

5/8/2023

Dear Senator Andrew Brenner,

I am writing to share concerns regarding the proposal to amend the guidelines to eliminate middle grades certification areas and grade spans in Ohio, House Bill 33.

In the interest of providing the best possible education focused on middle grades students, it is most beneficial for teachers in grades 6-8 to have preparation specifically designed to serving the young adolescents in those grade levels.

Research supports the importance of middle level education certification. Generalizing certification will be a step backwards for middle grades education in your state. Ohio has been at the forefront of initiatives in our nation and a leader in providing excellence in this area. Over the years, most middle schools have shifted from functioning as junior high schools to innovative schools serving the unique needs of young adolescents with developmentally responsive practices. Without middle school certification, we are in jeopardy of losing the middle school philosophy along with the effectiveness of our services and programs which is a disservice to young adolescents.

Although I am sensitive to the state's needs considering the current teacher shortage, this proposed certification change has the potential to have long-lasting negative implications for the effectiveness of middle schools. Young adolescents in the middle grades have unique developmental characteristics, needs, and abilities that are specific to this age group. They are best served by professionals who have prepared in this area.

Before any changes are made and to consider more effective solutions, I recommend input from the following groups: middle school teachers, Ohio Middle Level Association, the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), the National Professors of Middle Level Education (NAPOMLE), and the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.

As a former middle school teacher, I strongly believe that teachers benefit from certification in middle level education and that young adolescents deserve teachers who are specifically prepared to meet their needs. As a coordinator of a middle grades' teacher preparation program, I see the value of and need for continuing the current certification grade bands and focus on young adolescents in middle schools across our state. As President of the National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education, I am willing to help coordinate communication of information to assist in your decision. I sincerely hope you protect middle school certification in Ohio.

Sincerely,



Bridget Coleman, BridgetC@usca.edu

President, National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education