

December 9, 2006

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

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

I am writing to support the proposed changes in Pennsylvania teacher certifications as outlined in Chapter 49-2. I am currently a senior Early Childhood Education (ECE) major at West Chester University. The curriculum in the Early Childhood major uniquely prepares students to teach children in pre-kindergarten through third grade. In our ECE courses, we focus on the developmental and educational needs of young children. All of our field experiences are in pre-primary and primary classrooms and provide us with opportunities to practice and perfect our teaching skills. When I graduate, I know that I will be highly qualified to teach children in pre-kindergarten through third grade.

Despite this specialized preparation in early childhood education, many school districts refuse to hire individuals with ECE 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 ECE certificate. I strongly support the separation of the Early Childhood (pre-kindergarten - 3rd grade) and the Elementary (4th - 8th grade) certifications.

I also support the increased requirements for preparation in teaching students with disabilities and English language learners. In my field experiences, I have encountered both children with disabilities and those who speak a language other than English. While I'm learning and getting some experience with these students, more coursework would be beneficial.

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,


Shannon Healy

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REVIEW COMMISSION

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