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State Board of Education Adopts Regulations to Ensure Appropriate Supply of Experienced Early Childhood Education Teachers for Abbott Districts in Fall

The State Board of Education has adopted amendments to the Professional Licensure and Standards regulations that will expand the supply of qualified early childhood education teachers for Abbott districts in the 2001-2002 school year. Under the amendments, those with an Elementary School Teacher endorsement and two years of documented experience teaching three and four-year olds will be permitted to teach preschool.

"We have pursued this amendment because we are concerned that there will not be an adequate supply of certified teachers to lead pre-school classrooms in Abbott districts this fall," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "I believe that those with an Elementary School Certificate and with two years experience of teaching pre-school children are well-qualified to provide the children in the Abbott districts with a quality pre-school education."

"The teacher shortage and the competition for the limited supply of qualified teachers is intensifying," said Gagliardi. "We are moving aggressively on a number of fronts to address this critical situation. But until our colleges and universities produce an ample supply of new graduates certified to teach pre-school, the best course of action for the children is to keep experienced veterans in the classrooms."

Under the proposed amendments, beginning this September, all newly hired teachers of pre-school must have a pre-school through Grade 3 endorsement or an Elementary School Teacher endorsement and two years of documented experience teaching three and four year-olds. Teachers employed prior to September 1, 2000, in childcare centers contracting with Abbott school districts must obtain baccalaureate degrees and obtain the Preschool through Grade 3 endorsement by September 2004.

"As this new regulation goes into effect in September it is important to ensure that the flow of qualified teachers into Abbott district pre-school programs continued uninterrupted," said Gagliardi. If not for the amendments that are receiving final approval by the board today the children attending school in the Abbott districts would not receive the quality pre-school education to which they are entitled and they would not reach kindergarten prepared to learn the state's new and challenging core curriculum.

Research indicates that critical brain development occurs in children at ages three and four. Exposing children in the state's Abbott districts to sound pre-school programs can ensure that the children are well-prepared to meet the educational challenges that lie ahead. Assuring a sufficient quantity of qualified teachers for preschool will positively impact the entire system.