



## **7 OBJECTIVE 9: CONSOLIDATIONS OR REDUCTIONS**

**Objective 9:** Identify agencies that could be terminated/consolidated, cost reductions, and potential programs and cost reductions.

### **Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objective 9**

Public Works found a key area where the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) could consolidate offices to yield cost reductions. The review team recommends that DEED eliminate duplication of work processes between DEED, the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), and the University of Alaska's teacher preparation programs; and amend Article 5 of the Alaska Statutes, Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the PTPC's work into the Teacher Certification Office's work. Fiscal implications of consolidation are described at the end of this chapter, below **Recommendations 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3.**

### **7.1 CONSOLIDATION OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION (PTPC)**

#### **Findings**

There are inefficiencies and some duplication of effort in the management of educator licensing responsibilities between the PTPC and DEED's Teacher Certification Office. Examples are noted in the following paragraphs. The PTPC duplicates some services of the University of Alaska's teacher education programs, such as providing professional ethics training to candidates for graduation from these programs. These inefficiencies and duplications of effort generate unnecessary personnel time, travel, and facilities expenses.

State education agencies and/or state boards of education are responsible for issuing educator credentials in the form of a professional certificate or license. States routinely have statutory and regulatory mechanisms for reviewing allegations of educator misconduct and for taking actions that may include suspension or revocation of a certificate. The PTPC is a semi-autonomous entity that serves this function for the State of Alaska and for DEED.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>AS Title 14, Chapter 20, Article 5. Professional Teaching Practices Act.



Multiple interviewees report that, while there is a generally smooth flow of work processes between the PTPC and DEED's Teacher Certification Office, there are instances of unnecessary procedures on the part of the PTPC that could and should be addressed by DEED. For example, both the commissioner of education and the executive director of the PTPC can initiate license revocation proceedings. Denial of a license by DEED can be appealed to the PTPC, which can overrule the commissioner. This process is acknowledged by a key agency leader as unusual; this individual further reported that the shifting between the agencies of responsibilities related to sanctioning licenses and reporting such sanctions is duplication of effort. If the DEED Office of Teacher Certification determines from the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse that an educator's certificate has been sanctioned in another state, the office upholds the sanction in Alaska. The application is automatically referred to the PTPC office for investigation and adjudication. The PTPC's action is final, rather than advisory to the certificate-issuing entity, which is DEED. It would streamline the process for DEED to take original sanction action, and for the State Board to make the final decision on a challenged sanction.

As noted above, DEED does not make the final determination when a certification candidate challenges a sanction; the PTPC does this. However, DEED is then responsible for reporting those sanctions against certificates to NASDTEC.

It is an inefficient division of responsibility for the PTPC to make final rulings on sanctions against education licenses, while DEED is responsible for the required public reporting on these rulings. There is occasionally excessive lag time and there are occasional errors in the reporting of these sanctions as this information moves between the PTPC and DEED's Teacher Certification Office.

The PTPC provides information about professional standards, and the director frequently meets with pre-service educators to explain the ethical requirements of the profession and the responsibilities and practices of the PTPC. Teacher education programs also address information and training on ethics in professional practice.

Nothing in this finding should be construed to suggest that there should not be a stringent system for addressing educator misconduct. Educators should be held



to high standards of professional and ethical conduct. When educators violate these standards, they should be held accountable, and if found guilty of such violations, should be subject to appropriate sanctions related to their professional certificates. Similarly, educators who are erroneously charged with ethical misconduct are entitled to a fair and due process through which they may be exonerated. These processes should flow smoothly, effectively, and efficiently.

DEED addresses educator misconduct through a system that is unnecessarily expensive and elaborate given the relatively small population of educators, and the significant fiscal challenges faced by the state. Other states manage these processes in a more efficient, yet effective manner.

### **Recommendation 7.1.1**

**Eliminate duplication of work processes by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) and university teacher preparation programs, and by PTPC and DEED. (Tier 1)**

The responsibility for providing pre-service educators with information on professional ethics should be assigned to and carried out by university programs of preparation. University programs of educator preparation should orient candidates to codes of conduct and ethical practice.

If this recommendation is implemented, both the time and travel associated with the PTPC director's meetings with educator candidates to explain such provisions can be reduced. Key entities report that the director spends "a lot" of time on this process. The executive director's position and time represent an expenditure of state resources that should not be necessary if the educator preparation programs uniformly and effectively manage this responsibility.

If the recommendation is not implemented, then the director should ensure that preparation program faculty and certification liaisons are properly oriented to educator standards and to any related changes (rather than provide direct orientation to educator candidates.) To do so, the PTPC director can deliver a trainer-of-trainers model and a system of electronically communicated updates. Such a process is less expensive than direct provision of such content to educator candidates by the director.



### **Recommendation 7.1.2**

**Amend AS 14.20.370-510 Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the Teacher Certification Office's work. (Tier 2)**

DEED addresses educator misconduct through a system that is unnecessarily expensive and elaborate given the relatively small population of educators and the significant fiscal challenges faced by the state. The review team acknowledges that a proactive and effective process for addressing educator misconduct is essential. Other states manage these processes in a more efficient, yet effective manner. A number of states have elected to manage these processes within the state education agency, and do so effectively. A full-time administrator role need not be dedicated to dealing with educator misconduct. Other states with significantly larger educator populations effectively manage these processes with a smaller commitment of professional positions.

Given the inefficiencies of information flow, work processes, and divided reporting responsibilities, the state should consolidate the responsibilities for managing certificate sanctions into DEED's Teacher Certification Office. As noted above in **Recommendation 7.1.1**, the responsibility for providing pre-service educators with information on professional ethics should be assigned to and carried out by university programs of preparation.

Further given the costs of maintaining separate facilities and support staff for PTPC, consolidation of the PTPC into DEED's Teacher Certification Office will save funding currently expended for a support staff position and PTPC facilities. An assistant state attorney general currently manages the legal work for the PTPC, and this need not be altered by these recommendations. Reductions in the work responsibilities of the director, noted above in **Recommendation 7.1.1** should allow for these responsibilities to be managed by a part-time administrator, and should further result in reduced time and travel costs for this administrator.



### **Recommendation 7.1.3**

**Amend AS 14.20.370-510 such that the PTPC is advisory to the State Board of Education, rather than an entity that renders final administrative decisions in matters of certificate sanctions for educator misconduct. (Tier 2)**

The current line of authority for sanctioning certificates bypasses the entity charged with setting standards for educator preparation, practice, and conduct. This creates an unnecessary procedural step, presumes that the entity making the decision is not objective, and, in the case of the Alaska PTPC and DEED, creates duplication of effort across multiple agencies. Boards are deemed to be legitimate tribunals for such matters. By making the PTPC advisory to the State Board of Education in matters related to sanctions against educator certificates, legal challenges related to the full process of certificate administration would be managed more efficiently in one unit.

State education agencies elsewhere offer models that reflect the structures and processes encompassed in the recommendations above. For example, the state of North Carolina:

- Assigns responsibility for sanctions against educator licenses to the North Carolina State Board of Education;
- Engages an advisory committee of teachers and administrators to review and make recommendations to the State Board about cases involving certificate sanctions; and
- Manages the work through an assistant attorney general and staff attorney who will commit a portion of their time to this work.

According to DEED, PTPC is funded by receipts; consolidation of the process management for sanctioning educator credentials through DEED should not impact eligibility for any federal funding. It is anticipated that implementation of **Recommendations 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3** will save a minimum of \$100,000 in the state's general fund. The current total position cost for the PTPC secretary is \$74,918, all of which would be saved if these recommendations were implemented. The director's total position cost is \$145,403. Even a partial reduction to  $\frac{3}{4}$  position status would result in approximately \$30,000 savings. Additional savings can be achieved through additional components of the



recommendations outlined above (e.g., the elimination of a separate facility for the PTPC and reduced travel costs for the director).

The PTPC is funded through certification fees collected by the state to help defray the costs associated with educator credentialing. Among these costs are those associated with sanctions against educator credentials. The state should continue to collect these fees since, under the recommendation, the sanctioning process would continue within DEED, and through the Alaska State Board of Education.

The review team notes that the investigative role should not be duplicated through the implementation of this recommendation. Under both current practice and under the recommendation, an investigation occurs, and a body (whether the PTPC or the State Board of Education) acts. The processing of sanctions within the same agency (DEED) is expected to be more efficient than the current flow of work back and forth between two agencies –where leaders acknowledge that duplication of effort exists. Under the current process, the automatic investigation and adjudication of any application puts PTPC in the position of reviewing every denial by DEED. Under the recommended system, DEED staff would execute the denial, the system can transition to one in which only those denials that are appealed are adjudicated. The state board, with a recommendation from an advisory committee of practitioners (a streamlined PTPC composed of practitioners), is already part of the agency responsible for these processes. In personnel matters, a board can serve as an impartial tribunal.