

**Reach In, Reach Out, Reach Over:  
A Conflict Management Pilot Program In North Carolina**

**Licensure Report**

**prepared by**

**North Carolina  
Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention –  
Center for the Prevention of School Violence  
Raleigh, North Carolina**



**September, 2002**

## Acknowledgements

The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention - Center for the Prevention of School Violence acknowledges those who contributed to this initiative. Many individuals have lent their time and expertise to the success of the project Reach In, Reach Out, Reach Over: A Conflict Management Pilot Program in North Carolina. Throughout all phases of the project, support from various stakeholders has enabled Center staff to meet the goals set forth in the pilot. At this time, we particularly thank: Assistant Attorney General Deborah J. Daniels, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs; OJJDP Administrator J. Robert Flores, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs; OJJDP Deputy Administrator William L. Woodruff, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs; Ms. Janet Reno, United States Attorney General at the time of the project's inception; Governor James B. Hunt, Governor of North Carolina at the time of the project's inception; Mr. Phillip Kirk, Chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education; Dr. Charles Coble, Vice President of School-University Programs, University of North Carolina General Administration; Mr. George Sweat, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; Mr. Richard Moore, current North Carolina Treasurer and chair of the 1999 Governor's Task Force on Youth Violence and School Safety; Ms. Kathleen Severens, Director of Community Dispute Resolution, The Executive Office for Weed and Seed, United States Department of Justice; and grant administrators, particularly Scott B. Peterson, from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United States Department of Justice.

Appreciation is also extended to the deans and directors of the colleges, departments, and schools of education in the public and private colleges and universities, with particular recognition given to the University of North Carolina Deans' Council for its assistance in this project, the faculty that assisted with providing information and field testing, and the project's Advisory Board which consisted of college and university personnel and representatives from community mediation and dispute resolution organizations. At this time, with regard to this document, we would like to particularly thank the North Carolina State Evaluation Committee on Teacher Education and Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Director of Human Resource Management, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Finally, this project could not have been possible without the contributions of the many pre-service educators who participated. With this we express our deepest gratitude.

This document was supported by grant number 1999-JN-FX-0010 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Points of view or opinions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or other funding agencies.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Licensure Report**

The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention - Center for the Prevention of School Violence conducted a pilot project in North Carolina on conflict management for pre-service educators over the course of the last two years. Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the project was intended to enhance the skills of pre-service educators in the area of conflict management so that they are able to improve their skills for managing conflict.

Although the goal of implementing a teacher licensure enhancement can be ambitious, there were a number of supporting factors for the initiative and foreseeable challenges that were addressed. Supporting factors for the North Carolina pilot included a favorable political climate and careful coordination of resources and information. Understanding the certification process in the state and maintaining the buy-in of key policymakers and stakeholders in the early stages of project development were essential. In addition, timing worked well in that the revision of the teacher education program approval standards was unforeseen at the project's inception, yet on the horizon. Major revisions had not been made to the guidelines and competencies in close to fifteen years therefore, the atmosphere in policy development was favorable for change. An additional supporting factor to consider was indirectly related to the development of a teacher licensure requirement, but still important. This involves thinking through and communicating the specific needs of teacher education candidates in relation to their program requirements. Making their wishes known regarding enrichments to educational programs provided “bottom up” support for an initiative that can serve as a push toward enhancing the certification requirements in this area.

In addition to the supporting factors, challenges existed which had to be met. One of the greatest challenges in an initiative such as this involves understanding the processes and policies of teacher licensure. Knowledge of the policy formulation can also aid in timing an initiative. Advocating policy changes becomes difficult if major revisions have already occurred. Obtaining the necessary buy-in from those who will be most affected by policy changes, such as the colleges and universities that must meet the mandate, can also present a challenge. Finally, a challenge that can effect the development of a licensure initiative involves reading the general societal and political climate for change. Although rousing support in a climate that is not ripe for change may be difficult, there is still a possibility to make a difference.

Overall knowledge of the supporting factors and challenges is beneficial, yet this awareness must rest on why the new licensure proposal is being implemented. Being able to justify why this updated policy is needed and providing the rational and support of the change is probably one of the strongest factors in getting the boost needed to get an initiative such as this underway for future educators.

## **Introduction**

The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention - Center for the Prevention of School Violence conducted a pilot project in North Carolina on conflict management for pre-service educators over the course of the last two years. Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the project was intended to enhance the skills of pre-service teachers in the area of conflict management so that they are able to improve their skills for managing conflict, provide conflict management skills and knowledge to students, and serve as role models for appropriate conflict management behavior. The project was also designed to improve the skills of administrators so they are supportive of teachers in handling conflict and provide the leadership and direction necessary to establish safer learning environments. An additional goal of the project was to create a teacher certification competency that better reflects skills (proficiency) in conflict management.

The purpose of this document is to provide background information on the project, describe elements of the North Carolina educator licensure process, describe the North Carolina Pilot Project competencies, and outline supporting factors and challenges faced in establishing a teacher licensure enhancement. This information may serve to be beneficial to others who are working on similar initiatives.

## **Background**

In 1999 an opportunity to create a pilot program in conflict management for pre-service educators arose from two major efforts to create safer schools in North Carolina. The State Board of Education's Task Force on Disruption Free Classrooms focused on the importance of school climate, which is directly affected by classroom and conflict management. Recommendations were drafted which called for better training of teachers and school administrators so that classrooms and schools are able to operate in a "disruption-free" climate. The second effort was initiated by Governor Jim Hunt. The Governor's Task Force on Youth Violence and School Safety produced an action item requesting that the Center for the Prevention of School Violence carry out a project focused upon setting up a conflict management project resulting in all pre-service teachers and administrators being trained to better manage conflict.

Although the training of pre-service educators in conflict management was not a new idea, as referenced by Kathryn Girard and Susan Koch's [Conflict Resolution in Schools: A Manual for Educators](#), it served as a promising strategy to improve classroom and school climate through providing teachers with tools to understand the nature of conflict and how it relates to student behavior management issues. The pilot program in North Carolina set itself apart from past efforts in that not only would it provide for curricula for pre-service educators but also for the implementation of a teacher licensure enhancement in conflict management. The idea to include a state licensure enhancement was brought forth to encourage college and university faculty to examine course offerings in relation to conflict and classroom management and institutionalize curriculum materials that would further develop the skills of new teachers as they deal with student behavior and conflict in the classroom. Though a major undertaking, this was seen as an opportunity to convince colleges and schools of education that pre-professional development was

needed in the area of conflict management and that these institutions should take the lead in this preparation.

### **The North Carolina Licensure Process**

The educator licensing process verifies that educators meet an established set of professional standards and that individuals are qualified to perform professional services as public school employees (NCDPI, Licensure Manual 1999). Although once referred to as *certification*, the North Carolina State Board of Education moved toward the use of the term *licensure* to reflect credentials issued to professional school personnel in 1993. The terms have been used interchangeably and may reference the educational credentialing process used by an appropriate governing body or agency. North Carolina General Statutes specify that all public school employees must hold a license in the subject area and/or grade level taught or assigned by the employing local educational agency or school district. Teachers, principals, and other school professionals must hold or be qualified to hold an educator license to be employed in public schools across the state. The North Carolina Constitution delegates responsibility for setting standards to be met for educator licensure to the State Board of Education, with regulations being administered by the Licensure Section, a division of Human Resource Management of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. State statutes also hold that the State Board of Education possesses sole responsibility for establishing licensure requirements for all educators in grades kindergarten through twelve (including all subject areas) and regulations on the extension and renewal of licenses.

The State Board of Education governs the licensure process. With the State Board having the authority to oversee the implementation of standards for teacher licensure, an opportunity is created for the Board to receive information for the continued establishment of new policies by way of two different routes. A source of policy action may occur through submitting a petition to the Superintendent of Public Instruction who in turn transmits this petition to the State Board. The policy issue is initially presented to the State Board as an item on the monthly meeting Discussion Agenda, which allows the Board to familiarize itself with the issue. This also allows individuals pursuing the issue to provide additional input toward policy formulation and for the Board to provide instruction regarding next steps. Public comment is accepted on the proposed policy before final State Board action is taken. This allows stakeholders affected by the change to participate in policy development.

A second process of pursuing licensure policy changes with the State Board of Education is working through what is referenced as the program approval process in the colleges, departments, and schools of education in public and private colleges and universities. The State Board creates rules to be followed by the forty-eight teacher preparation programs within institutions of higher education in North Carolina. According to Board policy, each of these programs must adhere to outlined criteria and follow an established process to be considered an *approved* program by the North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction. Consideration of existing national standards for teacher education programs, self-study and continual review of programs, and regional accreditation of the institution are a few criteria needed to be termed an approved teacher education. The State Board also appoints the State Evaluation Committee on Teacher Education, made up of eighteen lay and professional

representatives from various levels of education that review, report, and make recommendations on teacher preparation programs every five years. The State Evaluation Committee on Teacher Education works closely with the Department of Public Instruction to define standards and indicators (referenced as guidelines and competencies prior to March, 2002) for teacher education programs, which must be Board approved.

Prior to March, 2002, major revisions had not been made to the guidelines and competencies since the late 1980's. Guidelines and competencies were replaced with standards and indicators that focus on core and diversity competencies. These standards and indicators guide faculty in approved teacher education programs as to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for teacher candidates to complete programs that lead to licensure.

Although this process seems more complex than the first described, working through program approval fit the needs of the conflict management project by providing more stakeholder exposure and buy-in at various stages of the initiative. Since the curriculum was drafted for the faculty of pre-service educators in the colleges, departments, and schools of education, working through the program approval process allowed a chance for greater sustainability of the initiative through embedding the competency into the program requirements, with this being seen as less of an add-on requirement to already stretched teacher education programs.

### **The North Carolina Pilot Project Competencies**

Taking into consideration the various aspects of the North Carolina licensure process, Center staff were prepared to move forward in outlining a strategy necessary for impacting a teacher licensure enhancement. Careful planning of the behavioral objectives designed for the pre-service teacher curriculum proved to be an important element in establishing the teacher certification enhancement. As the behavioral objectives were made available to the project's advisory board and to officials at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for review, feedback and suggestions were made that were beneficial to the continued development of curriculum materials. This also allowed for there to be congruency between what was currently offered or needed by university faculty, the revisions to the program approval standards, and what was emphasized in the curriculum. Draft objectives from the curriculum served as the basis for several core and diversity standards in North Carolina's revised Standards and Indicators. Examples of Indicators that reflect the influence of the curriculum's concepts include:

- Teachers identify (their) own biases and reflect on them in terms of practice.
- Teachers provide P-12 students with the skills necessary for evaluating their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors to enable them to understand how their attitudes affect their behaviors.
- Teachers know and respect the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a child's development and personality. They understand how an individual's belief system affects behavior.
- Teachers are able to use communication skills to circumvent or manage conflict as it arises in the classroom.
- Teachers teach communication, thinking, and problem solving skills.

- Teachers help students develop skills of teamwork, leadership, and cooperation in their classrooms and schools. They understand the importance of building a positive classroom climate through emphasizing constructive communication. (NCDPI, 2002)

These standards represent competencies related to conflict management which became part of the standards and indicators approved in the licensure enhancement. This means that before teacher candidates can be recommended for initial state licensure through an approved program, they must meet prescribed indicators outlined in conflict management. As the State Board approved the standards and indicators for teacher education programs in the colleges and universities during its March, 2002, meeting, it approved competencies in conflict management. These new standards will be in effect beginning Fall, 2003.

### **Supporting Factors and Challenges in the North Carolina Pilot Project**

Although the goal of implementing a teacher licensure enhancement can be ambitious, there were a number of supporting factors for the initiative and foreseeable challenges that were addressed. In thinking through creating a licensure enhancement in conflict management, the North Carolina State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction were contacted early in the project and further support was given to the project's certification initiative. A draft of the conflict management curriculum for teachers was presented to the Department of Public Instruction as it worked with the State Evaluation Committee and the deans and directors of teacher education. Once the draft was reviewed by the deans/directors of teacher education, the competencies outlined by the curriculum were thought to be easy to embed into the dispositions that must be articulated at the state and institutional level. This came in part to the Center's attempt to identify and understand the needs of the colleges and universities. Consideration was given to the existence of current national and state standards for practicing teachers and the impact of changes in the social climate of schools. Also, attention was given to the preparation of materials and resources that would support meeting the new certification enhancement to ensure that real and effective approaches would be used to meet the mandate.

Another supporting factor arose from the colleges and schools of education, although favor was initially mixed. Deans and directors of education as well as teaching methods education faculty expressed concern that their programs are already filled to capacity, and there was not much room to add new requirements. By working with the project's advisory board made up of teaching methods faculty, the University of North Carolina Deans' Council of Education, and deans from private colleges across the state, institutions of higher education were given the opportunity to provide suggestions and feedback as to how conflict management could be infused into an educational program as opposed to adding on additional semester hours. By bringing these stakeholders into the discussion, Center staff was in a better position to understand the specific needs of each college and university in reference to conflict management. Since many teacher education programs were at different stages on a continuum of preparation of teachers for student behavior management issues, flexibility and adaptability of material for each program became important. The fifteen constitute campuses of the University of North Carolina and the thirty-three private colleges and universities that house colleges, departments, and schools of education work autonomously to offer high quality programs to their students. If

schools and colleges of education are given the opportunity to assess their existing programs, they are better able to pinpoint needs specific to their campuses. Recognizing their strengths and challenges and having the autonomy to make decisions, institutions were more susceptible to program enhancements. This self initiated, self directed institutional level change allowed for greater acceptance and less opposition for program changes throughout the state level.

An additional supporting factor to consider was indirectly related to the development of a teacher licensure requirement and included thinking through the specific needs of teacher education candidates. At the beginning of the project, focus groups were held with pre-service teachers in the colleges, departments, and schools of education across the state. Although pre-service teachers from the focus groups believed they received quality instruction through their programs, there was a desire to learn more about how to handle conflict in the classroom. These teachers spoke to the need of additional training in the area of student behavior management in their programs, which can be directly linked to conflict management. Even with various levels of experience with students in the classroom, these teachers already recognized and desired additional information and practice in working with students to manage disputes. Knowing this provided “bottom up” support for conflict management that served as a push toward enhancing the certification requirements in this area. Pre-service teachers who realize the practical nature of the skills of conflict management in the classroom are more likely to support initiatives that can foster their professional development. They may be willing to take steps to ensure that these standards are part of their educational credentialing.

Other supporting factors for the North Carolina pilot included a favorable political climate and careful coordination of resources and information. Understanding the certification process in the state and maintaining the buy-in of key policymakers and stakeholders in the early stages of project development were essential. This goal was successfully met by attending to the specific needs within the schools and departments of education at the colleges and universities that were affected by the changes in policies. In addition, timing worked well in that the revision of the teacher education program approval standards was unforeseen at the project's inception, yet on the horizon. Major revisions had not been made to the guidelines and competencies in close to fifteen years. The atmosphere in policy development was favorable for change.

In addition to the supporting factors, challenges existed which had to be met. One of the greatest challenges in an initiative such as this involves understanding the processes and policies of teacher licensure. Being quite technical and detailed in nature, gaining knowledge in reference to policies involving rule making and the individuals who are key stakeholders in the process becomes important. Knowledge of the policy formulation can also aid in timing an initiative. Advocating policy changes becomes difficult if major revisions have already occurred.

Choosing the appropriate route to licensure can also present a challenge. As previously referenced, choosing to go through the program approval process instead of appealing directly to the State Board of Education probably worked best for this project because it allowed for more direct and sustainable change and helped to more substantially involve the colleges and universities who were major stakeholders.

Obtaining the necessary buy-in from those who will be most affected by policy changes, such as the colleges and universities that must meet the mandate, can also present a challenge. Early in the project many of the deans of education clearly expressed that teacher education programs

were heavy with requirements and that it would be difficult to effectively accomplish the goals of an added provision. Helping the colleges and universities see that conflict management could be infused into existing programs of instruction allowed for there to be limited opposition to its becoming part of the approved program competencies.

An additional challenge that can effect the development of a licensure initiative involves reading the general societal and political climate for change. Although rousing support in a climate that is not ripe for change may be difficult, there is still a possibility to make a difference. Even if the element for change is felt, challenges can still present themselves. In the earliest phase of the project, thought was given to requesting the creation of a new licensure standard that would require teacher candidates to complete additional semester hours in conflict management on top of their current program requirements. This idea was neither feasible for the project nor popular with stakeholders. Therefore, enhancement was pursued. This allows pre-service teachers to meet standards in conflict management through exposure to infused curriculum material in existing courses.

### **Conclusion**

The perspective gained in the North Carolina pilot project that can be shared with other agencies trying to change educator licensure requirements can be useful. Knowledge of who controls policies within the state or domain in which the enhancement will take effect and knowing who will be most affected by the change are important. In approaching these individuals, being clear and specific as to what goals are trying to be accomplished is necessary. Having substantial knowledge of where to affect a new policy goes along with this, which means understanding and choosing the most appropriate route for licensure enhancement. This also means knowing where to get guidance and assistance when faced with a challenge in the process. The knowledge of when to pursue a licensure goal involves familiarizing oneself with the process of policy revision and timing a proposal accordingly. Yet all of this must rest on why the new licensure proposal is being implemented. Being able to justify why this updated policy is needed and providing the rational and support of the change is probably one of the strongest factors in getting the boost needed to get an initiative such as this underway.