Inventory of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing Records

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Inventory of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing Records

Record Group number: R359

California State Archives
Office of the Secretary of State
Sacramento, California

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing records
Dates: 1917-1980
Collection number: R359
Creator: Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing
Extent: 20 cubic feet and 2 bound volumes
Repository: California State Archives
Sacramento, California

Abstract: The records of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing and its predecessors, the Commission of Credentials and the Dept. of Education-Committee of Credentials, consist of 20 cubic feet of textual materials and two bound volumes dating from 1917 to 1980. The record group contains minutes, agendas, investigative files, subject files, and correspondence.

Physical location: California State Archives
Language: English

Access
The records in the Investigative Files series (R359.02), the House Un-American Activities Committee Investigative Files series (R359.03), and the Committee of Credentials Minutes series (R359.06) are restricted because they contain records of investigations conducted and compiled by a state agency for licensing purposes and are restricted per California Government Code section 6254(f).

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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing Records, R359,[series number], [box and folder number], California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento, California.

Acquisition Information
The California State Archives acquired the records of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing per state law.
Agency History
In 1917, the State Board of Education was given the ultimate authority in issuing and reviewing credentials of teachers employed in California. To aid in the fulfillment of this responsibility they established the Commission of Credentials through Chapter 540 of the 1917 California Statutes. The Commission would have three members to include the commissioners of elementary, secondary, and industrial and vocational education. The purpose of the Commission would be to review the applications of those wishing to earn teaching certificates in California. To carry out this duty they would be required to perform investigations of individuals with suspicious applications or questionable lifestyles. They also accredited teacher training programs and prepared credential examinations. Although the Commission was not directly under the control of the State Board of Education, they could not issue any credentials without the Board’s final approval. Chapter 453 of the 1927 California Statutes slightly changed the Commission's membership and stated that it was to be an advisory board of the newly created Division of Teacher Training and Certification within the California Department of Education. The duties of the Commission remained largely unchanged. The State Board of Education retained control over the final decisions on credential approval.

In 1963, the Department of Education took over the issuing of teacher credentials, bringing the Commission under its authority. The name of the Commission was changed to the Committee of Credentials, but its membership and duties remained the same. The State Board of Education continued to maintain some degree of influence over the Committee by retaining the ability to appeal their final decisions. In 1967, the Governor signed Chapter 1694, also known as the Professional Practices Act, which added more members to the Committee and clarified its investigative role, stating that it was necessary for the Committee to follow strict guidelines for due process. The law also indicated that the State Board of Education would create the policies for the Committee and that future meetings would be closed to the public.

In 1970, sweeping changes were made to the administration of public education in California through the Ryan Act, also known as the Teacher Preparation and Licensing Law of 1970, or AB122 (Chapter 557). The new law created the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, an independent entity whose members would include public school teachers, school administrators, university faculty, local school board members, and private citizens, all appointed by the Governor. The Commission took on five major program areas in the area of credentialing, including accreditation of training programs, development of credential examinations, teacher licensing, evaluation and research, and teacher standards. To carry out this last duty they took over control of the Committee of Credentials, stating that it had a responsibility to ensure that immoral, criminal, or otherwise unhealthy behavior would lead to the revocation of teacher credentials. Since that time the Committee of Credentials has remained under the authority of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing.

Chapter 698 of the 1982 California Statutes changed the name of the Commission to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Though there have been minor changes to the duties and membership of the Commission, it has remained largely the same to the present day.

Scope and Content
The records of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing and its predecessors, the Commission of Credentials and the Dept. of Education-Committee of Credentials, consist of 20 cubic feet of textual materials and two bound volumes dating from 1917 to 1980. The record group contains minutes, agendas, investigative files, subject files, and correspondence. This guide describes records of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, as well as its predecessors the Commission of Credentials and the Dept. of Education-Committee of Credentials.

The records of the Commission of Credentials, the first predecessor of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, span from 1917 to 1962 and are organized into five series: Minutes, Investigative Files, House Un-American Activities Committee Investigative Files, Subject Files, and Correspondence. Investigative files make up the majority of the records within the collection and include detailed investigations of the professional and moral conduct of over 1,100 California public school teachers. The House Un-American Activities Committee investigative files include similar investigations that are focused on a group of about one hundred teachers that were subpoenaed to attend hearings on moral conduct in the spring of 1959. The investigative files are useful for understanding the reasons why teachers had their credentials denied or revoked and the social issues that were concerning the Commission of Credentials at the time of the investigations, such as Communist Party involvement or sexual orientation. Meeting minutes document the hearings of the teachers involved in the investigations. The subject files and correspondence also highlight the contemporary concerns of the Commission of Credentials.

The most immediate predecessor to the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing was the Committee of Credentials, whose records cover the years 1963 to 1971 and contain five series: Minutes, Agendas, Subject Files, Legislative Correspondence, and State Board of Education Correspondence. This series of minutes does not substantially differ from that found under the Commission of Credentials but is supplemented by a series of agendas that provide background information on teachers whose cases are to be heard at future meetings. Subject files and correspondence
address issues important to the committee at that time, including teacher credentialing, public schools, legislation affecting the committee, relationships between the committee and outside agencies such as the State Board of Education, and the procedures for revoking teacher credentials.

The records of the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing span from 1974 to 1980 and include two series: Agendas and Subject Files. Agendas include materials related to important issues discussed at monthly meetings, such as legislation affecting public education in California and the credentialing of public school teachers. Subject files also address these topics as well as other agencies or individuals whose work was of interest to the commission. The records contained within this collection are highly useful for the study of public education in California and especially the history of teacher credentialing in the state.

**Organization**

This record group contains into two subgroups: Commission of Credentials records and Dept. of Education - Committee of Credentials records. The remainder of the records are arranged into two series.

**Subjects**

California Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing
Teacher effectiveness
Anti-communist movements

**Related Material**

State Board of Education Records

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**Records of the Commission of Credentials 1917-1962**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series 1. Minutes. 1918-1962</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong> 31 file folders and 2 volumes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arrangement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranged chronologically by meeting date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Note</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This series contains the meeting minutes from the Commission of Credentials. Minutes include the date and location of the meeting, a list of members present, and a brief summary of the investigative information for teachers appearing before the Commission during that meeting. The primary purpose of the Commission's meetings was to review teacher credentials and determine whether they should be renewed or revoked based on illegal or immoral behavior. The Commission sometimes discussed decisions made at past meetings, past or upcoming legislation affecting the status of the Commission, or possible procedural and administrative changes to the structure of the meetings. For Minutes after 1962 see the Minutes series under the Committee of Credentials and the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R359.01(1-2) Two volumes include meeting minutes beginning in 1918 and ending in 1929. These minutes contain similar information to that found in the unbound minutes. Each volume also includes a date and subject index to the minutes found within that volume as well as a list of all credentials issued during this time period. Duplicates of the minutes ranging from 1954 to 1962 can also be found within the Records of the State Board of Education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Series 2. Investigative Files. 1927-1963

Physical Description: 124 file folders

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by last name.

Scope and Content Note
The records in this series that are less than 75 years old are RESTRICTED because they contain records of complaints to, or investigations conducted and compiled by a state agency for licensing purposes and are restricted per California Government Code section 6254 (f).

The Investigative Files include detailed investigations of California teachers applying for or renewing teaching credentials. These files were used by the Commission of Credentials to determine if a teacher was involved with illegal or immoral behavior that should result in the denial or revocation of their credentials. These files contain criminal background checks, newspaper clippings, correspondence between the Commission and the teacher, court records from legal proceedings in which the teacher was involved, professional information gained from previous employers, personal information gained from the friends and relatives of the teacher, correspondence with private investigators about unprofessional or immoral behavior on the part of the teacher, and other sensitive information gained during the course of the investigations. Some files include fingerprint cards or photographs of the teacher in question. Possible reasons for revocation or denial of credentials included criminal history, participation in Communist Party activity, suspicious sexual behavior, or substance abuse.

See Appendix A for an alphabetical name index.

Series 3. House Un-American Activities Committee Investigative Files. 1959

Physical Description: 5 file folders

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by last name.

Scope and Content Note
The records in this series that are less than 75 years old are RESTRICTED because they contain records of complaints to, or investigations conducted and compiled by a state agency for licensing purposes and are restricted per California Government Code section 6254 (f).

This series contains investigatory material related to hearings held by the House Un-American Activities Committee in San Francisco in the spring of 1959. During the hearings over one hundred California teachers were subpoenaed to answer questions about their involvement in Communist activity. These files are mostly composed of correspondence between the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Commission of Credentials about the individual teachers in question. Some court records and evidence gained from interviews with friends and relatives of the teachers can also be found in these files. Several of the individuals listed with files in this series also had separate files kept by the Commission of Credentials in the Investigative Files series.

See Appendix B for an alphabetical name index.
Series 4. **Subject Files. 1917-1963**

- **Physical Description:** 33 file folders
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged alphabetically by subject.
- **Scope and Content Note**
  Subject files for the Commission of Credentials include reports, notes, correspondence, interoffice memoranda, forms, newspaper clippings, and other materials that the commission kept on specific individuals, topics, or organizations. The majority of the subject files relate to councils, associations, or committees operating in the field of public education and teacher credentialing in California. Examples include the Accreditation Committee and the California Teachers Association. Prominent topics on which the commission retained files are Communist activity, higher education studies and surveys, and statistical data on credentials.

Series 5. **Correspondence. 1929-1962**

- **Physical Description:** 14 file folders
- **Arrangement**
  - Arranged alphabetically by subject.
- **Scope and Content Note**
  This series consists of letters and supplementary materials received by the Commission of Credentials. In some cases photocopies of letters that were sent by the Commission to outside agencies or individuals are also included. The correspondence is organized into subjects, many related to public education in California. Examples of important topics include credential procedures or Dilworth Act revocations. Some correspondence has been organized under the name of an individual or agency who sent or received the letters or about whom the letters have been written, such as Evelyn A. Clement or the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Series 1. Minutes. 1963-1971

Physical Description: 22 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by meeting date.

Scope and Content Note
The records in this series are RESTRICTED because they contain records of complaints to, or investigations conducted and compiled by a state agency for licensing purposes and are restricted per California Government Code section 6254 (f).

This series contains the meeting minutes from the Committee of Credentials. Minutes include the date and location of the meeting, a list of members present, and a brief summary of the investigative information for teachers appearing before the committee during that meeting. The primary purpose of the committee's meetings was to review teacher credentials and determine whether they should be renewed or revoked based on illegal or immoral behavior. As a result, the biographical summaries often include information about the professional and sometimes personal history of the individuals in question, as well as arguments about why they should or should not have their credentials revoked. The committee sometimes discussed decisions made at past meetings, past or upcoming legislation affecting the status of the committee, or possible procedural and administrative changes to the structure of the meetings. Meetings were usually held once a month in Sacramento and lasted for three consecutive days. For minutes before 1963 see the Minutes series (R359.01) under the Commission of Credentials.

The minutes of the Committee of Credentials are restricted because they contain investigative information used by the committee in deciding whether to renew or revoke teacher credentials. These meetings were closed to the public by law for these reasons.


Physical Description: 35 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by meeting date.

Scope and Content Note
The Agendas series includes agendas for the meetings of the Committee of Credentials. Agendas list the future date and location of the meeting, the schedule of events to occur at the meeting, professional background on the individuals who are to appear before the Committee, and an outline of important events that occurred at the previous meeting. In some cases the agendas include a detailed list of the individuals appearing at specific times during the meeting.


Physical Description: 16 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Scope and Content Note
This series contains reports, notes, correspondence, interoffice memos, newspaper clippings, and other materials that the Committee of Credentials kept on various topics of importance to their operation. The files pertain to commissions and boards as well as other subjects of interest to the committee. A significant portion of the files are related to Education Code revisions on the state level. Other important topics include the Attorney General, probationary teacher cases, and the State Curriculum Commission.
Series 4. Legislative Correspondence. 1968-1970

Physical Description: 10 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by date.

Scope and Content Note

Legislative correspondence includes letters that the Committee of Credentials sent to and received from the California state legislature on specific bills that were being considered for passage. Copies of bill drafts are included with many of the letters. The correspondence is organized by year and then by Assembly or Senate bills, and numerically by bill number thereunder. The exception is 1968, in which Senate and Assembly bills are contained within the same folder. Nearly all of the bills discussed in the correspondence are related to public schools, the employment of school teachers, policies for credentialing, or other topics of immediate interest to the commission’s function in the public education system of California.

Series 5. State Board of Education Correspondence. 1963-1969

Physical Description: 7 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by date.

Scope and Content Note

This series includes correspondence letters and supplementary materials that the Committee of Credentials received from the State Board of Education throughout most of the 1960s. In some cases photocopies of letters that the committee sent to the State Board of Education are also included. The correspondence is separated by year. Topics about which the committee and the State Board of Education corresponded include credentialing, teacher certification programs, public school teachers, and legislation affecting the committee.

Series 1. Agendas. 1975

Physical Description: 16 file folders
Arrangement
Arranged chronologically by meeting date.

Scope and Content Note

Agendas created by the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing include the time, date, and location where the meeting was to take place, the members that would be present, and a list of the topics that would be discussed at that meeting. The agenda files also contain a large amount of supplementary materials that would be provided to members of the commission at the beginning of each meeting. Such materials include reports, informational pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles, background information on individuals appearing before the commission, correspondence, graphs, and other documents that the commission used for reference during the meetings. The commission's meetings were held once a month and usually lasted for two or three days. Meetings were held to discuss a variety of topics related to public education and the credentialing system in California, such as upcoming legislation on the matter, current and future policies and procedures of the commission, or the function and structure of its various committees.
Series 2. Subject Files. 1974-1980

Physical Description: 131 file folders

Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Scope and Content Note
This series contains files kept by the commission on a variety of subjects that they deemed important for the operation of the commission and its various committees. The files include notes, memoranda, correspondence, pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles, reports, and other materials related to specific topics of interest. Subject files were maintained on important issues, various committees working under the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, outside commissions and agencies, and individuals that worked closely with the commission. Several files exist on the actions and policies of the Committee of Credentials after it had come under the purview of the commission. Other important topics include Alan Jones, California legislators, and the Administrative Council. Peter L. LoPresti, the Executive Secretary of the commission throughout the 1970s, prominently figures in this series.