



Education Department
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January 11, 2021

Dear Members of the State Board of Education,

We write to request the **reestablishment of Elementary Education Certificate (K-6)** as part of the Chapter 49 regulations on Certification of Professional Personnel.

During the Chapter 49 regulatory process in 2006, the Elementary Education Certificate (K-6) was split into two certificates: Early Childhood (PreK-4) and Middle Level (4-8). We argued, then, that the split was 1) arbitrary; 2) without solid basis in educational research and developmental theories; and 3) neglecting practical implications.

After offering the Pre-4 and 4-8 certificate programs for a decade at Muhlenberg College, we feel even more strongly that the K-6 certificate be part of our teacher education offerings in Pennsylvania.

We make the request for the **reestablishment of Elementary Education Certificate (K-6)** for the following pedagogical and practical reasons:

1. All teachers in the elementary grades need to be able to work with a range of learners. Classical theorists of child development and learning (e.g., Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson), as well as more contemporary theorists and researchers of school culture and classroom climate (e.g., Slavin, Aronson, Delpit, Ladson-Billings) provide a wealth of data that support a more fluid educational experience for young children through age 11 or grade 5. The split of the grade levels has also disjointed the range of essential knowledge and skills that all elementary teachers need to possess in a single certificate. The reestablishment of Elementary Education Certificate (K-6) would address this issue.
2. While grades 5 and 6 can be added to the Pre K-4 certificate through testing, we believe that classroom teachers working with these grades should earn their license to teach through proper education and training. The K-6 certificate will ensure that all teachers in the elementary grades have the essential developmental and pedagogical knowledge necessary for them to be effective teachers.
3. The split certificates watered down all of the licenses currently offered in Pennsylvania. Pre K-4 is not a true early childhood nor an elementary certificate. Likewise, 4-8 is not a true elementary nor a middle school certificate. Educating teachers for appropriate and effective classroom practice in early childhood, elementary, and middle school requires proper and legitimate programs in all three of these grade levels. The reestablishment of Elementary Education Certificate (K-6) would address this issue.

4. During the last Chapter 49 regulatory process in 2006, we voiced our concern that the split certificates would create an uneven pool of qualified teachers for our schools in Pennsylvania and that it would result in a shortage of educators prepared to teach in grades 4-6. Unfortunately, our prediction was correct. Grades 4-8 certificate is cited as the second among seven subject shortage areas in 2018-2019 according to the PDE data. The reestablishment of Elementary Education Certificate (K-6) would address this issue.
5. The split certificates do not mirror the staffing structures in most traditional public elementary and middle schools in Pennsylvania, posing staffing problems for schools that need flexibility. The reestablishment of Elementary Education Certificate (K-6) would address this issue.
6. The split certificates require 18 year-olds to commit to a teaching certificate/career before they have had the opportunity to experience the realities of teaching a range of age groups. With the reestablishment of the Elementary Education Certificate (K-6), teacher candidates will be able to identify grade level(s) of choice after a series of concrete practicum experiences. We believe it is a way to recruit students interested in education to remain in teacher education programs in Pennsylvania.

We pride ourselves in offering quality programs to identify, nurture, and develop effective teachers. The reestablishment of the Elementary Education Certificate (K-6) will require us to revamp our program. However, we believe that the work will be worthwhile and benefit both the teacher candidates and students in Pennsylvania.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully submitted,



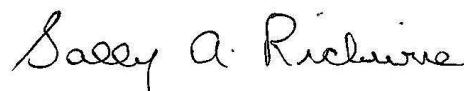
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