

# Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study

**May 2002**

Submitted To:

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## **Report Summary**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the feasibility of creating and operating a centralized repository of teacher records, which are used to place certificated personnel on the statewide salary schedule used by the legislature in allocating funds to school districts.

The study was conducted between February and April 2002. On-site interviews occurred during the opening phase to improve understanding of how the present system works and to test the interest in alternatives. An E-Mail survey of personnel officers in all of Washington's 296 districts; telephone conversations and e-mail contacts with central office staff in each of the U.S. states; and cost-benefit and systems analyses constituted the research approach.

Washington is a local control state. It also is one of a small number of states that provides full funding of basic education and employs a state salary schedule for teachers. A large part of the state funds are distributed in accordance with the staff mix formula, which is influenced by the state salary schedule. Accumulated education and experience are the variables that determine placement on the schedule. Correct placement on the salary schedule involves not only equity for the teacher but accountability for the appropriation from the state. This places a heavy emphasis on the certificated staff personnel system, which is decentralized among the state's school districts. School district certificated personnel record systems carry an unusual responsibility as personnel systems go. This, plus the fact that these local systems are subjected to considerable oversight, guarantees that the people who administer them devote considerable energy to ensuring that their decisions are substantiated and documented. The resultant complexities of records management contribute much to the case for a centralized personnel system.

Accuracy is an issue. Since these records drive state funding they are audited by the State Auditor's office. Because the records are dispersed and maintained locally, the number of records audited at the local level varies and is not related to an overall representative statewide sample. Thus, there is little evidence of what may be the statewide error rate and whether or not there is a serious fiscal issue involved. The

absence of a consensus on a common error rate fuels uncertainties that contribute to the emphasis on audits. In this sense the process is circular.

An effort was made to estimate the statewide error rate using data provided by the State Auditor's office. Based on information from nearly 2000 files in 193 districts, it appears that errors cluster in a few districts. Most, 160 of the 193 districts, or 82%, displayed no errors that would affect funding. The mean error rate appears to be less than 3.1 percent, although the confidence level associated with the limited sample size calls for additional testing.

Previous employment verification also is a large concern. Original transcripts usually must be provided anew each time a teacher changes jobs to another district. Based on LEAP data for 2000-01, nearly 1400 teachers change districts annually: about 2.4 percent.

Most districts use their own forms for applications and record purposes; there are no common forms employed by all. The records are retained in the district's certificated personnel office where they serve as the evidence of education and proof of experience. There also is a workload problem, since information requests to other districts occur for the most part during August-September.

Liability concerns also are important. If a district misplaces a teacher on the salary schedule the remedies can be substantial. It is usually the school district that is held liable, although teachers that are overpaid because of an error may be required to repay the money. Another aspect of liability relates to the paper-heavy nature of the records system. A lot of space is devoted to record storage, and it is not certain how much of this is retrievable in the event of a natural disaster.

A number of states have centralized record systems. The specific nature of these varies, as do the purposes they serve (not many states have funding programs similar to Washington's). Many also are paperless. Mississippi appears to be the only other state that has a statewide salary schedule that is implemented at the local school district level, although state funding is tied to the implementation of that schedule in conjunction with the Average Daily Attendance. Mississippi also employs about 35,000 teachers in comparison with Washington's approximately 60,000.

Mississippi operates a state-of-the-art technology system. Its teacher repository utilizes high-speed imaging to provide a paperless process. The Districts submit online information on a regular basis about each teacher's salary and placement on the salary schedule, teaching location, endorsements, numbers of students taught, teaching responsibilities, authenticated teacher clock hour training, teacher assessment scores, and background check. An important difference is that Mississippi began with a centralized records program. In Washington it would be necessary to bring all of the records to a central point, and that has been one of the issues that has blocked change.

There is considerable interest in either a centralized system or in significant modifications to the present arrangements. This interest is widespread among districts of all sizes. There is less knowledge of how a central system can be established. This may have less to do with costs, although these are a factor, than with mechanics.

The arguments in favor of centralization greatly outweigh those against, and movement in that direction is recommended. A few other changes also are recommended. They involve such matters as agreement on common forms, provisions for teacher records to be transported from district to district as teachers move, and expanded training opportunities for records managers and audit staff. Such changes would represent helpful improvements regardless of whether another system were to be established.

In terms of getting from the present decentralized arrangement to a central records office, a short-cut transitional approach is recommended. Its essence is a common "Certificate of Assurance [COA] for each teacher prepared and reviewed at the district level and transmitted electronically (either as an imaged document or as an attachment to an E-mail message) to the central records office, whereupon it would be used to establish the teacher's central records office record. On a single page, these Certificates of Assurance would detail the teacher's salary schedule rating and the accumulated experience and education figures. Other pertinent information, such the teacher's endorsements, etc., also could be listed.

This form would serve as the foundation for the teacher's cumulative file. The backup documentation would be stored at the district level. In the cases of those who move, this backup documentation would follow the teacher to the new district. Upon entry, all new teachers would provide necessary documentation directly to the central records office where it would be scanned and the cumulative file built accordingly. The central files would be electronically accessible to the district office and to the teacher. The district would submit annual updates for its teachers.

The costs of this system are estimated at \$763 thousand for the first year and annual costs of \$439 thousand thereafter. It is possible that these costs could be offset by reductions in the \$2.6 million annually spent now on certificated staff records management. The system could be funded directly with state appropriations, with district contributions on a per capita record basis, with modest annual teacher fees, or with some combination. Consideration might be given to the use of federal funds, as has been the case in other states.

Audits would begin at the central records office, as the audit staff identified a representative sample, but in the case of present teachers whose backup records were located in the district, the actual field audit would be performed there. In the case of new teachers, whose entire file was located centrally, the audit would occur at the central records office. Other features of a centralized system – common forms, training, teacher verification of records and status, etc. – also would be features.

With time and the continued initiation of new teachers' records centrally, the centralized model could be accomplished in an auditable and cost efficient manner. This is the recommendation of the report.

# Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Study Purpose, Questions, and Process	Page 6
B. The Present System - Its Form, Costs, Complexities, and Capabilities	Page 9
Description	Page 9
Some Aspects of System Capabilities	Page 20
C. The Survey of Districts	Page 24
D. Other States' Systems	Page 40
Survey of States	Page 40
The Case of Mississippi	Page 47
E. Alternatives and Recommendations	Page 49
Appendices	Page 61
Project Advisory Committee Members	
Research Team Members	
Site Visits and E-Mail Survey Respondents	Page 60
District E-Mail Survey Responses to Questions 5, 6, 7, & 8	Page 65

# Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study

**May 2002**

The purpose of the study, according to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's mandate [Work Request# 0350-01-03-WR], is to "analyze the feasibility of creating and operating a centralized repository of teacher certification records, which are used to place certificated personnel on the statewide salary schedule used by the legislature in allocating funds to school districts." The situation a centralized repository would be expected to solve was described in the following terms:

"Through the apportionment program, the state makes payments to school districts for certificated instructional staff salaries based on a state salary allocation schedule, which is used by the state to account for differences in the education and experience of each district's certificated instructional staff. Typically, the greater the education and experience of the staff, the greater the allocation from the state for salary purposes. Actual salaries are negotiated locally, within certain established constraints. There are eligibility criteria and limits regarding the education credits school districts may count as having advanced the experience level of their instructional staff. . . Education and experience information is gathered, maintained, and audited on a district by district basis . . ."

There is no uniform practice among the districts for these purposes, and this appears to be both a complication for the audits used to monitor the system and a source of audit exceptions. It also is a complication for districts during the hiring process, since they must require proof of the teacher's professional experience and education from each previous employer. In such instances the teacher may be required to acquire original transcripts and other materials to document education and experience. The tasks for both the district and the teacher could be greatly simplified if they could obtain such information from a central authoritative repository.

The issue is of such interest that the OSPI and a number of districts elected to proceed with a feasibility study using their own resources. They outlined the subjects of interest in the form of a series of questions:

1. Is a central repository a good idea, and, if so, why?
2. Is it a good idea for all districts, or only for some?
3. Is there duplication by school districts in keeping records current? If so, how much duplication is there?
4. Would a central repository eliminate duplication of effort and provide significant efficiencies for all districts or a portion of the districts?
5. What would be the estimated potential number of teacher certification records that could be deposited in a central repository?
6. What would be the start-up costs of a central system?
7. How should such a system be funded and organized?
8. Should the repository be operated by the OSPI?
9. What would be the recommended organizational structure, and what involvement should school districts have in the management of the central repository? What is the duplicated work that would be involved in keeping records current?
10. What are the major problems that would need to be addressed during the initial operating period?
11. What are the estimated cost savings to be gained?
12. What would be the estimated annual operating costs and what might a fee structure look like?
13. If the central repository were a self-supporting operation, what would be an appropriate fee structure?
14. What would be the liability issues and the legal implications for the central repository and school districts?

These questions guided the study. The research program was conducted between February and April 2002. It centered on the use of a project advisory committee composed of knowledgeable staff from the districts, the OSPI, and the state Auditor's office [the list of advisory committee members is presented in the Appendix.] On-site interviews were conducted during the opening phase. These conversations were intended to improve the research team's understanding of how the present system

works and the issues associated with it and to test the interest in alternatives. Visits and conversations were conducted with records management staff in several districts of various sizes. OSPI staff; State Board of Education [SBE] staff; other education unit staff; staff of ESD 113; legislators; legislative staff; State Auditor's staff; and the Assistant Attorney General for the OSPI, among others were interviewed [Interview site visits are listed in the Appendix]. Once the interviews were completed, the process turned to the remaining three major study components:

1. An E-Mail survey of personnel officers in all of Washington's 296 districts;
2. Telephone conversations and e-mail contacts with central office staff in each of the other U.S. states;
3. Cost, cost-benefit, and system analysis, alternative identification and analysis.

The results of these endeavors are described in the following pages. Before that a word needs to be said about the able and dedicated assistance of members of the OSPI Budget and School Services Division staff, the people who served on the project advisory committee, the help of all of those who were interviewed during the course of the study, both in- and out-of-state, and those who responded to the various surveys. Their interest and assistance are gratefully acknowledged. The work could not have been accomplished without their enthusiastic participation.



# **Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study**

## **The Present System: Form, Complexities, and Capabilities**

### **Washington's System:**

Educationally as in most things, Washington is a local control state. It also is one of a comparatively small number of states that provides full funding of basic education and employs a state salary schedule for teachers. State appropriations account for the preponderance of a school district's operating budget. A large part of these funds are distributed in accordance with the staff mix formula, which is influenced by the state salary schedule. Accumulated education and experience are the variables. The salary schedule is a crucial aspect. Essentially, the salary schedule is a matrix on which accumulating education (degrees, and continuing education credits) represents the horizontal axis and years of experience (17 years or steps) comprise the vertical axis. The cells of the matrix specify the respective salaries for certificated individuals based on their accumulated education and years of experience.

Determining an individual's placement on the salary schedule and awarding a salary that is appropriate involves not only aspects of equity (for the teacher) but accountability (the correct appropriation for the state). This places a heavy emphasis on the certificated staff personnel system, which is decentralized among the state's 296 school districts. Each district is responsible and accountable for its own personnel records and for its own personnel system within a general framework set by the relevant provisions of the Revised Code of Washington [RCW] and the Washington Administrative Code [WAC].

Each of the school districts must operate in general accordance with the state salary system at least insofar as state funding disbursements are concerned, although personnel decisions and systems are the responsibility of the local school boards. The

State Superintendent's Common School Manual 2002 notwithstanding, variance is apparent, and it has consequences. Decisions about salaries in this setting ultimately devolve to aspects of state funding and to fiscal accountability.

Because of this, school district certificated personnel record systems carry an unusual responsibility as personnel systems go. This, plus the related fact that they are subjected to considerable oversight, virtually guarantees that the people who administer these systems devote considerable energy to ensuring that their decisions are fully substantiated and documented. The resultant complexities of records management contribute to much of the support for a centralized personnel system. And it is the interplay of these two distinguishing factors -- a state salary system that determines district funding, and the prerogatives of local control -- that evokes legislative interest and promotes an emphasis on regularly audited records. These account for many of the problems associated with the present system. They also account for some of the natural suspicion that greets the arrival of records maintained by other districts. Missouri may be the "Show Me State;" the credentialed staff records keepers in Washington may constitute the "Show Me Profession."

### **Certification**

Teaching in Washington involves two levels of approval. The first is state-level certification, a function performed by staff in the State Superintendent's office (the State Board of Education is statutorily responsible for the rules and regulations governing eligibility for certification; the State Superintendent is responsible for their implementation). Evidence of graduation from an approved baccalaureate program and qualification to teach in certain fields or at certain levels (endorsements) are required (a records check, including a fingerprint check also is necessary.)

At the time of entry into the teaching profession in Washington State the teacher's records are presented at the certification office where they are reviewed and approved if that is the appropriate action. The records then are returned to the prospective teacher. Continuing education -- clock hours -- also are required for continuing certification in the form of renewals, (degrees and continuing education or professional development credits are required both for progression on the salary schedule and for continued certification), but the responsibility for acquiring these credits and maintaining evidence of having done so are that of the teacher. The original continuing education transcripts, or copies, are not stored in the SPI certification office, nor are the teacher's diploma and college transcripts - only the OSPI approval form is stored there - but if the teacher's record is audited that person must produce the

originals. Under present circumstances this is possible because certification does not affect state fund disbursements in the same manner as placement on the salary schedule. This is the essential difference that accounts for the different demands of the two systems.

This particular central file has about 300 thousand records. Department staff estimate that there are about 60 thousand active teachers, but they do not know how many of the remainder have died, retired, or moved. Presently the OSPI certification staff reports a backlog of 6-9 months in approvals waiting to be microfilmed. This does not appear to be a problem in itself, but it apparently feeds district apprehensions about an OSPI centralized record file because of the need for rapid confirmation of salary decisions.

Again, in both cases, certification and employment, the individual is typically required to initially present evidence from the college or university where the first BA or BS degree was earned. After that the requirements diverge. Aside from the duplication involved when teachers are unable to use the documents displayed when they applied for certification in their personnel files when they are placed in a district, the certification function is not an issue in this study.

### **District Records**

In the case of the employment event, original transcripts from all other colleges or universities in which credits have been earned since the first degree usually must be provided. In such cases, if the employee has taken credits from several colleges or universities, original transcripts must be obtained from each. Usually this must occur anew each time the employee changes jobs to another district. Some variance among districts in what they require is present. Most districts require original records as a matter of policy; others do not.

The teacher's records are retained in the district's certificated personnel office where they serve as the evidence of education and proof of experience needed to place employees in the proper cells on the salary schedule. Since most districts require originals for teachers who are new to the staff, a teacher moving from one district to another is likely to encounter this requirement with each move, since in this case he or she is a 'new teacher' to the district. Previous employment verification also is a large concern in this event. If this information is kept up to date in the previous district, the process tends to move smoothly. The clock hour issue also is simplified if teachers

routinely utilize their ESD to prepare and maintain a clock hour transcript for them (a fee is usually charged for this service).

Magnitude is a consideration. Some suggested that there really are not many transfers between districts each year. Estimates were in the neighborhood of about 500 annually. These are a little low. Staff members of the LEAP provided figures for use in this study. According to these data, the number is greater than people in the districts estimated, but it is not huge. Using a one-year data cut as an illustration, LEAP reported that the number of teachers changing districts from school year 1999-2000 to 2000-2001, i.e., moving from one Washington district to another the following year, totaled 1,357. This is about 2.4 percent of the total.

Continuing with the process, the district annually reports its certificated staff salary information to the OSPI (using the S-275 form). This information is based on data in the personnel files, although it does not contain the specific detail that is documented by the actual personnel file in the district office. Some districts retain the Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC) to manage the data for the S-275 form and submit it for them. WSIPC reports that it does this for 274 districts. Its data file contains employee-specific information on degrees, endorsements, and experience.

### **Cumulative Education Credits**

Continuing education "clock hours" are awarded by approved providers -- the approval comes from OSPI -- classes can be given by school districts, by ESDs, by different organizations such as WASBO or WASA, and by community colleges and other higher education providers. Since the inclusion of clock hours into the equation was allowed, the process of verifying each credit has become a bigger burden for both the employee and for the employer. Each clock hour (a credit comprises ten clock hours) must be pertinent to the employee's present or future assignment and approved by a supervisor, frequently in advance. Evidence of the approval usually becomes part of the employee's personnel record. Once approved, however, re-approval is not required.

Rules apply to the process of counting credits. These may be subject to different interpretations by different verifiers. For example, credit is given from the first degree received even if a teaching certificate is not received or the degree does not pertain to teaching; all credits after the first degree and in excess of 45 are counted if between a BA and MA. Since clock hours help to determine the education rating, and, in turn, affect salary and funding, the records are audited. Moreover, aspects of liability are

implicit since individual rights are involved. Most employees are earning credits or clock hours throughout their careers; the process of receiving and recording transcripts, therefore, is ongoing.

### **Affects on Teachers and Records Managers**

Problems for teachers in this system are obvious. Upon assuming employment, the employee may be obliged to send for verification of all experience - this not only includes work under contract as a certificated staff person in K-12 school districts, including substitute work, but also teaching days as a substitute teacher, including work for a college or university, and, in cases of vocational teaching, work in industrial management.

Each time a certificated employee is hired in another district, this process recurs, regardless of whether it has been completed at several previous districts. The records, in other words, are not transferable. Hence, with each change, the employee normally must contact the college and each provider of clock hours, and the receiving district must contact all districts in which the person was previously employed for verification of that service.

While opinions vary (one certification officer insisted that the only thing she requires from the previous district is the accumulated sick leave), at least some districts require documents that are officially sealed by the providing institution or district. The teacher may have graduated some time ago and have worked in several districts, each of which must be contacted for verification of the teaching experience, including substitute teaching. Some districts have established a cooperative record storage arrangement, but this is more the exception than the rule. Typically, the teacher or receiving district must contact all those worked for, even if only for a day, and have them verify the information for the new district. If prior employing districts do not respond in a timely manner, the receiving district must conduct follow-up requests. If there are any objections along the way, the process may have to be repeated.

Some believe the problems can only mount as more and more employees exercise their retire-rehire option. Several also noted that requests for records come from other districts at the very time they are trying to get their own new employee records up to speed at the beginning of the school year. Requests from other districts that have the effect of diverting staff from the matter at hand tend to be given a lower priority.

The process can become very complicated if the records of prior districts are not well maintained. This involves staffing and training. In fact, some insist that all of this is not so much a record-keeping system issue as a training issue. If district personnel office staff were adequately and properly trained, they insist, and especially if the auditor could participate in the same training, the problem could be reduced. This may be easier said than done. In large districts, responsibilities for payroll and personnel may be separate with each office relatively well staffed. In small districts, it may be that the same people exercise both responsibilities. In some cases, it may be the district office secretary that does all of this.

While some districts use their own forms for applications and record purposes, there are no common forms employed by all. This issue causes workload problems, since information requests occur for the most part during August-September, as schools are gearing up for the new school year. Teachers whose education and experience cannot be verified by the end of October may be placed in a lower pay grade than that to which they may be entitled until the record is validated, whereupon the district makes the adjustment and calls upon the state to make a similar adjustment in the district's allotment.

Some districts accept credits for movement on the salary schedule only in September for that school year. And some districts place all new employees on Step One of the salary scale until all of the needed records have been received. Obviously, most of the work associated with credential record keeping occurs in the fall --August, September, and October.

### **Accuracy**

Accuracy is an issue. Problems occur when there are questions of interpretation, such as the conversion of semester into quarter credits. Individual districts also may calculate the employee's placement on the salary schedule improperly, in which case it may become the new district's responsibility to make the correction and, possibly, if the employee has been improperly placed, compensate for back wages. Several felt that a central repository would improve the consistency in the reading and treatment of continuing education credits.

Not all agreed, it should be noted, that there are serious questions of interpretation. Some insisted that the conversion ratios and other criteria are clear in the RCW and WAC. There may be an aspect of interpretation involved when it is a matter of relevance, e.g., a physical education teacher seeking credit for a course in physics, but

this is why course pre-approvals are required. Several said that this also is a training issue.

Substitute teaching creates special problems of its own, as it constitutes a factor in the teacher's experience base. Getting accurate information from all of the districts in which a teacher has taught can be a big problem, especially if the teacher has taught out of state or out of country.

### **Audits**

Because these records drive state funding they are audited by the State Auditor's office (the Auditor is interested in continuing education credits associated with salary placement; continuing education records required for certification are audited by the OSPI). Auditing considerations become an overlay. The State Auditor's office audits some 200 districts a year and is funded to include personnel audits in its process. The audits start in October and continue into May. Usually individual records are pulled as part of a local auditing sample; the size of the final sample is determined in some measure by the number of errors encountered. That is, if the auditor encounters problems, additional records will be pulled and reviewed. Audited records, however, usually are not marked as having been so examined, so the employee may be audited again either in the present or a subsequent district. Likewise, some records are never audited and any errors therein may remain undetected.

A larger issue attends sample selection. Because the records are dispersed and maintained locally, and auditors audit them locally, the number of records pulled and audited at the local level varies. The number selected is not related to an overall representative statewide sample. There can be no clear evidence of what may be the actual statewide error rate, and, accordingly, whether or not there is a serious fiscal issue involved with disbursements. This is a problem, as the legislature is concerned about data reliability. According to legislative staff, the absence of a consensus on a common error rate in the data districts rely on for their reports for funding feeds suspicion that there are large holes in the funding bucket, and this, ironically, contributes to the emphasis on tight audits.

For its part, OSPI refunds or collects from the district in the event of an error detected by the auditors. Notably, some district personnel opine that the error rate may be a reflection of different interpretations, sometimes made by a new auditor. For them, consistent rules, clear definitions, and improved training would be the best solutions.

There also are misconceptions about what the auditor requires. People in some districts reported, for example, that the auditor wants only original records. Respondents in the Auditor's office, however, said any original document requirement is a matter of district policy. They will accept photocopies if the district allows them. The issue of training arises again. Some believe that field auditors receive no training in how to read transcripts or treat credits, and it is often the district's personnel staff who provide it. Most would agree that there is no sustained, common, and accessible training for district personnel and auditors throughout the state.

### **Liability**

If a district misplaces a teacher on the salary schedule there also can be liability issues, and the remedies can be substantial. It is usually the school district that is held liable, although teachers who were overpaid because of an error may be required to repay the money. Some felt that a central authority could be the final word and be responsible if there were errors. Others felt differently, since the district, which receives the state appropriation, ultimately must be the responsible party, especially if funds must be repaid or employees reimbursed for errors. Most felt that conflicts between district staff and teachers would be reduced with another system.

Some believe that it should be the responsibility of the teacher to make sure that all credits and experience are counted. Teachers, however, may be counting on the school to do that. Thus, any alternate system should employ provisions for self-audits, whereby the employee would review and sign-off on the information.

One other aspect of liability is worth mentioning here. There is a lot of paper stored in district offices and archives, and it is far from clear how much of this is retrievable in the event of a natural disaster. One district personnel officer who was interviewed said, "If there ever were a fire . . ."

Without exception, the people who work in the districts are knowledgeable about their part of the process, but this understanding may lose clarity with distance. They know how their office works, they know what is required, and they know how their district's certificated staff personnel records must be maintained, but they are less confident about other districts' systems. Add to this differing perceptions of auditing requirements and prospects of liability, and the result can be a level of uncertainty that contributes to the imperative for extensive documents and multiple verifications.



## **Interest in Alternatives**

It was clear from the outset of the study that there is considerable interest in either a centralized system or in significant modifications to the present arrangements. This interest is widespread among districts of all sizes. At the same time, and with a few notable exceptions, there is less knowledge of how such systems can be established, or in how to get there from here. This may have less to do with costs than with mechanics. Thus, a number of questions about alternative systems arose during the interviews: Would they save money; reduce the hassle; make it easier for teachers? Should a system apply statewide, or could it apply to some districts and not to others? Who would perform the data entry? Who would determine the credits? Who would decide the placement on the salary schedule? While there appeared to be something approaching universal interest in almost any new arrangement, much of it centered on the prospect of a centralized record system that districts could access in a timely manner.

The present system was described as paper-based, although some districts employ data systems (e.g., Olympia and other districts use the Education Data Resource Management System, EDRMS.) Some have suggested that if the Auditor's Office would support a state or central database there would no longer be need for paper. Others, particularly at the district level, are not as categorical. Several reported that they would still download from the state database and maintain paper personnel records in the district office. This need might dissipate if a centralized and accessible state data system were established, but it illustrates one respondent's comment to the effect that the present approach is shaped by the need for confidence in the records, nourished in turn by the inevitable impending audit. For their part, State Auditor staff also support a centralized system. They believe it would reduce the time required for personnel audits at least by half.

Perhaps building on the OSPI certification function, using present files as a core, and charging the OSPI with responsibility for verification was offered as an alternative. Costs would be involved, and issues of centralization in a local control state also might become important. If the districts could rely on OSPI it would simplify things. The central records office could publish one database for the district, which it then could verify the information. It probably would be necessary to charge a fee for the service.

In addition to a centralized record-keeping system, there is the possibility of storing records regionally in the Education Service Districts, the staff of which also could perform many of the input and validation functions. Several personnel officers seemed to like this alternative because of the ready accessibility it offered if they had to talk

personally with someone. It also would be possible to link the ESDs to a central repository electronically.

Another modification would be to have the personnel record accompany the teacher as he or she moved from district to district, perhaps in a sealed file shipped by courier (the district from which the teacher departed probably would want to retain a copy for a year or two in the event of an audit). Common forms would help this process. The possibility of using a private vendor also was mentioned.

If it is to be comprehensive, an alternative system will need to accommodate change. The basic skills part of the teacher assessment program will come into effect in September for all new teachers. Endorsement tests for all 32 areas are scheduled to become operative in 2003. There is an unanswered question about where this data will be stored (to say nothing about which data will be stored).

### **Cost Considerations**

As always, cost considerations weigh heavily. A fiscal note prepared for the Legislature in 2000 estimated the cost of a centralized record keeping system at slightly less than \$5,000,000, about \$500,000 of which would be a one-time cost. This estimate however, was described as "Very Drafty" by its author. Some suggest that it might be funded with teachers' fees. The charge for certification (reported at \$45.00) could offer a precedent.

If the OSPI certification office assumed responsibility for central record storage, additional staff would be required. As noted above, the office presently has a backlog of records to be returned to teachers. Similarly, the office now uses microfiche. It would be necessary to convert to digitalization, but that would involve personnel, software, and effort costs, particularly since the presently active microfilmed files would need to be converted. Two staff people presently input data. More would be needed. The office respondent also noted that some transcripts may not lend themselves well to imaging. It was suggested that questions about particular salary placements are now directed for the most part to the School Personnel Reporting Office at OSPI. A centralized system at OSPI would impose an additional burden on this office.

While it is reasonably fair to say that interest in a different system of some form is almost universal, it also is apparent that there is no widely shared view of what a different system would look like, or how it would be funded, or how it would work. In some instances, individuals who were ardently interested in a different arrangement were daunted by the uncertainty of how to get there from here. The possibility of

districts scanning and transferring their records to a central or regional repository was discussed. With care and commitment this could be done. But it would entail an enormous shift of paper. An estimate of three to five million documents may not be unreasonable. It certainly would involve costs.

Recently the Shoreline district decided to scan all inactive personnel records and store them on disks. The records of present employees had not been scanned at the time of writing. Two skilled secretaries pulled and scanned every file (50 years' worth). It required several months and \$30,000 for software, hardware, including scanner, CD ROMs, and network license. This experience was used as the basis for the aforementioned legislative fiscal note. The obstacles, not the least of which involve cost and the magnitude of the workload that would be involved in a central system, are substantial.

The question of feasibility enters at this point. Given sufficient time and resources, and assuming sufficient need, such a solution would be feasible, but feasibility is proportional to the time and resources available. The obvious problem is how to accomplish the transition – how to create a centralized record system out of a decentralized system in which the separate paper documents number in the millions.

### **Other Issues**

Other problems were mentioned. The absence of clear evidence on statewide average error rates, for example, was offered as one of the reasons for the state's continued emphasis on auditing. There were a number of software questions, including whether a paperless system is possible or practical. Other questions concerned security: Can an electronic system be made secure enough to satisfy state auditing requirements and procedures?

Storage problems were brought up. Some districts store records virtually forever. Others purge them after three or seven years. There appears to be no consistent district policy in this regard. Some reported that they copy and permanently store records for teachers who have moved to other districts. One certification officer reported that the oldest personnel record in the district files dated to 1922. If that teacher started teaching at age 20, he or she would be 100 years old at the time of writing. When this was noted, the respondent said she hoped the teacher was not still in the classroom. Some surmised that districts may not be clear on teacher record storage requirements.

Finally, there was frequent mention of the presence of varied reporting forms: A lot of different forms are in use among the state's 296 districts. These include

application forms as well as forms used to seek and report data to and from other districts and forms for prior employment verification, to name a couple. There appears to be an effort to standardize, but it seems to have not made it out of the hangar. Virtually everyone who was interviewed, and certainly including people in the Auditor's Office, said that common forms used statewide would represent a significant advance.

These are the principal features of the present system. The next section addresses some of its capabilities.

### **Some Aspects of the System's Capabilities:**

It is clear that many aspects of the present system are the products of state concerns that the data driving the funding disbursement program be accurate. Extensive auditing processes and systems have been established for the purpose of gaining greater assurance of accuracy. Much of the force behind the present emphasis on record detail and verification devolves from that. District personnel officers do not like negative audit findings, and superintendents do not like to re-adjust budgets when problems are found and money must be returned.

Ironies result from the interplay of separate values: e.g., state funding of basic education, on the one hand, and the strong commitment to local control on the other. An example is the inability to identify a statewide error rate – to establish the degree of accident for the state as a whole. Stated differently, it is an inability to report how much money may be mal-disbursed under the present system that accounts for its complexity and rigidity.

The importance of some consideration of that issue arose during the development of the study. After discussing the issue with legislative staff and members of the state auditor's office, both the need and the possibilities became apparent. The following estimate of the capability of the present district personnel administrative systems and processes is based in part on audit data provided by the Office of the State Auditor staff. The issue of interest is salary-schedule placements made by individual school districts and the errors found as part of overall financial reviews of school districts conducted on a periodic basis by the Office of the State Auditor.

An objective was to determine the average number of major errors that are likely among the approximately 60,000 teacher records and 296 school districts of Washington State, given the existing administrative process capabilities of the individual school districts. "Major errors" were defined as those having a financial impact on the school districts. The source of the data for the analyses was 193 field audits conducted

by the Office of the State Auditor during fiscal year 2000. The assessment is based on an analysis of the frequency distribution of the 56 major errors that were found in 1,832 teacher files during the 193 field audits. Some conclusions regarding the results of those audits are the following:

1. The 56 major errors occurred at 33 locations (17 % of the locations);
2. The median number of major errors is zero (the case at 160 of the 193 locations, i.e., 83% were free of major errors);
3. The most frequently occurring result (the mode) is zero errors;
4. The frequency distribution of errors is highly asymmetrical and does not fit the normal (bell-shaped) curve;
5. The sample size of 1,832 tested files is below the number required to accurately determine the error rate among all 60,000 teacher files;
6. The most likely theoretical form of the frequency distribution of errors is the Poisson distribution; and
7. The mean error rate that was calculated from the files sampled, 0.0315, very likely overstates the true error rate.

For these reasons, it can be argued that the most representative error rate among the 60,000 teacher files is not significantly different from zero. This may be intuitively difficult to accept, since small numbers of major errors were indeed found by the auditors. But despite what might appear to be a counter-intuitive conclusion, it is likely that the true error rate is significantly less than the arithmetic mean, 3.1 percent, would suggest.

While this is a reasonable deduction, it is qualified. The total sample size for FY 2000 (1,832 files at 193 locations) was not sufficiently large to draw reasonably supportable conclusions about the true mean error rate (and its confidence limits) of the population of 60,000 teacher files at the 296 school districts. The required sample size under the assumption of a 3.1 percent error rate, a 95 percent confidence level, and a sampling precision or margin of error of one-half of one percent would be 4,616 files, which is 2,784 above the number tested by field audit staff in FY 2000. This would suggest that, under the assumption of a 3.1 percent error rate, specific statistical inferences drawn from this analysis fail the 95 percent confidence limit hurdle. At the 90 percent confidence level a sample size of 3,271 would be required for the same level of precision. Therefore the statistical inferences also fail the 90 percent confidence limit hurdle.

The matter of a sufficient statistical sample to support an acceptable confidence level (95 percent) evokes one of the ironies of the present approach. The field audits are district focused. The samples of records that are pulled and reviewed are matters decided on-site. Thus, in the aggregate, at least for the year examined here (1,832 files in 193 districts) they totaled less than half of the number that otherwise would be appropriate. If the method were inverted and began at a central repository, the auditor could randomly distribute the requisite file requirements among the people conducting the field audits and a more representative statewide error rate could be determined. This is certainly one of the arguments in favor of a more centralized system.

With respect to the apparent 3.1 percent error rate (with all of its qualifications, and with the good possibility that it is overstated), if one accepts the premise that no moderately complex administrative process or system is likely to be error-free, a question that is relevant for the administrative processes of the school districts is, what overall error rate is achievable? Absolute perfection within any administrative system is not possible, but it is apparent that the error rate can be reduced. The extent of that potential improvement depends upon a number of factors. These include providing continuing training for both school district staff and auditors and improving systems and processes throughout the school districts.

The achievable quality level of processes and systems became a topic of major interest among U.S. business and industrial firms when American firms began to lose competitive position in both U.S. and world markets because of higher quality and lower cost products and services available elsewhere. One tool that U.S. firms are introducing to help remedy quality and cost relationships is referred to as "Six Sigma" analysis. 'Six Sigma' (a Motorola trademark) refers to implementing system and process changes that will reduce error rates and permit a specific process or an entire firm to become a "world class" operation. The goal is the virtual elimination of defects from any process, product, or service; this is far beyond the capability of most U.S. firms at present. The numerical target is 3.4 defects per million opportunities, arrived at by setting that target as six standard deviations above the process mean (this is an oversimplification of a complex topic). The Six Sigma statistic measures the capability of a process to perform defect-free work, with the sigma value indicating the probability that the process is defect-free.

Based on industry analyses that have determined the costs of poor quality, benchmarks of process capability have been defined for processes or firms considered to be world-class, industry average, and noncompetitive. These benchmarks have been

tied to process sigma capabilities, with the long-term defect level range of the average American company about 67,000 to 6,200 defects per million (3 to 4 sigma).

To place this theory in context, the table below depicts the number of misspelled words that one would find in a page, book, or library at various sigma levels and the duration of time electrical power is unavailable within one month because of outages:

<b><u>Sigma Level</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Misspelled Words</u></b>	<b><u>Monthly Duration of Power Outage</u></b>
7	1 per large library	0.00001 seconds
6	1 per small library	0.005 seconds
5	1 per several books	1.48 seconds
4	1 per 31 pages	2.72 minutes
3	1.35 per page	1.94 hours
2	23 per page	32.8 hours
1	159 per page	228.5 hours
0	500 per page	720 hours

Using the teacher records mean error rate for illustrative purposes, 3.1 percent or 31/1,000 would equate to 31,000 defects per one million opportunities. This would benchmark that error rate well above “noncompetitive” and well within the 67,000 to 6,200 defects industry average, at a Sigma level of roughly 3.6. It is not a poorly performing set of administrative processes by that benchmark, but clearly there is room for improvement in the quality of the administrative systems within school districts.

# OSPI Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study

## The Survey of Districts

An e-mail survey of the 296 school districts was conducted for the study with the assistance of staff of the OSPI and the advice of the project advisory committee members. The purposes were to obtain selected quantitative data about the respective school districts and to seek the opinions of their staff regarding their interest in the establishment of a central repository of teacher records. The number of questions and format of the questionnaire were limited by its nature as an e-mail survey. Eight questions were posed. These were the following:

1. How many teachers (head count of both full and part-time) does your school district have?
2. How many teachers were new to your district this school year?
3. How many office staff are involved in authenticating, processing, and maintaining teacher credential files?
4. Approximately how many staff hours annually are devoted to these tasks and activities?
5. In your view, is a state-authorized repository of teacher credential files needed? Why?
6. At least two types of credential repositories seem feasible at this point: (1) a centrally managed system and (2) a distributed system, perhaps managed by the ESDs. Would you favor one of these over the other (central versus regional)? Or would you favor some other arrangement?
7. What should a repository of teacher credential files provide electronically for you? (examples follow; add others if you wish):
  - a) A summary of years of experience;
  - b) Continuing education clock hours;
  - c) Certification information;
  - d) Endorsements;
  - e) Verification of background investigation;



- f) Step on salary schedule;
- g) Summary of college degrees completed;
- h) Images of official transcripts;
- i) Other, (specify).

8. Do you have any other thoughts about credentialed staff records systems you would like to share?

The survey elicited 105 responses from the 296 school districts, or 35 percent, an extraordinarily high response rate (responses also were received from four – 44 percent – of the Educational Service Districts). The responses appear well balanced among the different district sizes, gauged by the numbers of assigned teachers within them respectively.

The first four questions involved quantitative responses while the last four were qualitative in nature. One goal in requesting the quantitative data was to determine if it might be possible to develop a mathematical model for estimating the numbers of hours required to authenticate, process, and maintain teacher records. This proved successful.

Of the 104 responses received, five school districts were unable to respond to the fourth question. The quantitative responses for these five districts were deleted from the database. The data for three additional school districts were deleted because they were inconsistent with the numerical responses of the remaining districts. With the deletion of those eight responses, the analytical database consisted of 96 quantitative sets of data. The narrative responses, i.e., answers to the qualitative questions, however, were retained and are included in the report for the 105 districts.

### **1. How many teachers (headcount of both full and part-time) does your school district have?**

Most of the school districts are not large. Among the 96 in the usable sample, the total number of teachers assigned was 30,019. The average (arithmetic mean) number of teachers was 313; the median was 148 (this indicates that the arithmetic average was pulled upward by the larger districts). The first quartile was 48 and the third quartile was 348. The smallest school district in the survey, based on numbers of teachers, was five. The largest was 3,064. All calculated figures within this section, such as arithmetic averages, have been rounded to the nearest whole number unless otherwise indicated.

## **2. How many teachers were new to your district this school year?**

The total number of new teachers among the 96 districts in the sample was 3,947. The average was 41; the median was 16 (that is, a few large districts pulled the average upward).

The first quartile was four and the third quartile was 45. The smallest number of new teachers was zero and the largest was 500. Part of the difference between this figure and the 1,347 contained in the LEAP data relates of course to the fact that the latter addressed only teachers who had transferred from one Washington district to another the following year.

## **3. How many office staff are involved in authenticating, processing, and maintaining teacher credential files?**

The total number of reported staff was 160; the mean was 1.7 and the median one. The first quartile was one and the third quartile was two. The smallest number of staff involved in these tasks and activities was one and the largest number was six. Based on averages developed for the question immediately following, the total level of effort for the identified tasks and activities among these 160 staff is estimated to be 60,338 working hours, or roughly 35 FTEs. The average level of effort for these activities is therefore around 22 percent of time among all districts in the sample (this estimate is not precise because 35 FTE cannot be compared directly with 160 staff).

## **4. Approximately how many staff hours annually are devoted to these tasks and activities?**

An estimate of this figure was the objective of the quantitative analysis. All usable reported hours expended are included. The total number of hours expended on these tasks and activities among the 96 school district sample was 60,403; the average was 629 and the median 193 (again, the effect of the larger school districts pulled the average upward). The first quartile was 60 and the third quartile was 688. The smallest number of hours reported was one and the largest was 7,680.

A better perspective on these figures can be gained by relating them to the numbers of teachers assigned to the respective districts during the most recent school year and the numbers of new teachers arriving. The total number of hours worked on teacher files, the number of teachers assigned, and the number of new teachers among the 96 responses to the question were:

<b><u>Number of Hours Worked</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Teachers Assigned</u></b>	<b><u>Number of New Teachers</u></b>
60,403	30,019	3,947

The corresponding average number of hours spent on teacher files, based on ratios from the above totals, are:

<b><u>Average Number of Hours Worked per Teacher Assigned</u></b>	<b><u>Average Number of Hours Worked per New Teacher</u></b>
2.01	12.21

The first figure suggests that the number of hours worked on authenticating, processing, and maintaining teacher credential files among the 296 school districts of approximately 60,000 teachers would be about 120,600. The number of hours worked can be converted to the number of hours paid through a conversion factor relating to the average percentage of paid hours that governmental employees typically are on the job (that is, net of absences for all reasons such as annual leave, sick leave, etc.). This average is about 82 percent. Consequently, an estimate for the number of paid hours represented by 120,600 working hours would be 142,308.

By using another conversion factor for the number of paid hours in a full-time equivalent position (FTE) for classified employees, 2,080, these paid hours would be the equivalent of 68 FTE.

The approximate cost of these tasks and activities, using school year 2001-2002 annualized classified employee average salary of \$29,975, would be:

Annualized Salary: \$29,975  
 Benefits @ 28%: \$8,393  
 Total Compensation: \$38,368  
Estimated Cost: \$2,609,024 (68 FTE x \$38,368)

The publication from which the annualized annual salary for classified employees was taken, the *Preliminary School District Personnel Summary Reports, 2001-2002 School Year*, notes that the annualized salary may be somewhat overstated because of the use of FTE in lieu of numbers of employees. But if the above figures are approximately correct, roughly \$2.6 million of the total school districts' budget is expended on authenticating, processing, and maintaining teacher credential files. It is possible that the labor-intensive nature, and some of the cost, of this work could be

substantially reduced through a more efficient central process and these hours diverted to other school district endeavors.

Perhaps more useful than the above averages for estimating the number of hours required at a specific school district for these tasks and activities is a mathematical relationship that varies depending on the size of the school district in numbers of new teachers. In broad terms, every incremental increase in the number of new teachers by one imposes a workload equivalent to 13.2 hours for these tasks and activities. There is also a built-in amount of "overhead" no matter how many new teachers arrive in a given school year. The estimated numbers of hours required in a specific school district by numbers of new teachers are shown in the table below:

<b><u>Number of New Teachers</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Workload Hours, All Records</u></b>
1	99
5	152
10	218
20	350
30	482
40	614
50	747
60	879
70	1,011
80	1,143
90	1,275
100	1,407
200	2,728
300	4,049
400	5,370
500	6,691
600	8,012

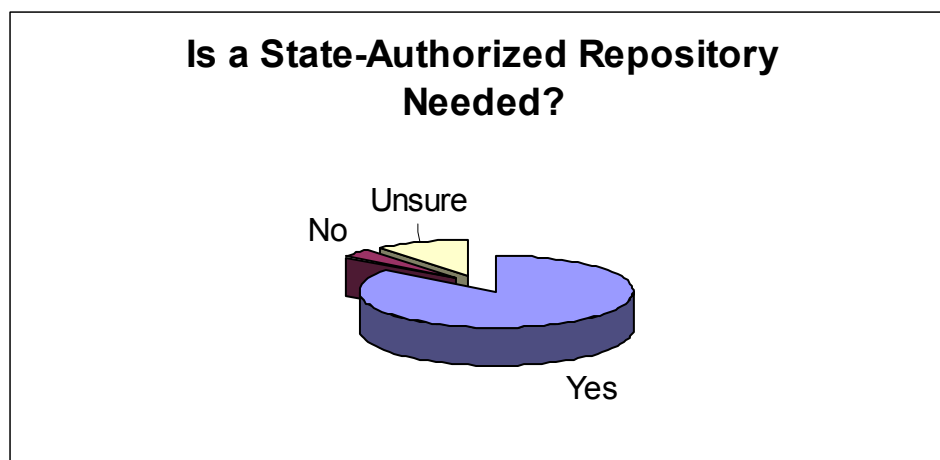
An example may clarify the terminology used for the above table, using the number of new teachers in the current school year at a specific location. Assume that ten new teachers arrive. The total number of hours likely required for that school district to authenticate and process their records and to maintain these and all remaining teacher records during that school year would be, from the above table, 218. If 600 new teachers arrived, 8,102 hours would be required.

Errors in the estimate could result from two factors: the likely inability of most school districts to accurately estimate the number of hours and the estimating error of the statistical formula. Most of any estimating error is likely to be the result of the former.

Circumstances naturally vary among school districts, and the figures presented above should be used only as guidelines for estimating the number of hours required for these tasks and activities. The more useful way to perform this estimate is for a school district to use an average of the number of new teachers for multiple years, say three years. This would tend to level the peaks and valleys of the estimates that would otherwise occur.

**5. In your view, is a state-authorized repository of teacher credential files needed? Why?**

The responses to this question (103) were overwhelmingly in the affirmative. Four (3.8 percent) were negative. Eleven (10.7 percent) were unsure. The remainder, 88 (85.4 percent) were clearly positive. Thus, there appears to be considerable support for some form of centralized system among those who manage personnel records in the districts.



Most of the negative responses centered on concerns for bureaucratization and information turnaround. For example, "My fear hinges on the turnaround time it would take for one office to manage all the files. I also wonder who would be responsible for "reminding" teachers to get their paper work in, what paper work is necessary, etc. . . I have worked many hours getting my system set up. I worry that the state or regional offices might require me to provide my staff information in a format that I am not using which would cause me countless more hours." Another respondent offered this: "No. I'm afraid that a state-authorized repository would make it very hard to process new employees and place them correctly on the salary schedule when hired. Currently, we have control over the paperwork that needs to be received in order to document their salary schedule placement in a timely manner. I feel that a central repository would slow

this process down tremendously. For example, we currently 'estimate' salary schedule placement for a new employee, based on tentative information from their application materials. Then, when documentation is received for credits and experience (usually within 4-6 weeks) we can verify the salary schedule placement, and make adjustments to salary if needed. 98% of the documentation we need has been received by October 1st. With a central repository, we would have no control over monitoring when the paperwork is received, and I can see this as a disadvantage to new employees and their initial placement on the salary schedule. Also, I can see a disadvantage for teachers moving incrementally on the schedule for additional education. In September of each year, we're able to document credits for this movement and change salaries in September or October. If all this paperwork was submitted to a central repository, teachers may not receive increases for a few months until their paperwork is verified. This would cause hardships for the teachers and added work for our payroll department (for retroactive payments). It could also affect our S-275 reporting information. It just seems to me that a central repository would add an unnecessary 'middle man' to the already cumbersome process."

But, as noted, most of the answers were positive. For example, "Yes, There is so much duplication of effort. Each district and teacher has to go through the verification process each time a teacher changes districts. Also, there is great variation in transcripts which allows a large potential for error when being completed by staff that have many other duties in addition to this job. People specialized in understanding the rules and the transcripts would be much more accurate."

Another writer offered this favorable comment: "Definitely. The margin for error increases as more districts handle materials. There is also the possibility of misinterpretation of the laws, which speak to the eligibility of credits and experience for reporting purposes. I believe most districts have or eventually will convert to using the state allocation model for their salary schedule. Many certificated staff move from one district to another and although the cost of having to send transcripts again is not prohibitive, it certainly can be a burden for a young teacher with a family. [Ours is] a small district, and I am the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent as well as Certificated Personnel Specialist. We do not have a personnel director; therefore, I am responsible for all processing of certificated personnel. Preparations for the next school year are occurring at the same time as new employees are being hired and information being verified. My position requires attention in both directions, which increases the burden. Another area of concern is verifying experience for overseas employment.

Obtaining appropriate information can take many months to compile and verify. And, I have had occasions when the information [could not] be obtained, therefore, cheating an employee out of additional experience placement on the salary schedule. This would also be beneficial for those employees hired close to or right after the school year begins. It takes time for the colleges/universities and previous districts to submit information, which may delay the employee receiving their full salary in the first month of employment. Once again, this is a big issue for a young teacher with a family.”

Still another had this to offer: “Yes. It would consistently apply rules rather than each district interpreting the rules and transcripts. Staff working with the records could be experts and well trained. In small school districts it is such a small part of duties that we spend as much time researching rules as actually doing the work. Districts would not have to waste time re-creating the same information that the last school district had already done. Teachers would not have to order new sets of transcripts each time they changed districts within the state.”

Finally, another provided this comment: “Absolutely, it would streamline the records and vastly simplify the manual and un-funded tasks that each school district now provides. Because every district is required to manually keep records and compute hours and credits, the info is rampant with errors and it becomes a major audit issue. We spend an enormous number of hours entering data, hand computing, self-auditing and cross auditing files in order not to have audit findings.”

Among those who were unsure, one had this to say: “Yes and no. Why? - YES - consistency of correct records with other districts, convenience of teachers not having to order official transcripts for each new district employed by. NO - timing new transcripts added to employee record for advancement on the salary schedule.”

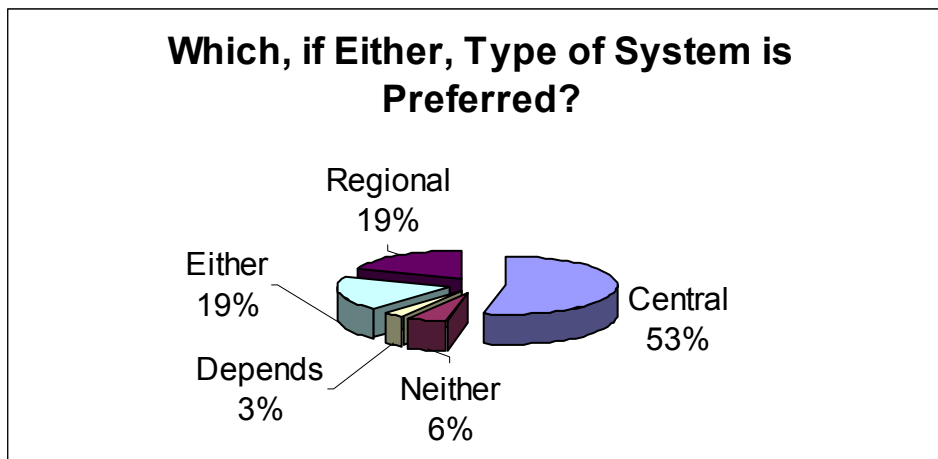
And another offered this: “I think it has merits and potential drawbacks. I spend a lot of time presently waiting for other districts to respond to my requests for experience verification, etc. If there was a statewide system, I am assuming this would be managed at the state level and easily accessed by the districts. I would also hope there would be less errors on the S275's because there would be only one office dealing with years of experience, credit accrual, etc.”

Again, all of the responses to this and the three other qualitative questions are presented in the Appendix.

**6. At least two types of credential repositories seem feasible at this point: (1) a centrally managed system and (2) a distributed system, perhaps managed by the**

**ESDs. Would you favor one of these over the other (central versus regional)? Or would you favor some other arrangement? Why?**

The responses (102) to this question clustered into five major categories. The first comprises those who favor the status quo (six responses or 5.9 percent). The second is composed of those who stated that their view would depend on specific circumstances (three responses or 2.9 percent). The third category is made up of those who favor one or the other of the options mentioned in the question (19 responses or 18.6 percent). Those who favor a distributed system (19 responses or 18.6 percent) are listed in the fourth category. Those who favor a centralized system, 55 responses (53.9 percent), compose the fifth and final category. The level of interest in a centralized system is apparent in this case as well.



A few examples of the comments on the different types follow, starting with those who spoke in favor of no change. “With the information I have, a state repository is not needed. I would recommend the state have read-only access to our district files. For accuracy and efficiency, the teachers need a local contact to verify their records and receipt of experience and certified course work.”

A person who said that it would depend offered this: “Not sure, but it would be important for information to be accessible in a timely manner. If information takes the amount of time that fingerprint verification takes it would not be beneficial.”

Among those who supported a more systematic approach but had no preference about whether it operated on a regional or centralized basis had this to say: “No particular preference; I can see benefits in both types [at the ESDs or in a central file]. The consistency in a centrally managed system would be great, but the more personal



service associated with a local ESD would be good too. It's nice to actually speak with someone rather than always getting voice mail.”

Those who favored a regionalized [ESD] system were equal in number to those who said they would be comfortable with either approach. Comments from the regional proponents included the following: “I would favor the regional repository or something like WSIPC student records where records are forwarded to a new district when a teacher moves. Thereby, only one district at a time would be updating the records to insure nothing is duplicated and that we know who is responsible for inputting the info.”

Another offered this: “A regional system, managed by the ESD's, would be much better than a centrally managed system. Again, I don't agree with the need for any central repository system, but I would definitely favor a regional one over a central one.”

Still another said this, “The ESD currently manages our clock hour information. That is working effectively. I would be more in favor of a regional approach.”

Again, those who favored a central records office comprised more than half of the responses. Illustrative responses are listed as follows: “We would prefer a statewide, centrally managed system. With the use of the Internet, teachers are now requesting applications from districts across the state. Having a central repository seems more efficient reducing the guesswork as to which region holds current records for an individual.”

“It is easier to have one place to call then to try and figure out which ESD has the information.”

“At this time, there is so much duplication of effort and potential for error in the current district-by-district process. Although there may be other reasons for keeping it at a regional level, my instinct is to encourage a process managed and run by OSPI, since experience and education documentation will easily cross regional boundaries just as it currently does district boundaries.”

“I would favor either of these arrangements; however, the centrally managed system seems to me to be the best option. I believe the centrally managed system would provide the proper consistency needed in review of the information for district purposes. My biggest concern would be the need for having appropriately trained personnel to deal with the ‘truckload’ of information that would be needed by districts on a year-to-year basis.”

“Central managed system – – SPI now handles the certification of teachers and keeping them up to date, it seems this would be the place to have the central system – – teachers would only have to work through one agency (more accuracy using one system).”

“I would favor the centrally managed system. It would allow for consistency and it would also be a central location for all the information. Four of the six teachers we hired were not associated with our ESD, so it seems as though the ESDs would face the same situation the school districts are currently facing, unless the ESDs are allowed to transfer that information to each other. Also, with a central system, wouldn't it be easier to monitor the teachers who should not be allowed to teach due to fingerprints, misconduct, etc.?”

“I would prefer a centrally managed system since people move around a lot. How would we know which repository was handling each teacher's credentials? It would also result in the discrepancies I was talking about earlier. A centrally managed system should be more consistent and efficient and effective. The only advantage I can see to regional is that they would be closer so people could interact with real people. But it still leaves problems when we hire people from other regions.”

## **7. What should a repository of teacher credential files provide electronically for you?**

- a. A summary of years of experience;
- b. Continuing education clock hours;
- c. Certification information;
- d. Endorsements;
- e. Verification of background investigation;
- f. Step on salary schedule;
- g. Summary of college degrees completed;
- h. Images of official transcripts;
- i. Other (specify).

Most of the 105 respondents to the survey stated that all of the identified information would be helpful to them in electronic form. Associated comments include the following:

“We can already access the SPI files to verify FBI/State Patrol Background checks.”

“A summary of verified years of experience/ in-state and out-of-state.”

“Continuing education clock hours; yes, if there is a way to track compliance with WAC at various school districts (and criteria used).”

“Images of Credit/Clock hr approval forms, created by each district, for placement on the salary schedule. These forms need to follow the teacher when they change employment for any classes taken after September 1, 1995.”

“All of the above plus a short description of the level and position of the certificated employee, i.e. first grade teacher.”

“Your list of 8 items is all needed by each district when hiring a teacher - why not do it once in one location! Electronic transfer of information seems even BETTER. Wouldn't the auditors love it to be consistent when looking into a personnel file?”

“Coaching experience would be great [to include].”

“Copy of last contract, so we can view what level of education and experience they have been credited with up to that point.”

“All the above, plus confirmation/dates of specialized training, such as HIV/Aids and Sexual Harassment, first aid, CPR.”

“I would like to see the experience, credits and clock hours in detail form, not just as a summary (such as a list in EDRM or Excel). Also, we need the course approval category for credits and clock hours completed 9/1/95 and later.”

“It would be nice to have: a, c, d, e, f, & g with these fields being adjustable at the district level as well. For instance, if you had given a teacher 4 years experience and we showed that teacher having some unpaid leave, we would deduct that unpaid leave from his/her experience, while you may not be aware of that unpaid time away from work.”

“Repository provides - items A-G. Images of the official transcripts would not be necessary. If a district wishes to use the transcript information for hiring purposes (areas of interest, what specific classes were taken, specific grades, etc.) it would be the district's responsibility to obtain the transcripts from the prospective employee.”

“I know that there are currently RCWs and WACs that govern what each district must maintain for audit purposes. I would propose that it would be beneficial to change the rules and determine that the repository would be responsible to maintain the required paperwork for audit purposes. If the repository gathers the data and makes the salary placement determination, the district would be able to look up the employee's placement and use that for contract purposes. If the repository were to take on the task

of maintaining this info and salary placement, there would be no need to have this information available electronically. All the district needs is to know where the teacher is to be placed on the salary schedule. It would reduce the filing and file space required for each employee.

“I could see this reducing the amount of work that is also required for the S275. Currently, all the placement information must be maintained. It would still be necessary for districts to identify the grade level, the account code and duty code, the FTE, etc., but if we did not maintain all of this information on paper in an employee file and used the repository salary placement, that would also reduce employee time spent on the S275 process. It would also be possible to use the information from the S275 to update the experience for each teacher annually. I understand that a repository is a lot of work, but I know that school districts repeatedly reconstruct employee files - transcripts, experience, clock hours, certificates, etc. and there is a big cost for the reconstruction (cost of transcripts, employee's handling the mail, forwarding our information to other districts, helping our teachers understand why they have to "do it again", etc.). We really appreciate being able to put a social security number in the computer to find out if a person had a teaching certificate. We are also able to look up information on each employee from DRS. This would be one more opportunity to reduce work and increase productivity and efficiency across the state. All districts prefer to put money into educational programs, but we are also very sensitive to audit findings and with the emphasis that the legislature has placed on staff mix and the annual requirement to audit and report, the state auditor really has no choice than to spend audit time in each district sampling our teacher files. So, there would also be an audit savings, if there were a central repository for the auditors to test and rely upon. At \$70 plus per hour, it would be of value for you to check with the State Auditor how many audit hours are spent each year on this area statewide. That would be an additional savings to the districts.”

**8. Do you have any other thoughts about credentialed staff records systems you would like to share?**

Sixty-three responses were received to this question from the 105 participating school districts. A few examples follow. All of the responses are presented in the Appendix.

“ [We are] not on the state-wide salary schedule, so I am not sure that our participation would provide all of the information that we would need to comply with our negotiated bargaining contract salary placement rules, in addition to following the state

regulations/guidelines. I know that most districts have bargaining contract rules that have to be followed for placements using credits/experience that are not recognized by the state - but we still have to maintain records and track for our use. So if this is being recommended as a cost saving idea, [we] would still have to have staff to track and maintain records that are not recognized by the state for our employees in addition to what a central repository may provide. We would still have to have staff to serve as a liaison between our [many] employees and this central repository to coordinate requests for information.”

“For us this isn't a priority. We have concerns that the information would not get back to us in a timely fashion. Also because we only just adopted the state LEAP schedule in 1999-00 and prior to that time we followed our own district salary schedule, we are still honoring the district schedule for grand fathered employees. This will take some monitoring for several years.”

“I think it has great potential and could be very beneficial to individual school districts.”

“I think the idea of a central repository has enough positives to be encouraging. I'm sure there [several] positives and negatives I am overlooking, but I find this an exciting possibility. I am a more than a little unsure how credit approval forms will fit into a centralized record-keeping facility, but think most of those problems can be solved. Thanks for taking on this challenge!”

“Do not pursue this!!”

“This system of centralization of records would only work if there were some types of checks and balances in place and that the accountability would fall on who ever has the central system. That would probably never happen. As a district we would have to be reassured that the system in place was correct and if in doubt we would continue with what is being done now to avoid any errors in case of an audit.”

“I have felt very strongly for quite some time that this should come to pass. It seems very efficient, cost effective and, most importantly, logical to have this centralized system to hold the credentials of all public school teachers in the state. It would save many, many hours of work at the district level, especially for teachers who may move from district to district during their careers. It would save districts money for the following reasons: a. Knowing exactly where to place a teacher on the salary schedule; b. Having prior experience housed in a central location rather than having to rely on or wait for a former district to research and mail back experience verification forms; c.

Determining whether credits or clock hours earned meet the criteria to be in compliance with WAC 392-121-262. d. Save many redundant inquiries by all school districts to OSPI personnel regarding the annual S-275 personnel reporting process. e. Cut down on time spent entering education and prior experience into the database of each district rather than just downloading it.”

“Thank you for conducting a study of this nature. I feel such a database would be a great resource for school districts and an efficient method of streamlining work done by all the school districts of the state. If you need further input or assistance, I would be happy to help you in any way possible.”

This summary of responses to the E-mail survey concludes on this note. While a number of legitimate questions are posed, and some reservations are apparent, the interest in a centralized teacher record repository is apparent and strong. Enough has been learned at this point to merit attention to some of the study questions. Several can be addressed at this point.

With respect to the first question -- Is a central repository a good idea, and, if so, why? – a number of people believe it is a good idea. Eighty-five percent of the survey participants agree that it is needed. While there is some divergence on the type of system, fully 91 percent of the respondents replied in the positive. These were in addition to those who were interviewed at the onset of the study, the majority of whom – educators and auditor’s office staff – agreed that such a system was desirable.

With respect to why, the reasons are myriad. The present system is complex, and not many, auditor or district staff, are satisfied with it. To some extent the two points of view operate at cross purposes: the auditor is seeking confirmation that teachers are placed at a salary level commensurate with their education and experience but because of the dispersal of records among the 296 districts, and an auditing program focused on approximately 200 districts a year, finds it difficult to establish a representative statewide error rate. People in the districts, concerned that errors may be revealed, feel pressure to make sure that placement decisions are completely accurate and fully documented. The system forms accordingly. The irony may be in the indications that a statewide error rate may not be severe and, in any case, not evenly distributed across districts.

Other reasons devolve from this. They include variances in interpretation, problems for teachers who sometimes must maintain records of all teaching experience, even that which is fragmentary, and accumulating education, and who may be required

to provide original documentation of each, decisions that must be made on highly compressed schedules, varied procedures and requirements among districts, accuracy, and the list goes on. Some of these problems might be addressed with changes that fall short of a central system – solutions that center on increased training opportunities, the use of common forms, etc. – but these are some of the reasons that so many support the central repository solution.

With respect to the question concerning duplication, this is more of a matter of duplication among districts than duplication at the district and state levels. The records of a teacher who has taught in several districts are likely to be retained in each of these. Storage policies are an issue, as some districts maintain complete records indefinitely and others purge them at different intervals. The number of cross-district contacts and confirmations each year comprise a significant workload and certainly would correspond with the number of teachers moving from one district to another in that period. Most agree that a central repository would eliminate some of this duplication of effort and provide efficiencies.

The questions concerning the cost savings associated with a replacement system, funding for that system, the estimated potential number of teacher certification records that could be deposited, the organizational structure, and the location of a central repository, etc. are matters for later chapters of the study.

Other states have centralized their record systems, and these efforts comprise the subject of interest of the next chapter.

# **OSPI Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study Other States' Systems**

## **The State Survey**

Part of the research to determine the feasibility of creating and operating a centralized repository of teacher certification records involved consideration of similar efforts in other states. There are inherent differences among the states with respect to certification or licensure. One commonality is that each state does something in this regard, i.e., each requires a teaching license or a certificate. The differences start after that, and they involve unique laws, policies, and procedures that accompany teacher licensure. The goals were to identify those states that have developed records repository systems and those with such systems that approximate Washington's licensure implementation requirements and funding approach.

The research entailed telephone or Internet contacts, or both, with each of the other 49 states. In the case of the telephone call, an interview guide was employed. A questionnaire was utilized for the E-mail contacts. Questions were directed to two areas of interest.

1. Identifying state department of education home pages and determining information availability via that route;
2. Identifying states that have developed or are developing centralized record systems and determining the extent to which these may be applicable or transportable to Washington.

The first of these, finding and using state department home pages, was essential to the second, as usability affected both the ability to research each state's efforts and the accessibility of teacher licensure information. Although not a primary issue for this study, the use of this medium as a means to obtain information on teachers' qualifications and experience was of interest.



The business of identifying particular contacts or obtaining specific information on a state's approaches to such matters as personnel record keeping is complicated, the availability of electronic technologies notwithstanding. Thus, a chart was created to avoid recreating that wheel should additional information be sought in the future. This chart, which contains the web address of the state's department of education and a rating of the ease of use was prepared. For example, a judgment was made on how easily a first-time visitor to that site could navigate to certification or licensure information, find the requirements for certification or licensure in the state, and whether access to a teacher's certification records is possible from the web. Where access is possible, the type of identification or password information required (password, social security number, certificate or license number, last name, first name, etc.) was noted. The chart appears on the following page.

Websites for the following states were judged exceptionally easy to navigate: Georgia, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and West Virginia. In these cases, except for Georgia and Massachusetts, teachers may access their own certification records. Massachusetts intends to be online with teacher records in the summer of 2002. Montana is the only state that provides public access to teacher certification records, while others are checking the legal implications of making this information available to the general public. Georgia, while not providing online access to teacher certification records, has implemented a "Certification Wizard," which takes a teacher through the steps necessary to become certified to teach in the state. The use of the Internet to provide teachers information about certification and licensure occurs in all states, although some web sites are more obscure in this regard than others. Should Washington opt for a centralized repository, a linkage between access to this information and the OSPI website would be an obvious consideration. A more thorough study of existing state department of education websites would be warranted in that event.

Some states have made significant efforts in the development of various aspects of repository systems, and some already have comprehensive repository systems. The following matters were of most interest.

Does the state have a **centralized records repository**? Related matters of interest were whether the state has a department or agency that houses teacher license application files and if the process is part of one department that maintains teacher certification separately from all other teacher renewal and accumulative files.

State	Department of Education Web Address	DOE Home Page	Certification Page	Access to Teacher Certification Records	Ease of finding requirements
<b>Key: 1 = Easy to use; 5 = Very difficult to use; Highlighted = particularly easy to use.</b>					
Alabama	<a href="http://www.alsde.edu/html/home.asp">http://www.alsde.edu/html/home.asp</a>	3	3	Password	5
Alaska	<a href="http://www.educ.state.ak.us/">http://www.educ.state.ak.us/</a>	1	1	No	1
Arizona	<a href="http://www.ade.state.az.us/">http://www.ade.state.az.us/</a>	1	1	Secure logon to site (?)	1
Arkansas	<a href="http://arkedu.state.ar.us/teachers/index.html">http://arkedu.state.ar.us/teachers/index.html</a>	1	1	No	1
California	<a href="http://www.ctc.ca.gov/">http://www.ctc.ca.gov/</a>	3	3	Public	2
Colorado	<a href="http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_license.htm">http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_license.htm</a>	1	1	No	1
Connecticut	<a href="http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/oert/index.htm">http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/oert/index.htm</a>	1	1	No	1
Delaware	Certification website not available	na	na	na	na
Florida	<a href="http://www.firn.edu/doe/edcert/home0022.htm">http://www.firn.edu/doe/edcert/home0022.htm</a>	2	2	No	1
Georgia x	<a href="http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/index.asp">http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/index.asp</a>	1	1	No	1-"Certification Wizard"
Hawaii	<a href="http://doe.k12.hi.us/">http://doe.k12.hi.us/</a>	3	5	?	5
Idaho	<a href="http://www.sde.state.id.us/certification/">http://www.sde.state.id.us/certification/</a>	4	3	No	3
Illinois	<a href="http://www.isbe.state.il.us/">http://www.isbe.state.il.us/</a>	3	3	SSN + Last Name	3
Indiana	<a href="http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/">http://ideanet.doe.state.in.us/</a>	4	1	No	1
Iowa	<a href="http://www.state.ia.us/educate/boee/index.html">http://www.state.ia.us/educate/boee/index.html</a>	1	3	No	3 (phone menu)
Kansas	<a href="http://www.ksbe.state.ks.us/Welcme.html">http://www.ksbe.state.ks.us/Welcme.html</a>	1	1	SSN + Last Name	1
Kentucky	<a href="http://www.kde.state.ky.us/">http://www.kde.state.ky.us/</a>	2	1	No	1
Louisiana	<a href="http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp">http://www.doe.state.la.us/DOE/asps/home.asp</a>	3	3	No	2
Maine	<a href="http://www.state.me.us/education/homepage.htm">http://www.state.me.us/education/homepage.htm</a>	1	1	Last name + last 5 digits SSN + BD	2
Maryland	<a href="http://www.msde.state.md.us/">http://www.msde.state.md.us/</a>	2	2	No	1
Massachusetts	<a href="http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/">http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/</a>	1	1	Summer 2002	1
Michigan	<a href="http://www.mde.state.mi.us/">http://www.mde.state.mi.us/</a>	2	2	Last or First + Last or Cert #	1
Minnesota	<a href="http://children.state.mn.us/">http://children.state.mn.us/</a>	4	1	File folder # or First+Last	1
Mississippi	<a href="http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/">http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/</a>	1	2	School District access only	1
Missouri	<a href="http://services.dese.state.mo.us/">http://services.dese.state.mo.us/</a>	1	1	Last + SSN	1
Montana	<a href="http://www.opi.state.mt.us/index.html">http://www.opi.state.mt.us/index.html</a>	1	1	Public	1
Nebraska x	<a href="http://www.nde.state.ne.us/">http://www.nde.state.ne.us/</a>	1	1	SSN + Last Name	1
Nevada	<a href="http://www.nde.state.nv.us/">http://www.nde.state.nv.us/</a>	1	1	No	1
New Hampshire	<a href="http://www.ed.state.nh.us/">http://www.ed.state.nh.us/</a>	1	1	No	1
New Jersey	<a href="http://www.state.nj.us/education/">http://www.state.nj.us/education/</a>	1	3	No	3
New Mexico	<a href="http://sde.state.nm.us/">http://sde.state.nm.us/</a>	2	2	No	1
New York	<a href="http://www.nysed.gov/">http://www.nysed.gov/</a>	5	5	na	5
North Carolina	<a href="http://www.ncpublicschools.org/about_dpi/">http://www.ncpublicschools.org/about_dpi/</a>	2	2	No	2
North Dakota	<a href="http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/index.shtml">http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/index.shtml</a>	2	1	No	1
Ohio	<a href="http://www.ode.state.oh.us/">http://www.ode.state.oh.us/</a>	3	2	PIN + Last name	3
Oklahoma	<a href="http://www.sde.state.ok.us/home/defaultie.html">http://www.sde.state.ok.us/home/defaultie.html</a>	4	3	No	3
Oregon	<a href="http://www.ode.state.or.us/">http://www.ode.state.or.us/</a>	4	4	First+Middle+Last + BD + PIN	4
Pennsylvania	<a href="http://www.pde.state.pa.us">http://www.pde.state.pa.us</a>	1	1+	SSN	1+
Rhode Island	Certification website not available	na	na	na	na
South Carolina x	<a href="http://www.sde.state.sc.us/">http://www.sde.state.sc.us/</a>	1	1	SSN	1
South Dakota	Certification website not available	na	na	na	na
Tennessee x	<a href="http://www.state.tn.us/education/">http://www.state.tn.us/education/</a>	1	1	Name &/or SSN or License #	1
Texas	<a href="http://www.tea.state.tx.us/">http://www.tea.state.tx.us/</a>	1	1	SSN or Last Name + First Name	1
Utah x	<a href="http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/">http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/</a>	1	1	Teacher-created Login Name + password	1
Vermont	<a href="http://www.state.vt.us/educ/">http://www.state.vt.us/educ/</a>	1	1	No	1
Virginia	<a href="http://www.pen.k12.va.us/">http://www.pen.k12.va.us/</a>	2	2	No	1
Washington	<a href="http://www.k12.wa.us/">http://www.k12.wa.us/</a>	3	1	No	1
West Virginia	<a href="http://wvde.state.wv.us/">http://wvde.state.wv.us/</a>	1	1	Last + BD + last 4 digits SSN	1
Wisconsin	<a href="http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/">http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/</a>	1	1	No	1
Wyoming	<a href="http://www.k12.wy.us/wdehome.html">http://www.k12.wy.us/wdehome.html</a>	5	4	No	4

Are the records maintained **electronically** or are the teacher files maintained in paper format for initial license purposes?

Is **imaging technology** employed? (States that use imaging have the potential to be paperless, i.e., all materials are digitized.)

Is the records system **paperless**? (States that have developed paperless teacher files. receive licensure information and process materials upon receipt so they only have to handle the paper once. From this point forward all analysis and license procedures are done with computers. There are some variations on the paperless process because of the different systems in use, but in most cases the files remain digitized with backup files. Some states are required to warehouse paper files until they can get appropriate legislative changes, while others keep the materials for a given period and either shred or send them back to the teacher.)

Does the state maintain teachers' **cumulative files** in the central repository? (Teachers take additional course work, attain advanced degrees, experience clock hour training, receive specialty endorsements, meet state renewal requirements, leave and return to the profession and move from school to school or state to state and return. The question of interest is whether such information is maintained centrally or whether the districts or the teachers themselves maintain this information.)

What is the **teacher's responsibility** with respect to the records? Is the teacher solely responsible for submitting material for renewal, clock hour training, advanced degrees, endorsements, etc. or are there other methods of providing information pertaining to professional growth for the repository system?

Is there a **licensure fee**? (Some states require a credentialing fee in an effort to make the departments self-sustaining, while others provide free licensure services.)

Is there a **renewal fee**? (Some states have regulations that require teachers to renew their teaching certificate/license at specified intervals. Some charge a service fee to teachers for this renewal process.)

Does the state have a **statewide teacher salary schedule**? (Some states have *minimum* state salary schedules, while others have varying themes on the state salary schedule. In others salary matters are entirely a local concern.)

Does the state have a **staff-mix formula, or some variant**, that affects the disbursement of state funds to the district? (If so, does the teacher's experience, renewal clock hours, and education level determine the level of state fiscal support provided to local school districts?)

A variety of related topics were discussed. Some of these *other* topics are relevant to this research project. The information gleaned from the state contacts, organized in these general categories, is summarized on the table on the following page.

There is evidence in all states of interest in the development and/or maintenance of a state repository system. Some have been working on or developing a system for many years, while others are planning for implementation of a comprehensive system in the near future. Arkansas has prepared a \$1.5 million RFP for the development of a system. Maryland is following suit with a \$1.5 million RFP, and New Jersey has prepared \$1 million RFP. New York has spent \$50,000 designing the RFP planned for use there, and officials anticipate that their comprehensive system will cost between \$1 million and \$2.5 million. New Hampshire is starting work on an RFP.

In contrast, some states, such as New Mexico, Nevada, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin, and Kentucky have used in-house state education department expertise and have contracted either for software design or equipment upgrades.

Many states, including those mentioned above, have contacted Georgia, Florida, and Texas for examples of comprehensive repository systems or to identify portions of systems that may be applicable to their efforts. Georgia has significant experience in the development of a paperless repository system, and the activities there have attracted most of the attention. Georgia designed and refined its system during the past five years. This state also is in the process of integrating the Standards Commission teacher test data into the certification repository and developing a virtual certificate, which is patterned after the Texas certificate. Georgia teachers can check their accumulative file online using their Social Security Number. Florida's comprehensive system has been paperless for ten years, and it is continually evolving technologically.

Imaging is a key component to all of state systems that are either paperless or striving to be paperless. States that are advertising RFP's, previously mentioned, are requiring high speed imaging as an essential part of their systems, with high quality resolution expected at a speed of 40 documents per minute. It is believed that such speed will expedite the credentialing process and eliminate delays in processing information.

States	Central Repository	Computer System in place.	Imaging	Paperless	Maintain Teacher Accumulation Files	Teacher Responsible Information	Credentialing Fee	Renewal Requirement and Fee	State Salary Schedule	Financial Assistance Based on Schedule.	Other Issues of Interest
Alabama	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	20	20	Yes	No	
Alaska	Cert.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes			No	No	
Arizona	Cert.	No	No	No	No	Yes	30	20	No	No	
Arkansas	Cert.	Soon	Soon	Soon	Soon	Yes	Free	Free	Minimum	No	1.5 mil.
California	Commis.	Yes	Yes/No	Soon	No	Yes	55	55	No	No	Public Info.
Colorado	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	48	48	No	No	
Connecticut	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	100	200/300	Minimum	No	
Delaware	Cert.	Yes	No	No	No	No	Free		No	No	No Plans
Florida	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Dist.	Yes	56	56	No	No	50 staff
Georgia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Dist	20	Dist	Minimum	No	
Hawaii	License	Soon	Soon	Soon	Yes	Illinois	48/year		Yes	One Dist.	Illinois model
Idaho	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	35	35	Yes	Yes	
Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Free	Free	Issue	No	3 Agencies
Indiana	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	35	35	No	No	10/1 Dist. Snap.
Iowa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Soon	Yes	Yes	50	50	No	No	Georgia model
Kansas	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	24	24	No	No	
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	Yes	No/Yes	Yes	Yes	50	50	No	No	
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	Yea	Yes	Yes-7/20	Yes	50	25	No	No	
Maine	Yes	Yes	No/soon	No	Dist.	Yes	50	50	No	No	
Maryland	Cert.	Yes	Yes	No	Dist.	Dist.	10		Yes	No	RFP (1.5Mil)
Massachusetts	Cert.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes			No	NO	
Michigan	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	75	125	No	No	
Minnesota	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	47	47	No	No	Start 8/01
Mississippi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Free	Free	Yes	Yes	
Missouri	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Dist.	Free	Free	No	No	
Montana	Yes	Yes	soon	soon	soon	Yes	6	6	No	No	
Nebraska	Yes	Yes	Yes	soon	renewal-7	Yes	45	45	No	No	Iowa's model
Nevada	Yes	Yes	soon	Ph. II	Yes	Yes	100	80	No	No	Part of Syst.
New Hampshire	Cert.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	80	80	No	No	RFP
New Jersey	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	25/60	NA	No	No	RFP(1 mil)
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	50	25	Minimum	No	Account. Syst.
New York	No	Yes/cert.	No	No	No	Yes	50	NA	No	No	RFP
North Carolina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/dist.	55/85	55	Yes	Yes	
North Dakota	License	Yes	No	No	Retire.	Yes	20		Minimum	No	
Ohio	Cert.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes			No	No	Planning
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	10	30-Oct	Yes	No	
Oregon	Yes	No	No	No	NO	Yes	60-90	60	No	No	
Pennsylvania	Cert.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes			No	No	Micofilm
Rhode Island	Yes	soon	soon	No	Yes	Yes	25	25-100	No	No	
South Carolina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/Dist	49	0	Minimum	No	work in prog.
South Dakota	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes			No	No	
Tennessee	Yes	Yes	No	research	Yes	Yes	Free	Free	Yes	No	
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes			Minimum	No	
Utah	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15	15	No	Yes	
Vermont	License	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	130	100	No	No	
Virginia	Yes	Yes	RFP	No	No	Yes	50/75	50	No	No	
Washington	Yes	No	No	No	Dist.	Yes			Yes	Yes	
West Virginia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	15	15	Yes	Yes	
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100/150	100	Yes	Yes	Inhouse audit
Wyoming	Cert.	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	125	125	No	No	

When states have changed from either all paper or microfiche systems to imaging all materials, the change has required a decision as to where the starting point of the new system should be. The states with large teacher populations, i.e. Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Kentucky, have chosen to start with all new license applications and then to digitize existing files to become paperless as those files are used. The goal of each of these states is to become paperless for all files as time and money permit.

There is an impending issue for all states pertaining to the addition of Federal and State requirements to existing systems. The additions to the system include such items as:

- Teacher Standards Assessment scores
- Teacher fingerprinting and background check
- Teacher salaries
- Teacher experience
- Teacher school location and teaching responsibility
- Teacher accumulative files
- Public access to teacher credentials
- Relationship of student test scores to teacher experience and training
- Renewal requirement documentation
- Ability to add electronic notes and due dates to a teachers file for future reference and retrieval
- Teacher online read only access to their file
- Authenticated College and University online transcript transmittal
- Imaging speed and system compatibility
- Authentication of material submitted to a teachers file
- Auditing of files to assure accuracy
- Accountability for expenditure of funds for teacher training

These are being dealt with in different ways in different states. North Carolina, Wisconsin, New Mexico, Nevada, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, South Carolina, Utah, Iowa, Idaho, and Mississippi are approaching inclusion of these data in their systems. The age and sophistication of the equipment being used apparently determines what inclusion is possible. Arkansas, Maryland, New Jersey, Minnesota, New Hampshire,

and New York will begin their new systems with these items, and many more, in place as a result of the response to their RFPs.

Matters of money plague state education departments everywhere. People in every state described their concern for this issue. The states that have new technologies and a paperless system in place have prioritized funds to meet their goals. Maryland, Arkansas, New Jersey, and New Hampshire have received assistance from their legislatures. Other states have developed comprehensive systems by prioritizing the expenditure of existing funds to reach their goals. Mississippi, Georgia, Illinois, Wisconsin, Florida, New Mexico, Nevada, Tennessee, and Utah have combined federal and state (i.e. vocational, special education) funds to develop their systems.

### **The Case of Mississippi**

Mississippi most closely compares to Washington as far as regulations and procedures for education are concerned. It appears to be the only state that has a statewide salary schedule that is implemented at the local school district level, although state funding is tied to the implementation of that schedule in conjunction with the Average Daily Attendance. Mississippi does have a state-of-the-art technology system. Its teacher repository utilizes high-speed imaging to provide a paperless process. The districts submit online information on a regular basis about each teacher's salary and placement on the salary schedule, teaching location, endorsements, numbers of students taught, teaching responsibilities, authenticated teacher clock hour training, teacher assessment scores, and background check.

The district process can be likened to Washington's 275 Form reporting process, with the addition of significantly more information about students. Mississippi's ultimate goal is to identify high quality teaching by using this reporting system, relying on teacher profiles. Mississippi also has made a conscious effort to combine both fiscal and human resources to develop their system. For example, the state used federal and state vocational funds to start its teacher repository and reporting system five years ago, and it continues to combine resources to maintain and upgrade its system. The Mississippi reporting system also facilitates the audit process.

When districts complete their reports, the state system identifies irregularities. When this occurs, the state sends a team of auditors to investigate the issues that have been identified. This audit function is in addition to the audit activities that take place in every district on a regularly scheduled basis. Because Mississippi has fewer school districts than Washington, 25 rather than 296, its districts function somewhat like

Washington's ESDs. Mississippi also continually works to improve its program. Learning from other states and systems has been an important part of the development of the Mississippi teacher repository system. For example, this state will have a "virtual license" in place within 90 days; it used the Texas license process as a model for its own. The main difference between Washington and Mississippi for the purposes of this conversation is that Mississippi started with a centralized record system. The personnel records were paper, but they were housed and managed in Jackson. The transition to a paperless system, accordingly, was accomplished smoothly as the records were imaged in-house.

There are many examples of other successful components of a teacher repository system. The facts that people in all states are interested and that some states have developed such systems demonstrate both the popularity of the idea and that such systems are feasible. The further facts that there is no set way of doing this and that much can be borrowed from states that have gone the route probably enhance feasibility. Should Washington elect to establish such a system, a great deal can be learned and gained from further contacts and perhaps visits to a few. Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Illinois, and Florida are among them. Whatever else, further detailed research is recommended in those states that have features similar to Washington.

At one level, at least, the fact that other states have done this answers the question of feasibility, at least at the global level. Centralized teacher record keeping systems have been established. But, as stated earlier, feasibility is a relative thing. Some solutions are more feasible than others. This brings the matter of alternatives to the surface. That is the subject of the next chapter.



# **Centralized Credentialed Staff Records Repository Feasibility Study**

## **Alternatives and Recommendations**

A number of alternatives for modifying the present system or replacing it with another were considered during the course of the study. Some were suggested by survey participants; others are drawn from the survey of other states.

Building on the OSPI certification function, using present files as a core, assigning OSPI the responsibility for verification, all were mentioned frequently as possibilities. The possibility of storing records regionally in the Educational Service Districts, the staff of which also could perform many of the input and validation functions was mentioned. The ready accessibility was a strong attraction. The ESDs could be linked to a central repository electronically. Still another suggestion offered was that the files be retained locally – presumably electronically – and that the state have read-only access to determine accuracy. Teachers also would have such access in order to verify their records. Whatever else, it was clear from the beginning that there is considerable interest in a centralized system. There is less knowledge, however, of how such systems can be established. This may have less to do with costs than with mechanics.

Whichever alternative is selected, the argument for change outweighs the case for the status quo, if for no other reason than the fact that technology is passing it by. There are, however, other arguments. The present system is not only cumbersome, costly, and of undeterminable reliability (although it is the contention of the research team that it is more reliable than many suppose). There is a fair presence of misconception among people who manage and people who observe the system. The movement of teachers among districts, for example, while an important workload driver, probably is not as great as many who work in that system surmise. Such misconceptions drive different district policies, and this contributes to the variance in the processes used and the requirements employed, with these variances contributing in their own way to uncertainties about reliability. The system is paper heavy, and a lot of

this paper is out of date. Some of this paper, including some that pertains to present employees, may be vulnerable to fire or other disaster.

The system also is relatively costly, certainly in terms of effort but also monetarily. It is estimated that about \$2.6 million annually is expended to process the records of new teachers, a number of whom are new to the district but not necessarily to the state. Additional costs are associated with the audit function. The amount of auditor's time involved in the review of personnel records varies by auditor; it ranges between four and forty hours on site in the district. To use a simple average, which is admittedly risky, this could amount to about \$300 thousand per year. The appropriate portion of the Auditor's Office KART budget, \$900,000, would add to this. Not all of these costs would be avoided in a more centralized arrangement, but certainly a potential to avoid some is there. The costs to teachers are even more difficult to estimate, but if one assumed a \$50 per teacher cost to acquire appropriate transcripts and records during the year of the LEAP data cited earlier, this would add another \$70,000. These costs certainly could be avoided in a new system.

A new centralized system would induce some costs. These are equally difficult to identify without a clear understanding of what the new system would entail. The legislative fiscal note cited earlier assumed that the central records office would scan all of the data ("Transcripts are 10-15 pages, with dozens of pages of clock hours per employee [at the time for 51,560 teachers]"). The further assumption was that the central records office would go to the district to scan all documents. There would be some burden on the districts with respect to helping the central records office staff scan the material; this was not quantified and included, however, in the overall cost estimate. The bottom line in this fiscal note was about \$5 million for the first biennium, of which about \$500 thousand would be a one time expense. On-going costs were estimated at about \$2 million per biennium.

With respect to other states, Arkansas, New Jersey, and Maryland are expecting to issue bid requests for system designs that range between \$1 and \$1.5 million. Officials in New York estimate that the comprehensive system planned there will cost between \$1 and \$2.5 million dollars. Mississippi, with about 35 thousand certificated staff, converted its already centralized paper records system into a paperless version, which was a considerably simpler task than would be the case in Washington because the papers were already in one place. Mississippi operates its system for about \$200 thousand per year.

Costs will depend on the type of system selected, and that will depend on what it is expected to do. But an inescapable cost driver will be the process associated with getting there from here. This issue is so profound, in fact, that it undermines the feasibility of most efforts to move directly from the present to the future, especially in the current fiscal environment. The state does have some options, however, and some of these are both practically and fiscally feasible. They reside among the alternatives.

The two obvious alternatives – keeping the present system and moving to a comprehensive centralized system -- comprise the bookends. The discussion of alternatives begins with these. But between the two are a number of variations. The objective circumstances ensure that this is the most fertile field to search.

### **Characteristics of the Present System:**

Under the present system, no original or detailed personnel records are stored centrally. While the certification functions (initial and renewal) are performed by staff of the OSPI, once certification is granted the actual supporting documents are retained by the teacher. Actual teacher personnel records, in this case for purposes of salary determination and staff-mix reporting, are managed and stored locally in the school district (or in more than one district for teachers that work simultaneously in several). Typically the teacher presents original documentary evidence of education and experience at the time of hiring, and the cumulative record builds incrementally on this base. Salary decisions are made at the time of entry and more or less regularly thereafter, as the teacher acquires experience and additional education. (Evidence of additional education also is required for credential renewal, but the credential issue is not expected to materially change under an alternative model.) Although not all districts utilize the state salary schedule for actual decisions regarding salaries, as staff-mix reports are prepared for state fund disbursements the state salary schedule enters. District reports for this purpose, which are made to OSPI, can be transmitted electronically, employing aggregated data rather than specific personnel records.

Should a teacher take a position in another district, it is likely that the process of documentation will begin anew. Unlike state government employment or the military, for example, the teacher's personnel record does not follow the teacher. It is re-created with each new job, as personnel officers re-confirm the experiential and educational status of the teacher for proper placement on the salary. Original records usually are required of the teacher of this point, and the process of acquiring them may delay the

actual salary decision for several months (although, ultimately, an appropriate adjustment is made and the teacher fittingly compensated with back pay). Meanwhile, the previous district retains the teacher's previous file, since there is a possibility that it will continue to be responsible for salary decisions made during the period of service there. Local requirements vary, but some districts retain these paper records forever. The minimum number of years for complete record retention is three; many retain the complete records for seven. A few districts, although apparently not many, have scanned obsolete records and retain them on disks.

Since these decisions affect state fund disbursements, accuracy is essential. The State auditor enters at this point. Personnel record audits, however, must occur locally, since the records are stored and decisions about salaries are made at the district level, and funding, accordingly, is disbursed to the districts. Decisions about sample size - how many records to review - appear to be matters of field auditor choice. This, plus the fact that only about two-thirds of the districts are audited annually, complicates the prospects of statistically representative statewide findings with respect to annual error rates (i.e., errors that affect funding).

The process is further complicated by the variety of forms, procedures, and requirements that operate among the state's 296 districts. Training issues also arise, and these involve both the personnel office staff and members of the auditor's office. The salient features of the present system can be summarized as follows:

#### **PRESENT SYSTEM**

- **Initial Certification and Renewal Filing at OSPI**
- **Records Managed and Stored in Districts**
- **Teachers Provide Documentation When Hired and When Relocating to New District**
- **Districts Determine Placement on Salary Schedule**
- **Districts Report Aggregated Staff Mix Data to OSPI**
- **Audits Occur at District Level**
- **System is Paper Intensive and Employs Varied Procedures, Standards, Forms, and Records**

### **Selective and Feasible Adjustments to the Present System:**

Before moving to discussions of the other alternatives, it will help to pause for a moment to consider a few adjustments to the present system that fall short of complete replacement but would reduce some of its cumbersome features. Since these would be appropriate elements for any system it will help to list them at this point. The first would be to allow the teacher's paper personnel record to follow the teacher. The present district would seal and send the record to the new one (it also could be scanned and sent), retaining a photocopy backup for its own purposes. An inter-district/auditor agreement on such a process would seem to be all that would be required to accomplish this, but it should be a statewide change.

A second change would be a similar school board/OSPI/auditor agreement on the use of common forms and common records-keeping policies. The School Personnel Association or another of the educational associations in collaboration with OSPI and the state Auditor's office could guide this. Required annual reviews by teachers of their personnel records should be a feature; a teacher's failure to regularly review the record might be made a mitigating consideration with respect to liability.

Improved and accessible training opportunities for personnel office staff, at least some of which should include collaborative personnel and audit staff training, comprise another desirable feature. Some of this might occur as part of annual staff conferences, perhaps held during the summer prior to the onset of the fall hiring onslaught. Again, these could be improvements to the present system, but they should also be features of any replacement program. Briefly summarized, these are:

#### **SELECTIVE IMPROVEMENTS**

- **Personnel Record Follows Teacher**
- **Common Forms**
- **Common Records Keeping Policies**
- **Improved and Collaborative Training Opportunities for Personnel and Audit Staff**
- **Annual Summer Personnel Staff Conferences**

### **Characteristics of a Centralized System:**

Different perceptions of what a centralized credentialed personnel record system might look like can vary, but the version that seems most apparent throughout the state would involve the transfer of personnel records to the central records office, most likely OSPI (at least under OSPI jurisdiction; the actual office could be located away from the Old Capitol). This could occur physically, perhaps by bundling them up and delivering them, or electronically, either by crews from the central records office scanning the documents locally or by having the districts scan them and transfer them electronically to the central records office. Once in place, the system would become paperless, and the files could be updated annually as the districts transmitted information on the incremental changes respecting education and experience. Decisions about placement on the salary schedule would be made on the basis of this information, probably centrally, although it is reasonable to assume that there would be some process for mediation should there be disagreements. The annual reports for fund disbursements would be based on the aggregated information in these files.

It is expected that the certification function would remain as at present, with the data filed in the Certification Office, although these data files could be linked. Similarly, the fingerprint records, etc., files could be linked, as could other data files involving student information, school information, etc. As teacher performance evaluation procedures become operational, these data files also could be linked. The point here is that the data files do not all need to be in one office, but they should be relational.

Districts could access files electronically, as could teachers, but access would be in a read-only mode. Teachers, in fact, should be responsible for reviewing these files annually for accuracy. The records problems of teachers changing districts would be eliminated, since the new district could simply call up the central file and notify the central records office of the change. The need to retain paper records in the district office could be optional, but the ready availability of the electronic version should eliminate any such need over time.

Auditing would occur centrally, and problems with sample size and reliability for purposes of state funding and reporting would be corrected. Similarly, the issue of varied forms and procedures among districts would become academic, although for consistent training purposes it is reasonable to assume that the central records office

would insist on common reporting formats. Training would be one of the responsibilities of the central records office.

The principal features of the centralized model can be summarized as follows:

#### **CENTRALIZED MODEL**

- **All Records Placed in Central Records Office**
- **New Teachers Start File at Central Records Office**
- **Districts Report Annual Incremental Changes Electronically**
- **Central Records Office Staff Updates and Maintains Records**
- **Central Records Office Determines Placement on Salary Schedule**
- **Audits Occur at Central Records Office**
- **System is Paperless**
- **Teacher Reviews File Annually Via Internet**
- **Central Records Office Responsible for Forms, Reporting Requirements, Training on System Operations**
- **Data Files Linked**

There are problems that would need to be worked, e.g., district-central records office communications, reasonable turn-around expectations, district authority and prerogatives vis-à-vis a centralized system, etc., but support for such a system is widespread. The main problems center on the inter-related issues of transition and cost. Both are daunting. The sheer magnitude of the task of transferring all of the appropriate records to the newly established central records office is overwhelming, and it obviously would drive the start-up costs. It is these problems that have been the principal impediments to such a change. There may be a solution in the form of a transitional model, however, designated here as the Shortcut to a Centralized Record System. It could take the following form.

#### **Characteristics of a Transitional Model: Shortcut to a Centralized Record System:**

The essence of a solution to the paper transfer issue would take the form of a common form for each teacher prepared and reviewed at the district level and transmitted electronically (either as an imaged document or as an attachment to an E-mail message), whereupon it would be used to establish the teacher's central records office record. These "Certificates of Assurance" [COA], consisting of a single page for each teacher, would detail the teacher's salary schedule rating and the accumulated

experience and education figures. Other pertinent information, such the teacher's endorsements, etc., also could be listed . This form would serve as the foundation for the teacher's cumulative central file.

The backup documentation for present teachers would continue to be stored at the district level. This backup documentation would follow the teacher to the new district, in the case of those who move. All new teachers, however, would provide the necessary documentation directly to the central records office, where it would be scanned and the cumulative file would build accordingly. The central files would be electronically accessible to the district office and to the teacher. The district would submit annual updates for all of its teachers.

Audits would begin at the central records office, as the audit staff identified a representative sample, but in the case of present teachers whose backup records were located in the district, the actual field audit would be performed there. In the case of new teachers, whose entire file was located centrally, the audit would occur at the central records office. Other features of a centralized system – common forms, training, teacher verification of records and status, etc. – would occur as in the case of the centralized model described above.

With time and the continued initiation of new teachers' records centrally, the centralized model could be accomplished in a responsible, auditable, and cost efficient manner. This model also continues a pattern of shared responsibility that seems essential to the state's educational values of local control.

The key features of the transitional or short cut model are the following:

#### **SHORTCUT TO CENTRAL RECORD FILE SYSTEM**

- **Certificate of Assurance for Current Teachers as Basis for Central File**
- **Backup Records Retained Locally**
- **New Teachers Start File at Central Records Office**
- **Backup Records Move with Teacher**
- **Electronic Annual Updates Entered and Sent Locally**
- **Audits Start in Central Records Office but Backup File Audits Occur in District**

The remaining study questions can be addressed at this point, starting with the question of whether a centralized system is a good idea. The answer is in the



affirmative. It is a good idea. Sooner or later it will need to happen. It makes little sense to continue a paper heavy arrangement with all of its encumbrances when much more efficient means and technologies are available. The problem is not with the alternative but how to accomplish it in an affordable manner. The transitional model outlined above should considerably reduce the startup and dislocation costs.

Should a central system be established, it would be a good idea for all districts to participate. With respect to the question about the estimated potential number of teacher certification records that could be deposited in a central repository, this would depend on the number of districts that were included. There is no reason to believe that such a system could not accommodate all teacher records.

With regard to the organizational structure, such an office should be part of the OSPI, although it need not be housed in the Old Capitol. The Educational Service Districts also could have a role, possibly serving as regional centers for purposes of training and facilitating the data transfer processes. The school districts should have a role in the management of the central repository, perhaps through an oversight committee arrangement. The relationship between the central records office and the districts should be reciprocal and mutually supportive. If the transition model were implemented, the district's role with respect to preparing and transmitting the Certificates of Assurance, maintaining the backup files, and providing the annual file updates is obvious and essential.

There should be little evidence of duplicated work in keeping the records current. Some of this might be evident at the start, as districts retained paper records until the new system was up to speed and acquired a proven track record, but this should pass with time. Whatever else, a central repository could eliminate duplication of effort and it should provide significant efficiencies for those districts that participate.

On the question of costs, it is difficult to estimate the startup and annual operating costs without more evidence on the nature of the actual model. The magnitude of these costs would clearly be reduced if the transitional model were employed, since the record imaging effort would be reduced, perhaps by a factor of fifty. Similarly, if Certificates of Assurance could be either scanned or transmitted as E-Mail attachments, at the district's option, equipment costs at the district level would be minimal. There would be costs associated with the preparation and verification of the COAs by the districts, but this would be a one-time cost that would be more than offset

by the eventual savings in staff time after the system became operational. At the central records office level, costs would be associated with the acquisition of scanning equipment so new teachers' original records could be imaged and filed. Software costs could be involved, but it would be appropriate for OSPI staff, representatives of the Auditor's Office, and representatives of personnel office staff to visit a few selected states during the developmental period to determine how these systems might work in Washington. Some attention also should be directed to the Department of Health's system and perhaps that of the Washington Bar Association. It is possible that software might be acquired from other states or the record system might tag onto one such as the Department of Health's. A unit administrator and a few staff to enter and review data would constitute other cost drivers. Finally, there would be costs associated with increased training opportunities, form conversions, etc., but these changes should occur in any case.

Using the annual classified staff salaries and benefits average of \$38,368, and 2080 paid hours per year, staff compensation generally is \$18.45 per paid hour, or \$0.307 per paid minute. If one adjusts for 18 percent absences of various kinds, the cost per minute figure becomes \$0.362. If one assumes an average of 15 minutes to prepare and transmit each COA, the average cost would be \$5.43. Applying this to the state's approximately 60,000 teachers, a one-time cost of \$326,070 would be experienced to get this information into a central file. If the average time required per record were greater, this figure would be increased proportionately. It would be distributed across the districts on the basis of their share of active teachers. The fiscal note alluded to earlier assumed an FTE staff of ten to manage the system. That was for a different transitional system then envisioned here. Based on conversations with officials in other states, a figure of five FTE is used – a director and four staff. Using the earlier fiscal notes for other figures, which are not pro-rated per FTE and thus may be high, the following estimated costs seem reasonable:

Five FTE central records office staff (@ \$47,500)	\$237,500
Benefits (@ \$10,805)	\$54,025
Equipment, Furniture	\$53,000
Travel	\$28,000
Goods & Services	\$31,800

Subtotal	\$404,325
Indirect (8.5%)	\$34,367
COA Preparation (60,000 x \$3.00)	\$324,070 (one time cost)
Total Estimated Start-up and Annual Costs	\$762,762
Estimated Annual Costs After Start-up	\$438,692

The system could be funded directly with state appropriations, with district contributions on a per capita record basis, with modest teacher fees, or with some combination. Consideration also might be given to the use of federal funds, as has been the case in other states. A \$10 a year per capita contribution would gross approximately \$600 thousand. A \$20 charge would gross \$1.2 million. Such amounts do not seem excessive. In any case, the savings in staff time, and in the present annual costs of \$2.6 million, could be sufficient to offset the costs of a centralized repository.

The liability issues are not likely to change as far as state overpayments to districts are concerned. If a reporting error results in the overpayment of funds, those funds will have to be repaid by the recipient, regardless of who made the mistake. In the case of liability associated with the misclassification of teachers and underpayments, the liable entity would seem to be the one that misclassified the teacher. It is likely these situations would have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. The potential for liability of this type could be reduced if teachers were obliged to review their records on a regular basis.

At this point the essential questions have been addressed, and this report can be concluded. It is with the following recommendation.

**Recommendation:**

*A centralized credentialed staff records system is desirable and widely supported throughout the state. If the short cut transition model is employed, it also is feasible. Therefore, it is recommended that the OSPI, the school districts of Washington State, the State Auditor, and other interested parties initiate a developmental process leading to its implementation.*

# Appendices

## **Appendix A: Project Advisory Committee Members**

Mike Bigelow, Associate Superintendent, Budget & School Business Services, OSPI

Jackie Driver, Snoqualmie School District

Keith Lowry, ESD 113

Linda Long, Washington State auditor's Office

Marcie McKaig, Shelton School District

Mike Phillips, Cashmere School District

Rich Moore, Renton School District

Rick Maloney, Certification, OSPI

Rosalie Bond, Ephrata School District

Lynn Hallock, OSPI Project Liaison

## **Study Team Members**

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### Phase One Interviews

State Auditor's Office Staff

Attorney General's Office Staff

OSPI Staff

Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC) Staff

Legislative fiscal Staff

Legislators

ESD 113 Staff

Ephrata School District Staff

Camas School District Staff

Dieringer School District Staff

Toledo School District Staff

Olympia School District Staff

Kent School District Staff

Shelton School District Staff

Shoreline School District Staff

Seattle School District Staff

Spokane School District Staff

### E-Mail Survey Participants

Asotin-Anatone

Almira

Adna

Arlington

Anacortes

Auburn

Bainbridge

Battle Ground  
Burlington-Edison  
Bellingham  
Bethel  
Camas  
Carbonado  
Cashmere  
Chehalis  
Chopaka  
Central Kitsap  
Clarkston  
Cle Elum  
Clover Park  
Concrete  
Cosmopolis  
Crescent  
Dewey  
Eastmont  
Easton  
East Valley  
Edmonds  
Elma  
Evergreen  
ESD112  
ESD113  
ESD123  
ESD165  
Everett  
Fife  
Federal Way  
Goldendale  
Granite Falls  
Griffin  
Highland  
Hockinson  
Hood Canal  
Hoquiam

Kalama  
Kelso  
Longview  
Lopez  
Lynden  
Mabton  
Marysville  
Meridian  
Methow Valley  
Midland  
Mary M Knight SD  
Montesano SD  
Morton  
Moses Lake  
Mossyrock  
Mount Baker  
Mount Vernon  
Naches Valley  
Napavine  
Naselle  
North Kitsap  
Northshore  
Oakville  
Okanogan  
Ocosta  
Olympia  
Orca  
Orting  
Palisades  
Pasco  
Pe Ell  
Puyallup  
Quinault  
Raymond  
Renton  
Ridgefield  
Royal

Richland  
Stevenson-Carson  
Seattle  
Sedro-Woolley  
Selah  
Shelton  
Shoreline  
Skykomish  
Snoqualmie  
Steilacoom  
Tacoma  
Thorp  
Toppenish  
Toutle  
Tukwila  
Tumwater  
University Place  
Vashon  
Walla Walla  
Wapato  
Warden  
Washougal  
West Valley  
White River  
Willapa  
Yelm  
Yakima  
Zillah



## **Appendix B: Responses to Questions 5, 6, 7, & 8 of the District Survey**

### **Question #5: In your view, is a state-authorized repository of teacher credential files needed? Why?**

#### Negative responses:

My fear hinges on the turnaround time it would take for one office to manage all the files. I also wonder who would be responsible for "reminding" teachers to get their paper work in, what paper work is necessary, etc.

As I stated before, I have worked many hours getting my system set up. I worry that the state or regional offices might require me to provide my staff information in a format that I am not using which would cause me countless more hours.

No. Another layer of bureaucracy to manage.

Not for our district.

No. I'm afraid that a state-authorized repository would make it very hard to process new employees and place them correctly on the salary schedule when hired. Currently, we have control over the paperwork that needs to be received in order to document their salary schedule placement in a timely manner. I feel that a central repository would slow this process down tremendously. For example, we currently "estimate" salary schedule placement for a new employee, based upon tentative information from their application materials. Then, when documentation is received for credits and experience (usually within 4-6 weeks) we can verify the salary schedule placement, and make adjustments to salary if needed. 98% of the documentation we need has been received by October 1st. With a central repository, we would have no control over monitoring when the paperwork is received, and I can see this as a disadvantage to new employees and their initial placement on the salary schedule. Also, I can see a disadvantage for teachers moving incrementally on the schedule for additional education. In September of each year, we're able to document credits for this movement, and change salaries in September or October. If all this paperwork was submitted to a central repository ----- teachers may not receive increases for a few months until their paperwork is verified. This would cause hardships for the teachers, and added work for our payroll department (for retroactive payments). It could also affect our S-275 reporting information. It just seems to me that a central repository would add an unnecessary "middle man" to the already cumbersome process.

Unsure, indifferent, or “yes and no” responses:

If a state repository saves dollars at the school district level and does not add additional cost to the tax payers go for it. However, if becoming an absentee landlord adds time and cost do not go down this road. More bureaucracy we don't need. Again I restate my position if you develop a system that does not save tax monies what is the point.

This is the first that I have heard of this concept and am not sure how it would help [our district]. With our volume and a need for immediate access to some of this information during peak times, I am not sure our needs could be met. If it would help with audits, that would be fine - but how would it help us during hiring of new teachers (teachers brand new to the profession)? it might be helpful with hiring of experience Washington state teachers who are transferring between districts, but won't help with out-of-state hiring. It might be helpful to know some of the background behind why this is being proposed? or a better picture of how it could operate?

Not sure. We are quite small and our staff turnover is not high. Therefore this might actually create more work for a small district.

Yes and no. Why? - YES - consistency of correct records with other districts, convenience of teachers not having to order official transcripts for each new district employed by. NO - timing new transcripts added to employee record for advancement on the salary schedule.

I think it has merits and potential drawbacks. I spend a lot of time presently waiting for other districts to respond to my requests for experience verification, etc. If there was a statewide system, I am assuming this would be managed at the state level and easily accessed by the districts. I would also hope there would be less errors on the S275's because there would be only one office dealing with years of experience, credit accrual, etc.

Centralization of records makes sense if, in fact, an effective and efficient system could be developed. However, given our years of experience with WSIPC, and the inability of that system to meet the needs of our district, I am somewhat doubtful that such a system could truly be developed. I believe that it would take an amount of resources that likely wouldn't be available to establish and maintain such a system. I am also concerned about how such a system could truly be universal to all districts, given our differences. Additionally, I know the amount of "customer service" time that our folks

spend answering questions and meeting the needs of our teachers regarding their files. It seems to me that a large, more bureaucratic system would likely be less user friendly.

The concern I have in a state repository is the turn-around time on employees from out of state, or new to the system. We have deadlines for issuing contracts to employees, and the delay of another agency posting information for the districts to access could create problems for us. We also have bargaining agreements to issue salary changes by a deadline. Each district has their own deadline, which could be difficult for the state to meet. Right now, we only have ourselves to accommodate--the state repository would be responsible to meet deadlines for every district in the state. That is a lot of teachers, and a massive project.

Yes and no. PRO: continuity, all credentials evaluated using the same criteria and procedures. CON: not as easily accessible.

I cannot imagine how counting credits can be handled from OSPI, because it involves so much paperwork and communication between the teacher and the processor. The status can change so rapidly and it often changes right up to the deadline for accepting credits. Would the approval of the credits that currently comes from the Superintendent, then come from OSPI with the new method? That, I believe, would be very helpful to insure that classes approved are indeed acceptable credits. Where there is concern is in the appropriateness of the class to the current teaching assignment and whether or not the same class has been taken before by an individual. Teachers often delay with paperwork because their first priority is teaching children and they have so much paperwork! Getting professors to turn in grades and getting the universities to then get them posted and the transcripts out, is often very time consuming and frustrating to teachers. On top of that, they now must have the Credit Approval Form turned in and approved and the official transcript mailed to us before September 15th to move on the pay scale. If OSPI then processes the information, I can imagine only anger brewing out of frustration in the process. My answer then is yes, I would like to see OSPI approve credits, but I believe the more personal handling of credit counting within the districts is a far better way to manage teacher files. I cannot imagine how counting credits can be handled from OSPI, because it involves so much paperwork and communication between the teacher and the processor. The status can change so rapidly and it often changes right up to the deadline for accepting credits. Would the approval of the credits that currently comes from the Superintendent, then come from OSPI with the new method? That, I believe, would be very helpful to insure

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Yes and No -- more uniformity.

Positive responses:

We all are duplicating work that in many cases has already been done in a previous district. Plus, with the huge number of staff around the state dedicated to this task part time, the efficiency is low and opportunity for error is high.

Yes - this would cut down on the hours that each district is spending -as long as other districts records were accurate from prior experience.

Yes, There is so much duplication of effort. Each district and teacher has to go through the verification process each time a teacher changes districts. Also, there is great variation in transcripts which allows a large potential for error when being completed by staff that have many other duties in addition to this job. People specialized in understanding the rules and the transcripts would be much more accurate.

YES.

Yes -- it would be wonderful for all districts to have access to the same information without many hours spent by the teachers and our staff trying to gather the info. It seems this would be satisfying to the state auditor also which would make our jobs easier.

Definitely. The margin for error increases as more districts handle materials. There is also the possibility of misinterpretation of the laws which speak to the eligibility

of credits and experience for reporting purposes. I believe most districts have or eventually will convert to using the state allocation model for their salary schedule. Many certificated staff move from one district to another and although the cost of having to send transcripts again is not prohibitive, it certainly can be a burden for a young teacher with a family. We are a small district and I am the Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent as well as Certificated Personnel Specialist. We do not have a personnel director, therefore, I am responsible for all processing of certificated personnel. Preparations for the next school year are occurring at the same time as new employees are being hired and information being verified. My position requires attention in both directions, which increases the burden. Another area of concern is verifying experience for overseas employment. Obtaining appropriate information can take many months to compile and verify. And, I have had occasions when the information was not able to be obtained, therefore, cheating an employee out of additional experience placement on the salary schedule. This would also be beneficial for those employees hired close to or right after the school year begins. It takes time for the colleges/universities and previous districts to submit information, which may delay the employee receiving their full salary in the first month of employment. Once again, this is a big issue for a young teacher with a family.

Yes! Would prevent much of the duplication of effort involved in maintaining the records in each district and then OSPI as well when certificates come up for renewal. Would also prevent problems with apportionment overpayment and repayment when errors are made at the district level. Would reduce work on S-275, etc.

Is moving in the right direction -- subtracting from rather than adding to the workload of districts.

Yes, it would help to improve accuracy of records. When a new teacher is hired we can access the repository to verify their salary placement. The task of requesting, collecting, evaluating, and calculating placement and experience, would be reduced.

YES. 1. CREDITS AND CLOCK HOURS WOULD BE COUNTED CONSISTENTLY. 2. IF THE INFORMATION WAS IN A CENTRAL LOCATION, DISTRICTS WOULD BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE INFO QUICKLY FOR EXPERIENCED TEACHERS MOVING WITHIN THE STATE .

Yes, Yes, Yes - I think that would be wonderful. When a teacher moves from district to district - the H.R. department has to reinvent the wheel each time. This would be a great benefit in the time spent counting credits, verifying transcripts, copying clock

hour approval forms for teachers leaving, yadda, yadda, yadda and a major benefit would be on THE ANNUAL AUDIT.

Yes. Once a District has verified years of experience why should each District the teacher works for after that have to have the first District do the verification over again. Make that verification available to all other Districts that teacher may work for. Once a teacher leaves a District their file is moved out to the office area and when 2-3 years down the line someone wants to verify that teacher worked for you, you have to track down those records all over again. TIME, TIME, TIME is the issue with these verifications.

Yes. It would eliminate duplicate work and save wasted time.

Yes. Why? It would save money for the teachers who have to pay for transcripts every time they change districts, etc., plus the time and money it takes to send for verification of previous experience. It would be faster for our office to figure contract information if we were able to have the summary of years experience, transcripts, etc. on line.

Not as important for a smaller district but would be helpful. Would alleviate possible audit errors, storage problems, and possibly make everything more standardized.

Yes. It would consistently apply rules rather than each district interpreting the rules and transcripts. Staff working with the records could be experts and well trained. In small school districts it is such a small part of duties that we spend as much time researching rules as actually doing the work. Districts would not have to waste time re-creating the same information that the last school district had already done. Teachers would not have to order new sets of transcripts each time they changed districts within the state.

It isn't necessarily needed, but it would take the burden off the school districts and be more convenient for teachers because they would only have to order their transcripts once if changing school districts.

I think it would be a good idea. Why? Because it would eliminate redundancy in processing for both districts and teachers. Hopefully, it would also increase the accuracy of data retained.

Yes, definitely!!! Would save time for school districts. I also feel that this would take care of any human errors that schools may have in regards to S275 and trying to add up credits, years of experience, etc.

Absolutely, it would streamline the records and vastly simplify the manual and unfunded tasks that each school district now provides. Because every district is required to manually keep records and > compute hours and credits the info is rampant with errors and it becomes a major audit issue. We spend an enormous number of hours entering data, hand computing, self auditing and cross auditing files in order not to have audit findings.

Yes, if it can be kept current. It would relieve burden on districts by eliminating duplication of effort , and hopefully increase consistency in experience calculations.

YES!!! Smaller districts have too few personnel to deal with this and too many other responsibilities. The count of credits and experience would be centralized AND since the state audits the school districts, the information would be available to them at one site, rather than going to each and every district to audit. Teaching staff going from district to district would have their records located at one central location, wouldn't need to send for transcripts again and again. Placing staff on the Statewide Salary Schedule would be a much easier task we wouldn't have to wait until transcripts or experience arrived to give them credit. It would save me having to re-issue contracts with up-to-date or corrected information

With the information I have, a state repository is not needed. I would recommend the state have read-only access to our district files. For accuracy and efficiency, the teachers need a local contact to verify their records and receipt of experience and certified course work.

Yes. There needs to be a state authorized program in place.

Yes, because teachers move from district to district and it is difficult to get the college transcripts from each college they attended in a timely manner to get them ready for Sept. pay. Since they have to submit transcripts to SPI to get certification, it would seem like that would be a good source for the districts to get the information. However, our district could not afford to pay very much for this service, and maybe small districts could opt in or out, depending on the cost (if there were to be a cost).

It would be so much easier to look up and get the information you need, especially when a teacher moves from school district to school district.

I think the centralized idea is a good one. Regionalizing at the ESD's would also work. There are of course pluses and minuses for any system be it the current one or any other option. I think the main plus to centralizing or regionalizing is the expertise will remain constant and the records maintained accurately.

Yes! It is a huge responsibility. We have one person in our district that works days, nights, and week ends to keep up. Gathering the information is time consuming, oftentimes requires follow-up, requires a great deal of time to input and double check, and except in a few cases each year, has already been done in some other school district. Since many of our employees statewide move from district to district, the time requirements for all of us could be shaved by having the records located centrally. If the information were centrally located, audit hours could be reduced in each district. Those of us in small districts rarely have more than one set of eyes looking at the information. A central repository would allow a better opportunity for accuracy. Local storage sites could be reduced (it would be more cost effective to purchase filming equipment for only one agency) and the cost of training at the local level would also be reduced. The cost of maintaining computer systems purchased to track the information would also be reduced as would the time required for that training. I also think having a central repository would enable the individuals inputting the information to have more expertise. Because I rarely see some sorts of experience or education it is more difficult to remember all the requirements. I think there will be a cost savings at the university and ESD level too as the number of transcripts they are required to produce should go down. Errors on the S-275 would be reduced as districts would be able to report names, FTE, salary, benefits and accounting information with the rest of the information coming from the central repository.

This would be helpful for salary and audit purposes. It would save time, provided that the responsibility for keeping all the info. accurate and up-to-date does not rest on the school district.

Yes - it would eliminate the duplication of work when teachers transfer employment to other school districts. Also, in a small school district, the person who processes the teacher credential files does this as a very small part of many other duties. The amount of time that person is able to devote to this process may not always be sufficient to properly do the task And that person may not always have adequate training in that area.

Yes, at some level to reduce duplication.



Yes. Would be more accurate and no discrepancies from one district to another on interpretation of credits.

Yes. It is very repetitive to do the same thing over and over again.

Yes. Each time we hire a new cert., they must provide me with sealed transcripts from every college/university from their BA degree to date, plus provide me with official verifications from prior employers, which can be a nightmare. I sometimes have file that are incomplete for several months -- just waiting for a transcript or a verification. And, the employee is waiting to receive payment for how this information affects their placement on the salary schedule. Also, some new hires may have up to 10-15 colleges/universities/clock hour providers to contact for official transcripts. The money involved is some times unbelievable. Plus, when we have a former employee that needs their experience with us verified, it's down to the archives to get this information, and some of the record keeping years ago are something to be desired. It can become a real time consumer. Also, this type of system would, hopefully, cut down on the time that state auditors spend at the districts reviewing this information. Most of the time, districts will be audited by folks new to the system. The time saved here is money saved by the district in auditor costs.

Yes, since we all need to maintain the same information, it seems that many dollars that could go to directly to students is being spent to maintain and re-invent teacher placement files and maintain audit data. If there was a central repository, it would not be necessary to reconstruct the experience and education allowance many times during a teacher's career. We really like the teachers who stay forever. Since this is a mandatory audit item, a repository would reduce the audit risks to the school districts. It would also resolve any discrepancy between what one district will accept and what another district will accept. If there were a repository, all districts would accept the experience and education (clock hours) using the same basis. If there were specialists, accuracy would be better. It would be the main focus of the repository to maintain standards. School districts that are smaller cannot specialize and thus these tasks are part of many other jobs the person has. This alone cause inconsistencies.

If done correctly, it could be a good solution. It should provide consistency and accurate placement. It must be timely, though, so new or incoming teachers could be placed immediately for payroll.

Yes. Too much chance of errors with so many individuals interpreting rules and guidelines. Interpretation changes from district to district.

Yes. Our district just completed a KART audit because of staff mix audit discrepancies. The results of the audit indicate to me that the administration burden placed on small districts lead to errors in S-275 reporting and leap placement that date back years. The primary reason for most errors is that we have no real position or expertise in this area which leads to errors spanning over a teacher's entire career.

Yes, because as staff move from district-to-district the same process is repeated over and over using up a tremendous amount of time and effort from the universities, the school districts, the new employee. It would be so nice to be able to access a new teacher's information from OSPI and it would be there for any and all districts as the person moves about.

Yes -- Convenience and Efficiency,

YES! Why? a. To save time which saves money. b. It will reduce the possibility of error. When a teacher relocates, new documentation and calculations are done in each district. c. It will be a savings to teachers. Only one official set of documents (transcripts and teaching verifications) would be needed instead of a new, complete set for each district where the teacher is becomes employed.

Yes. I feel it would expedite salary information for employees moving from one district to another. It would provide consistency and accuracy in reporting on the S-275. At the present time, most of the districts in the Olympia area are transferring official transcripts and experience verification to each other by certified mail with a release authorization from the employee. This has helped tremendously with the time frame of receiving documentation, although not all districts will participate.

Yes -- would be very helpful and a time saver to have same info available and accessible to all school districts in the State of WA.

Yes, to ensure accuracy and consistency of reporting The districts wouldn't duplicate work previously done by another district. It should save the districts in audit costs. They could rely on the independent reporting of the repository.

Yes, because it seems repetitive to document a teacher's credits/experience over and over again after a change in employment. It would just be useful to have access to the general information without having to make telephone calls, sending out experience forms, sending out requests for copies of clock hr/credit approval forms for placement on the salary schedule and the employee having to send for official transcripts. Many hours and dollars are spent by school districts repeating the process.

Yes, all records at one location, easily accessible, reduce time spent obtaining information.

A state authorized repository would act as a good reference. Why? Not sure since we are so small and so far have had a low turnover of teaching staff.

Yes, we are currently duplicating efforts that are not needed.

Yes. It would eliminate mistakes made by school districts in counting credits and having the wrong information.

Absolutely! It is necessary to ensure the accuracy of the number of credits, clock hours, and the applicability of these to their positions and certification. In smaller districts with personnel who perform multiple functions, it would free these people to carry out the many other job functions they perform, i.e. payroll, board duties, and fiscal reporting, to name just a few. The repository could employ certification specialists who would have a much broader knowledge of current certification criteria than most districts currently have.

YES YES YES!!!

YES -- we currently request 'verification of experience' and transcript information for all certificated staff -- if this could be verified/maintained at the State level, it would minimize errors in salary placement and reduce the paper documentation in district personnel files. One concern would be a possible time delay in obtaining the information (problems with access to fingerprinting information for certification last year) but we could work around that with a 'tentative' salary placement until we receive verified information from State.

Yes - to create consistency, efficiency (reduce redundant work for district personnel and for teachers as they move from employment in one district to another), and to speed up the process for verifying that individuals are eligible to be issued contracts.

It will save the personnel office time and energy. Eliminate the redundancy for teachers transferring between districts.

YES. We are a small district with no money to hire extra staff. Also, errors can be made costing the state \$ if not caught during an audit.

YES -- why, continuity, accuracy from one location -- not 3 or 4 or 5, however times a teacher moves!, reduce repetition of procedure and much frustration of the teacher being hired, less paper work (save a tree) actually the list can go on.

Yes, every time a teacher changes schools a complete history and background must be rebuilt.

Yes

Yes -- We feel that the complexity and the data collection is so extensive for this report that it make errors almost a certainty when staff is trying to do this as well as all their other duties. The state has made this such an important report financially, that it can't be left to chance. Each District is responsible for thousands of pieces of data that change constantly for all certified staff and not just the new ones walking in the door. Much of the criteria is open to interpretation with regard to pre-1995 credits, level of course acceptability and the needs of the present district over prior experience. College transcripts come from all over the nation and are different in criteria for semesters, units, partial credit all working toward "quarter credits". Each District is reviewing the needs somewhat differently as far as "lower level credits" and whether they are counted or not. Many of our audit mistakes were because the rules have changed since the person who certified the report 10 years ago. All these things need to be constantly revised.

How is this report which determines so much of the schools apportionment any different than a repository to certify a teacher to teach? We need one set of rules determined by one agency and reviewed by people who specialize in this and not as a portion of their busy and interrupted day.

Absolutely!! Eliminates duplication of effort by district and has same staff counting credits and experience.

Would increase accuracy.

Yes -- too time consuming.

Yes! All School Districts (using the state salary schedule) use the same criteria to place teachers on the state salary schedule. It only makes sense to have everything in one location. Teachers wouldn't have to send for transcripts/verification of experience from prior districts every time they move and we can place them on the salary schedule immediately upon intake rather than waiting until the appropriate documents arrive.

Yes, I feel that it would speed up the process for doing placement, as we'd have the history right there and not have to wait for forms and transcripts to be sent. Which some times takes too much time and documents are received after the cut off dates.

Yes! Each year a number of certificated employees move to surrounding school districts for a variety of reasons. Due to those moves, the new human resource/personnel office must request a new set of official transcripts, new verification of employment forms, credit/clock hour forms from previous districts, etc. in order to make an accurate placement on the salary schedule for the employee. This is a very time consuming process for the requesting district, costly for the employee, and time consuming for the district in which we are requesting information. If all of this information was held in a central location, it would be much more expedient in dealing with employee placement on the salary schedule, would be more cost efficient for the employee, and would save hundreds of hours of time that needs to be focused in other areas of the human resource/personnel functions of the district.

Yes. It would be helpful to call one agency for all teacher information.

Yes, so that the same teachers don't have to keep digging up verification of experience, transcripts, and clock hours for every new district. It would be great to access a computer and know that reliable info is there for salary schedule placement.

Yes. This would save hours and dollars for the employee in not having to duplicate documents for each district they work for; and for the district. We currently handle a personnel file many times while receiving transcripts and verifications of experience, making adjustments as they are received. A one time receipt of all documents would be cost effective for everyone.

Yes, to reduce costs in labor and paper. Also to increase accuracy and consistency.

Yes. Each year we have to input new college and clock hours for all teachers. New teachers take a lot more time especially if they have a lot of credits, and from many colleges, universities, etc. Getting information from other districts can take up to two months or more. They are just as busy as we are at the beginning of the year and it takes a lot of time to get this information together and ready to send. Then if that teacher goes to a new school the following year, that employee has to do the same routine as I did the year before. It could streamline our processes and save time at the district level. In order for it to be successful, those managing the system need to be readily accessible to both district employees needing the data ( for budget, S-275, &

salary placement purposes, etc.) and to the teachers, particularly if there are concerns about accuracy and completeness of the records. Those working at the central repository also need an awareness of how this data is used at the district and state levels and a sensitivity to the employees whose salaries are directly impacted by the accuracy of the data provided to the users.

Yes, for accuracy and consistency.

Yes, it would be more efficient, and improve accuracy from district to district on transferring employees. It would free up time for local staff and eliminate errors. Audit time should be decreased at the local level.

Yes! Each District spends a huge amount of time verifying placement each time a teacher moves from one district to another. Training enough people in each district to do this correctly is burdensome. There is always a great risk of error.

Yes. Would be extremely helpful to the districts.

Yes, to reduce costs in labor and paper. Also to increase accuracy and consistency.

Yes, consistency, the file would follow the teacher (like students files do), it would eliminate duplications, save the teachers the cost of official transcripts, would eliminate the audit on staff mix a savings for the district, eliminate placing teachers on the wrong salary schedule step, etc. etc.

Yes! Because every district and every auditor has their own idea of what is right. If the auditor does not agree with the district, then it could be a major problem with the district. If there was one state authorized repository then there would be only one interpretation of the rules. Everything would be done the same way for everyone. Most of us have multiple job responsibilities and during August, September, October, and November all responsibilities need numerous hours of attention. Errors are made because the work load that has been placed on us. Right now if a teacher came to our district with more than 15 years of experience and credits accumulated over those 15 years, I would probably not count them the way the previous district did. Also, some district will not share original transcripts. I had one teacher who spent 25 years in one district. That district would not release the original transcripts to my district. The teacher had to reorder 15 different transcripts. This can be quite costly (The Evergreen State College charges \$10.00. Most others are from \$3 to \$7). Transcripts would be ordered once and that would be it.

The state legislature doubled the paperwork and work load for districts when they added the criteria requirement. The extra work load funding had to come out of levy dollars which was taken away from the students.

The placement will be standard and follow teachers from district to district. A state-authorized repository of teacher credential files is needed to insure accuracy throughout the districts. Also, to stop the repetitive work being done when a teacher moves from one district to another. It would also save the cost of ordering original transcripts repeatedly. By getting the correct salary placement from the repository soon after an employee is hired, we would not need to place the employee at one pay level, then change it when the correct records are obtained (which can take several months some times). It would save payroll time, because the pay has to be recalculated and back pay given when the pay level goes up. It would also protect against fraud. The district would know it was getting a true rendition of the employee's records. A state-authorized repository of teacher credential files would be beneficial to the teachers...they wouldn't need to duplicate materials, and the districts wouldn't need to keep doing the same research on a staff member. Some are more complicated than others, especially vocational or an employee who has taught in a number of districts, attended a number of universities, etc.

Yes. It would be helpful to call one agency for all teacher information. But it will only work if the individual you call knows the answers.

YES, SO EVERY DISTRICT WILL HAVE UPDATED INFORMATION WHEN A NEW PERSON COMES TO THE DISTRICT.

Yes, It would be helpful to both staff and the employee as the employee would not have to order transcripts for every new employer and the employer would not have to spend the time contacting each employer for experience verification and would not have to figure placement for salary purposes. I'm not sure needed is the word. It seems to me that it would make a lot of sense and it would be more efficient; but does anyone have the monetary resources to set the system up, do all the input, and staff for maintenance? I don't know what the cost would be, but I believe school districts would rather see that money being used for classrooms. A large burden would be taken from the school districts if we were no longer responsible for tracking and reporting experience and credits of certificated staff. Time spent tracking and reporting has become easier due to the development of software programs. A central repository would be nice for teachers who move from one district to another; however, the former

district could keep copies of transcripts and send originals to the new district. I'm just not sure that the need is greater than the cost in money, time, and effort.

Yes, I think it would be nice for everyone to have the same information about all staff members. Some districts report differently and people interpret information differently.

Need...absolutely.

Yes. Accurate and up to date information.

As we currently operate, teachers usually have their credentials in hand when applying for a position. If the intent of a state-authorized repository is more comprehensive such as holding a common application, official transcripts, employment verifications, placement on salary schedules in previous districts, fingerprint information, etc., then a central, easily accessible repository would be beneficial to both districts and teachers. Also, if official transcripts are located in a central repository, the teacher would have to provide just one set that is accessible by respective districts. Currently, we ask for official transcripts, but if an official one is provided to the repository, I would have no problem accessing copies from its file.

Yes. If teachers are seeking a higher placement on the salary schedule, they/we should be accountable for how they are placed.

Yes. Efficient coordination, maintenance of records.

**Question #6: At least two types of central repositories seem feasible at this point: (1) a centrally managed system and (2) a distributed system, perhaps managed by the ESDs. Would you favor one of these over the other (central versus regional)? Or would you favor some other arrangement? Why?**

Favor Current Practices

See answer to #5. District managed and OSPI approving credits.

No.

Districts should maintain their own. No need for this. I believe WEA would object strenuously as well.

With the information I have, a state repository is not needed. I would recommend the state have read-only access to our district files. For accuracy and efficiency, the teachers need a local contact to verify their records and receipt of experience and certified course work.



If the ESD's managed it, would the cost of that management be passed on to the district's? If so we don't need something that will create more cost. I could see this for a larger district, but the smaller district's should be exempt.

1st preference, stay local, 2nd preference - regional/local ESD, 3<sup>rd</sup> preference - state.

It Depends

Depends on where the payment would come from, and the cost to each district.

It depends on the efficiency of keeping up the records.

Not sure, but it would be important for information to be accessible in a timely manner. If information takes the amount of time that fingerprint verification takes it would not be beneficial.

Favor Either a Distributed or a Centrally Managed System

Either way is fine.

I think either system would be an improvement.

Either arrangement would be satisfactory.

I think either is workable, as long as the qualifiers in item 5 are met.

Both [either] would be fine.

Either one would work I would think.

Either one would help with the work that is being generated, for tracking information, not only by the employer but by the employee.

We would favor either one.

Either one okay.

Either.

Either one would probably work.

Either system would be better than the current.

Either sounds fine.

Other than storage, I can't think of any reason it would make any difference who managed the information.

Actually either one would be favorable.

No particular preference; I can see benefits in both types. The consistency in a centrally managed system would be great, but the more personal service associated with a local ESD would be good too. It's nice to actually speak with someone rather than always getting voice mail.

Either would be fine.

Either would be fine. We hire teachers from all over the state. Central would be good for that, but if we knew which ESD area the person is coming from we could contact them.

I have no preference. If it is a distribution [distributed] system, would it have to be at the ESD's or could it be a satellite office in each area?

#### Favor a Distributed System

I am happy with working with the ESD.

2.

We favor the distributed system.

ESD -- we already have a relationship of checking out information and returning to them.

I would like to see a distributed system, only because there might be a more personal touch.

I would favor the regional repository or something like WSIPC student records where records are forwarded to a new district when a teacher moves. Thereby, only one district at a time would be updating the records to insure nothing is duplicated and that we know who is responsible for inputting the info.

A regional system, managed by the ESD's, would be much better than a centrally managed system. Again, I don't agree with the need for any central repository system, but I would definitely favor a regional one over a central one.

Regional.

ESD -- When I consider the number of schools all needing information by Oct.

1.

Preference is #2, ESD distributed.

2 is favored, proximity.

A distributed system. It would probably have a quicker processing time and there would be a local contact for the districts.

Regional would be better as it seems the customer would have easier access to make corrections.

A regional system managed by the ESDs with the capability to transfer the information, would be preferable.

The ESD currently manages our clock hour information. That is working effectively. I would be more in favor of a regional approach.

A distributed system managed by the ESD's would be more convenient for staff and school districts.

I am wondering if regional systems might be more easily managed and offer a faster turn around time to districts.

A distributed system because I think the information would be available in a more timely fashion and it would be easier to get through to people.

REGIONAL.

#### Favor a Centrally Managed System

Central...better control and consistency.

We would prefer a statewide, centrally managed system. With the use of the internet, teachers are now requesting applications from districts across the state. Having a central repository seems more efficient reducing the guesswork as to which region holds current records for an individual.

Centrally managed. It would have to be all or nothing, because on an ESD level it would be like it is now, a district to district system.

Management system...State level. The rules for determining the placement of a certificated employee is WAC. The WACs are developed at the State level. State funding is based on the placement of employees on the LEAP schedule, subject to audit by State auditors.

I think it would need to be central, otherwise you would lose too much efficiency and standardization.

(1) It is easy to have one place to call then to try and figure out which ESD has the information.

1.

Either system would help... A centrally managed system would allow a teacher to have all his/her information in one spot and each district could access it for their needs. It would save hundreds of hours.

I would prefer #1, a central managed system. If you have each ESD or other regional groups take care of specific areas, you will fall into the same problem of different interpretations.

I feel it should be a centrally managed system.

Central.

At this time, there is so much duplication of effort and potential for error in the current district-by-district process. Although there may be other reasons for keeping it at a regional level, my instinct is to encourage a process managed and run by OSPI, since experience and education documentation will easily cross regional boundaries just as it currently does district boundaries.

Central system: Why should records move all over the state? The information should be in one place where it can be maintained and accessed.

Central would be better, the more people involved the more potential for errors.

Central system. If a teacher moves outside the jurisdiction of the ESD, the other ESD would have to use the same process as another school. Just have it at one location for the state.

Central.

I would favor either of these arrangements; however, the centrally managed system seems to me to be the best option. I believe the centrally managed system would provide the proper consistency needed in review of the information for district purposes. My biggest concern would be the need for having appropriately trained personnel to deal with the "truckload" of information that would be needed by districts on a year-to-year basis.

We would like the centrally managed system, just due to the fact that teachers will move from one ESD district to another and having it central would just make things easier.

I would like to see a centralized system in place for the above reasons. I envision it being much like the 'certification information' we can access through SPI to check teachers certificates.

Centrally managed system – – as long as it wasn't difficult to access and download information.

Option 1 would lend to better consistency as staff from different ESDs could interpret information differently. Having it at the local ESD level makes it more personal in working with staff you know.

Central because it seems it would cut down on the opportunity for mistakes, i.e. moving between ESD's, states, etc. I guess I would need to know how it would work if managed by ESD's as opposed to OSPI.

Central managed system – – SPI now handles the certification of teachers and keeping them up to date, it seems this would be the place to have the central system – – teachers would only have to work through one agency (more accuracy using one system).

I favor #1, centrally managed. This would be the simplest in the long run and most straight forward method.

We would favor a centralized system – – again to maximize consistency and efficiency in obtaining, reporting and accessing this information.

A centrally managed system – – eliminate the 'middle' man--set up similar to fingerprint or certification system.

A centrally managed system.

A state-wide data base accessible state-wide would be most feasible to those districts that choose to utilize it. Management at the ESD level would be most practical. Teachers could report their credits and clock hours to their regional ESD, who would enter this into the data base. Both OSPI and districts could access this data base to create personnel reports which would be much less cumbersome than the current S-275 reporting methods.

Centrally managed system would be ideal since you would only need to go to one place to locate information.

Centralized, due to accuracy and consistency.

Definitely would favor a centrally managed system. Any form of distributed system would continue the same margin for error as processing at the local level. Also, it would make more sense to have all documents housed in the same location.

Centrally managed system.

If we are going to have a managed system, it should be centrally managed. Everyone would work from one data base.

In my opinion, a centrally managed system is best. Why? Each time a teacher relocates to a different district in a different ESD area, either the documents would need to be transferred or another official set of documents supplied by the teacher. Setting up the system from the beginning to provide documentation statewide is the most logical and efficient system to me.

I favor the centrally managed system, so all of us could access the same information.

Definitely favor a centrally managed system because of consistency. A single location would be best.

I would favor the centrally managed system. It would allow for consistency and it would also be a central location for all the information. Four (4) of the six (6) teachers we hired were not associated with our ESD, so it seems as though the ESDs would face the same situation the school districts are currently facing, unless the ESDs are allowed to transfer that information to each other. Also, with a central system, wouldn't it be easier to monitor the teachers who should not be allowed to teach due to fingerprints, misconduct, etc.?

I would prefer a centrally managed system since people move around a lot. How would we know which repository was handling each teacher's credentials? It would also result in the discrepancies I was talking about earlier. A centrally managed system should be more consistent and efficient and effective. The only advantage I can see to regional is that they would be closer so people could interact with real people. But it still leaves problems when we hire people from other regions.

Central. Not sure totally why I think it would be best, but if you have John Doe at ESD 112, and Mary Doe at ESD 113, why would that be better than having both their records in a centralized statewide repository? The less complication for someone locating their information, the better. Or, the ESDs could be at least a location where the official data could be received, then sent on to the centralized repository.

Centrally managed system.

I think the centralized idea is a good one. Regionalizing at the ESD's would also work. There are of course pluses and minuses for any system be it the current one or any other option. I think the main plus to centralizing or regionalizing is the expertise will remain constant and the records maintained accurately.

I would personally prefer the centrally managed system. Teachers move in and out of the various ESD's and I find the ESD's charge for each service they provide.

I really don't know what difference it would make, I believe I favor a centrally managed system -- OSPI.

Central -- as a one stop shop.

I feel central would be easiest. Teachers may move in state and it would be very handy for all schools to have access to one place to get the information.

I would like to see a centrally managed system to supply most consistency and less duplication of effort.

I WOULD SUGGEST A CENTRALLY MANAGED SYSTEM. IDEALLY I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE THROUGH OSPI, JUST LIKE FINGERPRINT AND CERTIFICATE INFO IS AVAILABLE ONLINE.

I would say centrally managed system. I say this because staff move throughout the state and to identify ESD's involved with their files could be time consuming. It would be better if all information was in a single location.

I think both could have advantages, but at this point, without hearing arguments for either, I favor a centrally-managed system, such as at OSPI. This would prevent problems with teachers questioning where to send materials when credits are earned. With a centralized repository, the record would be associated with the teacher, not the district or region where the teacher is working. The teacher would be able to more readily move to another region of the state without concern about records transfers, etc.

In order to make it cost effective for the districts as well as the employee, the centrally managed system makes more sense. If a distributed system were used, that would not preclude an individual employee from having to repeat the process if he/she moved into another region within the state.

A centrally managed system.

The state managed system seems best because otherwise there will be the same duplication of effort from ESD to ESD as there now is between school districts.

Centrally managed.

The centrally managed – – thereby only a few individuals are managing the system for all districts.

No preference, however, based on comments above it seems a central resource would be more efficient and accurate.

**Question #7: What should a repository of teacher credential files provide electronically for you? (examples follow; add others if you wish):**

- 1. A summary of years of experience;**
- 2. Continuing education clock hours;**
- 3. Certification information;**
- 4. Endorsements;**
- 5. Verification of background investigation;**
- 6. Step on salary schedule;**
- 7. Summary of college degrees completed;**
- 8. Images of official transcripts;**
- 9. Other (specify).**

Summary of clock hours and college credits (after BA/after MA/in-between credits.

Degrees and year issued.

We can already access the SPI files to verify FBI/State Patrol Background checks.

I feel it is important for the districts to maintain copies of certificates and endorsements. When a candidate is offered employment, we request a copy to ensure correct placement and a valid certificate. This keeps some responsibility with the employee, as well as the district.

A summary of verified years of experience/ in-state and out-of-state

A summary of years of experience; yes, if detail is available to employee and/or district upon request.



Continuing education clock hours; yes, if there is a way to track compliance with WAC at various school districts (and criteria used).

Summary of college degrees completed; yes, if detail is available to employee and/or district upon request.

Images of official transcripts; yes - clearly legible

Images of Credit/Clock hr approval forms, created by each district, for placement on the salary schedule. These forms need to follow the teacher when they change employment for any classes taken after September 1, 1995.

Should include all mentioned, plus type II driving endorsement, any other specific training.

Perhaps information about extra curricular activities they have been involved in. Our current salary schedule gives them credit for like kinds of experience such as coaching, etc.

All of the above plus a short description of the level and position of the certificated employee, i.e. first grade teacher.

All would be good - h. would not be a priority.

We would favor a centralized repository that could be accessed electronically for all the items listed above. It would also be helpful to have pre-approval forms in a centralized repository.

Your list of 8 items is all needed by each district when hiring a teacher - why not do it once in one location! Electronic transfer of information seems even BETTER. Wouldn't the auditors love it to be consistent when looking into a personnel file?

Continuing education clock hours; yes (assuming these all have prior approval).

Coaching experience would be great [to include].

Verification of background investigation; no, I don't believe this is necessary.

Certification information; NO --- AVAILABLE THROUGH SPI HOOK-UP.

Endorsements; NO --- AVAILABLE THROUGH SPI HOOK-UP.

Verification of background investigation; NO.

Copy of last contract, so we can view what level of education and experience they have been credited with up to that point.

All of the above, plus confirmation/dates of specialized training, such as HIV/Aids and Sexual Harassment, first aid, CPR.

Verification of background investigation; no, this is a different department at OSPI.

Step on salary schedule; would be nice but not necessary,

Certification information; Optional.

Endorsements; Optional.

Verification of background investigation; No.

Images of official transcripts; If required by the state auditors--if the auditors would accept the centralized summary information, these would be optional.

I would like to see the experience, credits and clock hours in detail form, not just as a summary (such as a list in EdRM or Excel). Also, we need the course approval category for credits and clock hours completed 9/1/95 and later.

It would be nice to have: a, c, d, e, f, & g with these fields being adjustable at the district level as well. For instance, if you had given a teacher 4 years experience and we showed that teacher having some unpaid leave, we would deduct that unpaid leave from his/her experience, while you may not be aware of that unpaid time away from work.

Hopefully, error free information.

I believe that covers most...[or] better yet...Why not let the [repository] enter the information into WSIPC and let us access what we need from there.

All listed with the addition of academic credits as well as the clock hours.

a, b, g, h.

It would be helpful to have experience, number of credits, and degrees. We already have access to the background checks. Although maybe all the information could be contained in the same file.

Breakdown of in excess/in service/academic after 9/1/95.

Repository provides - items A-G. Images of the official transcripts would not be necessary. If a district wishes to use the transcript information for hiring purposes (areas of interest, what specific classes were taken, specific grades, etc.) it would be the district's responsibility to obtain the transcripts from the prospective employee.

All of the items listed. I assume item "e" includes fingerprint information such as when the individual was last fingerprinted.

Summary of quarter hour credits beyond initial BA.

Date of college degree(s) granted.

Summary of total credits taken in a specific area, i.e., English, social studies, math, science, etc.

All of these things are important. Which are needed depends on how you envision the repository working. If the idea is to collect the data so each district can go retrieve the data, then that would be of minimal value. The district would still be responsible to determine if all of the credentials are there to justify salary placement.

I know that there are currently RCW's and WAC's that govern what each district must maintain for audit purposes. I would propose that it would be beneficial to change the rules and determine that the repository would be responsible to maintain the required paperwork for audit purposes. If the repository gathers the data and makes the salary placement determination, the district would be able to look up the employee's placement and use that for contract purposes. If the repository were to take on the task of maintaining this info and salary placement, there would be no need to have this information available electronically. All the district needs is to know where the teacher is to be placed on the salary schedule. It would reduce the filing and file space required for each employee.

I could see this reducing the amount of work that is also required for the S275. Currently, all the placement information must be maintained. It would still be necessary for districts to identify the grade level, the account code and duty code, the FTE, etc., but if we did not maintain all of this information on paper in an employee file and used the repository salary placement, that would also reduce employee time spent on the S275 process. It would also be possible to use the information from the S275 to update the experience for each teacher annually. I understand that a repository is a lot of work, but I know that school districts repeatedly reconstruct employee files - transcripts, experience, clock hours, certificates, etc. and there is a big cost for the reconstruction (cost of transcripts, employee's handling the mail, forwarding our information to other districts, helping our teachers understand why they have to "do it again", etc.). We really appreciate being able to put a social security number in the computer to find out if a person had a teaching certificate. We are also able to look up information on each employee from DRS. This would be one more opportunity to reduce work and increase

productivity and efficiency across the state. All districts prefer to put money into educational programs, but we are also very sensitive to audit findings and with the emphasis that the legislature has placed on staff mix and the annual requirement to audit and report, the state auditor really has no choice than to spend audit time in each district sampling our teacher files. So, there would also be an audit savings, if there were a central repository for the auditors to test and rely upon. At \$70 plus per hour, it would be of value for you to check with the State Auditor how many audit hours are spend each year on this area statewide. That would be an additional savings to the districts.

Total credits.

a through h of your list look great.

Some form of detailed credit report (that lists all credits and colleges/clock hour providers with a total number of credits) for district staff and each individual to request for responses to questions about credits taken (on file) for planning for future course work and so individuals can plan for taking more credits to move between lanes. Our district currently provides this service for our staff.

If continuing education clock hours were listed, I would assume that those would be considered approved or would each district have to approve them? - same with credits...

We hire teachers who will be coaching also so coaching experience that is verified would be good also.

Date of State required blood borne pathogens training.

Whether approval to take classes was given by a district and if so, which one.

Majors and minors.

Number of credits being reported in the s275 categories (academic, excess and in service).

Credits.

Immunization.

Step on salary schedule; nice, but not all districts are on state schedule.

Continuing education clock hours; - YES ,BUT NEED APPROVAL CRITERIA.  
HOW WOULD THAT BE DONE?

Step on salary schedule; - NOT ALL THE SAME SALARY SCHEDULE FOR DISTRICTS

Summary of college/university credits earned after first bachelor's degree; summary of "Vocational experience and (non-degree) credits"; social security number; date of birth; gender; ethnic code; high degree type; high degree year; excess credits; [All the information required on the S-275 that "attaches to" an individual (i.e. is not district specific)]

I believe that a traveling file that stays with the certified member as they move between districts should be considered instead of the central repository.

Immunization records?

Credit Criteria Forms.

A, B, C, D, E, G. Presuming that the central repository idea would change the S-275 documentation requirements, there should be no need for me to have copies of any backup information. I do think there will need to be a mechanism to be informed of credits an individual has earned in a given area.

I think you can delete item c.; d; e; and h. Reasons: c & d. - certification and endorsement information is easy to acquire with no discrepancies on interpretation - what you see on the certificate is what you get.

When a teacher moves from district to district, the new district could probably accomplish the fingerprinting in a more timely manner, i.e. they're given the cards when they sign the contract. How/when would the repository know to re-print someone?

Why would we need these [h] if they have already been authenticated by the central repository?

All that are listed, and perhaps sick leave transfer.

Total credits.

**Question #8: Do you have any other thoughts about credentialed staff records systems you would like to share with us?**

Having continuing education clock hours in a central repository, I hope, would then be able to be the documentation for the continuing education requirement for certification.

Thank you for the opportunity to give input. I have maintained for many years that this approach would make sense and save districts and certificated staff members time, as well as money.

[We are] not on the state-wide salary schedule, so I am not sure that our participation would provide all of the information that we would need to comply with our negotiated bargaining contract salary placement rules, in addition to following the state regulations/guidelines. I know that most districts have bargaining contract rules that have to be followed for placements using credits/experience that are not recognized by the state - but we still have to maintain records and track for our use. So if this is being recommended as a cost saving idea, [we] would still have to have staff to track and maintain records that are not recognized by the state for our employees in addition to what a central repository may provide. We would still have to have staff to serve as a liaison between our [many] employees and this central repository to coordinate requests for information.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this issue. I am interested to see the responses and concerns of other districts. Is a summary going to be put somewhere on the OSPI website?

Mainly questions about how it would work... How would district-approved credits be recognized, etc. Would not want the system to add more headaches for the districts.

I think this list looks great. It would be beneficial for everyone involved, employees, school districts, colleges, and OSPI.

**GREAT IDEA. I HOPE THIS BECOMES A REALITY SOON!**

Just that this is a wonderful idea and many thanks to whoever initiated this process. I will be shouting praises for them from the rooftops if this becomes a reality!

it looks like a lot of work has already been done. THANK YOU.

Would districts still be required to obtain transcripts of all past college course work at the time of hire?

I think it would be a nightmare for your office to set up in the beginning!!!

For us this isn't a priority. We have concerns that the information would not get back to us in a timely fashion. Also because we only just adopted the state LEAP schedule in 1999-00 and prior to that time we followed our own district salary schedule, we are still honoring the district schedule for grand fathered employees. This will take some monitoring for several years.

I just really think that this would be an excellent idea.

This would certainly be a big assist to the districts. I hope it becomes a reality

I think it has great potential and could be very beneficial to individual school districts.

It looks like a positive direction.

Recently our district began sharing records with a neighboring district because staff move between the two districts. That has worked well, esp. for one recent hire who had credits from approx. 10 colleges all over the western US. It also saved the teacher money because she didn't have to send for official transcripts.

Sounds like a wonderful plan. Hope it works!!

I think the centralized idea is a good one. Regionalizing at the ESD's would also work. There are of course pluses and minuses for any system be it the current one or any other option. I think the main plus to centralizing or Regionalizing is the expertise will remain constant and the records maintained accurately.

A central repository is an excellent idea. There must be a clear understanding that accuracy and completeness of the data is the responsibility of the entity that records it. Would this eliminate individual responsibility for the S-275 data?

I think the idea of a central repository has enough positives to be encouraging. I'm sure there are a number of positives and negatives I am overlooking, but I find this an exciting possibility. I am a more than a little unsure how credit approval forms will fit into a centralized record-keeping facility, but think most of those problems can be solved. Thanks for taking on this challenge!

Do not pursue this!!

Keep the system simple for both certificated staff to access/forward their information and the districts to receive it. It should not be a system that has several "hoops" to jump through to get information. When hiring, the speed at which the information is received by the hiring district should be in a timely fashion. Also, keep the manner in which experience is updated yearly simple. The cost for this repository could be subsidized by a fee for the transferring of records. However, make the cost of it somewhat in comparison to the cost of official transcripts.

I know that there are currently RCW's and WAC's that govern what each district must maintain for audit purposes. I would propose that it would be beneficial to change

the rules and determine that the repository would be responsible to maintain the required paperwork for audit purposes. If the repository gathers the data and makes the salary placement determination, the district would be able to look up the employee's placement and use that for contract purposes. If the repository were to take on the task of maintain this info and salary placement, there would be no need to have this information available electronically. All the district needs is to know where the teacher is to be placed on the salary schedule. It would reduce the filing and file space required for each employee.

I could see this reducing the amount of work that is also required for the S275. Currently, all the placement information must be maintained. It would still be necessary for districts to identify the grade level, the account code and duty code, the FTE, etc., but if we did not maintain all of this information on paper in an employee file and used the repository salary placement, that would also reduce employee time spent on the S275 process. It would also be possible to use the information from the S275 to update the experience for each teacher annually. I understand that a repository is a lot of work, but I know that school districts repeatedly reconstruct employee files - transcripts, experience, clock hours, certificates, etc. and there is a big cost for the reconstruction (cost of transcripts, employee's handling the mail, forwarding our information to other districts, helping our teachers understand why they have to "do it again", etc.) We really appreciate being able to put a social security number in the computer to find out if a person had a teaching certificate. We are also able to look up information on each employee from DRS. This would be one more opportunity to reduce work and increase productivity and efficiency across the state. All districts prefer to put money into educational programs, but we are also very sensitive to audit findings and with the emphasis that the legislature has placed on staff mix and the annual requirement to audit and report, the state auditor really has no choice than to spend audit time in each district sampling our teacher files. So, there would also be an audit savings, if there were a central repository for the auditors to test and rely upon. At \$70 plus per hour, it would be of value for you to check with the State Auditor how many audit hours are spent each year on this area statewide. That would be an additional savings to the districts.

I don't think that it would be hard to find a system to do what a central system would need it to do. I think the issue may be the volume of information that would need to be inputted, stored and accessed. A user friendly system is always preferred; however, any system that would centralize this information and remove unnecessary



duplication of work throughout the state would be much appreciated. I have only been in my position for two (2) years and can only comment on the current issues I see. I would highly recommend contacting [omitted], my supervisor, if you are interested in putting together a team to evaluate the best record keeping system for the central location. She has been in this department for nine years and has developed most of the ways we track our information. Since she has been doing this, we have not had an auditor issue any findings in our department. She is great at looking at the individual pieces and still be able to see the whole picture...just a suggestion!

Right now, I am in favor of centrally located placement files to avoid the problem of college records not being available, and to avoid ordering transcripts multiple times from multiple locations. I would want to be sure about the efficiency, timeliness, and accuracy of a central system for credentialing, though. I haven't been involved in any discussion about the possibility, so I don't think I have enough knowledge about the concept.

I thought this repository was to be for salary placement purposes. It looks like it has broadened into other areas. Certificate, endorsement, and background checks are readily available now. No need to combine them with credits and experience. In some assignments, a specific number of credits are acceptable (without an endorsement), i.e., middle school/junior high blocks where an endorsement covers one subject and 9 credits cover the other area. (English, social studies, math, science, etc.).

Please continue your efforts to shift the burden off of the small districts.

How long until this is up and running?????????????

Thank you for taking the time to do this survey, and allowing all of us the opportunity to give input in this important issue.

How will this information be collected? Who's inputting the information? IF this becomes mandated that district's do the inputting, then there needs to be dollars for the districts.

Other school districts besides [ours] have changed requirements for district salary placement over the years and are not on the SAM. We would need a way to identify the "grand fathered" employees whose placement for S-275 and District are different.

Years ago, it was required that Official Transcripts be sent to the state. When the requirement changed back to local retention, many transcripts were unavailable,

forcing districts to ask their current employees to obtain officials a second time. If a central repository is adopted, it would be good to build in safeguards so that it would not be necessary for districts to maintain duplicate records "just-in-case."

This system of centralization of records would only work if there were some types of checks and balances in place and that the accountability would fall on who ever has the central system. That would probably never happen. As a district we would have to be reassured that the system in place was correct and if in doubt we would continue with what is being done now to avoid any errors in case of an audit.

Who will pay to manage this system?

I have felt very strongly for quite some time that this should come to pass. It seems very efficient, cost effective and, most importantly, logical to have this centralized system to hold the credentials of all public school teachers in the state. It would save many, many hours of work at the district level, especially for teachers who may move from district to district during their careers. It would save districts money for the following reasons: a. Knowing exactly where to place a teacher on the salary schedule; b. Having prior experience housed in a central location rather than having to rely on or wait for a former district to research and mail back experience verification forms; c. Determining whether credits or clock hours earned meet the criteria to be in compliance with WAC 392-121-262. d. Save many redundant inquiries by all school districts to OSPI personnel regarding the annual S-275 personnel reporting process. e. Cut down on time spent entering education and prior experience into the database of each district rather than just downloading it.

Thank you for conducting a study of this nature. I feel such a database would be a great resource for school districts and an efficient method of streamlining work done by all the school districts of the state. If you need further input or assistance, I would be happy to help you in any way possible.

A centrally managed system needs to be a priority. The current system is antiquated and prone to error. It is also more labor intensive than school districts should have to undertake. The duplication of effort in tracking and verifying education and experience that takes place when a teacher moves from one district to another within the state is an unnecessary burden for both teachers and school districts.

Again, thanks for asking for our input.

We look forward to more information about this following completion of the survey and study.

It might be possible to access the information that is already in the system and authenticate it. This would lessen the initial input dramatically.

This is a TREMENDOUS procedure. How could records be any more accurate by doing them one at one location opposed to 1-2-3-4 ? Districts doing them over and over again, hoping they equal what was done in previous positions! I cannot express how great this would be. I love working with the new personnel, but the paperwork can get very cumbersome when dealing with the other districts for verification, transcripts from all the colleges, etc. Thank you for the effort on this project!

These records, once established should be used for LEAP placement and audit compliance.

Who bears the burden of responsibility for accurate information? Who bears the burden of responsibility for accurate information?

Am very encouraged by this step - is a long time coming!!

Sounds wonderful.

I am really excited about this possibility. I think this would be a benefit to all school districts and would free up valuable time for everyone. Please pursue this!!

1. Many variables need to be considered regarding this. Mainly, will this cause more of a hardship to the teachers (in not receiving salary raises when expected); and more work and headaches to the payroll department (in needing to process retroactive payments for many months)and personnel department (in misplacement of new staff on the salary schedule due to lack of timely information, and not having the information needed for the S-275 reporting).

2. Rather than a central repository, I feel that a regular state training program needs to be established and implemented throughout the state. Training should be held at least twice each year for all school districts to attend to learn how (or to review how) to document and authenticate this information. Thorough, ongoing training should be available for new staff as they are hired, and a "help" line should be available for guidance, questions, etc.

I would not think that having one central place keeping the info up to date would be efficient enough to be able to produce a contract immediately in August when a new teacher is hired. I would suggest having the teachers turn info in to the school district they work for and that all be processed and then input from the district to a central computer with the original documents then sent to the repository and images available

by computer. Then a teacher's records could be accessed from any district at time of hiring.

This system should be made a high priority! Also, in this questionnaire you only mention teachers. What about administrators? The same credential needs apply.

Determination of credits meeting criteria as required in WAC392-121-262.

I just would like to see this happen at OSPI level.

How will the course approval process work if the record keeping is centralized, but the approval process is local? For instance, how would someone outside of the district determine a course is pertinent to current assignment? Better yet, let's discontinue the course approval process and accept any courses from regionally-accredited universities or approved Washington clock hours providers.

Our district has really had a tight grip on credit counting through official transcripts and validation with the S275 credit counting area. Clock hours are not as clearly defined. The clock hour forms take on so many different forms and deal with such small amounts of credit, that it is quite burdensome. I have heard that some communities have all the teacher's clock hours go through the local ESD and then appear on the ESD clock hour transcript. That would be a much better way of counting clock hours, in my opinion. Currently ESD 105 only provides transcripts for clock hours earned through them. Credit counting is a time consuming, tedious task, taking lots of concentration. I'm really interested in how this could be accomplished on a statewide basis and be done accurately. Please keep us posted in the progress in this area.

This centralized repository just makes too much sense! We are a small district with limited staff, we all wear many hats. The beginning of the school year is extremely hectic for all of us, and for staff at other districts where the records may be. The records should be accessible on the internet. We should not be re-inventing the wheel each time a teacher changes districts.

Great idea.

From a Business and Finance perspective, and thinking of audit and funding issues, I would like to say that I think a centralized repository would provide a great service to both certificated staff and to school districts across the state. Kudos for continuing to look at this, and please let me know if there's anything I can do to help make it a reality.

At this time, there is so much duplication of effort and potential for error in the current district-by-district process. Although there may be other reasons for keeping it at a regional level, my instinct is to encourage a process managed and run by OSPI, since experience and education documentation will easily cross regional boundaries just as it currently does district boundaries.

Again, thank you for pursuing this question.

Determination of credits meeting criteria as required in WAC392-121-262.

I would think all school districts need to be on the new Human Resource system, that way the information can be downloaded to the centrally managed system.

I really hope this will be approved!

This would be one of the best moves this state has ever done, taking away this responsibility from all the districts in the state, putting it under one roof, and managing it the way the state intended.

IT WOULD BE NICE IF THE INFORMATION ALREADY IN THE SYSTEM CAN BE IN THE NEW SYSTEM

I'm not sure what this system would look like. Would districts be able to access information just like they access certificate information now? Would teachers correspond directly with the state office as far as reporting continuing education and other classes taken? Would it be the state office's responsibility to report correct experience and credits to districts so that we can report correct LEAP information? In our district, some teachers have a lot of trouble getting their act together to bring in all the right paperwork in order to have experience or credits increased. A central repository would probably increase their frustration, but it would be great for me!

Thoughts....the current system of re-creating employment files each time a certificated person changes districts is not efficient - both in terms of collecting information and the accuracy of the information compiled. The mix factor is a major driver of revenue for school districts, and a major area of expenditure for school districts. The State should provide a greater level of assistance to make sure districts are accurately reporting. The rules are complicated and seem to be more so every year. For the new employee - he/she must order new official transcripts from all colleges attended, request verification of employment from all former districts, including districts where he/she may have worked as a substitute. Through the years this may become quite a lengthy process. For the district hiring the new employee - complete files must

be created prior to placement on the salary schedule. If the verifications do not arrive timely, the employee is placed on the lower cell of the salary schedule until proper documentation is received...usually creating an unhappy employee. When the documentation is received, payroll corrections are needed. Verifications are also subject to interpretation - what constitutes a full time day - in one district it may be 7 hours, in another 7.5 hours...is it clear that experience is based on 180 days, even though for the last two years a full-time teacher may have been contracted for 183 days? Does the person in the personnel department clearly understand the experience calculation of a person who has taught at the college level, without teaching certification, while performing other duties for the college. In large school districts jobs are specialized. In smaller and small districts jobs are not specialized. Does a part-time teacher, who stays and substitutes for an extra period or two receive additional experience credit for this time? There are lots of scenarios that affect placement and are subject to interpretation. For the former employing districts - employment records must be maintained forever..verifications are usually arriving when you are the busiest. If the employment records are not maintained properly an employee who left 15-18 years before could create a challenge for finding accurate information...creating a situation for the new hiring district. I know liability for mistakes is one concern...who pays if an employee has been underpaid for a significant amount of time? What does the employee do when it is determined that too much compensation has been paid. Do school districts across the state have a uniform way of dealing with these issues...I don't think so. By creating a state-level depository all districts will have personnel who are specialized in reading college transcripts, in determining how much experience should be granted for a non-traditional teaching setting. It only makes sense.

This is a great idea that would require a lot of set-up and maintenance. For this to be an effective tool, it seems that districts would need to provide timely information in order for the information on file in the repository to be current and usable. Providing the information could have a huge impact on our workload depending on when the information is needed and in what format. Would this be accomplished electronically (years of experience, placement on salary schedule, etc.)? What about information for teachers coming from out-of-state?

Central repository seems especially appropriate in this technological age.