

Teacher Standards and Practices Commission

	2013-15 Actual	2015-17 Legislatively Approved*	2017-19 Current Service Level	2017-19 Governor's Recommended
General Fund		200,000		
Other Funds	5,004,014	6,874,833	6,654,885	8,162,153
Federal Funds	35,000			
Total Funds	\$5,039,014	\$7,074,833	\$6,654,885	8,162,153
Positions	20	27	21	27
FTE	20.00	24.88	20.50	26.00

*Includes Emergency Board and administrative actions through December 2016.

Program Description

The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) composed of 17 members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, have three primary areas of responsibility:

- Establish rules for licensure and registration and issue licenses and registrations to teachers, administrators, school nurses, school counselors, and school psychologists.
- Maintain and enforce professional standards of competent and ethical performance and proper assignment of licensed educators through investigations and actions brought about through formal complaints to the Commission.
- Adopt standards for college and university teacher education programs and approve programs that meet such standards.

There are over 60,000 educators licensed by TSPC with teachers representing over 90%. For comparison, there are approximately 30,000 working teachers in Oregon's public schools. The TSPC is one of eleven stand-alone teacher licensee entities among the states.

The TSPC is almost fully supported by fees charged to educator licensees. The fee structure was increased during the last biennium (first time in 10 years) with the basic new in-state and renewal fees increasing from \$100 to \$140 for three or five year licenses. This should help stabilize the revenue situation for the next few years, when compared to the past few biennia when revenues actual fell from one biennia to another. These falling revenues were large part due to fewer license/renewal applications as school districts were not hiring. In the 2015-17 biennium, \$200,000 General Fund was added to the TSPC budget for a program authorized in SB 78 (2015) for assisting the teacher preparation programs at post-secondary institutions in the state to earn national accreditation. These funds will be placed in a "trust fund" and be available for grants to the programs to be prepared for the accreditation process in future years.

CSL Summary and Issues

- The CSL budget for TSPC factors in the staff changes in the budget for 2015-17, some of which were limited duration and do not continue into the 2017-19 biennium. General inflation and price-list changes are incorporated into the budget. The \$200,000 General Fund

appropriation for the teacher preparation program has been eliminated from the 2017-19 budget but Other Funds limitation remains to provide grants to the programs from the “trust fund”. The Emergency Board in December 2016 approved a \$358,049 increase in Other Funds limitation for increased fingerprinting and legal costs as well as for merchant fees paid as licensees use their credit cards to pay fees. While not part of the CSL amounts, the Governor’s budget does factor this increase into the 2017-19 budget in a 090 package.

Policy Issues

- A Secretary of State audit released in January 2016 found a number of weaknesses in the services and functions of the agency including long waiting periods and delays in responding to inquiries, processing of licenses and investigations. The audit reaffirmed the problems of the Commission resulting in backlogs in licensing and investigations over the past few biennia. For example, 18 months ago, applications submitted in early July (2015) would not be processed until early November, almost two months after the school year begun. Backlogs in the investigations of complaints of the TSPC licensees have been also substantial. Cases often take over a year to fully investigate. High caseloads for each investigator are one reason for the backlog. At the end of 2015, the caseload per investigator was 65 while the corresponding Washington investigators carried caseloads of under 30. The audit’s findings placed partial blame for these problems on staffing shortages, employee turnover, a “complicated paper-based” licensing system, lack of accountability throughout the agency, and an inadequate web site.
- The Commission implemented a new on-line licensing system in the past year replacing a very labor intensive “low tech” system. The cost of developing and maintaining this system is paid through a processing fee of \$10 paid to an outside contractor which is “outside” of the state budget. This system should address some of the issues that have arisen over delays in license processing and communications issues raised in the Secretary of State audit. Full implementation of the system is expected later in Spring 2017.
- The licensing structure has recently changed which clarified and streamlined the various licensee and endorsements for teaching licensee. This is hoped to improve the efficiency of processing as well as better reflect the education environment. A similar restructuring is planned for administrators and non-teaching licensees (e.g., counselors)

Other Significant Issues and Background

- The Governor’s budget is a net \$1.5 million increase in Other Funds expenditure limitation from the CSL. Increases include \$342,710 to factor in the December 2016 Emergency Board actions relating to merchant fees, legal costs and fingerprint related costs. Four positions and \$802,300 are added to improve customer service. Two positions are limited duration to continue to improve phone and email interaction with contacting the agency. A full-time manager position is proposed to be restored for the licensing program and a programmer is added to meet information system related needs of the agency. A further \$431,407 is proposed to add two limited duration positions (1.5 FTE) to reduce the backlog in investigations and to continue to scan files to move on from a paper based system. This amount also includes the purchase of a case management system for the investigation function.