

**PAC-TE**  
**Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators**

November 11, 2008

Representative James Roebuck  
Chairperson of the Education Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representative  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17126

Dear Representative Roebuck,

Attached is a written copy of the testimony that I will be presenting at the House Education Committee Hearing on Thursday November 13 on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators. I am also attaching copies of the three resolutions passed by the membership at our annual business meeting. I look forward to the opportunity to testify on behalf of PAC-TE.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Ruthkosky". The script is cursive and fluid.

Kathleen Ruthkosky  
PAC-TE President

To: Representative James Roebuck  
Chairperson of the Education Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Members of the House Education Committee

From: Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators

Re: Testimony on Issues related to the Implementation of Chapter 49

Date: November 13, 2008

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak with the committee on the issues related to implementation of Chapter 49. I am Kathleen Ruthkosky and I represent PAC-TE. The Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PAC-TE) is dedicated to promoting strong advocacy for teacher education in the Commonwealth by promoting quality programs in teacher education. PAC-TE serves as a unified voice for seventy-four member institutions including PASHE, state-related, and private colleges/universities. At the annual business meeting of the organization, the membership overwhelmingly approved passage of three resolutions related to the implementation of the guidelines disseminated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for the new certificates designated in Chapter 49.

The first resolution approved by the PAC-TE membership calls for elimination of the credit requirements embedded in the guidelines for the new certificates. The guidelines developed by Pennsylvania Department of Education for the certificates defined in Chapter 49.2 (PK-4, Grades 4-8 and Special Education PK-8 and Grades 7-12) prescribe a required number of credits. In the past PDE has issued competency-based guidelines for program development. Institutions were required to design programs that met these specific program guidelines and the requirements of Chapter 354. Chapter 354.25(1) states: *The preparation program design shall be consistent with the preparing institution's mission, and reflect knowledge derived from research and sound professional practice.* Chapter 354.25 (4) states: *For initial programs culminating in a bachelor's degree, the professional educator program shall cooperate with the liberal arts and other academic disciplines of the college or university to create preparation programs that allow candidates to complete the degree and the initial preparation program within 4 years from the time of initial enrollment at the college or university.* The credit mandates embedded in the guidelines for the new certificate programs hinder institutions' efforts in meeting Chapter 354 requirements.

In the new guidelines, PDE is requiring a minimum of 60 credits plus student teaching for PK-4 certification and a minimum of 66 credits of content, 27 credits of professional coursework and student teaching for candidates seeking certification in Grades 4-8. Is it possible to design teacher education programs with the total number of credits prescribed by the new guidelines? Yes, it is possible; however, just because it is possible does not mean that it is in the best interest of teacher

education programs and teacher education candidates. First and foremost, the requirement for credits is in direct conflict with the intent of Chapter 354 which gives institutions the flexibility to design programs to meet the mission of the institution and to be completed in four years. Teacher education programs must be responsive to the changing needs of students, schools, districts, and communities as well as state and federal mandates. The changes in Chapter 49 came about in response to the Gaskin case as well as the increased interest in early childhood education at the state and national level. NCLB is up for reauthorization and changes may impact teacher education. As new demands are placed on institutions to better prepare teachers, the response to the demands cannot be to simply add credits to candidates' programs. Designing programs based on competencies rather than credits allows institutions to adjust programs to meet the ever-changing needs of the field.

Prescription of credits may have a negative impact on the future supply of teachers. Changes in Chapter 49 require candidates seeking special education certification to be dually certified in PK-4, Grades 4-8 or Grades 7-12. Data on teacher shortages provided by Pennsylvania Department of Education (<http://www.pde.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?A=135&Q=146429>) notes the need for highly qualified special education teachers will be more than double in the near future. The prescribed credit requirements for middle level and special education will make it difficult, if not impossible, for institutions to design four-year programs that lead to dual certification. Obviously, this will only add to the difficulties of ensuring highly qualified special education teachers for middle school students.

Institutions must have flexibility to design programs that meet the mandates of Chapter 354.25 (1) and Chapter 354.25 (4) and to ensure that children are taught by well-prepared, highly qualified teachers. To this end, PAC-TE is requesting that the credit requirements be removed from the guidelines and that institutions be required to design programs that meet the candidate competencies stated on pages 16 - 35 of *The Framework of Grades PreK -4 Program Guidelines*, pages 17 -26 of *The Framework of Grades 4-8 Program Guidelines*, and pages 14 -28 of *The Framework of Grades PK-8 and 7-12 Special Education Program Guidelines*.

The second resolution approved by the PAC-TE membership calls for the elimination of the faculty matrix as a requirement for program approval. PAC-TE is in agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Education that faculty must have knowledge and understanding of the content that they are teaching. However, we believe the authority to determine the quality of faculty has been clearly defined as the responsibility of the teacher preparation institution in Chapter 354.41 (a) which states: "*the preparing institution shall establish a procedure to confirm that the professional education faculty are education scholars who are qualified for their assignments and actively engaged in the professional education community.*"

In previous program reviews the quality of the faculty was evaluated holistically. Programs provided evidence/data that the institution has:

- a comprehensive system to assure faculty member exhibited exceptional expertise as teachers and scholars;

- faculty that reflect gender and ethnic diversity;
- faculty who are engaged in on-going professional development
- faculty who are involved in the improvement of K-12 schools through scholarship and service; and
- faculty who demonstrate best practices and incorporate current scholarship and instructional technology into their teaching

All of the indicators noted above are aligned with the Chapter 354 guidelines on Faculty Quality. The matrix designed by PDE does not address the elements of Faculty Quality defined in Chapter 354. The imposition of a required score to determine faculty competence eliminates an institution's right to hire the faculty candidate that best suits an institution's needs, goals and mission. PAC-TE recommends the elimination of the faculty matrix as a requirement for program approval

The third resolution approved by the PAC-TE membership calls for the elimination of the requirement for articulation agreements for program approval. PAC-TE recognizes the importance of and need for clear and comprehensive articulation agreements between two-year and four-year programs. Many of our member institutions currently have articulation agreements that allow teacher candidates to seamlessly move from a two-year to a four-year program. In the new program approval process, institutions must show evidence of articulation agreements as a condition for receiving program approval. PDE cites Chapter 354.25 a (2) (4) and Chapter 354 .26 (1) (2) as the basis for this requirement. Neither of these sections of Chapter 354 specifically addresses articulation agreements with community colleges. Articulation agreements are addressed in Chapter 49.14 (5) which states: *"Institutions may enter into articulation agreements with community colleges that permit students to earn credit toward meeting the requirements of this chapter."* The Pennsylvania Department of Education has established a website for frequently asked questions on the implementation of Chapter 49. In their response to FAQ #46, PDE states: *"The quality of courses that transfer into an approved teacher preparation program is the responsibility of the receiving institution. In the case of community colleges, because they do not offer approved teacher preparation programs, PDE will not evaluate their faculty according to the Faculty Qualifications Matrix."* The Department of Education has clearly identified issues that relate to articulation agreements. Both two-year and four-year institutions must have the autonomy to decide the appropriateness of entering into an articulation agreement. Requiring such agreements as a condition of program approval violates the autonomy of institutions to make decisions on faculty qualifications, admission requirements and course content. Therefore, PAC-TE recommends that the requirement for articulation agreements be removed from the program approval process.

PAC-TE is committed to promoting quality in teacher education and we are grateful for this opportunity to discuss our concerns with the House Education Committee the organization supports the changes in Chapter 49 as well as the guidelines established for the new certificates. The issues discussed in this testimony directly impact institutions' ability to effectively implement the changes needed to make Chapter 49 a reality. Institutions must have flexibility to design programs that meet the

mandates of Chapter 49 and 354. Therefore, PAC-TE recommends that the Pennsylvania Department of Education:

- eliminate all credit requirements from the program approval guidelines for the PK-4, Grades 4-8 and Special Education PK-8 and Grades 7-12 guidelines and competencies be the basis of determining the quality of teacher preparation programs in Pennsylvania;
- eliminate the faculty matrix requirement from the program approval process; and
- eliminate the requirement for articulation agreements from the program approval process.

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**Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators**

**Resolution 1**

Title: Elimination of the Faculty matrix

Author: The Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators

To: Representative James Roebuck  
Chairperson of the Education Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representative

Members of the House Education Committee

Whereas: The Pennsylvania Department of Education has created a matrix to evaluate the qualifications of the professional education faculty; and

Whereas: The Pennsylvania Department of Education has established a requirement that within two years from the date of initial program approval all faculty teaching professional education courses will meet an established score; and

Whereas: The authority to determine the quality of faculty has been clearly defined as the responsibility of the teacher preparation institution in Chapter 354.41 (a) which states: "the preparing institution shall establish a procedure to confirm that the professional education faculty are education scholars who are qualified for their assignments and actively engaged in the professional education community"; and therefore be it

Resolved: That the Pennsylvania Department of Education eliminate the faculty matrix requirement from the program approval process.

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**Resolution 2**

Title: Elimination of the Credit Requirements for New Certificate Programs

Author: Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators

To: Representative James Roebuck  
Chairperson of the Education Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representative

Members of the House Education Committee

Whereas: The Pennsylvania Department of Education has established new guidelines for a PK-4, Grades 4-8 and Special Education PK-8 and Grades 7-12 certificate programs; and

Whereas: The Pennsylvania Department of Education has required a minimum of 60 credits exclusive of student teaching to meet these guidelines; and

Whereas: Chapter 354.25(1) states: "the preparation program design shall be consistent with the preparing institution's mission, and reflect knowledge derived from research and sound professional practice"; and

Whereas: Chapter 354.25 (2) states: "the preparing institution shall ensure that the preparation program curriculum does not include unnecessary duplication of coursework and strives to create efficient professional educator preparation"; and

Whereas: Chapter 354.25 (4) states: "for initial programs culminating in a bachelor's degree, the professional educator program shall cooperate with the liberal arts and other academic disciplines of the college or university to create preparation programs that allow candidates to complete the degree and the initial preparation program within 4 years from the time of initial enrollment at the college or university"; and

Whereas: The credit requirement is in conflict with the intent of Chapter 354.25 (1), and 354.25 (2); and therefore, be it

Resolved: That all credit requirements be eliminated from the program approval guidelines for the PK-4, Grades 4-8 and Special Education PK-8 and Grades 7-12 certificates and that competencies be the basis of determining the quality of teacher preparation programs in Pennsylvania.

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**Resolution 3**

Title: Elimination of the Requirement for Articulation Agreements in the Program Approval Process

Author: Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators

To: Representative James Roebuck  
Chairperson of the Education Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representative

Members of the House Education Committee

Whereas: The Pennsylvania Department of Education has established a mandate for program approval review that requires an institution to enter into articulation agreements with community colleges; and

Whereas: Chapter 49.14 (5) states: "institutions may enter into articulation agreements with community colleges that permit students to earn credits toward meeting the requirements of this chapter"; and

Whereas: Chapter 354 does not make specific reference to, define or require articulation agreements; and

Whereas: The requirement of such agreements limits the autonomy of the institutions with respect to admission requirements, course content and faculty qualifications; and therefore, be it

Resolved: That the requirement for an institution to have articulation agreements in place for program approval be eliminated.