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The Washington Professional Educator Standards Board: Scope of Authority and Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Washington Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) was created in 2000 legislation¹ to oversee new teacher assessments, recommend alternative methods of certification, and advise the State Board of Education (SBE), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the legislature on issues pertaining to preparation and professional development of educators.

The Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) to study the scope of authority and governance of the PESB.² The role of educators in governing educator quality was examined in all 50 states. Eight case study states were researched in detail to gain more in-depth information.

Findings

- **The main impetus for the creation of professional educator standards boards has come from educators, primarily teachers.** Educators have promoted the creation of standards boards to obtain responsibility for developing policies governing their profession, similar to other professions such as health care.
- **Eighteen states, including Washington, have delegated some type of policymaking authority to an educator standards board.** The remaining states have standing or ad hoc advisory committees of educators and utilize their advice and expertise on issues of preparation and development.
- **Washington's PESB is similar to most other educator standards boards in size, method of appointment, length of term, and types of professions regulated.** Washington's PESB has 19 members appointed by the governor for four-year terms and one ex officio, non-voting member, the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The PESB oversees teachers, educational staff associates, and principals.
- **Washington's PESB differs from most other educator standards boards in scope of authority and level of decision-making responsibility.** Washington's PESB has decision-making authority for new teacher assessments only. Most professional educator standards boards with responsibility for assessments also have responsibility

¹ Engrossed House Bill 2760 was signed into law as Chapter 39, Laws of 2000.

² Engrossed House Bill 2760.

for setting standards for certification. The most common areas of responsibility assigned to professional educator standards boards are setting standards for certification, establishing assessments for initial certification, and setting criteria for continuing certification.

Washington's PESB also differs from most other educator standards boards in nomination of members. Although a few states involve legislative leadership in appointing members, only Washington's PESB has four of its eight teacher representatives nominated by the legislative caucuses.

- **The eight case study states are equally engaged in efforts to improve educator quality regardless of the model of governance they use.** Research is limited on the effectiveness of one governance model over another. However, all eight case study states demonstrated significant efforts in the last five years to create rigorous systems of educator preparation and development with high levels of input from educator professions.
- **The case studies highlighted the following issues for policymakers as they consider alternative models of scope of authority and governance for Washington's PESB:**
 - ✓ What role should educators play in policymaking?
 - ✓ Would assigning the PESB decision-making authority for certain core issues create more consistent standards and expectations for educators?
 - ✓ Should the PESB *improve* or *police* educator professions?
 - ✓ How valuable is PESB involvement in decisions made primarily at the local level?
 - ✓ Are resources (funding and staff) sufficient to fulfill PESB responsibilities?

Options for Washington's PESB

Three options are outlined for the scope of authority and governance of Washington's PESB. Each option differs in how it addresses the issues for consideration raised by the case studies.

- **Option A** represents the scope of authority and governance under the **current statute**. The PESB has **advisory authority over a wide range of issues and decision-making authority for only one issue**, new teacher assessments.

Implications: This model limits educators' decision-making role regarding core issues of educator preparation and certification and splits responsibility for these issues between the PESB and the SBE. The PESB's scope of authority covers a wide range of issues, including educator discipline and locally determined employment issues.

- Under **Option B**, the **PESB's advisory authority for core issues of preparation and certification of educators could be converted to decision-making authority** in addition to its current responsibility for teacher assessment. Decision-making authority over certain professional development issues could also be assigned if resources permit. Option B removes the advisory role of the PESB for educator discipline and suggests either an advisory role, or no role, in other employment issues.

Implications: Option B grants educators a higher degree of decision-making authority over the core issues of preparation and certification. Consistency in standards and expectations for educators might be improved. However, this would reduce the SBE's decision-making responsibility for these issues. OSPI's responsibility would also be diminished if the PESB made decisions for certain professional development issues. The PESB could focus on improving, rather than policing, educator professions by allowing a current advisory committee on educator discipline to continue.

- **Option C** assigns the PESB **decision-making responsibility for the same issues as Option B**. However, the **SBE could be authorized to review PESB decisions regarding educator preparation and certification**. The SBE could reject PESB decisions on educator preparation and certification and send them back for amendment.

Implications: While educators are given more decision-making authority over the core issues of preparation and certification, the SBE review provides an additional check and balance. However, the process of review could delay action on decisions.