

Remarks of Cheryl Prevost  
Chair  
Connecticut Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards

Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee

November 14, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

My name is Cheryl Prevost, I'm a technology teacher in the East Hartford Public Schools, and currently serve as chair of the CT Advisory Council for Teacher Professional Standards. Today I'd like to talk to you about what the Council does and how and why I believe we can be more effective.

This Council is composed of practicing teachers, administrators, and representatives from higher education, business, and the public. It is strictly advisory in nature; the Council may *make* recommendations to the State Department of Education (SDE), State Board of Education (SBE), or the commissioner, but those recommendations need not be taken into account when decisions affecting educators are made.

I can say with confidence that this lack of decision-making authority takes its toll on teachers who sit on the Council. They often feel as though their opinions aren't valued when decisions are made that have an impact on how they do their jobs. This questions many to ask why we even have an advisory council.

There are also positions on the Council that have been, and continue to remain vacant. There have also been many times when appointed Council members don't attend meetings. For example, out of seventeen positions appointed to the Council, eight positions generally remain vacant, or the appointee drops off. Does this occur because the work of the Council is seen as not being important, so it doesn't matter whether or not those vacancies are filled or meetings are attended?

Whatever the reasons, I believe this Council could do much more if restructured and replaced by an independent professional educator standards board that had much more decision-making authority in governing our profession. Such a board may be composed of educators from a variety of settings, including the classroom, administration, and higher education, and representatives of local school boards and parents. Giving the board authority to do such things as set and implement standards for educator certification, teacher preparation programs, and teacher induction would generate a much greater level of buy-in, responsibility, and accountability. Educators *want* this in our profession, as it is one of the things that defines what a 'profession' does.

Educators have been proud to play a part over many years in setting standards for programs in our state, so to move to an independent standards board with defined authority is a natural progression. Educators understand, better than anyone, what is needed to move practice and student learning forward. This movement can occur much more effectively and efficiently if driven, in part, by an independent professional educator standards board. Thank you for your time and willingness to discuss this important issue.