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May 7, 2017

To the Honorable Members of the Board of Regents:

I am writing to you on behalf of superintendents across our state to urge that you approve the proposals on your agenda this week to modernize state requirements governing middle level education.

We strongly believe that the proposals will improve learning opportunities for students.

Importantly, the proposals will *not* reduce the total instructional time required to be devoted to any student. One proposal addresses the current requirement that all students complete one unit of study in Technology Education and .75 units in Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS). The proposal would permit schools 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 would create great potential for making the best possible 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.

Here is what one of our members from the Finger Lakes region wrote in urging our support of the proposals:

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.

A Long Island superintendent wrote,

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

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“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.

A widely-cited concern with the current requirements is that districts are simply unable to find appropriately certified teachers in Technology Education and FACS. As a consequence, districts are left with no choice but to fill positions with uncertified teachers. The flexibility under this proposal to construct options using currently available staff assures that every class would now be taught by a certified teacher.

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

Concluding, we are grateful to the Department for developing a set of recommendations to enable schools to construct instructional options that will better serve the needs of students today. We strongly urge you to approve this item this week.

Sincerely,



Charles S. Dedrick, Ed. D.
Executive Director

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