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Information

Credentialing and Certificated Assignments Committee

Analysis of Proposal to Require Teachers to Renew Credentials Online

Executive Summary: This agenda item provides an analysis of the issues and concerns teachers and employing agencies have regarding renewing credentials online.

Recommended Action: Information Item

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Strategic Plan Goal: 3

Provide Quality Customer Service

- ◆ Use technology innovation to maximize operational efficiency and improve customer access to information and services

Analysis of Proposal to Require Teachers to Renew Credentials Online

Introduction

At the April Commission meeting, the Commission directed staff to prepare an agenda item reviewing any barriers that might restrict teachers from using the online credential renewal process. This agenda item discusses various issues and concerns that teachers have regarding the use of the online renewal system. County office and districts also have concerns regarding teachers who renew their credential online after it expires.

Background

In June 2001 the Commission entered into a contract with International Business Machines [IBM (formerly PriceWaterhouseCoopers)] to serve as the contractor to develop and implement a three phase Teacher Credential Service Improvement Project (TCSIP). TCSIP was initiated because the old computer system was inadequate in response to current functional or informational needs of the Commission and the public. The antiquated technology did not integrate with external systems, lacked a comprehensive Web-enabled application/renewal submission function and was unable to serve the needs of the commission and its' stakeholders.

Phase 1 of the TCSIP was launched in October 2001, allowing teachers and administrators to view the status of applications on-line and provide public access to teachers' credentials on-line. This feature has proven to be very popular with over 1,000 hits per day on the web site. Feedback from county offices of education and IHEs has been very positive regarding the real-time access to credential holder information. This process is vital to future technological efficiencies.

Phase 2 was successfully implemented in June of 2002 and allows credential holders to renew and pay for their credentials on-line. Between June 2002 and April 2005, the renewal process required that each online file be printed so certification staff could update the data. Phase 3 included the development of a fully automated renewal process termed the Virtual Credential Officer (VCO). When a teacher renews a credential online, the automated process enters all data including application and payment data into Credential Automation System Enterprise (CASE) without manual intervention. The only manual process required is that staff prints the credentials and prepare the documents for mailing. Currently approximately 5000 credentials are renewed monthly online. The latest report shows that 52% of all teachers renewing credentials are using the online renewal system.

Initially only clear, professional and professional clear credentials could be renewed online. On May 8, teacher, master teacher, site supervisor and program director child development permits were added to the online renewal process. This is being publicized through a press release and the Child Development Consortium.

In order for a teacher or child development permit holder to renew online they must first have access to the internet. Secondly, the system requires that the individual have an email address so he or she can be notified of the transaction and third have either a Visa or MasterCard.

The advantage to the teacher to renew online is the receipt of the credential within ten business days. Usually the Commission staff can mail the online renewed credentials within five business days. The advantage to the Commission is that it eliminates the need for the Cashiering and Certification Units to enter data into the database. As mentioned above, the online renewal system is fully automated. If the Commission were to require that all teachers renew online, staff projects that three staff could be redirected to evaluating credentials and reducing the backlog.

Potential Issues

The Commission staff asked the Credential Counselors and Analysts of California (CCAC) to query its members to identify potential issues if the Commission were to require teachers to renew online. CCAC members include credential analysts at the colleges and universities, county offices of education, school districts and local education agencies. A preponderance of responses stated that districts and counties currently encourage teachers to renew online. Only one response stated that the district did not allow its teachers to use the online renewal system. The district stated that it needed to know if the paperwork had been filed on time.

The issues fell into three categories, access, identify theft and district/county processes.

Access

Almost all of the CCAC members who responded to the request for potential issues stated that teachers potentially did not have access to the internet, access to an email address and access to a credit card. However, when staff asked districts if all schools in their district had internet access all responded that they did. Public libraries also provide internet access. Once an individual has access to the internet, they then have access to an email address. Both Hotmail and Yahoo, and there may be others, offer email addresses at no cost. Lastly, Visa and MasterCard cards can be prepaid like a gift card at banks and many merchants. There is a fee that ranges from \$3 to \$10 to purchase one of these cards. The Commission also charges a \$2 bank fee when using the online renewal system. Currently the Commission requires teachers who file through a county or district to obtain a money order or certified check, for which the cost can be as low as \$0.95.

Identify Theft

Another common issue that the CCAC membership identified pertained to teachers who were either uncomfortable or unwilling to use their social security number on the internet. In response to that that concern, when the online process was established the Commission required the web vendor to use the highest rated security. Financial and personal data is encrypted between the web user and the online database using 128-bit encryption or higher. Sensitive financial information such as credit card numbers and bank account information is stored encrypted in an Oracle database. Financial transactions are executed through a dedicated point-to-point circuit or over the internet encrypted using 128-bit encryption or higher. Web Servers are protected by firewall and intrusion detection.

Process

The Education Code requires that all teachers hold a valid credential in order to be paid. A number of districts and county offices of education expressed a concern about requiring all teachers to renew online. Their concern pertains to teachers who do not renew their credentials in a timely fashion. While the Education Code requires that all teachers hold a credential in order to be paid, the labor code states that a teacher has to be paid if they provide services.

For example, a county notifies a teacher that his or her credential is going to expire at the end of the month. For one reason or another, the teacher does not renew the credential on time and instead the teacher renews the credential online five days after it expires. The document issued by the Commission will have an issue date the day the applicant renews online thus creating a lapse in service. If the application had been filed through an agency, the agency may request an earlier issuance date as long as four months had not elapsed. Employing agencies have four months to submit a credential application for the Commission to honor an issuance date of a credential. Consequently, the agency may request an issuance date that will cover the lapse in service.

The Commission does have a process to validate service. The validation of service procedure may be utilized by an employer when an employee has rendered service in a position requiring certification for a period in which the employee did not hold appropriate certification or a Temporary County Certificate (Education Code Section 44332/44332.5/45036 and Title 5 Sections 80600, 80601, 80603 and 80604).

Regulations specify the circumstances under which validation of service may be requested. The two requirements that must be met are:

- the applicant must have been eligible for the appropriate credential during the entire period of the service requiring validation, and
- a valid credential required for the position must have been issued to the applicant by the Commission after the period when the service was rendered.

The requests for validations of service appear on the Commission's consent calendar under Certification, Assignment and Waivers Division.

Staff Direction

The Commission may wish to direct staff to return at the August meeting to set a timetable to implement a process to require all teachers to renew online.