

Texas Education Agency
Divisions of Educator Credentialing and Investigations
Workshop for the State Board for Educator Certification
Minutes
January 10, 2008

Dr. Glynn opened the meeting with announcements about the reorganization of Texas Education Agency. He announced changes in his role as a new Deputy Commissioner of School District Leadership and Educator Quality. Dr. Loonam will now be working more closely with the Board. Carla Valadez will replace Dr. Loonam as Director of Educator Standards.

Dr. Glynn gave a status report on the fingerprinting process as it relates to Senate Bill 9. Dr. Cain volunteered Pearland ISD to be the next district on the list for fingerprinting.

Ms. Pogue advised there will be a Legislative Committee meeting following this training workshop. Dr. Glynn stated that the Board could not hold a Legislative Committee meeting due to Open meetings rules.

Dr. Cain welcomed board members and visitors to the January 10 Board Training session at 1:11 p.m.

I. Division Structure

Mr. Phillips presented data regarding the Investigations Division. Mr. Phillips presented the division's organizational chart, and gave a brief description and functions of each of the three units within the division, fingerprinting, criminal history, and investigations.

II. Review of Program Data and Discussion of Program Issues

Mr. Phillips informed the board of each unit's structure and responsibilities. The fingerprinting unit's main focus is fingerprinting. The program is currently in place at Austin ISD, with both the certified and non-certified individuals. Mr. Phillips advised board members as of January 1, 2008 all non-certified employees must be fingerprinted. A system has been developed to submit this information, working with the IT section, school districts, DPS and DPS vendors to guarantee that this system will allow people to submit individuals as they come in, receive authorization to be fingerprinted, and set up an appointment for the actual fingerprinting. Once history, criminal or non-criminal, has been received from the DPS or FBI, the fingerprinting process is complete and the histories are sent to the criminal history unit.

The criminal history unit's main function is to conduct the initial review of all criminal histories. The program specialists will screen all criminal histories that have been received as a result of the fingerprinting process, and will forward, if warranted, to investigations. The investigators conduct investigations into criminal histories for non-certified individuals to determine if they are employable under guidelines set by Senate Bill 9. The investigators also

investigate all applicants for certification to determine if an individual should be recommended for approval of certification. After the review stage, investigators will conduct investigations to determine initial certification suitability by applying the standards found in the Texas Administrative Code Chapter §249.12. The investigators will conduct investigations into reported criminal histories of non-certified to determine employability by a school district by applying standards found in Section 22.085 of the Texas Education Code. Reported criminal histories involving existing certified educators are forwarded to the investigations unit for review.

One of the benefits of this system of fingerprinting is the “wrap back” feature. Once fingerprinted, if an educator is arrested, SBEC will be notified.

The investigations unit is responsible for investigating all leads forwarded from the criminal history unit, all complaints of misconduct and all reported criminal histories against certified educators. The unit is responsible for determining if an individual’s certificate should be sanctioned. The investigator will try to negotiate an agreed settlement with the educator; however, if an agreement cannot be reached, the investigator will forward the investigation to the legal department.

Mr. Phillips provided data of number of fingerprints completed from Fiscal Year 2003-2004 to date; the number of opened investigations year-to-date in 2007-2008 budget year; the number of investigations year-to-date opened by case code in 2007-2008 budget year; the number of investigations year-to-date completed in 2007-2008 budget year; the number of investigations year-to-date opened in 2007-2008 budget year by case code; investigations completed year-to-date for 2007-2008 budget year by disposition.

Mr. Phillips also provided copies of Senate Bill 9 as well as Texas Education Code and Texas Administrative Code frequently used in the division. Board members discussed the lack of enforcement of the rules that are used by investigations and fingerprinting staff.

Mr. Phillips and staff are working with David Anderson, TEA General Counsel, to address rules for contractors who work in the school districts.

Mr. Phillips responded to questions from the Board.

Board members took a short break.

Dr. Cain called the meeting back to order at 2:13 p.m.

III. Review of Credentialing Division

Mr. Echazarreta presented data on the Credentialing Division including an organizational chart and annual performance data.

IV. Review of Program Data and Discussion of Program Issues

Mr. Echazarreta provided data regarding the number of Educator Certificates issued over a three year period (2005-2007), showing a breakdown in teachers by certification area, professional student support services, teachers teaching out of their certification fields and master teacher certificates. Mr. Echazarreta will have staff meet to review the certificates issued and compare to the current certification exams and determine why certificates are being issued where there are no exams available.

Data was provided showing critical shortage areas along with charts identifying the low volume certificates issued. Discussion followed regarding recruitment and retention of teachers. Board members stated they needed flexibility in hiring and the Temporary Teacher Certificate may provide this flexibility.

The Credentialing staff is working with the IT staff to run queries to pull accurate data consistently.

Dr. Cain adjourned the meeting at 3:24 p.m.