



Mapleton Public Schools

Adams County School District No.1

Global Leadership Academy
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To: Colorado Senators
 Re: Occupational Therapists in Colorado

January 29, 2013

Dear Senators:

I wish to share comments about the regulation of Occupational Therapists in Colorado. I speak to you both as a professional special education teacher in Colorado and as a parent of a child with a disability.

I work as a professional Special Education teacher for Mapleton Public Schools in Denver, Colorado, where I have been employed since 2000. Prior to this I worked as a Special Education paraprofessional in the state of New Jersey. In my many years serving students with special needs within the schools, I have considered Occupational Therapy to be one of the most critical supplemental support services many students with disabilities need in order to be successful, both in school and in life. O.T. helps students with a broad array of difficulties, and it is my professional opinion that the need for highly qualified Occupational Therapists is a huge need in our state, as it is in all states.

My beliefs about the importance of access to high quality, professional Occupational Therapists began long before I became a professional teacher, because I am also the parent of a child with Autism. Individuals with Autism benefit immensely from Occupational Therapy to help them overcome difficulties with sensory processing, left-right brain coordination, fine motor skills, hyperactivity &/or hypoactivity, and more. Receiving high quality Occupational Therapy services was one of the most vital related services which helped my son to make gains in overcoming many of the more severe traits of Autism. However, it was not easy to find O.T. services; in fact, at one time, I was even told by an O.T., "I don't feel comfortable working with autistic kids." At that time, I was hurt and shocked as a parent, but I quickly moved on to find someone who did feel comfortable working with my son. One of the things which helped me to find appropriate Occupational Therapy services was that we were living in New Jersey at that time, a state which has procedures to register and regulate O.T. service providers in the public schools.

It is my understanding that Colorado does not currently have a similar procedure for the registration and regulation of qualified Occupational Therapists. My professional recommendation is that Colorado should implement a system of registration and regulation, so that very high standards of professional qualifications can be ensured. Children with a wide variety of different forms of disabilities benefit from O.T. services; however, in order for these services to be effective, they must be of outstanding quality. For this reason, our Occupational Therapists serving Mapleton Public Schools support the implementation of a statewide regulatory process for O.T.s in Colorado. As both a professional and a parent, I completely agree and hope that Colorado will take such steps to ensure professionalism and accountability for Occupational Therapists.

Sincerely,

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