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September 8, 2017

Re: Unit of Study Requirements for Career and Technical Education in Grades 7 and 8

To the Honorable Members of the Board of Regents:

I am writing to you on behalf of superintendents across our state to thank you for your action last May in approving regulations to modernize state requirements governing middle level education and to urge you to give final approval to that action at your meeting next week.

Our members firmly believe that the new regulations will improve learning opportunities for students and are excited about the options they will now be able to offer.

One component addresses the current requirement that all students complete one unit of study in Technology Education and .75 units in Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS). Schools are now allowed the option of offering students a total of 1.75 units in an assortment of Career and Technical Education areas. Districts will still need to develop integrated curricula for their chosen options which will cover the state standards for Technology Education and FACS.

Consolidating the current required separate units of study into a more flexible CTE track creates great potential for making the best possible of use of locally available teaching staff in a direction that can add programmatic value to a middle school student's exploratory experience. Specifically, this change opens the door to more meaningful and more relevant curriculum for students in this formative developmental stage of life. Importantly, the proposals will *not* reduce the total instructional time required to be devoted to any student.

A widely-cited concern with the current requirements is that districts struggle to find appropriately certified teachers in Technology Education and FACS. In a survey we concluded last month, over one-third of superintendents statewide cited difficulty in finding qualified teachers to be a significant problem for their schools. This included 72 percent of North Country superintendents, 51 percent of rural superintendents, and 62 percent of superintendents serving districts where over 60 percent of students are estimated to qualify for free or reduced price lunches. Nearly half of the superintendents identifying teacher shortages as a significant problem name Technology, FACS or both as teaching fields they struggle to fill.

We also support the proposal to give individuals with subject area expertise additional routes to certification.

I will share again what some of our members have written in support of the previously approved changes:

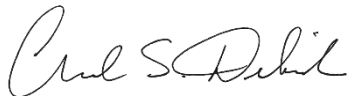
As a superintendent in a small rural school who faces the challenge of delivering on Commissioner's Regulations with limited staff members, I appreciate any option for flexibility that doesn't compromise the integrity of what we offer. Different school districts will have a different range of opportunity and talent locally, and while two schools may provide very different courses under this requirement, students will be able to take advantage of the best resources in their own district. If one school can offer a high quality agricultural offering while another can provide a great experience in carpentry or auto tech, the students in both districts benefit. (Finger Lakes Region, near Rochester)

The current Part 100 regulations are not designed for the 21st century. Greater flexibility is needed to accommodate the skills children will need for the future. Coding is an excellent example. All over the country states are embracing new "maker movement" that focuses on creativity and a combination of production skills coupled with computer science technology. New York is finally moving in this direction. Making the new requirements in line with CTE fields of study will better prepare kids for the world of work. It will also allow for the creation of more interdisciplinary project based learning opportunities that cross over CTE strands. (Long Island)

As a superintendent serving a rural school district, I am pleased with the certification flexibility this will allow us. It is extremely difficult to find certified family consumer science and technology teachers. I am excited about the opportunity students will have to learn about different CTE areas of study in middle school. This affords schools the flexibility and opportunity to enrich their middle level units of study. (Western New York)

Concluding, we are grateful for your action in May to enable schools to construct instructional options that will better serve the needs of students today. We strongly urge you to give final approval to this item at your September meeting.

Sincerely,



Charles S. Dedrick, Ed. D.

Executive Director

C: Commissioner Elia
Executive Deputy Commissioner Berlin
Senior Deputy Commissioner Ebert