

May 20, 2024

To Chair Brenner and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I have been interested in the recent discussions surrounding teacher licensure grade bands and Ohio Senate Bill 219. Because I hold a K-8 teaching license, I tend to believe that this licensing structure offers the most flexibility for teachers and school districts. The concerns about changing the current licensure structure remind me of when I earned my degree in elementary education at Miami University in the mid-1990s. I was one of the final cohorts to earn an Ohio K-8 license. At the time, there were concerns from fellow students who were reluctant to have to select a narrower grade band because they had planned on having broader options in the grade levels they could teach. There were also concerns from colleges of education about how to change programming and meet new requirements. Similar concerns are being raised with the current changes.

I find the idea of an option for K-8 licensing to be an option that provides districts with the flexibility to place teachers where they are best suited to serve the needs of the district. For example, if there is a decrease in enrollment, a grade 3 teacher could move to a grade 4 or grade 5 teaching position without the need for additional licensure requirements.

In thinking about my own professional journey of 28 years as a teacher in Ohio, this license has allowed me to work with students across grades K-8 and accomplish the following:

- Working as a classroom teacher for grades 3, 4, 5, and 7
- Working as an instructional coach for grades K-5
- Earning National Board Certification as a Middle Childhood Generalist (ages 7-12)
- Earning a masters degree in educational leadership and a doctoral degree in mathematics education
- Obtaining principal licensure for grades PK-12
- Teaching methods and assessment courses for preservice mathematics teachers
- Providing professional learning experiences for inservice teachers of students in grades PK-12

While working on my undergraduate degree, I was convinced that I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. After having a year of experience working as a substitute teacher and then being hired as a grade 4 teacher for Jonathan Alder Local Schools in 1997, I realized that I enjoyed working with older students. Having the background knowledge of early literacy and numeracy allowed me to connect students' previous understanding of the material to the content of our lessons. Having a broader view of these learning trajectories has been instrumental in my work with students. Had I been required to choose a PK-3 license to fulfill my original goal of teaching kindergarten, my career path would be very different.

Merely changing the grade bands will not address many of the current needs and concerns in education. I would like the legislature in Ohio to consider ways in which early career teachers

can be supported as they continue honing their professional skills. During my first few years of teaching, I was fortunate to participate in many professional development offerings funded through the state of Ohio. While my college classes gave me a strong foundation, it was the opportunities that I had to continue my learning in the field that allowed me to hone my skills in literacy, numeracy, science and social studies. If you are interested in learning more about my experiences, please feel free to contact me at jbailey@moonglade.com.

Sincerely,
Jodie A. Bailey