

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

AND

PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

LORI MURPHY DEINERT *

VS. *

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT *
OF EDUCATION

DECISION

Held: Petitioner is not
entitled to a Social
Studies Certificate or
Special Subject Area
Certificate.

Date: July 2, 1996

Under current regulations the Rhode Island Department of Education issues a multiplicity of distinct types of teaching certificates. One type of teaching certificate is one which is needed by a teacher who wishes to teach "Social Studies". In order to earn this certificate a teacher must have 36 credit hours in Social Studies. At least 24 of these hours must be in History. Endorsements to the Social Studies certificate may be earned in Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Political Science, and Sociology. Each endorsement requires the completion of at least six (6) credit hours in the corresponding subject area.

The petitioner has a B.A. Degree in Sociology and a Masters Degree in teaching Behavioral Sciences. The course work in the Masters Degree program included courses in sociology and teaching methods. In sum, while the petitioners' degree work is replete with courses in Sociology it does not include 24 credit hours in History. Since she lacks these 24 credits in History she cannot obtain a Social Studies certificate. Since she cannot obtain a Social Studies Certificate she obviously is not eligible for any sort of Sociology endorsement.

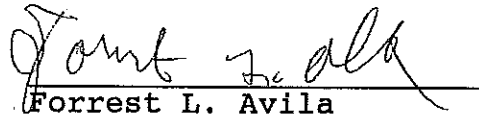
Petitioner's complaint is that she has a chance at a public school teaching position where she would only teach Sociology. She objects to having to earn 24 credits in History as a "condition precedent" to earning a Social Studies certificate with a Sociology endorsement. The short answer to this contention is that the Rhode Island Board of

Regents has decided that 24 hours in History is an appropriate and required background for the teaching of Sociology. This academic policy, as set forth in regulation, is not something which we are allowed to ignore or overturn.


Petitioner also wishes to argue that she is eligible to obtain a "Special Subject Area" certificate in "Behavioral Sciences" on the basis of her Masters Degree in teaching Behavioral Sciences. The problem here is that petitioner's course work for her Masters Degree was, in fact, composed of courses in Sociology and in teaching methods. Special Subject Area Certificates can only be issued in areas not already covered by regulations. Here the essence of petitioner academic work has been in Sociology. Calling it "Behavioral Science" does not change its substance and make it a "Special Subject Area". We therefore cannot find that petitioner is eligible for a "special subject area certificate".

Conclusion

Petitioner appeal must be denied and dismissed.


Forrest L. Avila
Hearing Officer

Approved:


Peter McWalters
Commissioner

Date: July 2, 1996