



JOY HOFMEISTER

STATE SUPERINTENDENT *of* PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Joy Hofmeister

DATE: July 26, 2018

SUBJECT: Appeal for exception to an alternative certification requirement

The statute that authorizes the State Board of Education to issue alternative placement teaching certificates and outlines the requirements for the alternative certification program provides that “[t]he State Board of Education may grant an exception to the requirements for certification and, upon demonstration by an individual of specific competency in the subject area of specialization, may grant a certificate to the individual” (70 O.S. § 6-122.3(D)).

One of the listed requirements for entry into the alternative certification program is that an applicant may never have received a failing grade in a course taken as part of a teacher preparation program. An individual who once received a failing grade in an education course has requested that the State Board grant an exception to this provision so that she may receive alternative certification to teach in Oklahoma public schools. This applicant is a veteran participating in the Troops to Teachers program.

The applicant has served as a paraprofessional for an Oklahoma school district, and her application materials include a letter from the district superintendent “strongly recommending” her for certification. Upon review by the State Department of Education, approval is recommended.

JH/js
Attachments

To the Oklahoma State Board of Education:

I am requesting a special consideration regarding my application for alternative teaching certification. Initially, my application was denied because of Oklahoma Law 70 O. S. Section 6122.3 that states,

“Persons enrolled in an alternative placement program shall:

1. Anyone who has enrolled in and subsequently failed required teacher education courses necessary to meet the minimum requirements of a teacher education program is not eligible for the alternative placement program.

For my application, I was denied because of the course I took in 2017, The Exceptional Child at Missouri Southern State University which is marked as an F on my transcript. However, I believe that my situation is unique and that this grade does not imply a lack of qualification.

I started working as a Paraprofessional, at Fairland Elementary, in January of 2017. I was enrolled full time at MSSU pursuing a degree in Computer Science. I was not planning to start a job until I completed my degree. My children all go to school at FPS and the Principal had a need for Paraprofessional in my son’s class. Knowing I went to school full time she asked me if I would be able to help in his class. I decided I would with no plans on staying past that semester. But what I found was that I love working with children with special needs and helping them to learn to read and do math. My principal seeing how much I enjoyed working with the kids told me about the Alternative path to certification and suggested once I graduated I think about becoming a teacher.

I enrolled in The Exceptional Child class, during the summer semester of my senior year of college, however during the summer semester my financial situation changed requiring I take on a full-time summer job and complete the Semester. At the time, I was not aware of the rules for alternative certification and I was okay with taking an F in the course. I was more concerned with learning the content rather than the letter grade. I felt the content would be more useful with my current job as a Paraprofessional. I also was not aware at the time I would not be able to retake the course my final Semester at MSSU. When I tried to enroll in the course the second time it was completely full. I only needed five more credit hours to finish a General Studies degree. I had decided by that point I wanted to pursue the Alternative Teacher Certification so I was ok with this decision. Because I was not able to enroll in The Exceptional Child class my advisor recommend I take other courses to complete the degree.

I would consider simply retaking the course to receive a passing grade, but my reason for applying in the first place was to receive certification for an Special Education position at Fairland Elementary. This job is currently posted now and is time sensitive I do not have the chance to retake the course. I will however take a course in Class Room Management and Teaching Methods within the next three years to be fully Certified through the Troops to Teacher program.

I believe I have shown my qualifications as a teacher above and beyond the basic requirements for alternative certification. I am currently in the second year as a Paraprofessional at FPS. My responsibilities include helping children with special learning disabilities to learn at the pace and level

specific for each child. I am responsible for managing the classroom when the teacher is unavailable. I am a Substitute teacher for the computer teacher and have developed lesson plans for when I am there to give the kids experience with web design. I am also the assistant teacher to the Coding Club, teaching our students about how to code their own computer programs.

In 2017, I had the option to take a different class, but decided against it because I was genuinely interested in becoming a better teacher. I have proven my knowledge and ability in Special Education by passing the OSAT on my first attempt. It would be ironic if this decision hindered my ability to teach today. I believe that I have shown that my teaching qualifications greatly outweigh this one issue with my certification. I have a great respect for the requirements and expectations of those seeking alternative certification, however I believe that in this situation, this requirement is preventing a **qualified** candidate from teaching in Oklahoma.

6/19/18

To Whom It May Concern

Julie Klineknight has been working as a para professional in Fairland Elementary and is a valuable employee with outstanding character and professionalism. While working for our school district Ms. Klineknight has earned a Bachelor degree and, because of her experience in our school and community, we feel she is the best candidate for a teaching position working with special needs students. This is a position that we have been unable to successfully fill with a certified teacher.

Ms. Klineknight has proven herself that she can be an excellent member of our teaching staff. We would like to employ her as a special education teacher at Fairland Elementary School. We are strongly recommending that she be certified through the Oklahoma Troops to Teachers program.

Thank you,

Mark Alexander
Superintendent
Fairland Public School