

Kathy Cooper

From: Susan Harlan [SHarlan@po-box.esu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2006 7:57 PM
To: jbuckheit@state.pa.us; IRRRC
Cc: Susan Harlan

RECEIVED

2006 DEC -7 AM 10:32

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION



ECE REsponse to
PAC-TE Concern...

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

As the President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association for Early Childhood Educators (PA- NAECTE) I would like to respond to the concerns expressed by the organization PAC-TE. Many of the members of PA- NAECTE are also members of PAC-TE but we do not share their concerns about Chapter 49-2. We believe that the concerns listed on the attached document have arisen from a concern about the challenges of change not from a concern for what is best for children. I urge you to read our response to their concerns.

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) which is the national organization under which PAC-Te operates, has urged teacher preparation institution to create stand alone Early Childhood Education (ECED) certifications and urges states to move away from having ECED imbedded in Elementary Education. Their recommendation is based on the knowledge that ECED is a distinct disciple and not a division of elementary education. Other professional groups that share this opinion are:

- Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI)
- The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)
- The National Association of Elementary Principals (NAEP)
- The National Education Association (NEA)
- National Association of Early Childhood Specialists at State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE)
- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development(ASCD)
- The American Educational Research Association (AERA)
- The National Association for The Education of Young Children
- The Division for Early Childhood of the Council on Exceptional Children (DEC/CEC)
- Society for Research in Child Development

The Early Childhood community in Pennsylvania would welcome the opportunities that would come with a change in certification. We believe that well educated Early Childhood teachers will enable our state's children to reach their potential in literacy, math and social skills. We know that Early Childhood is where we must begin if we are to truly "Leave No Child Behind". It is for this vital work that we need more and better-trained Early Childhood educators.

We believe this can best be accomplished by requiring the ECE teacher to receive extensive education in both Special Education and English as a second language. Early Childhood teachers are among the first professionals to detect and teach children with developmental disabilities. We are the teachers who first express our concerns to parents. It is the Early Childhood teacher who works to support the parents as they seek diagnosis, community resources and learn to become strong advocates for their child. We are also many times the first English speaking adults to spend time with many young children. We need the expertise to help these children find their place in our school communities.

Yes, it will be a challenge for us to integrate special education and ESL into our classes and programs but it is a challenge that will be well worth our time and energy because we believe it will benefit our students as well as Pennsylvania's

youngest children. We have long recognized the economic benefits of early intervention. Will this be difficult within a four year degree? Absolutely, but our children deserve no less!

We fear that colleges that do not presently have ECE programs will either push down the Elementary curriculum they have or merely add a Preschool course. We know that we will need to work with these colleges to ensure that the programs they develop truly prepare students for the entire birth to age 8 range.

Thank you for your time and your support of young children.

Susan Harlan

Department of ECE/ELED

East Stroudsburg University

East Stroudsburg PA 18301

570-4223044

suharlan@esu.edu

"Our challenge is not be prepare children for schools but schools for children." Docia Zavitkovsky

PAC-TE CONCERNS about CHAPTER 49-2

With disputing response statements from PA-NAETC

- Chapter 49-2 will result in the elimination of the current PA elementary certification (K-6).
- Yes, but it will strengthen the skills of teachers working with the youngest children Pre-k to 3rd, and also expand the expertise of those teaching upper elementary and middle school

- Chapter 49-2 elementary teacher certifications will narrow the focus of the preparation and could create voids in the teachers' ability to deal with student developmental needs.
- It will narrow the age range but add a depth of knowledge concerning the special challenges of teaching each age group

- Chapter 49-2 changes in elementary teacher certification will encourage teacher isolation.
- Why? I think that teachers in grades Pre-k to 3 will have more in common than teachers in today's schools that have two different degrees (N-3 and K-6). The same in middle schools with some teachers having K-6 and others 7-12?

- Chapter 49-2 certification changes are likely to have a dramatic negative impact on Professional Development School (PDS) approach to teacher preparation.
- Why? PDS is a delivery system by which teachers are prepared. It can exist in any grade configuration. This approach to teacher training would be strengthened as it would ensure that the required courses were taught by specialists in the areas rather than for instance an elementary education faculty being called upon to teach children under five.

- Chapter 49-2 could result in a shortage of educators prepared to teach in upper elementary (grades 4-8).
Perhaps but those who do teach there will be better prepared and will have chosen that age group. Teacher preparation programs will need to make sure that prospective teachers have early experiences across all age groups in order to best decide on the certification they wish to pursue.

- Chapter 49-2 could create staffing problems for elementary schools in Pennsylvania because of decreased certification flexibility.
- As more school districts add Pre-K classes and expand into full day kindergarten there will need to be more qualified teachers available for these positions. Presently some principals use grade assignment as a way of “punishing” teachers. The new certification levels will not allow a teacher with experience and expertise in 6th grade to be “punished” by being sent to kindergarten (Clearly more of a punishment for the children)

- Chapter 49-2 will limit the portability of PA certified elementary teachers.
- In some states perhaps, but as more and more states are moving to similar certifications this will be less and less of an issue. Other states might jump at the chance to hire our teachers because of the more specialized training they have received. But our concern needs to be the welfare of the children of Pennsylvania. We must ensure that they get the best most qualified teachers available.

- Chapter 49-2 does allow for certification exemptions on a case-by-case basis but using this option to make staffing adjustments results in concerns about “highly qualified” teachers of NCLB.
- By this statement, PAC-TE is acknowledging that the bifurcation allows for more qualified teachers in preK-3rd and/or 4th to 8th grades. This statement seems to argue against their earlier stance.

- Chapter 49-2 will “grandfather” all teachers with existing certifications and allow school administrators to apply for exceptions to the revised certification regulations on a case by case basis. Why would this be written into a new regulation designed to “improve” the preparation of teachers?
- Would you have this taken out and so that thousands of teachers lose their jobs? It serves as a transition from one certification system to the new improved system.

- Chapter 49-2 will result in a narrowing of teacher preparation expertise which may result in a student who is ready to learn a concept or skill being assigned to a teacher who is not knowledgeable about that concept or skill.
- How is this different for a sixth grade teacher certified in K-6 working with an academically gifted child or a 12 grade teacher working with a gifted child? Teachers have always been able to take a child beyond his or her own expertise by finding them resources and mentors. Certainly a Pre-K -3rd grade certified teacher would be able to teach a concept usually taught in 4th or 5th grade, if not there is really something wrong with our schools and colleges.

- Chapter 49-2 will exacerbate the current short supply of special education teachers due to the credit requirements for dual certification.
- Inclusion is happening more and more. This plan ensures that more teachers will be prepared to recognize and teach children with special learning needs. This will allow special educator to concentrate on low-incident disabilities.

- Under Chapter 49-2, the quality of teacher preparation, in the State System of Higher Education (SSHE), could be seriously damaged if the mandate about “diverse learners” is interpreted to mean three (3) courses or nine (9) credits. The real concern is the 120 credit limit – not the mandated extra emphasis on courses in teaching of “diverse learners.
- This will be a challenge but one certainly worth the effort to ensure that our children’s teachers are well prepared to serve any child in their classroom.

- Chapter 49-2 could discourage enrollment in teacher preparation institutions in this state because the PA certificates will be less portable.
- When New Jersey began requiring an ECE degree for teachers in their Abbott districts Pennsylvania colleges received letters asking them to notify their graduates of the signing bonuses being offered to teachers with ECE degrees. We cannot know what other states will do we can only decide what we see as the best way to produce well prepared teachers in Pennsylvania. The following is an excerpt from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) in their December newsletter. It gives a good idea of the job opportunities our ECE certified teacher could find in one of our neighboring states.

Expansion Plan Proposed for State-Funded Pre-K in New Jersey

If New Jersey's Joint Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform has its way, the state's Abbott preschool program will be expanded to an additional 77 low-income school districts and low-income children in more well-to-do districts will receive state-subsidized pre-K. At present, the court-mandated Abbott program is offered only in the state's 31 lowest-income districts. The committee's recommendation to expand beyond the court-mandated districts came as part of an effort to revise the state's school funding formula so districts more equitably share in state aid. The committee also recommended the state fund pre-K programs, though not necessarily Abbott programs, for low-income children who qualify for the federal lunch program in all other districts. Many of those districts would participate in the state's Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI).