

**A Report by the
 Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators
 on the Perceptions of Levels of Agreement
 with the Design and Implementation
 of the Pennsylvania Department of Education
 Initial Review Process for Teacher Certification Programs**

During August and September, 2010, the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators (PAC-TE) surveyed its membership to gather information regarding issues related to new teacher certification program design and implementation. The survey was distributed to the membership of PAC-TE (404) online via Survey Monkey.

111 respondents involved in the program review process submitted completed surveys:

- 77.5% represented private institutions of higher education
- 16.2% represented state system institutions
- 6.3% represented state related institutions

66.7% self-identified as faculty; and 29.7% self-identified as administrator.

What follows in this report is a description of patterns and trends illustrating levels of agreement found in a series of statements about initial teacher certification program review and a summary of themes culled from the written comments provided at the end of each series of program review statements.

PROGRAMS OFFERED SINCE THE PASSAGE OF CHAPTER 49.2

Two questions in the survey were designed to get a sense of program offerings pre and post Chapter 49.2. Table 1 notes the programs institutions offered prior to the passage of Chapter 49.2 and Table 2 notes the percentage of institutions offering the new certification programs.

Table 1. Programs Offered Prior to Passage of Chapter 49.2

Certificate	% of Institutions Offering the Program
Elementary (K-6)	87.0%
Early Childhood (N-3)	58.3%
Special Education (N-12)	53.7%
Early Childhood/Elementary (Dual Certification N-3 and K-6)	56.5%
Early Childhood/Special Education (Dual Cert N-3 and N-12)	31.5%
Elementary/Special Education (Dual Cert K-6 and N-12)	50.0%
Secondary Certification in Content Areas	91.7%
K-12 Certification	63.0%

Table 2. Program Offerings After Passage of Chapter 49.2

Certificate	% of Institutions Offering the Program
Early Childhood (PK-4)	87.4%
Middle Level (4-8) Option I MATH	58.9%
Middle Level (4-8) Option I SCIENCE	57.9%
Middle Level (4-8) Option I SOCIAL STUDIES	66.3%
Middle Level (4-8) Option I ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	69.5%
Middle Level (4-8) Option II MATH/SCIENCE	31.6%
Middle Level (4-8) Option II MATH/SOCIAL STUDIES	27.4%
Middle Level (4-8) Option II MATH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	31.6%
Middle Level (4-8) Option II SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES	25.3%
Middle Level (4-8) Option II SCIENCE/ENGLISH LANG ARTS	27.4%
Special Education (PK-8) with Early Childhood (PK-4) Dual Cert	66.3%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert MATH	24.2%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert SOCIAL STUDIES	21.1%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	24.2%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert SCIENCE	20.0%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert MATH/SCIENCE	12.6%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert MATH/SOCIAL STUDIES	11.6%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Certification in MATH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	11.6%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES	11.6%
Special Education (PK-8) with Middle Level (Grades 4-8) Dual Cert SCIENCE/ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	11.6%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert MATH	22.1%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert SOCIAL STUDIES	21.1%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	22.1%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert BIOLOGY	17.9%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert CHEMISTRY	16.8%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert EARTH SPACE SCIENCE	11.6%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert GENERAL SCIENCE	11.6%
Secondary Special Education (7-12) with Dual Cert PHYSICS	15.8%

DISCUSSION

A not so surprising finding is that the percentage of programs now offering PK-4 certification programs is equivalent to the number that offered elementary certification prior to the passage of Chapter 49.2. The most popular option for 4-8 certification programs is Option I, the single content area option. Neither option for grades 4-8 seems to be a good fit for dual certification with special education given the fact that less than 24% of the Option I programs and less than 15% of the Option II programs will be offering a dual certification program at the undergraduate level. Also not surprising is the low number of programs offering dual certification in special education at the secondary level. Comments submitted with these questions often noted that given the credits required for middle and secondary certification, special education will be offered as a post baccalaureate option only.

GENERAL QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE INITIAL PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

The first nine statements were designed to ascertain satisfaction level with the program review process. Table 3 represents statements that had high levels of agreement in terms of dissatisfaction with the process while Table 4 represents a summary of the statements that had high levels of agreement in terms of satisfaction with the process.

Table 3. Summary of Responses Indicating Dissatisfaction with the Components of the Program Review Process

Statement	% Strongly Disagree or Disagree
My program was reviewed in a timely manner according to the timeline established by PDE.	67.9%
The electronic application system is user friendly.	83.9%
Rubrics used to evaluate my program were clear.	66.7%
Reviewers' observations and recommendations were clear and easy to address.	53.7%
Considering cost for preparing and reviewing applications, the electronic review process was cost effective.	50.4%
Reviewers' observations and recommendations were consistent with each other.	42.4%*

*19.8 % of respondents marked NA for this question

Table 4. Summary of Responses Indicating Satisfaction with Components of the Program Review Process

Statement	% Strongly Agree or Agree
My institution has been supportive of the required changes needed to offer programs aligned with the new guidelines.	73.3%
The PDE liaisons were helpful as we navigated our way through the program approval process.	55.1%
Our institution has been able to find qualified faculty to teach special education and ELL coursework.	66.3%

DISCUSSION

As the data in Table 3 suggest respondents generally felt that the initial program review process was not conducted in a timely manner (67.9%) and that the electronic process was not user friendly (83.9%). Related to this, they felt the program review rubrics were unclear (66.7%) and that the comments of reviewers were not easy to address (53.7%). Respondents were more neutral about the cost effectiveness of the review process and the consistency of the reviewers' recommendations. The respondents did feel that their institutions were supportive of the process (only 22.7% disagreed), that the PDE liaisons were fairly helpful (only 41% disagreed), and that their schools had personnel qualified to teach courses in English Language Learners and special education (only 31.7% in disagreement).

Respondents had the opportunity to offer comments on the program review process. Of the forty-four comments submitted none were positive with respect to the program approval process. Four common themes that emerged were:

1. Design and implementation were cumbersome, had glitches, contained ambiguous instructions and redundant competency statements;
2. Program reviewers were inconsistent in commenting and re-reviewing;
3. Unfinished initial review reports are running up against full program review schedules;
4. Threatening deadlines for program applications are juxtaposed by delays in review returns of up to eleven months.

The remaining four questions in the survey focused on issues related to the implementation of Chapter 49.2. Respondents were asked to address only questions for certification areas they will be offering. Table 5 presents statements that had a high percentage of strongly disagree and disagree responses to statements that dealt with the new program guidelines and Table 6 presents statements that had a high percentage of strongly agree or agree.

Table 5. Percentage of Strongly Disagree and Disagree Responses by Program Type

Statement	PK-4 N=92	Grades 4-8 N=76	Special Education N=66	Secondary/K-12 N=75
The guidelines for certification were clear.	67.4%	63.1%	50%	41.9%*
Compliance with the new guidelines for teacher certification programs was easy.	82.6%	82.8%	53.8%	64.0%
The program review process allowed for flexibility in meeting the guidelines.	74.7%	78.6%	64.6%	NA
The new program guidelines strengthened the liberal arts/general education component of our teacher education candidates' program.	85.4%	60.5%	70.1%	69.3%
The 190 hours of required field experience easily fit into our planned certification program.	58.6%	55.2%	50%	68.9%
Implementation of the new certificate program has had a positive impact on enrollment.	60.4%	64.3%	37.8%	59.7%

* refers to Professional Core Guidelines

Table 6. Percentage of Strongly Agree and Agree Responses by Program Type

Statement	PK-4 N=92	Grades 4-8 N=76	Special Education N=66	Secondary/ K-12 N=75
Although not required, our program meets the recommended number of credits stated in the guidelines.	82.0%	76.3%	77.2%	54.9%
To ensure program approval, our institution felt compelled to meet the recommended number of credits stated in the guidelines.	78.7%	72.0%	71.2%	58.3%
My institution's administration supports additional resources that may be needed (faculty, technology, funding) in order to comply with new program requirements and/or recommendations made as a result of the review.	51.2%	42.1%	51.5%	40.5%
All candidates will be able to obtain quality field placements to meet the 190 hour requirement.	59.7%	45.3%	46.2%	29.7%
Candidates will be able to complete the program in four years.	75%	62.6%	43.9%	40.5%

DISCUSSION

Regardless of the type of certification program designed, there appears to be common agreement on several issues. Compliance with new guidelines was viewed as difficult and programs felt the general education/liberal arts core was weakened by the new requirements. The majority of respondents felt there was little room for flexibility when designing new certification programs, and they tended to design programs that met the recommended number of credits to ensure approval. While responses were almost evenly split on a program's ability to easily fit the 190 hours of field hours into their programs, there tended to be more disagreement as to the ability of candidates to obtain quality field placements particularly at the secondary/K-12 level. Finally, there seems to be less agreement that candidates who will be seeking special education or secondary/K-12 certification will be able to complete their program in four years.

One hundred twenty-seven comments were collected across the four certification categories. One theme that emerged in the comments was the difficulty institutions are experiencing in designing post baccalaureate programs that would meet the new guidelines. Given the nature of the post baccalaureate teacher candidate, many programs struggle with incorporating 190 hours of quality field experiences. Concern was also expressed that there is increased competition for field placements and that basic education may struggle to accommodate both traditional and post baccalaureate candidates for the required number of hours.

Some respondents spoke to issues that tie to Pennsylvania's reputation of being an exporter of teachers. Comments submitted for the PK-4 and 4-8 questions suggest that prospective candidates have difficulty comprehending the new grade level configurations and that the 4-8 grade band is incompatible with grade bands for certification in Pennsylvania's border states.

Finally, with respect to the new special education program guidelines, concern was noted that the new requirements are liable to reduce the number of candidates and result in a shortage of secondary school special educators.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Design and implementation of the initial program review process was viewed by survey respondents to do little to add value to the quality of the preparation of teacher certification candidates. Program approval applicants found the experience to be wrought with frustration because of a design considered to be cumbersome. Program guidelines that were not a part of Chapter 49.2, including the requirement for 190 hours of field experience, are overly prescriptive and offer little flexibility for programs when designing new certification programs. Regardless of program, respondents generally agreed that their administrations provided support throughout the application process and for the futures of the new programs. Overall, however, a pervasive expression of despair resonated from the 171 comments that respondents rendered, lamenting the process as a drain on time, personnel, and resources.

The findings described above suggest that there is consensus regarding the following recommendations:

1. PDE should pilot all electronic procedures and employ technology experts capable of identifying and correcting glitches.
2. PDE should design a realistic timeline for review of programs and should be held accountable when programs are not reviewed in accordance with the established timetable.
3. Program guidelines for the new certification programs need to be revised and formatted into a clear, concise listing of program outcomes that are aligned with national standards for the preparation of early childhood, middle level, secondary/K-12, and special education teachers.
4. Program guidelines for special education (7-12), grades 4-8 and secondary/K-12 certification programs should be revised to allow for design of undergraduate dual certification programs.
5. PDE should recognize the distinction between clientele who pursue post-baccalaureate certification and those who pursue undergraduate certification and should allow for teacher preparation programs to design their post-baccalaureate programs in accordance with those differences.
6. PDE should acknowledge the rich diversity of teacher preparation programs provided by colleges and universities in Pennsylvania and should promote excellence through respect for that diversity and through flexibility in program design and implementation permitting programs to infuse their uniqueness throughout their teacher preparation programs.