

Buckheit, James

From: Buckheit, James
Sent: Tuesday, December 26, 2006 8:46 AM
To: 'kathycarney100@comcast.net'
Subject: RE: public comment on Chapter 49

State Board of Education

333 Market Street 1st Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17126 0333

December 26, 2006

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Ms. Carney:

Thank you for your letter received by the State Board of Education on December 26, 2006 regarding the proposed Chapter 49 Certification of Professional Personnel regulations.

Your letter is considered official public comment. As such copies are shared with each member of the State Board of Education, the chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees and Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC). Your letter is also considered a public document that may be publicly released upon request.

The Regulatory Review Act provides that notice regarding final regulations be provided to those who make official comment if requested. If you would like to receive a copy of the final-form regulation when it is submitted for final approval by the legislative committees and IRRC, please submit a written request to me at the address listed above.

Sincerely,

Jim Buckheit

Executive Director

-----Original Message-----

From: K Carney [mailto:kathycarney100@comcast.net]
Sent: Saturday, December 23, 2006 9:46 PM
To: jrbuckheit@state.pa.us
Cc: Zahorchak, Gerald; Tommasini, John
Subject: public comment on Chapter 49

December 22, 2006

To the State Board
Re: Chapter 49 Proposed Changes

I am writing with concerns over the proposed changes to Chapter 49. I do **not** believe that splitting our current certifications, and the eight new certifications proposed are in the best interest of students and educators. I believe that we should leave our current certification categories intact and address changes needed in teacher preparation programs.

In the elementary grades, good pedagogy is what is needed to ensure student success. In the elementary grades, teachers do not require high degrees of specialization to teach students, as that which is required in the upper grades. Good teaching practices are necessary to ensure that our students achieve to their potential. The focus should NOT be on splitting the certification, but rather on preparing pre-service teachers to be better prepared to deal with the classroom and the host of issues that arise with teaching. Splitting the certification will not reduce the number of teachers that leave the profession, nor will it provide more support for teaching professionals. With each new decade, schools are being forced to deal with increasingly numerous educational and social issues; mounting pressures on teachers is more likely the cause of migration from the teaching profession. As schools take on more and more responsibilities towards the remediation of societal ills, I would expect to see even more teachers to leave the field.

I have a significant amount of experience in education as a result of having children with special learning needs. My experiences with my children lead me to pursue every opportunity I could find to educate myself as a parent. My greatest resource has been PaTTAN. I have attended countless trainings at PaTTAN. It is at PaTTAN that I "learned" what high-quality teaching looks like, and picked up the expertise that has enabled me to become a skilled teacher.

What I have learned over the years via the training opportunities offered by PaTTAN is appropriate for all students. I believe that what I have learned is excellent teaching principals and practices – and these are the concepts that have made me a first-rate teacher. I wish that I could say that higher education played as an important role as PaTTAN in the development of my teaching skills. I entered the profession by a non-traditional route. First I learned what good teaching is all about via PaTTAN training opportunities, next I started substituting with an emergency certificate, and lastly I entered a teacher preparation program. I have found that the teacher prep program (at least at the Master's level) does not measure up to the specific trainings offered at PaTTAN. I believe that it is essential to address pre-service preparation programs. A good solid theoretical background is helpful to teaching, but the cornerstone to good

teaching is first-rate skills. Higher education should focus on skill development and proved techniques that will ensure success for all students and teachers.

As I look at the eight proposed certifications, several questions comes to my mind –

1. Why would teachers with Special Education Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired and Speech/Language Impaired certifications be allowed to continue to teach children in K – 12? If it were not acceptable for our other special education students to be taught by a special education teacher certified K - 12, why then would this be acceptable to our low incidence populations? Do the teaching methodologies stay the same across this age group in this disability group? Do these special education teachers learn skills in their teacher preparation program that allows them to be better prepared to teach students with special needs in all grades? If so, let's take advantage of higher education's expertise in preparing teachers of low incidence populations, and apply those same higher education teaching techniques to our other pre service special education teachers.
2. What will happen in regards to newborn to preschool children in need of special education services? While a teacher might be Early Childhood certified, does this mean that he/she will be qualified to deliver special education services?
3. What will happen to our students who complete grade 12, but continue to be eligible for a Free and Appropriate Public Education? Who will be qualified to teach these students if the special education certificates go to 12th grade?
4. How will certification be addressed for teachers of students of any age with multiple disabilities who are instructional at levels below pre-K?
5. How will certification be addressed for teachers who teach students in need of specially designed instruction at the high school level, who are instructional at the K – 2nd grade level?

I recommend leaving our certification as it stands today, and more completely addressing the need for pre service teachers to learn the skills they need to teach- skills such as teaching a researched based reading program, effective techniques for managing classroom behaviors, motivating students, reaching those hard to reach children, addressing different learning styles of all our learners, progress monitoring, etc. Certifications do not make you a great teacher – neither does being “highly qualified”. Being a great teacher means being effective, motivating your students to learn, and making a difference in the life of the student, family and community.

I would further recommend that any proposed changes to our school code that deals with special education issues be addressed jointly across the Commonwealth with groups such as the State Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP).

I regret that I have not been more informed on Chapter 49 proposed changes, and that I did not have the opportunity to provide information to the State Board prior to this written correspondence.

Kathleen Carney
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Lincoln University, PA 19352