administrative code, state board of education policy, or by the action of the chief state school officer,
- is accountable directly to the body or person responsible for its establishment,
- is responsible for only those items assigned to it,
- is charged with making recommendations to the body or person to whom it is accountable,
- does not have authority to hire staff, and
- does not have authority to establish and administer its own budget.

ADVISORY PRACTICES BOARD

An advisory practices board is one that . . .

- has been established by state statute, administrative code, state board of education policy, or by the action of the chief state school officer,
- is accountable directly to the body or person responsible for its establishment,
- is responsible only to adjudicate allegations brought against licensees and to recommend the revocation, suspension, or reinstatement of a practitioner's license to the body or person to whom it is accountable,
- does not have authority to hire staff, and
- does not have authority to establish and administer its own budget.[7]

QUESTION

We now get to the topic of this panel: *Lessons Learned From Becoming an Independent Standards Board.*

In response to that topic, I base my concluding remarks on the material that your states provided me for the 1999 publication of NEA's *A Report on the Status of Professional Boards of Teaching in the United States*, and the 2002 updated and revised edition of that same report.

[7] *A Report on the Status of Professional Boards of Teaching in the United States (Revised)* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, March 2002), pp. 8 and 9.

From what I have gleaned from the information contained in those two reports, it appears that the primary lesson learned concerning Independent Standards Boards is that they have chalked up the greatest accomplishments in their work concerning teacher standards and practices.

Two other states with semi-independent standards and practices boards — Maryland and Texas — have also, it appears, have made great strides as well as Delaware, which has a semi-independent standards board.

One advisory standards board — the New York State Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching — appears, also, to have made many good accomplishments.

Yet, it is those nine independent standards and practices boards and two independent standards boards, which stand out. "Why," you may ask, "is that the case?"

I submit that is the case for the following reasons.

1. The work of those nine boards is narrowly focused upon teacher standards and practices. That is their full-time agenda, and they are unfettered from other educational issues.

2. Those nine boards are free to devote all their energies and resources on teacher standards and practices. That is done consistently and in an on-going manner.

3. Decisions made by the nine boards are made in an efficient and timely manner. In essence, the staff's recommendations are made directly to the board, and there are no other competing interests with which they must contend. In short, teacher standards and practices issues are not lost within an "education bureaucracy."

4. The authority of the board on standards and practices issues, on the hiring of staff, and on the management of its budget frees it to do its work.

5. The boards are comprised of highly educated and experienced classroom teachers as well as others with significant interest and expertise concerning public education.

6. Those nine boards report directly to their legislatures. Thus, teacher standards and practices are recognized and dealt with as "stand-alone" issues. In other words teacher standards and practices are not lost in discussions concerning such things as "student testing," "transportation," "special education," the implementation of "No Child Left Behind," "prayer in school," etc.

Whatever weaknesses exist within independent standards and practices boards are, I submit, the same that may be found within any human institution. It is the nature of humankind and its institutions to be imperfect. Nothing more; nothing less.

In closing, let me again thank you and your states for the assistance you provided me in 1999 and 2002 as I worked for NEA in the development and publications of the two documents, *A Report on the Status of Professional Boards of Teaching in the United States.* I doubt if I will be pestering you in another two years, but I have ceased trying to predict what will and will not happen in my life.

I wish you well.

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