

250 S. Pitt Street, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 17013

717 243 5112

shughes007@comcast.net

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August 26, 2007

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-033

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2007 AUG 29 AM 9:18

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Buckheit:

I am a special education teacher of 28 years who retired this June. I wish to comment as revisions are being made for Special Education in our commonwealth.

Over my career I have seen students come out of state institutions, I have taught in church basements, I have worked to return disabled students to their home school districts, I have worked with all kinds of special needs students from multi-disabililites to emotional support. I have taught for an IU and a school district, for a time I was a consultant to different school districts.

I decided to retire after noting that when ever I walked past a special education colleague in their classroom they were always on the computer doing paperwork
In my own classroom I realized I was spending more time on paperwork that I was teaching.

With the necessity of showing to the state I was highly qualified I was expected to get on a 'bridge' and complete HOUSSE requirements. Next year more paper work is coming with progress monitoring. I decided it was time to go. I am tired of jumping through hoops and doing things that was not helpful to the students in my care.

I have noticed that many special education teachers who have become 'highly qualified' have now applied for regular classroom positions to get away from the special education paperwork.

Here are some recommendations for you to consider:

Maintain current timelines of 60 school days for evaluations.

Do not drive away classroom aides . Have the State devise a continuing education program for all para -professionals and have each district / IU or school consortium provide the training.

Bring back caseloads that are based on number of kids in a room with a teacher at any given time, and the subject the teacher is teaching.

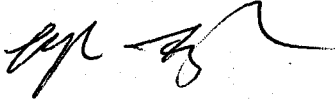
Allow all full time (66% of day in special ed. class) special education students to take the PASA and not PSSA.

Require any regular education class be supported by a special education aide or teacher when there are three or more special need students in a regular class.

Grandfather current special education teachers with a masters as 'highly qualified' and require new special education teachers, and those working towards a master to become highly qualified in the core subject they teach.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Hughes', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Hughes M. ED