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Kathy Cooper

From: Yoder, Myron E. [yoderm@allentownsd.org]
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2006 9:27 AM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us; IRRRC
Subject: Chapter 49-2

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director

Dear Jim,

I am very much concerned about Chapter 49-2 and would like to voice one concern in particular. I highly disagree with the splitting of Elementary Certification and have great concerns about Upper Elementary Certification also taking into account Middle School grades.

One of the greatest consistencies of an education is the elementary schools. Currently testing scores in the elementary schools are far more consistent than the secondary schools and yet we are looking at tinkering with a sound practice of preparing teachers to teach elementary students from a holistic approach within a common educational setting. Consider just one practice that is taking place, "Looping", has become practice in many schools and has a proven track record as well. This practice will be severely limited if teachers must now cease moving with their class mid way through the elementary years. Further, staffing issues in the Elementary schools will now be affected with schools that will be divided into two areas of certifications thereby effectively splitting educational settings, staff and schools. Staffing will become less consistent with teachers no longer focused on elementary education as a whole but now "specialized" into grade levels. The end result could very well become an Upper Elementary schedule that resembles a middle school subject level approach which will in the end yield a less interdisciplinary approach to learning. When hiring, how do we know if the teacher got the certificate so they can teach middle school or to teach Upper Elementary? Granted for middle school they will need subject level proof but in the end, what motivates them to get the certification, the elementary portion or the middle school portion? The child developmental differences are so striking, do we really want a teacher focused in middle schools to now have to teach 4th grade or vice versa? With a K-6, we know they are motivated to teach elementary.

I am also hard pressed to learn of data and research that suggest such a move to be sound in approach. How many PA teachers K-6 have demonstrated that an Elementary K-6 certificate is a problem? How many have demonstrated that they are only capable of delivering effective instruction in either a primary or upper elementary setting? My guess is few if any.

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So why is PA considering changing a certification that has served the Commonwealth extremely well and continues to serve it well to this day? I do hope that the board reconsiders this change and maintain the focus of elementary teacher training on a holistic approach and maintain the Elementary Certification as it currently exists.

Respectfully submitted,

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"Before Children can read, write or perform math they are social creatures born into a social world."

Rebecca A. Filipos, DeSales University Elementary Education Major