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Buckheit, James

From: Bumbargers [sntsum@verizon.net] 2007 AUG -2 AM 9: 54
Sent: Monday, July 30, 2007 2:13 PM
To: 00statbd@psupen.psu.edu
Subject: Hlghly Qualified

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

I am writing in regards to the recently proposed standards for special education paraprofessionals. I work as a learning support aide in an elementary school in the DuBois school district.

I work under the supervision of a special education teacher to assist students in reading and math. I have been working in a special education class room for the past 6 years. Prior to this I worked as an aide in the regular classroom setting, again helping with reading and math. According to these new guidelines, I will now have to pass a test to show that I am qualified to do the job I have been doing all along.

I have taken training sessions as required through the district. I also take CPR and first aid training every year. The teachers are not required to take this course, but the aides are.

Our wages do not reflect our increasing responsibilities. This fall, when we receive our wage increase, I will be making \$9.00 an hour. I was hired part time 10 years ago, but have worked full time for the past 6 years. When our local went on strike last year, members of our community were surprised to hear how little we were compensated after so many years. Now that the strike has been settled, we are working more hours, but the compensation level is still low. Individual districts set the pay scale, so all paraprofessionals are not compensated equally and fairly.

When I am working in the classroom setting, it is my responsibility to assist the teacher in many different ways. It is the instructors responsibility to teach the material to the students. If a student requires extra help in the learning process, that is the teachers responsibility. I can help by alerting the teacher to students who need extra help in certain areas. I also help by xeroxing, running errands, talking with students to find out where they need help, decorating bulletin boards, and a myriad of other jobs. This gives the teacher more time to spend with the students. I work very closely with the teaching staff and if I have any questions or concerns I ask for support immediately.

I believe that those who are already working in the special education field, should be "grandfathered." Past experience in the classroom should count for something. As it stands now, I feel that we are being told that unless we pass a test, we are not qualified to do our job. That is very disheartening to hear.

Please remember that we are "support staff." We enjoy what we do, or we would not be there. Requiring us to meet yet more qualifications, adds more stress to a job that can be very challenging on any given day. There will be support staff who will leave for other employment if these changes are made. It will be difficult to find employees who are qualified to fill these positions.

Please consider these points when you are making your decision.

Thank-you.

Nancy Bumbarger

7/31/2007