

December 8, 2006

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

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

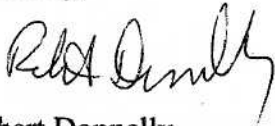
I am writing to support the proposed changes in Pennsylvania teacher certifications as outlined in Chapter 49-2. I have been an educator in a public school for thirty-six years and currently have a daughter graduating with an Early Childhood Degree from West Chester University in May. The curriculum in the Early Childhood major uniquely prepares the students to teach children in pre-kindergarten through third grade. In Early Childhood Education courses, they focus on the developmental and education needs of young children. All of the field experiences are in pre-primary and primary classrooms and provide the students with opportunities to practice and perfect their teaching skills.

Despite the specialized preparation in Early Childhood Education, many school districts refuse to hire individuals with Early Childhood certification in favor of hiring persons with Elementary Education certification. The Elementary certification covers seven grade levels which means these individuals have less in-depth knowledge of pre-primary and primary grade learners. Therefore, they are likely to be less qualified for these positions than those who have an Early Childhood Education certificate. I strongly support the separation of the Early Childhood (pre-kindergarten – 3rd grade) and the Elementary (4th – 8th grade) certification.

I also support the increased requirements for preparation in teaching students with disabilities and English language learners. In my thirty-six years of teaching, I have encountered both children with disabilities and those who speak a language other than English. I did not have courses that focused on teaching children with disabilities or English language learners.

In conclusion, I urge the State Board of Education to adopt the changes in the teacher certification requirements as specified in Chapter 49-2. These changes will help Pennsylvania to meet the federal mandate for a highly qualified teacher in every classroom by 2014.

Sincerely,



Robert Donnelly

No address given