

will be offered to the traditionally licensed teachers first. So, it wasn't that I was purposefully avoiding taking an English teaching position at the middle or high school level. I was never given the opportunity. Furthermore, I do not have the luxury of being unemployed, as I have a family for which to provide. My budget allowed for a pay cut but not for a complete eradication of income. So, if there are no jobs in teaching English, then why deny me the opportunity to work as an educator in another area for which my license was acceptable, especially since I left a well-paying career to become a teacher through the PACE program.

Fortunately, I was offered a position with adult education in August 2014. However, after my original hire was approved by the Horry County School Board, then the State denied my right to teach adult education citing I must teach English only in a high school or middle school setting, because this is where the need was. Yet, there were no middle school or high school teaching positions open at that time, and only a couple open since the beginning of the school year, so the State licensure office agreed to let me teach adult ed for the 2014-2015 school year. As for the designated area of "need", I don't agree with the PACE criteria that define "need". Simply ask my director if she feels her school is a high needs area. I am certain she would say it is, as she has had quite a time trying to fill her teaching positions in HCS's Adult Education, especially struggling with recruiting quality teachers. Many potential applicants view adult education as an "easy" gig, in other words, a way out of group instruction and lesson plans. But this is not the case, as our director wants active, engaged learning for the students. She wants teachers who use assessments to gauge student readiness for the GED, and provide individualized instruction, as well as general instruction, in order to prepare those students for the GED. In addition, I teach English to the high school diploma students – from English I to English IV. On a daily basis, I teach about 25-30 students. So, I am teaching English and much more.

Through Adult Education, I have made a difference serving our children. However, next year, because of PACE's irrational rules, I will not be allowed to continue teaching adult ed, and could, very possibly, end up unemployed. Currently, there are only two English teaching positions open in Horry County Schools for which I am qualified, and as I stated earlier, those positions will most likely go to a traditionally licensed teacher before being offered to a PACE certified teacher. Being that I have been successful in my current role as an adult education teacher (which my director, Etta Greene-Carter would verify), it seems unreasonable to move me out of my current teaching position into one where there is practically no availability, possibly causing me to be unemployed. I am appealing to you as a fellow Clemson alumnus, but, most importantly, as someone who cares about the unemployment rate of South Carolina and understands that there is a definite shortage of highly qualified teachers. So, I'm sure you see how illogical it is to force a successful, highly qualified teacher out of her current position into another nonexistent position. It simply makes no rational sense.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 843-449-6201 or via email: triciawilkes@frontier.com. If you need to verify any information with my director, Etta Greene-Carter, please feel free to contact her at 843-488-6200.

Regards,



Patricia Wilkes

CC: Molly Spearman, Superintendent of Education (via email)

Patricia A. Wilkes
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February 19, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Ms Haley,

In your 2014 inauguration address, you quoted Martin Luther King, Jr., “Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve.” Service, he believed, requires not a specific level of education or of sophistication, but only “a heart full of grace,” a “soul generated by love.” I truly understand your desire to serve our State in order to make a difference, as I have recently chosen to leave a financially lucrative career in marketing and public relations in order to serve our State as an underpaid educator. Please don’t misunderstand; I am not complaining about the pay, as I was well aware of the salary cut I would endure. I am simply saying that I intentionally chose to take a drastic cut in pay, so I could, like you, serve my state. I want to serve our children, and I feel especially passionate about serving those children who are looking for a second chance at getting an education, those children who didn’t manage to graduate when they originally had the chance, those children who are returning “all-grown” up physically, but not academically. Currently, I teach adults in Horry County Schools Adult Education Center. I am giving those, who might have had to settle for a less than stellar life, a second chance to get an education that will afford them a better future. I want to continue working with these students, as I am truly making a difference in their lives which is my whole reason for becoming a teacher. My director, Etta Greene-Carter, has told me that I am the best teacher in her program, which is also reflected in my numbers, as the majority of my students have met their gains by state standards. In addition, my overall gain percentages exceed the state standards.

However, next year, the State will not allow me teach adult education, because I possess a PACE alternative certification, and the State is mandating that I must be in a “traditional” school setting. With all the recent discussions about the incredible need for highly qualified teachers in South Carolina, I can’t make any strategic sense out of PACE’s argument against me teaching adult education. My PACE certification is for both middle school and secondary English. In order to teach adult education, an educator may have a teaching certification in any licensed area. So, I have the proper certification to teach adult education. In addition, I hold both a B.A. and M.A. in English from Clemson University and have taught college English courses at Coastal Carolina University, Horry-Georgetown Technical College and ITT Technical Institute. Through my teaching at ITT-Technical Institute, I have firsthand experience working with the type of students attending adult education, as most of my ITT-Tech students were either GED or high school diploma equivalent students. Thus, I can effectively relate the material to my adult education students. Furthermore, I have tried to adhere to PACE’s rule regarding teaching English in a high school or middle school setting. However, there have been very few English teaching positions open in Horry County since I received my PACE letter of eligibility in July 2014. At that time, I was also told by several Horry County School administrators that is very hard to acquire a position in a school as a PACE candidate. I was, further, advised by those administrators that I should quickly seize any teaching opportunity extended, as most positions