

## **Testimony - SB 216**

### **Proposal to designate two teaching licensure bands - K-8 and 6-12**

My name is Dr. Kristin Bourdage, and I am the Chair of the Department of Education at Otterbein University in Westerville. I am responsible for our Department's teacher preparation programs. I research and have a PhD in literacy education and am a former classroom teacher. I would like to speak to the Committee about SB-216s proposed in Ohio's current licensure bands. The current proposal to designate two, broad teaching licensure/grade bands will practically remove the current focus of specialization in teaching and learning, favoring instead a generalist approach to essential topics of teaching, including child and adolescent development, theories of learning and motivation, assessment practices, and subject matter pedagogy.

For the past two decades, Educators have been working toward the specialization of teaching. Much research, especially in middle level education, has reached consensus on the need to equip teachers with specialized knowledge about the development or the age of learners and the way to teach these learners (AMLE website). In the late 1990s, Ohio led other states in adopting one of the first middle level licenses, and as a follow-up study about the impacts of the middle level licensure, teachers in Ohio reported that a specialized teaching license in the middle level mattered for their effectiveness with students (White et al., 2015). Likewise, almost all other states, 45 total, have current teaching license and grade-level bands that reflect more specialization and not less, with various configurations of the elementary, middle, and high school grade bands (AMLE website).

Specialization is the modern way of knowing and innovating in the 21st century; it's the way we develop, expand, and test new knowledge, and is essential for staying out front in medicine, business, technology, law, research, and education. When Orville and Wilbur Wright developed and tested the first aircraft, how many people worked with them on it? Maybe a half dozen people? When Boeing, a company of over 150,000 employees, develops a new aircraft, how many people work on the new design - 30, 40 or even more? Simply put, the modern way of knowing and using technologies requires more specialization, not less.

An example to illustrate this point is about teaching reading. To prepare PreK-9 teachers to teach reading in Ohio, teacher preparation programs need to provide at least 12 hours of literacy coursework. This coursework, four courses at most places, and over 100 hours of associated field experiences in an early or middle school classrooms are focused on the age, development, curriculum, and assessment practices to ensure teachers know what happens at each step of the way. Young children or English learners new to reading in English need strong instruction in phonemic and phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency instruction (National Reading Panel Report, 2000). Older students, in middle school, for example, need teachers who know how to teach academic language and vocabulary, comprehension strategies, and tools for critical reading, and know ways to motivate and engage interest in reading (Kamil et al.,

2008). All readers need teachers who use high quality literature, model positive reader dispositions, and make reading enjoyable for learning.

Currently, teacher preparation programs are able to focus the 12 hours of coursework and associated field experiences on what young children and older students need for their learning, development, and literacy well being. Removing the grade band specializations means new teachers will have a “pinch of this” (phonics, for example) and a “pinch of that” (motivation) for each area of literacy and developmental need. I cannot think of a reason why children would be better off with a teacher who knew a little of this and a little of that.

In conclusion, de-specializing teaching is impractical for preparing Ohio teachers to know their learners, know how to teach and assess their learners, and to know how to inspire learners to achieve.

## **Proposal**

I urge you to reconsider the proposed change to the current licensure bands. If the primary issue is building staffing, and hiring flexibility, I encourage you to consider a PK-5 license. Create a 5-9 license and retain the 7-12 license. These options would allow for flexibility and the specialization that Ohio schools, children, and families need in Education. I urge you to reconsider the proposed change to the current licensure bands. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak.

## **References**

AMLE website links

<http://www.amle.org/AboutAMLE/ProfessionalPreparation/Certification-LicensurebyState.aspx>  
<http://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet.aspx?ArtMID=888&ArticleID=487>

National Reading Panel Report link

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/ublications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>

National Literacy Panel Report link

<http://www.cal.org/resource-center/publications/developing-reading-and-writing>

Improving Adolescent Literacy IES Practice Guide link

[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit\\_pg\\_082608.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit_pg_082608.pdf)

White and colleagues (2015) - article about teacher perspectives on the middle level license

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19404476.2013.11462104>