

**New Structure for Leadership Certification & Endorsements  
Minutes  
Monday, October 27, 2008**

**Leadership Certification & Endorsements Co-Chairs**

Dr. Margaret Trybus, Concordia University  
Scott Day, University of Illinois at Springfield (not present)

**Leadership Certification & Endorsements Team Members in Attendance**

John Murphy, ICPEA & Northern Illinois University  
Jim Harrington, Dominican University  
Carlene Lutz, Illinois Federation of Teachers  
Darlene Ruscitti, Regional Superintendent  
John Hunt, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville  
Nick Osborne, Eastern Illinois University  
Brian Schwartz, Illinois Principals Association  
Dennis Williams, Illinois State Board of Education

**Review of Charge**

The charge to the New Structure for Leadership Certification and Endorsement Redesign Team is to develop a draft leadership continuum structure in Illinois that will provide career ladders for teachers, other administrative positions and principals. Special consideration should be given to 1) a specific principal endorsement which requires preparation for school improvement through instructional leadership and should be a prerequisite for the superintendent endorsement; 2) recommendations regarding the number of years of teaching experience for entrance into the principal preparation program; and 3) recommendations regarding the number of years between issuance of the principal endorsement and becoming a principal (shelf life of the endorsement).

**Introductions and Goals**

Following the introductions of leadership and certification endorsements team members, the group defined the goals for the morning session. The main goal was to cover the second and third parts of the charge and draft recommendations and rationale before lunch. After lunch, the goal would be to take a closer look at the principal endorsement and what the differences would be if a tiered system would be put into effect.

**Charge 2:** Recommendations for the number of Years Experience for entrance in programs and at the completion of program.

**Emerging Questions:**

1. How specific does the team want to be regarding the two year requirement?
2. For the purpose of the discussion, does two years of teaching mean two years in the classroom or legal equivalent? Teaching experience or currently accepted equivalent for two years is the basis of our discussion this morning. There is a large problem of inconsistency here.
3. Is experience needed before one starts a principal program?
4. What experience is needed before an individual is certified?
5. What, then, is teaching?

6. What about Bachelor's Degree holders taking Master's level classes for professional development? We do not want students wasting time. Admission to programs is different than taking coursework within a department.

John Murphy stated that based on the previous reports, rather than say what the years are that a student must have, the idea is to say before anyone can be granted a principal's certificate, and he or she must hold the standard teaching certificate or its equivalent.

The **baseline consensus: more teaching experience is necessary prior to the granting of certification.** While all members of the group agree on this, the number of years or achievement of credential must be more clearly defined.

### **Recommendations**

- 2 years teaching experience prior to program, then admission to the program and 2 years completion for a total of four years
- 4 years of teaching should be the standard measurement attained prior to the issuing of a principal certificate
  - The hope here is that universities will look at the standards for admission and this will be driven by that 4 year requirement.
- The group decided that ultimately, without being too specific, this is the direction (4 years) that we need to be heading in.

### **Rationale**

- Theory/Experience match is needed and vital.
- Quality of discourse in university settings will be enhanced by candidates who have experience in teaching.
- School experience is very important in a principal clearly understanding his or her role.
- School experience is also vital to achieving skills needed to lead.
- How can one be an instructional leader if he or she has limited experienced or has never taught? How can you evaluate teachers if you don't understand teaching?
- Respect/credibility in understanding the culture and climate of the classroom – the systemic organization of schools.
- The value of supervision experience.
- Understanding the needs of classrooms overall (management, budget, allocations of staff).
- Set-up for success: can students who are in their younger twenties handle the responsibilities in order to be successful? What about professional maturity-this evolutionary process (maturing as a professional within the profession)?
- Four years currently necessary for standard certificate (not a current reference point but a historic reference point)
- Symmetry with the number 4 historically frames the opportunity to align the current teaching system as a progression of experience leading to developmental readiness.
- As a result of this recommendation we encourage universities to review entrance program requirements and the duration of their academic principal preparation programs to align with this recommendation.

**Other areas of focus:** there is not a final product at the exiting of our program: our hope is that we create within the overwhelming majority the understanding of the basic tenets of being successful in the Principalship. Continuous improvement for lifelong learning.

## Finally an overarching theme emerged for the recommendations: **Basic Tenets for Success in the Principalship**

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The next conversation focused on equivalent experiences. The following questions were addressed:

- Is it a problem?
- Is this likely to hurt our proposal?
- Would a principalship program help someone who had no context?

The framework for this conversation assumed that before you become a teacher you have to be able to lead. Therefore given the present operational parameters, the group decided not to change the definition of teaching experience, but recommended changing the number of years before principal certification. Subsequently to this report, future consideration of what constitutes teaching experience may need to be examined. The group agreed at this point to move on from this question with the above understanding and moved on to the third part of the charge.

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**Charge 3:** Recommendations regarding the number of years between issuance of the principal endorsement and becoming a principal (shelf life of the endorsement).

Currently, Type 75 certification requires little or no maintenance. However, what about individuals with other administrative roles other than the principal? The term 400 (principals) vs. the 4000 (general administration certificate holders) was used frequently in this conversation. To be a principal, you must have a type 75. For all other positions to evaluate, one must have type 75. Function defines the title. Does the job require a type 75? Go back to the job description. Certificate is the driving force.

**Recommendation:** define a shelf life. The group decided that there needs to be a differentiation between general administration and principal endorsement before a shelf life can be defined.

The following questions emerged in the shelf life discussion:

- How many years can you not be working as a principal?
- What is the period of non-engagement in order for the certificate not to be valid?
- What is the value of current practice versus theoretical practice?
- The initial driver of this charge: how long will a certificate remain viable?
- Is it a problem the way it stands?
- Can we legitimately expect a person whose credential has lied dormant to be currently admitted in to the practice? This goes back to the non-engagement question.
- How long may a principal certificate stay in force when it is not used?
- Can we give exemptions for other experiences?
- You have gone through the program but your job is not principal. Does this count as experience, active engagement?
- How many periods of non engagement then recertification do you give before the certificate is ultimately gone?

The group concluded that if he or she is serving in a position that requires use of the type 75 certificate; therefore the certificate is being used (engaged). The following parameters need to be defined: if a certificate holder is not engaged in the profession after \_\_\_\_\_ years, holder must complete \_\_\_\_\_. After \_\_\_\_\_ more years, must complete \_\_\_\_\_. If the person is issued a credential but is not actively using it in a supervisory position, at the end of three years there needs to be some kind of update.

Before lunch, the group agreed that anyone who holds a type 75 certification (or the principal endorsement) and is not engaged as an administrator for a certain period of time (to be defined) must go through some kind of update in order for the certification to be valid. The question still stands that if we are doing all of this to be regulatory, is it necessary? Where / who is the authority to regulate this?

The next level on this issue: what other values need to be imparted in this situation?

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After lunch, the group briefly reviewed the topic discussed before lunch. The group noted that we must revisit the idea of reactivation/activation being in the principal's area. Then, the group moved to the first charge.

**Question: should there be a special principal endorsement?**

Dr. Trybus distributed a handout reviewing content-area standards for principals and also reviewed the discussion from the previous meeting.

The group discussed the fact that if there is no change in the principal endorsement, then there is still a mismatch between the individual who gets the certificate and has no intention of using it and the individual who intends to be a principal all along. It's not the state that has changed the nature of the certificate, it is the district. The market actually has changed the certificate.

As the group was reviewing the charge, there was a discrepancy in how the charge was read. While trying to understand the nature of the charge, some group members were unclear on how to read the specific principal endorsement clause.

It was presented that districts do not hire apprentice principals. Dr. Trybus noted that the full year residency is the best way to fully integrate knowledge from the preparation programs into the practical environment. A program with a dividing point for principal candidates and general education candidates could be the solution. The capstone then could be made into a more rigorous piece of the certification. However, multiple levels of access to the administrator position may be difficult for incoming individuals who may not know exactly what they want to do at the beginning of furthering his or her education.

Dr. Trybus stated that there is an assumption that what we currently have is not working for principals because of the issue of student learning. The answer is not more coursework, but more in-depth. However, many principal programs do not have the capacity to add depth, but do have the ability to add courses. Student performance will not improve unless teacher performance improves. Therefore, it was presented that if principals do not understand student learning then how can they be an advocate for quality teaching?

Darlene Ruscitti brainstormed that everyone could take the teacher leadership endorsement, then forks off into the principalship and/or other certifications, if desired. Everyone gets the same foundation.

**Questions:**

- What is the value or transactional reward?
- Does the current program serve the need?

- Have we had the principal mentoring program out there long enough to see the results
- Are these needs being met by these other forms of education?
- What will be the role of the general administration certificate if a specific principals program is required?

**General Recommendations** from discussion of the first section of the charge:

- Instructional improvement made a more central core of program.
- Exploration of the teacher leadership endorsement to recognize the need for other administrative positions to be qualified in supervision.
- We cannot look at the principal certification without a consideration of the general administration type.

The group decided that there needed to be more clarity of the charge because the charge had some specific points regarding the principalship certification and left out areas of consideration within the general administration certification.

Finally In order to clearly present the groups findings to the group at the end of the day, the following statement was designed: **Given the fact that we have now honed in on these two recommendations, we feel that the two recommendations will elevate and focus improvement in the general administration type 75 endorsement. And given the fact that we do not know the effects of the statewide mentoring program as it improves the principalship, at this point in time we have not come to the consensus that we find a need for a special principalship program.**

At 2:31 pm, the group reconvened in the Redwood/Sierra conference room to share draft recommendations.