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PA. STATE BOARD  
OF EDUCATION

Dear Mr. Jim Buckheit,

I am writing in regards to some of the possible changes in Chapter 14. I currently work with two paraprofessionals in my classroom. I greatly value the knowledge and skills of these women. I also do not know how my classroom would function with out them. I feel the two year post secondary requirement for employment as a paraprofessional is premature. At this point my district struggles to find qualified and willing paraprofessionals. This requirement would greatly hinder my districts ability to fill vacancies for these positions.

The next area I would like to address is the caseload chart. I am a Junior High school special education teacher. I support the concept of the draft caseload chart. I recommend that the State Board adjust the level II caseload number to 20. This would be helpful due to the changing nature of special education, and allow for concentration on the academic content areas. The instructional day should incorporate the time we need as professional staff for IEP meetings, team meetings, correspondence with parents, and report development.

Least Restrictive Environment has new language in the draft. Consider replacing the draft language with the following:

- (1) TO the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities must be educated with children who are non-disabled.
- (2) A student with disabilities shall only be removed from a regular setting if the student cannot derive meaningful educational benefit from specially designed instruction and supplemental aids and services provided pursuant to an appropriate IEP.

This language would be keeping with the Federal law.

Please leave Autism and mental Retardation requirements in their respective categories. There was suggested that students with Autism be given the same privileges as students with MR. This is not necessary under the regulations we have under the federal law.

→ In my job I am required to work with students that have severe emotional disturbances. With the behavior supports section, I appreciate the detail used when describing what is and is not a restraint. This will be most helpful at the IEP meeting in making sure the team is able to be in compliance.

These are some of the issues I feel are very important in the revision of Chapter 14. I hope you consider these suggestion from someone that is directly affected by them in my day to day job. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Casey Blake

Special Education Teacher

Philipsburg-Osceola Area School District