

A 2583

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street

MUHLENBERG RECEIVED
COLLEGE
November 28, 2006
2006 DEC -5 PM 3:34

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

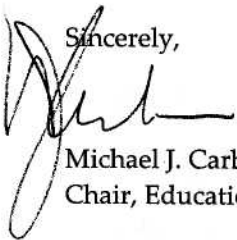
We write to respond to the proposed changes to Chapter 49-2, specifically regarding the substitution of the current Elementary Certificate (K-6) with Early Childhood (Pre K-3) and Elementary/Middle (4-8) Certificates. It is our opinion that these are fundamental and sweeping changes for public education in Pennsylvania, and as such, deserve the widest possible debate among the varied constituencies including higher education institutions, K-12 public schools, and tax payers of the Commonwealth.

As a higher education institution, Muhlenberg College strongly opposes these changes for the following reasons:

1. The elementary certification split is arbitrary and without solid basis in educational research. The emphasis on *Learning to Read* vs. *Reading to Learn* seems insufficient in providing a rationale for the split. We believe that teachers in grades K-6 should be knowledgeable in both approaches to reading.
2. We are concerned about the viability of educating teachers for appropriate and effective classroom practice from grades 4 to 8 under one certificate preparation program. Grade 4 is developmentally very different from Grade 8.
3. The split will require 18 year-olds to commit to a teaching certificate/career before they have had the opportunity to experience the realities of teaching a range of age groups. Within the current K-6 program, students are able to identify grade level(s) of choice after a series of concrete practicum experiences. We believe the current K-6 certificate provides career choice flexibility for students.
4. The split will create an uneven pool of qualified teachers for our schools in Pennsylvania. We suspect that changes to Chapter 49-2 will result in a shortage of educators prepared to teach in grades 4-6.
5. The split will result in staffing problems for districts that need K-6 flexibility.
6. This split may require most students to complete both certificates in order to be fully employable in Pennsylvania and in other states.
7. The split poses problems in portability of PA certificates with other states since so few states have certification structures that mirror the proposed certificates in PA.
8. This split is inconsistent with the goal of preparing highly qualified teachers as outlined in NCLB mandate.

We highly recommend keeping the current Elementary Certificate (K-6) and adding a legitimate middle school certificate (6-8).

Sincerely,



Michael J. Carbone
Chair, Education Department



Cathy Y. Kim
Coordinator of Professional Programs

cc: Kim Kaufman, Independent Regulatory Review Commission ✓
Senators Patrick Browne, James Rhoades, Raphael J. Musto
Representatives Karen Beyer, Richard Grucela, Jennifer Mann, Jess Stairs, James Roebuck, Jr.,

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