



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Jun 9, 1997

Mr. Joseph Fisher
Assistant Commissioner
Tennessee Department
of Education
132 Cordell Hull Building
Nashville, Tennessee 37219-5335

Dear Mr. Fisher:

This is in response to your letter dated February 24, 1997, written to the office of Special Education Programs, regarding the date that the Tennessee Department of Education (TDE) has established for the retraining of currently-employed speech/language teachers who have a bachelor's degree to attain a master's degree or its equivalent.

To comply with the personnel standards requirements of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part B), as amended by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA Amendments of 1997), TDE must include in its demonstration to the Secretary of eligibility under Part B policies and procedures that ensure that it has established and maintains standards for ensuring that personnel in each profession or discipline providing special education and related services are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. These standards for entry-level employment of personnel in a specific profession or discipline are based on the highest academic degree requirement across all state agencies serving children and youth with disabilities. 34 CFR §300.153(b)(1)-(2) and (e). TDE has established the master's degree as the highest entry-level academic degree requirement for the speech/language teacher profession. 34 CFR §300.153(a)(2). TDE has established the year 2000 as the timeline for upgrading all speech/language teachers in the State to attain a master's degree or its equivalent, and has included this timeline in its prior year Part B State plan in accordance with 34 CFR §300.153(c).

In your letter, you explain the difficulties that individuals who do not have a master's degree have experienced in obtaining the requisite academic training and believe that the retraining goal for the speech/language teacher profession cannot be achieved by the year 2000. Therefore, TDE is requesting that it be able to extend to the year 2010 its timeline for upgrading all currently-employed speech/language teachers to appropriate State certification standards.

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To the extent that this proposal is inconsistent with TDE's policies and procedures concerning the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards that were submitted as part of TDE's prior year Part B State plan and would constitute a modification to the information included in that plan, TDE must meet the public participation requirements contained in §612(a)(20), as revised by the IDEA Amendments of 1997. See also §612(c)(1) and (2), as revised by the IDEA Amendments of 1997. Therefore, we suggest that you review the information contained on page 108 of your Part B State plan for fiscal years 1995-1997 regarding certification requirements for speech/language teachers to ascertain whether any amendments will be needed to affect the change that you are proposing.

We hope that you find this explanation helpful. If we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact Dr. JoLeta Reynolds at (202) 205-5507 or Dr. Kenneth L. Kienas, the Tennessee State contact, at (202) 205-9057.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Thomas Hehir".

Thomas Hehir
Director
Office of Special Education
Programs