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Kathy Cooper

From: Patricia Smeaton [PSmeaton@po-box.esu.edu]
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2006 3:42 PM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us
Cc: IRRRC
Subject: Ch. 49

Mr. Buckeit,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed regulations in Chapter 49-2. I am a professor in the Professional and Secondary Education Department. I have 35 years experience divided between high school and college teaching. I now prepare future teachers and administrators. My major concerns are:

1. the amount of courses you want secondary certification candidates to take will be greatly increased by the addition of 9 credits of Sp.Ed. and 3 credits of ESL. This will be very difficult given that we must stay within the 120 credit limit at the 14 state universities.
2. 9 -12 credits in Sp.Ed. exceeds what secondary students presently get in secondary methods courses. Something seems wrong with that – we need to be preparing teachers to teach all students in their classes – and most of the students in their classes are not students in Special Education. While I agree students need training in this area, I believe 9 -12 credits is too much. When I surveyed my student teachers and recent graduates they all said one good Sp. Ed. course would have been sufficient to prepare them for students they have. I do think that the state should make regulations for in-service training that allows teachers to meet the needs of their students. For example, if a school has a high percentage of Spanish speaking students, teachers at that school should be given instruction in educating ESL students, particularly Spanish speakers. Likewise, if a school has a large autistic population, teachers should be educated in that. Given the differences in our schools across PA, each school needs to take the lead in meeting the needs of its students.
3. that the middle school certificate (4-8) allows elementary teachers not trained in a particular content area to teach in that content area. For example and elementary trained teacher could be teaching Algebra I or Spanish I. That just does not makes sense to me at all.
4. that you are splitting the El. Ed. certificate into two. It will make staffing schools very, very difficult in all but the largest district.
5. there still needs to be a Sp. Ed. certificate. There are many students who need special services and teachers must be adequately trained – which takes more than just a couple of courses.

I am very concerned that you are being driven by special interest groups and not looking at the needs of the entire population. And I think it is all being driven by the fact that subgroups are preventing districts from meeting the mandates of NCLB. This problem is not one of how we are preparing teachers – it is a problem that needs to be attacked at the school level within the school.

Thank you ,

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