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January 5, 2007

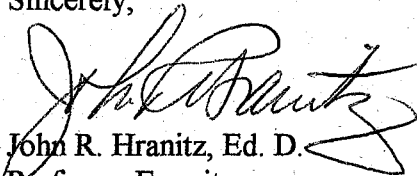
State Board of Education
Mr. Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

I know that the period of time to comment on Chapter 49-2 has ended. Personally, I am pleased, as a retiree, that Chapter 49-2 will be undergoing some revisions. My comments stem from being a public school teacher, faculty member and chairperson in education for nearly forty years. During those years, I have developed certification programs and served on teams to evaluate programs at other institutions. My comments can be briefly summarized as: (1) making two basic teaching certificates available with added endorsements; and, (2) requiring a master's degree for all teachers entering Pennsylvania's classrooms.

Best wishes as you pursue this huge task. If I can be of any help, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



John R. Hranitz, Ed. D.
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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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January 3, 2007

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO PAC-TE QUESTIONS – CHAPTER 49-2 PROPOSED CHANGES

FROM: John R. Hranitz, Ed. D.
Professor Emeritus

1. Teaching certificates: reduce the number of certificates to basically two:

- a. **PK-5: ECE/ELE (with or without one of the two Special Education endorsements):** – The ECE certificate has always posed problems when the early childhood person worked in day care or a school related program for 3's and 4's. Would the time spent in these settings be counted towards permanent certification? I would recommend taking two certificates—early childhood and elementary and making them into one. I would also propose changing the ages to include birth to grade 5. Special Education certification would be handled by the use of an endorsement along with or after the initial PK-5.

The flexibility that school districts and teachers would have under this certificate would be greatly increased. Remediation programs would no longer be blocked but allowed to cross what is now an imaginary line between early childhood and elementary when the child enters kindergarten. Instead, a continuous line of support and remediation could be implemented due to the inherent "team concept" and approach. A unified approach to the education of the child from birth into the teen years would be realized.

- b. **SE: 6 – 12 (with or without Special Education endorsement but containing content specialties):** - Pre-secondary education teachers would be prepared as learning specialists who will be working with pre-adolescent and adolescent children.

Specializations and content areas could be added or removed according to the changing needs of society or the district. Those who wanted to work in Special Education would add the endorsement before or after the initial certification. Additional content endorsements would be handled similar to the process now in place.

2. Teacher training: all programs require a master's degree.

Introduction: In the late 1980's, a fellow colleague and I received grants and monies to research the question of: "Who are our best teachers and what were their characteristics?" To this end, we devised a survey instrument which was sent to Teacher of the Year Award winners in Pennsylvania and nationally, the

National Education Assn. Teacher of the Year Award winners. Consistently, the results, if I may be brief, were the same. (1) TYA's had Grade Point Averages 2.95 and higher. (2) Most, if not all, had master's degrees or the master's equivalency. (3) All had taught more than 10 years before nomination and/or winning the award. A review of their open-ended comments found that their love of teaching stemmed from their love of children. Secondary to their love of children was their love of knowledge. Quite a few indicated that their initial selection as a candidate was the result of "so many things that they brought into their teaching" from classes that they either had or were taking. Thus, the reason why many had earned a master's or masters' equivalency was quite clear. Several TYA's possessed a doctorate in their content area choosing to work with children rather than move to the college or university.

Teacher Training: Teacher training programs need to reflect the growing changes and demands being placed upon teachers. The present four-year system which was largely an outgrowth of a series of provisional certificates and based upon a need for teachers to have more knowledge and skills has become unworkable in the light of some schools requiring 120 credits for graduation and others saying that content needs of today's secondary teachers cannot be determined by these same credit limitations.

A Proposal: Teacher preparation programs culminate with a master's degree. In order to meet this goal, preparatory programs would be based upon a "tiered system of studies and experiences" with the first three years of the program providing a foundation of liberal studies for all teachers with secondary preparation students receiving additional content related to their area of expertise.

A minimum of 96 credits would be allocated to liberal studies. Preparatory courses in psychology and human growth and development as well as initial observation/field experiences would be integral to the 96 credits. Clearances and grade point averages would be reviewed as part of the requirements for entering the fourth year.

The fourth year would be a year of observation, classroom experiences, and continued undergraduate and graduate course work. Standards for Pennsylvania programs in education would constitute the guidelines in designing, preparing, and implementing the curriculum at each college/university. Students entering the fourth year would complete 32-36 credits. The course work would contain a minimum of 12 credits of graduate study.

The last or fifth year would contain a 12 week classroom/school district experience in which the novice teacher would be observed and tutored in the skills necessary to manage a classroom and the curriculum. Course work at this time would be concentrated with more studies of children (the learner), the classroom (the environment), and assessment (how well are we doing?). A single comprehensive examination or a writing assignment with committee review

would be an additional exit requirement for graduation. Any and all state mandated tests would be taken at this time. The course work would contain a minimum of 24 credits of graduate study; six of them being the practice teaching experience.

Many states already require a master's degree for certification. This model would enable students to seek jobs in those states; i.e., Maryland, Indiana to name two.

A Digression: Question number seven in the FAQ about Chapter 49-2 presents a "medical model" for the training of teachers. My proposal supports this model in that it provides a solid background of liberal studies while providing for pedagogy and clinical practice related to teaching.

Clearly, the four year program model with a Bachelor of Science and the teacher certificate at the end of four years and so many credits will continue to create difficulties as we enter a time when the demands being placed upon the classroom teacher are more not less. Several of the latest developments, while not intentional, have made the preparation of teacher candidates similar to shopping at Wal-Mart where costs are lower because of reduced overhead in the form of credits. While many college/university bulletins indicate that 148 credits may be taken for the same money being spent, the public only focuses on the minimum required.

We need to implement a bold change in the way we prepare and certify teachers in Pennsylvania. Stop gap measures such as the mandated Praxis tests do not insure that the best are entering our classrooms. We have fallen behind many states in not requiring a master's degree for permanent or initial certification.

Is there an answer? One answer proposed many years ago was a program of studies similar to the Great Books. When would you finish? Who would devise this list? A model similar to the one presented would "best fit" what many schools are doing and allow for curricular changes. The state needs to continue in its implementation and program evaluation of standards for teacher certification. Colleges and universities need to continue to review and develop assessments that are more rigorous than passing grades in courses and a 3.0 Grade Point Average.
/jrh