

Commentary—

Basics of certification

By DENNIS DEMMERT

The Alaska Department of Education is sponsoring a conference on teacher certification at the Anchorage Westward Hotel on February 15, 16, and 17, 1977. Today's column will provide background information and certification jargon.

Elementary and high school teachers in Alaska must obtain a teaching certificate from the Alaska Department

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Basics of teacher certification procedures

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of Education in order to teach in Alaska.

In most states, including Alaska, an individual must complete an "approved" teacher education program in order to obtain certification. Each state has its own procedures for "approving" teacher education programs. The linkage between "approved" programs and certification is an important relationship to understand.

Teacher education programs in Alaska are approved by the Teacher Education Certification Advisory Board (TECAB). TECAB is advisory to the State Board of Education.

TECAB is made up of: 1. an elementary teacher 2. a high school teacher 3. an Alaska Association of School Boards representative 4. a University of Alaska representative 5. a National Education Association-Alaska representative 6. a Professional Teaching Practices Commission representative 7. a Superintendent's Association representative 8. a representative of the Commissioner of Education 9. a representative of private institutions.

TECAB has approved teacher education programs at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, including the Cross-cultural Education Development Program (X-CED); the University of Alaska, Anchorage and the University of Alaska, Juneau. Sheldon Jackson is seeking approval. Alaska Methodist University had been approved when it was last operating.

TECAB evaluates programs in Alaska according to "Standards for State Approval of Teacher Education, 1971 Edition." These were created by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). The NASDTEC standards are

used by most states for approving teacher education programs in each state. Each state evaluates teacher education programs in that state for approval.

Many states, including Alaska, use the "approved program" approach to certification of teachers. "Approved programs" are those teacher education programs in other states which are approved according to NASDTEC standards. Approval is given by each state to institutions within its boundaries. Whitworth College, in Spokane, for example is approved by Washington State. Its graduates qualify for Alaska certification because it is an "approved" program.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teachers (NCATE) also has standards for national accreditation or approval. NO teacher education in Alaska has NCATE approval.

One criticism of national standards, whether NASDTEC or NCATE, is that they do not provide consideration for local or regional needs.

Alaskan certification is good for five years. The five year period is arbitrary and determined by the State.

Six semester hours of study are required for renewal. Alaska has no stipulation regarding the content of the six semester hours.

Some states have "reciprocity agreements" with other states. This means that certified teachers in the one state can obtain certification to teach in the other state. As states move toward the approved program approach, reciprocity may become a minor issue. Alaska has reciprocity agreements now with only Washington State and Utah.

Paraprofessional work in education does not add to an individual's ability to gain certification. Unless a parapro-

fessional is in an approved program, he or she gains nothing toward certification.

Educators in some states have sought full control of certification by the profession. This would be similar to the bar, which regulates entry into the legal profession. It would remove certification from the direct control of citizens other than educators.

Both NCATE and NASDTEC standards say that their purposes are to upgrade the quality of instruction teachers receive.

The points made above

should show that certification is not an independent process. There are a number of related considerations. In spite of the jargon jungle, however, change is still possible. Any suggestion for change must take into account those various requirements and limitations.

Ultimately teacher certification should help to assure us that we have qualified teachers in our schools. Even with complicated procedures, we can and must have a certification process that provides qualified educators.