



VCSEA Testimony to House Education Committee concerning the proposed transfer of the educational speech language pathologist license from AOE to OPR under S.217

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VCSEA does not support the removal of the educational Speech Language Pathology endorsement from the Agency of Education for the following reasons:

- SLPs serve as educators in the schools and removing them from an educational endorsement process within AOE must be carefully considered. The role of the SLP is central to the educational pursuits of language acquisition, communication and literacy. Language acquisition is key to academic skill development and access to the curriculum. SLP services are often at the heart of the educational program for students who struggle with language and literacy.
- Educational endorsement of SLPs in a manner similar to other teacher colleagues is central to supporting a consistent educational culture, climate and experience. The performance skills and knowledge identified in the current Educational Speech Language Endorsement within the AOE (5440-84) are vital to the role of the SLP in schools. Included are case management, assessment, collaborative work with teachers and designing and implementing educational plans “including directly teaching, or supervising the teaching of the communication skills essential to literacy development.” The skill set needed within school settings is different from practice within clinical settings. Maintaining the endorsement of educational SLPs within the Vermont AOE appropriate to assure for the knowledge and skills identified in the endorsement within our schools. The education of our children is the primary function of the AOE.
- VCSEA does not want to see a more clinical orientation to speech language pathology services in the schools. Under Vermont Special Education Regulation Rules (2360.2.12 (b)(1)(iii) speech language pathology services “...may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction; or related services, if required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education.” Both educator and related services provider roles are important to SLP practice in schools.
- VCSEA supports the role of the overall system of educator licensing as established within the AOE. The interconnectedness of educator quality and licensing within AOE in conjunction with the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators and the Local Standards Boards throughout the state assures for a critical feedback loop for educator quality, updating educator endorsements, and communication with the institutions of higher education in updating professional coursework that leads to recommendations for licensure. Removal of the educational SLPs from this system does not appear to serve the interests of an integrated educational system for our children.

It is critical that all implications, beyond convenience, of moving an educator licensing function away from the current AOE educator endorsement structure and process be considered. Positive educational outcomes for our children demands such care.