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PA. STATE BOARD  
OF EDUCATION

July 9, 2007

Mr. Jim Buckheit, Executive Director  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
State Board of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Mr. Jim Buckheit,

I am writing concerning the recent proposals made by the PA State Board. I have worked at my local school district for 15 years and have taken all the courses required to be qualified for my present position. Our school district is very diligent about keeping us trained and up-to-date on various issues concerning our jobs. However, the recent proposals by the Board of Education concern me. It seems every state, every school district, and every board member has a different idea about standards and qualifications. How do we know which one is best? Requirements and standards keep changing - creating more time and work for all involved. Yes, improvement is good and it is necessary for growth, but changes are not always for the better!

In addition to working with children at school I have also worked with every age from pre-school to mid-twenties at my church over the past 26 years. I have taught many children and young adults, but I have also been taught by them. Yes, a college education is a good thing, but I am a firm believer in "on-the-job training". I have experienced things in the classroom - both at school and at church - that I never would have experienced "in a book" or during a college lecture.

Another concern I have is the shortage of substitute paraprofessionals. When I take an occasional day off work, there are times when no sub is available. I am sure it will be much more difficult to find a sub if these proposed requirements are imposed. If a person goes to college, they are not going to be willing to be on a "sub list" and get called to work now and then. They are probably getting a college degree in order to get a full-time job and benefits. I am not saying a college degree would not be helpful. Neither am I saying that my job is not important enough to require a degree. My job is very important! I feel I have made an impact on literally hundreds of students over the years. What I am saying is I believe that the hours of training I have already had should be considered "rigorous". Our teaching staff is also excellent about being ready to help us with any questions or concerns we have.

At my local school district, I have been a kindergarten assistant, an aide to multi-handicapped students, a Preschool teacher's assistant, and I am now a Title 1 assistant working with primary grades. I have worked at three different school buildings. Sometimes, we must be transferred to a different building or to a different position depending on circumstances, student enrollment, and other factors. By having different standards set for different jobs and then proposing changes, the State Board is making it difficult for us and for our districts. Please reconsider these changes.

Sincerely,

Lisa J. Miller  
920 West Mattie Road  
Clearville, PA 15535