



January 15, 2021

Ms. Karen Molchanow
Executive Director
State Board of Education
333 Market Street, 1st Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Dear Ms. Molchanow:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed amendments to Regulation #6-346: Certification of Professional Personnel.

My name is Christina Wackerman, I am a Director of Education for The Malvern School. I have my BSED in Early Childhood Education and my MSED in Curriculum & Instruction. My experience over the last 30 years includes director, PD trainer, EC management trainer, teacher, camp counselor and assistant teacher. I have also spent time moving through the PA Stars program as well as NAEYC. Early Childhood Education has been my life since 1992.

I am pleased to see that the proposed amendments to 22 Pa. Code Chapter 49, §49.85 only seek to codify the special education changes made in Act 82 related to special education.

I urge the State Board of Education to maintain the current grade spans as proposed in the amendments to Chapter 49 and make no further changes. As you consider the issue, I am providing the reasoning to maintain the current spans as follows:

- 1) It is essential that Pennsylvania teachers are well-trained in child development for the age group in which they are instructing. Broader certifications, which provide more marketability for teachers and greater flexibility for school administrators, are also unlikely to allow for a focus on specific developmental groups and the science around how these students learn. For instance, younger children are guided by their teachers in learning social skills like sharing and communicating appropriately, which are the foundations for all learning. Teachers need to be equipped not only to teach curriculum but also to understand how to instruct children in such a way to promote their development and well-being based on their development. **Teacher certification grade bands must reflect child development.**
- 2) There have been proposals for a K-6 span overlapping the pre-k-4 grade span. This would result in prospective teachers enrolling in the K-6 track for marketability. When this overlap existed a decade ago approximately 90 percent selected K-6 and only 10 percent pre-k-3. This significantly and very negatively reduces the pipeline of teachers available to provide high-quality pre-k in school districts and in high-quality STAR 3 and 4 child care programs, nursery schools and Head Start programs. State investments to increase the number of

children who have access to high-quality pre-k has been a bipartisan priority. This is evidenced by the \$145 million increase in funding for the Pre-K Counts and the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs since the beginning of the Wolf Administration. As more children are served, they will need many more pre-k-4 qualified teachers, not less.

I will continue our work to ensure the developmental and educational needs of each age group of children is the priority related to teacher certification grade spans.

I thank you and the State Board of Education for prioritizing children and youth as you considered this issue and put forth the proposed amendments to Chapter 49.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions at:
norritondoe@malvernschool.com

Sincerely,

Christina Wackerman
Director of Education
The Malvern School of West Norriton