

0064-1

Redesign of Teacher Education in Oregon

David Myton, Executive Director, Teacher Standards and Practices Commission
H. Del Schalock, Research Professor, Teaching Research Division



The preparation of and continuing professional development for Oregon's teachers has changed. During the past decade the state has moved steadily toward the adoption of standards-based teacher preparation and licensure.

This has occurred in two phases. The first set of changes occurred in the last half of the 1980s with the adoption of an "outcome-based" approach to licensure. This paralleled the state's first design for outcome-based schooling which laid a foundation for the subsequent 1991 restructuring of Oregon's educational system. The second phase of changes occurred over the past four years in response to the 1991 redesign of K-12 education. The essential features of both sets of these changes to accommodate the demands of standards-based schooling are outlined in the paragraphs which follow.

The 1980 Redesign

Most of the nation's current teacher preparation programs and criteria for teacher licensure focus on what teachers know or are able to perform rather than on what they are able to accomplish. Students of teaching are expected to master the subject areas they are to teach, become proficient in the skills of teaching, and demonstrate their ability to translate knowledge and skill into teaching practices that truly engage a classroom of pupils in learning activities. Only rarely, however, are measures taken of how productive

these learning activities actually are, that is, of the extent to which they foster learning gains. With the exception of Oregon, no state requires that such evidence be used as a basis for licensure.

After 1987 Oregon moved away from its long-standing program-approval approach of assuring the quality of teachers entering the work force to one that focused on teacher accomplishments. The latter step, labeled an "outcome-based approach to teacher preparation and licensure", anticipated the policy shift that has now been taken by many states and currently is advocated by the national association for teacher licensing agencies.

In addition to being the first state to make this policy shift, Oregon's definition of outcomes has always been unique in its insistence upon evidence of learning gains by pupils taught as one of the accomplishments teachers need to demonstrate to be recommended for an initial license to teach.

The rationale for requiring such evidence is straightforward: The purpose of teaching is to nurture learning, and both teachers and schools should be judged for their effectiveness on the basis of what and how much pupils learn.

Teachers and schools should be judged for their effectiveness on the basis of what and how much pupils learn.

In formulating these new standards for teacher education programs, Oregon's Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) eliminated all administrative rules governing content to be studied by prospective teachers. Institutions are now free to design

programs they feel will best prepare prospective teachers to pass licensure examinations and to complete student teaching successfully.

The vehicle that was adopted by TSPC to document a beginning teacher's ability to foster learning in their pupils is what has come to be called a "work sample". In practice, this amounts to a 2-5 week unit of instruction that contains within it clearly identified goals for pupil learning and clearly specified measures of goal attainment. To ensure breadth of evidence, beginning teachers must prepare work samples for separate subject areas, in the case of elementary teachers, or for separate courses, in the case of secondary teachers. In

addition, work samples must include learning goals that vary in kind, such as the mastery of a concept, the acquisition of a skill, or the application of knowledge and skills. Each learning goal must be consistent with the host school's formally adopted curriculum.

Pupils taught by a student teacher are to be assessed prior to and after instruction, with data on learning gains analyzed separately for each pupil. In addition, data on individual pupils are to be summarized in relation to their level of goal mastery prior to instruction. Finally, a student teacher must provide an interpretation of the learning gains he or she was able to foster, or the lack thereof, and a description of the use made of these data in planning further instruction and in reporting learning progress to pupils and their parents.

The 1990 Redesign

With the passage of the Oregon Education Act for the 21st Century in June, 1991 and refined by the 1995 Legislative Assembly (HB2991), a new way of thinking about the nature and purpose of schooling was placed into law. The high school diploma is to be supplemented by Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery; expectations for pupil learning are to be elevated; pupils are to be granted certificates and diplomas only after meeting rigorous intellectual standards; and, schools are to operate on the premise that all students not seriously handicapped intellectually or emotionally are capable of achieving such high levels of accomplishments if time for learning is flexible and instructional methods and resources for learning are appropriate.

In January, 1992 a two-year study was funded by the Oregon State System of Higher Education to determine the implications of this new design for schools for the preparation and licensure of teachers. The first year of the study was spent in an analysis of the implications of the design for the roles and responsibilities of teachers. The second year was spent in the compiling of related research and practice, identifying the knowledge and skills teachers need to

Candidates seeking a basic Oregon teaching license will find that there are four basic licenses...

function effectively in Oregon's schools of the future, and formulating recommendations from all the above for a teacher preparation and licensure system that ensures an effective teaching work force in our schools. More than 150 Oregon educators and policy makers participated in the study, and the recommendations coming from it have formed the basis for the redesign of teacher preparation and licensure.

Space does not permit a detailed description of the findings coming from this landmark study but it is illustrative to indicate that 82 major shifts in teacher roles and responsibilities were identified as needing to occur if the new model of schooling is to be implemented fully. As used in that study, a major shift referred to "...a change in role, responsibility, or practice that is sufficiently great as to represent an essentially new role or practice for most teachers in most of today's schools" (Schalock, 1993, p.23). On the basis of this astounding finding it was the view of all who took part in the study that Oregon's design for 21st century schools calls for so many shifts of this kind that, when taken together, they constitute essentially a transformation in both the nature of teaching and in the job definitions that will emerge for teachers.

Highlights of Oregon's Emerging Design

As a result of the many changes occurring in the Oregon educational scene adaptations are being considered for both teacher preparation and continuing licensure requirements. A brief summary of concepts being considered by TSPC are presented below.

Candidates seeking a basic Oregon teaching license will find that (a) there are four basic licenses (early elementary, middle elementary, middle school and secondary) instead of the current two, and (b) requirements for subject matter and specialist endorsements have changed.

Practicing teachers will find several changes in expectations held for them in retaining their licenses: (a) an advanced license may be earned elsewhere than at college or university, (b) all teachers, not just secondary educators, will be expected to acquire an advanced license, and (c) all teachers will be expected to demonstrate continuing professional development plans throughout their careers.

Oregon's expectations for what occurs in its public schools has changed for its children. And logically so has Oregon changed how it anticipates its teachers will be trained and how they will be aided in maintaining their skills. ■

References

Schalock, Del. Oregon's design for 21st century schools and its implications for teachers. Document III. Western Oregon State College, Monmouth OR.