

## **PA ACCESS Statement in Support of Maintaining the Current Pre-K – 4**

### **Guidelines and Program Approval Process**

**Presented to the Pennsylvania House Education Committee, November 13<sup>th</sup>**

PA American Associate Degree Early Childhood Educators ( PA ACCESS) with representation from Pennsylvania colleges offering associate degrees in early childhood education, including the fourteen community colleges, is writing in support of Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) current Pre-K-4 certification guidelines, program approval process and faculty qualification matrix. The guidelines were developed by Pennsylvania college educators from public and private institutions who have expertise in teacher education directly related to the ages of children who will be served in the Pre-k-4 certification area. It is evident that the current guidelines are based upon research and are consistent with best practice and aligned with National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Associate degree accreditation standards.

We believe it is imperative that the guidelines maintain specific emphasis on child development, age appropriate content, methodology and assessment that support best practice for all children in the Pre-K -4 age level. In addition to the developmental emphasis, content that is focused on the dynamics of the family is essential to providing a framework to support all families and children in the Commonwealth. It is also imperative that pre-service teachers be exposed to experiential learning within the context of all age levels and program types within their area of teacher certification. These experiences should be offered often, early and applied systematically to theory taught in relevant course work.

The current Pre-K -4 program guidelines provide for seamless articulation of early childhood associate degree programs into baccalaureate degree programs that lead to Pre-K-4 teacher certification. This articulation model supports the development of well qualified early childhood teachers, follows the PA Early Learning Career Lattice and builds quality education for all young children in Pennsylvania. Allowing institutions to eliminate credit requirements and rely solely on a competency framework will jeopardize this seamless articulation and impact the depth of knowledge and skills of teachers. Additionally, the work of the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) in the area of early childhood career preparation and workforce development; as well as program to program articulation in ECE will suffer serious setbacks if the current framework is revised.

In addition to maintaining the credit and competency framework of the Pre-K-4 guidelines it is essential to uphold the use of the Faculty Qualification Matrix. The purpose of this matrix is to ensure that faculty preparing Pre-K-4 teachers have the theoretical, pedagogical and experiential expertise specific to the content and competencies of the courses they teach. Modifications and adjustments to the matrix criteria would impact the knowledge base and outcomes for teacher preparation. The current framework and recommended process of Chapter 49.2 guidelines sets forth expectations for teachers of young children regardless of the location of the teaching to support the promise of high quality education for all children in the Commonwealth.

PA ACCESS recommends that the House Education Committee retain the current guidelines and program approval process as written. The current guidelines represent research based best practice and are developed in a way to ensure that future educators

are provided content and methods that are best suited for teaching young children. The use of the faculty matrix will also ensure that faculty assigned to teach in the Pre-K-4 certification curriculum has the deep knowledge of the unique developmental nature of children in this age group. Without the guidelines for both content and faculty qualifications it will not be possible to ensure that the improvements that are the intent of the new Pre -K-4 certification areas will be achieved.

Respectfully submitted on November 13, 2008 by:

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