

PAC-TE focus Group on ACT 91 Student Teachers acting as Substitutes

May 18, 2022

Participants included 3 private universities and one PASSHE university

Findings:

Three (3) programs already had a policy in place or developed one in response to the legislation. One (1) program addressed requests on a case-by-case basis following a general set of guidelines.

All programs required some form of satisfactory evaluation of the student teacher by the supervisor and the mentor. There was a range of 3 weeks to 8 weeks by which this could occur.

Two (2) programs limited substitution to the placement classroom. Programs that allowed substitution outside the placement classroom still wanted it in the grade or content area of the placement and did not count substitution days toward the PDE requirement of a minimum of 12 weeks.

Programs put most of the responsibility for following the policy and working with districts on the student teachers themselves. Universities felt there were too many different districts and too many hiring agencies for the university to get involved beyond approving the student teacher to be eligible to substitute.

All programs felt that student teachers who participated appreciated earning extra money and gaining experience. The concerns were similar in all programs and were about student teachers feeling pressured to substitute when they did not want to or being asked to substitute outside of the approved policy. In one case a student teacher was asked to substitute for a partial day without pay. The number of these negative cases was limited. The participating universities received very little feedback from school districts about their policies.

Most participants felt that having student teachers serving as substitutes is not ideal and potentially negatively affects their preparation. They understand, however, that there is a balance between these concerns and the needs of districts experiencing substitute shortages. Most participants hope that this is a temporary policy.