

Buckheit, James

From: ksbrill@comcast.net
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2006 7:08 AM
To: j buckheit@state.pa.us
Subject: Chapter 49 comments - PA TASH

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

Attached is a letter with our comments on Chapter 49. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input for this very important issue. I will also be sending a copy of this document to you by mail.

Have a wonderful holiday! I hope you find some time for relaxation.

Sincerely,

Kathy Brill, President
PA TASH

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION



Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities since 1975.

PA TASH

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December 18, 2006

Dear Mr. Buckheit,

Pennsylvania TASH, the state chapter for the nation's leading advocacy organization for individuals with significant disabilities, is guided by a commitment to educational excellence, diversity, democracy, and social justice, which fosters and honors the rights of all students to learn together. PA TASH believes that teacher certification needs to be changed to meet the needs of all children, and we applaud the efforts of the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in putting forth proposed changes to Chapter 49 that we believe are necessary.

We supported the original proposal, especially the important components of required dual certification with special education for all entry level teachers at the early childhood and elementary level, the advancement of distinct certifications in special education (Pre-k to grade 6 and grade 7 to 12), and the establishment of more advanced graduate level specialist positions in special education beyond the instructional I certificate. We, as were many of like mind, were dismayed that many of these well-researched and reasoned aspect of the reforms put forth by the PDE were diluted. We are still concerned that many are in danger of being derailed by organizations that resist change, especially as it relates to programs aimed at serving students with disabilities.

Specifically, we want to reinforce our support for the reforms to Chapter 49, especially the critical components identified below:

- Section 49.13(b)(4)(i). Require undergraduate education majors to take 9 credits or 270 hours in how to teach students with disabilities and 3 additional credits or 90 hours in how to teach English language learners. The credit hour requirement is essential to assure that teacher preparation programs adhere to specific and measurable amounts of coursework related to educating diverse learners
- Section 49.16(d). Require school districts to provide induction activities for new teachers that "focus on teaching diverse learners in inclusive settings."
- Section 49.17(a)(7). Require school districts to ensure that all teachers take continuing professional education classes "focused on teaching diverse learners in inclusive settings."
- Section 49.62b. Add new areas for "program endorsement certificates" in assistive technology, assessment, autism spectrum disorders, curriculum modification, and gifted education. Incentives, such as these certificates, for advance practice in educating children are essential.
- Section 49.83. To receive Instructional II (permanent) certification, all teachers must complete "six specific course credit requirements" within a total of 24 college credit hours. The State Board originally proposed that six credit hours would be required for teaching diverse learners in an inclusive setting. We strongly object to diluting the language around on-going course credit as it relates to educating diverse learners. Vague language means virtually nothing. The proposal can and should be fixed to restore the Board's original position of requiring 6 credits for teaching diverse learners in inclusive settings.

Most entry level teachers do not have the requisite skills necessary to provide equal access to quality instruction for diverse learners. As such, the changes outlined in the current proposal are necessary to give new teachers the initial skills they need to adequately instruct in PA schools.

Sincerely,

Kathy Brill, President
PA TASH Board of Directors