

Buckheit, James

From: Buckheit, James
Sent: Friday, May 11, 2007 3:40 PM
To: 'thomas.j. walker'
Subject: RE: Chapter 49 Regulations

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

State Board of Education
 333 Market Street, First Floor
 Harrisburg, PA 17126
 May 11, 2007

Dear Dr. Walker:

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts about the Board's proposed Chapter 49-2 regulations. I will share your comments with members of the Chapter 49 Committee, members of the State Board, the Chairs of the House and Senate Education Committee, and Independent Regulatory Review Commission.

Jim Buckheit
 Executive Director
 State Board of Education

-----Original Message-----

From: thomas j. walker [mailto:tjwalker@temple.edu]
Sent: Friday, May 11, 2007 3:36 PM
To: jrbuckheit@state.pa.us
Cc: lburket@state.pa.us; RAW18@psu.edu; dgamble@solaris.voced.iup.edu; chet.w@temple.edu; jackie@pava.org; rpeterston@state.pa.us; charberison@state.pa.us
Subject:

Dear James Buckheit, Executive Director:

I'm writing as a follow-up to the letter sent to you and the State Board by the House Education Committee, which expressed concerns about the proposed regulation #006-303, State Board of Education, 22 PA Code, Chapter 49-2: Certification of Professional Personnel. I realize you are in the process of considering the Committee's recommendations.

Specifically, the Committee expressed concern about the ability of teacher education programs to fit the additional 9 credits or 270 hours of diverse learner courses and 3 credits or 90 hours for English language learners into their existing programs. The Committee went on to recommend that consideration be given by the Board to spread out this requirement over both the Instructional I and Instructional II certification timeframe. The example the Committee presented was to require 6 credits or 180 hours of diverse learner courses for Instructional I certification and require 3 more credits or 90 hours of diverse learner courses as well as 3 credits or 90 hours for English language learners for Instructional II certificates.

What the Committee failed to mention in its recommendation was an accommodation for PA's Vocational Instructional I and Vocational Instructional II programs, which are regulated by Sub-Chapter C of Chapter 49. Vocational Instructional certificates are awarded through a less than baccalaureate approved program consisting of 60 semester credit hours. The approved programs, which are offered at Temple University, the Penn State University, and Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), include both the Vocational Instructional I and Vocational Instructional II certificates in the 60 credit hour framework. The Vocational certificates are not designated as pre-service and in-service like the Instructional certificates are. Therefore, spreading the 12 semester hours across the Level I and Level II programs will not provide any relief in the number of credits having to be integrated into a university's approved vocational teacher preparation program.

This is problematic for vocational teacher preparation because, in essence, we are being asked to make room in the 60 credit program for an additional 12 credits (or the equivalent in hours). Most vocational teacher educators believe that 60 credit hours are necessary but not sufficient for the preparation of vocational teachers. To include an additional 12 credits means restructuring a program that is bare bones to begin with. It's not that the additional 12 credits are not important, indeed, they are. But what should be given up in order to make room: a course about safety, human development, English, curriculum and instruction, mathematics, or assessment? These too are important for teaching professionals.

An alternative the Board might be receptive to could be to add the new credit requirements to the 60 credit program instead of integrating them into what currently exists. At the same time, the Board could recommend changes to Sub-Chapter C, Chapter 49, requiring vocational teachers to earn a B.S. degree like general education teachers must in order to be highly qualified and meet the requirements of NCLB. Another alternative could be to require some portion of the 12 hours to be integrated into the university preparation program and the balance to be taken as continuing professional development and Act 48 credit.

I and my vocational teacher educator colleagues would be pleased to work with you and the State Board to develop an accommodation that is best for PA's students and teachers. We are appreciative of the State Board's efforts to improve Chapter 49. Thank you for your consideration.

Tom Walker
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