

THE FIGHT TO MAINTAIN STANDARDS: TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION, STANDARDS OF THE PROFESSION, AND THE POLITICS OF TEACHER LICENSING

By

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It was 1986, and in Oregon one was able to be licensed to work in the public schools with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Disorders. This was termed a Basic Endorsement after the teaching norm with the same name. It was late summer, and there was a chance to present testimony before a subcommittee of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC). The president of the Oregon Speech-Language and Hearing Association was able to garner a place on the hearing agenda.

The position was to instate the Master's degree in Communication Disorders that was equivalent to the requirements for the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. Those commissioners present listened politely. The executive director asked if having a Bachelor's degree had "hurt anyone." More information was provided on the importance of profession-based standards and quality outcomes. His response was that his question had not been answered. The president had no response. Those present voted not to move this request onto the Commission at large.

Then in 1987, the TSPC, going along with Reagan political thinking that anyone with a Bachelor's degree in one of the Arts or Sciences could teach, moved to reduce the requirements for the Basic in Communication Disorders and in Deafness from 42 quarter credit hours to 24 and combine the norms into one. The other belief was that anyone who could pass the Praxis in Speech-Language Pathology with any degree could be awarded the Basic in Communication Disorders that could be renewed every 5 years by taking 9 quarter credit hours.

The TSPC held hearings that winter all over the state. The testimony was organized by OSHA with members of the deafness community. Each hearing was overwhelmed with negative input toward the proposed changes. The Commission voted to drop the reduction of requirements, but maintained passage of the Praxis allowing anyone to be licensed by TSPC to practice in the public schools, no matter what type of undergraduate training that person received.

Teacher licensing seems to go the way of the latest trends in education-many of which are politically motivated. This is one of the reasons that OSHA has been working for at least five years to have the exemption removed in the licensure law administered by the Oregon Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (BSPA)) that allows those licensed by TSPC to practice in the schools without a BSPA license. The BSPA standards are of the profession and administered to ensure that all Oregonians receive services from a Speech-Language Pathologist fully qualified by the profession. There are no political winds that can shake these requirements!