

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY EDUCATION CURRICULA STUDY COMMITTEE

Study Assignment

A study and review of the coordination of undergraduate curricula at the public colleges of education relative to K-12 content standards.

Summary of Interim

The committee worked under the premise of ensuring the entities responsible for educating, regulating, licensing, and representing South Dakota teachers were working collaboratively to provide the best education to South Dakota's children. In gathering that information, many entities provided testimony on their role in producing effective and qualified teachers that would meet and exceed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act requirements.

The Board of Regents explained that South Dakota has five public institutions with approved teacher programs – Black Hills State University (BHSU), Dakota State University (DSU), Northern State University (NSU), South Dakota State University (SDSU), and University of South Dakota (USD). The programs are approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents and by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). There are thirty-five teacher programs throughout the regental system.

The committee learned that a good teacher isn't just "book smart", but must also be able to determine methods of teaching to different learning styles and have the ability to relate to children in the classroom. The Board of Regents uses many tools to determine if a prospective teacher will be an effective teacher. Among the assessment tools are the PRAXIS exam (a set of rigorous and carefully validated assessments that provides accurate, reliable information for use in making licensing decisions); and the pedagogical exam.

The Board of Regents maintains an on-going partnership with the South Dakota Board of Education, local teachers, and local schools for continuing professional development. There is also a great deal of work and cooperation between the Board of Regents and the Department of Education to ensure South Dakota teachers are receiving adequate training.

Dr. Rick Melmer, Secretary of the Department of Education (DOE), reviewed their responsibilities in approving and awarding teacher certification. The Department plays a vital role in providing professional development opportunities to all teachers--public, private and tribal.

Mr. Robert Whitehead, Executive Director of the South Dakota Education Association (SDEA), said that enhancing teacher programs, eliminating redundancy, and making sure teachers have the necessary tools to educate children are some of the responsibilities of the SDEA.

The committee's second meeting was two days and focused on teacher organizations and public testimony. Dr. Tom Hawley, Dakota State University, testified that the South Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (SDACTE) works closely with the South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) and other school organizations to ensure the administrative rules governing teacher preparation are meeting the requirement of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). SDACTE determines scoring on the state's teacher certification test and

works with the South Dakota Department of Education (DOE) and the Board of Regents on the Teacher Quality Enhancement project.

The committee heard public testimony from Mark DeVries, who is a parent of alternative school students. Alternative students must be tested, but the accepted testing instrument and testing environment vary among home and alternative schools. The committee asked if Mr. DeVries thought home and alternative school children should be required to be taught by a certified teacher, which is not the law currently. Mr. DeVries said his philosophy is that it is the state's responsibility to provide access to quality education; however, it is the parents' responsibility to determine which educational setting and what educator would be best for their child.

The third and final meeting was held in Pierre and focused on collaboration in the higher education system. Dr. Lesta Turchen, South Dakota Board of Regents, outlined the many ways the universities are working collaboratively on numerous programs. Black Hills State University (BHSU), South Dakota State University (SDSU) and the University of South Dakota (USD) all provide scientists and experts in the K-12 education field to work on the Science-on the Move Mobile Laboratory Project which travels to remote school districts and works directly with students for several days.

DSU and USD established a joint master's degree program in educational technology. Each university teaches two of the courses and share in teaching the fifth course. Northern State University (NSU) and BHSU created the associate degree program in paraprofessional education. A person can now become certified as a paraprofessional in a K-8 classroom in two semesters.

Chair Hunhoff distributed a survey conducted in September to gain information from teachers regarding their thoughts on whether they had received adequate preparation to properly teach children. Chair Hunhoff thought the comments were good and highlighted some trends. Time, money, and availability of courses were listed as obstacles in obtaining the "highly qualified" teacher status. More time is needed in college learning classroom and time management skills and discipline techniques. The survey can be found on the LRC website at <http://legis.state.sd.us/interim/2004/index.cfm>.

Listing of Legislation Adopted

No legislation was proposed by the committee. The Committee concluded that the present occurring processes were addressing the goals that were identified at the beginning of the study. There may be specific legislation brought forth by members of the Committee on selected topics discussed.

Summary of Meeting Dates and Listing of Committee Members

The committee met on June 21, August 9 and 10, and September 20, 2004. All meetings were in the State Capitol Building in Pierre.

Committee members included Representative Jean Hunhoff, Chair; Senator Marguerite Kleven, Vice Chair; Senators Jerry Apa, Robert Duxbury, and Clarence Kooistra; and Representatives Stanford Adelstein, Rebekah Craddock, Cooper Garnos, Alice McCoy, Ben Nesselhuf, Thomas Van Norman, Hal Wick, and Ron Williamson.

Staff members included Ann M. Mehlhaff, Principal Fiscal Analyst; and Teri Retrum, Senior Legislative Secretary.