To: Kelly Henson, Commissioner
Georgia Professional Standards Commission

From: The Office of Education Preparation, Innovation and Research on behalf of the USG Deans of Education

Date: November 2009

Re: Proposal for change in regulations for 6-12 classroom content teachers

INTRODUCTION

Given the ramifications of recent reports (*A Critical Mission: Making Adolescent Reading an Immediate Priority in SREB States* (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009) and *Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success* (Carnegie Corporation of New York's Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010.), this proposal for change in secondary regulations is proposed.

This proposal is based upon a rationale growing out of these two recent reports, position statements and research from a variety of sources including the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and other research that is coming from national school improvement and reform research.

PROPOSAL

The proposal for changes in the regulations is below, followed by a rationale.

We propose that these statements be added to the Special Georgia Requirements, Standard 7, for teachers applying for Georgia certification in grades 6-12.

All teacher candidates applying for certification in grades 6-12 should be prepared to teach reading and writing in their content teaching areas. The program shall prepare candidates who understand and apply principles of teaching reading and writing at the secondary grades (6-12) and who meet the following elements of the standards specified by the International Reading Association Standards for Reading Professionals, Classroom Teacher Candidate, 2009 draft. This requirement may be met in a separate three (3) semester-hour course, or content may be embedded in courses and experiences throughout the preparation program.

(i) Candidates use knowledge of adolescent literacy development (1.3)
(ii) Candidates apply knowledge of the teaching of reading and writing to adolescents (1.1, 1.4)
(iii) Candidates use knowledge of formal and informal literacy assessment strategies in the content areas (3.3)
(iv) Candidates apply knowledge of how to meet the needs of students who come from diverse backgrounds and read at diverse levels (2.1, 2.4, 4.2)
(v) Candidates facilitate all students' learning from content area texts (2.2, 2.3)

Role alike

RATIONALE:

The call for more effective teaching of literacy skills in secondary schools is coming from multiple groups and institutions throughout the United States. NAEP scores in 12th grade reading dropped 7% between 1992 and 2005. The same scores show a persistent achievement gap that is both racial and class-based. The U.S. Congress proposed and funded the Striving Readers legislation in 2006.

Some key findings from the research on shifting literacy demands are summarized in the NCTE (2007) position paper on adolescent literacy:

1. *Adolescents are less likely to struggle when subject area teachers make the reading and writing approaches in a given content area are clear and visible.*
2. *Writing prompts in which students reflect on their current understandings, questions, and learning processes help to improve content learning.*
3. *Effective teachers model how they access specific content-area texts.*
4. *Learning the literacies of a given discipline can help adolescents negotiate multiple, complex discourses and recognize that texts can mean different things in different contexts.*
5. *Efficacious teaching of cross-disciplinary literacies has a social justice dimension as well as an intellectual one.*

Specialty professional organizations, including National Science Teachers Association, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council of Social Studies all stress higher level thinking, problem-solving, the use of primary texts, the ability to know and express ideas within the disciplinary context.

The International Reading Association indicated as early as 1999, *Adolescents deserve assessment that shows their strengths as well as their needs and that guides their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers (p.6,* that *Adolescents deserve expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading and study strategies across the curriculum(p.7.)* Since 1999, much more research has tracked the importance of reading and writing instruction that is content specific in adolescent and early adult classrooms.

In a draft version of the new IRA standards currently being reviewed, more specific recommendations are made for the preparation of middle and secondary teachers including Revised Standards for Teaching Professionals, Secondary Classroom Content Teachers (2009, draft manuscript.)

The key elements are identified below—more detail is included in the document itself:

Standard I: Foundational Knowledge

1.1. *Understand major theories and empirical research that describe the cognitive, linguistic, motivation, and socio-cultural foundations of reading and writing processes, components, and development;*
1.2. *Understand the historically shared knowledge of the profession and changes over time in the perceptions of reading and writing processes, components, and development.*
1.3. *Understand the role of professional judgment and practical knowledge for improving all students' reading development and achievement;*
1.4.

Standard II: Curriculum and Instruction

2.1 *Use foundation knowledge to design and/or implement an integrated, comprehensive, and balanced curriculum;*
2.2. *Use appropriate and varied instructional approaches, including those that develop word recognition, language comprehension, strategic knowledge, and reading/writing connections;*
2.3 *Use a wide range of texts [narrative, expository, poetry, etc.] and traditional print and on-line resources.*

Standard III: Assessment and Evaluation

3.1 *Understand types of assessments and their purposes, strengths, and limitations;*
3.2 *Select, develop, administer, and interpret assessments, both traditional print and online, for specific purposes;*
3.3. *Use assessment information to plan and evaluate instruction;*
3.4 *Communicate assessment results and implications to a variety of audiences.*

Standard IV: Diversity

4.1 *Recognize, understand, and value the forms of diversity that exist in society and their importance in learning to read and write;*
4.2 *Use a literacy curriculum and engage in instructional practices that positively impact students' knowledge, beliefs and engagement with the features of diversity;*
4.3 *Develop and implement strategies to advocate for equity.*

Standard V: Literate Environment

5.1 *Design the physical environment to optimize students' use of traditional print and online resources in reading and writing instruction;*
5.2 *Design the social environment to optimize students' opportunities for learning to read and write;*
5.3 *Use routines to support reading and writing instruction (e.g., time allocation, transitions from one activity to another, conducting discussions, giving peer feedback)*

5.4 *Use a variety of classroom configurations (whole class, small group, and individual) to differentiate instruction.*

Standard VI: Professional Learning and Leadership

6.1 *Demonstrate foundational knowledge of adult learning theories and related research about organizational change, professional development and school culture;*
6.2 *Display positive dispositions related to one's own reading and writing and the teaching of reading and writing and pursue the development of individual professional knowledge and behaviors;*
6.3 *Initiate, design, participate in, implement and evaluate effective and differentiated school-based professional development programs;*
6.4 *Understand and influence local, state, and national policy decisions.*

Consistent with the IRA guidelines, NCTE also speaks of the same key areas: motivation, strategy instruction, diverse texts, self-selection of texts, vocabulary development, and discussion based approaches (also see What Works Clearinghouse for Instructional Conversations and Learning Logs), critical thinking including self-monitoring, interpretation and analysis, multi-disciplinary approaches, technology and finally assessment including formative and summative, formal and informal assessments.

The SREB Report suggests that states identify the key skills students need. There is support for this goal in recent research and research summaries.

Carnegie (2010) identifies the following needs:

- ✓ *Know how literacy demands change with age and grade,*
- ✓ *Know how students vary in literacy strengths and needs,*
- ✓ *Know how texts in a given content area raise specific literacy challenges,*
- ✓ *Know how to recognize and address literacy difficulties,*
- ✓ *Know how to adapt and develop teaching skills over time.*

A Langer (2002) state, increased performance is *measured by students' engagement in thoughtful reading, writing and discussion and by their use of knowledge and skills in a new situation.* Langer also notes the need for classroom instruction in the content area that is interactive and conceptual, not packaged, scripted, or inflexible. Teacher skills are the key for this type of instruction (as well as flexibility to meet standards in the context of a particular classroom or school.) She concludes, *Kids who think well, test well.* The best preparation for higher achievement scores in content areas and literacy is well-prepared teachers who see literacy as an essential aspect of content teaching.

Richard Allington (2007, in Beers, Probst and Rief) suggests that all of the reports which are listed in the bibliography point to two foci for adolescent literacy:

1. The development of higher order, 21st century, literacy skills;
2. The need to improve literacy skills for students who struggle with daily literacy demands.

In his summary of professional research in adolescent literacy, Allington (2007) notes that while the research is still scant in some areas, effective teachers of literacy in the content areas share several characteristics: They use multiple texts; explicitly teach, model and use comprehension strategies within their discipline; they expect students to apply the strategies in multiple contexts; they vary the size of instructional groups to meet their objectives; they gradually transfer responsibility to students; they ask students to interact with text in various ways–graphic organizers, multi-media, multiple texts providing various points of view, genres, etc.; certainly, they accept the responsibility for providing reading and writing instruction as they support learning in the discipline and enhance the disciplinary "way(s) of knowing."

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of all of these major reports share striking similarities and are covered by the proposed language change in the proposal. In addition, there are many sources and resources for teacher preparation in these research summaries, position statements, and reports. Most importantly, all of these sources indicate the need for secondary teachers to have and use content reading strategies to improve the learning in their disciplines and the critical thinking skills of their students. Currently, many content area teachers describe themselves as not prepared to teach literacy within their content area. The proposed change in Georgia PSC rules will provide a foundation in the key aspects of teaching literacy within content area secondary courses. The language allows the choice of a specific course or embedded instruction and provides flexibility within the broad goals defined for secondary content teachers. Finally, we would request at least one academic year to plan for these changes if this proposal goes forward.

Reports Reviewed

Alliance for Excellent Education (2007) "Double the Work: Challenges for Solutions on Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent Learners."

American College Testing - ACT (2006) "Reading between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals about College Readiness in Reading."

National Association of State Boards of Education - SBE (2005) "Reading at Risk: The State Response to the Crisis in Adolescent Literacy.

National Council of Teachers of English - NCTE (2007) "Adolescent Literacy: A Policy Research Brief"

National Council of Teachers of English - NCTE (2006) "NCTE Principles of Adolescent Literacy Reform."

National School Boards Association - NSBA (2006) "The Next Chapter: A School Board Guide to Improving Adolescent Literacy."

National Reading Panel -NRP (2000) "Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-based Assessment of the Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction."

Southern Regional Educational Board - SREB (2009) "A Critical Mission: Making Adolescent Reading an Immediate Priority in SREB States.

International Reading Association - IRA (2009, draft) Standards for Reading Professionals.
Carnegie Corporation of New York (2010) "Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success."

Other Sources:

Beers, K., Probst, R.E. and L. Rief (Eds.) (2007) "Adolescent Literacy: Turning Progress into Practice." Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Cochran-Smith, M. and K. Zeichner (Eds.) (2005) "Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education." American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC published by Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.