

I am Sandy Mangan, President of the Connecticut Reading Association. I have been teaching first and/or second grade for the past 21 years.

I am here today to offer comment on the proposed certification of school administrators. Good reading skills are a key to school achievement and indeed success for life. Reading goes beyond a set of skills - it is a process to derive meaning in all disciplines. We need educators and leaders who are well prepared to help all students advance in their reading competency.

Our schools need principals who have an interest in literacy and knowledge of literacy development so that they can identify what good literacy instruction looks like in the classroom and recognize the importance of hiring highly-qualified literacy personnel. The Connecticut Reading Association recommends that the State Board adopt regulations for administrator certification that include the International Reading Association's recommendation that individuals filling the role of "administrator" must have an advanced degree with a concentration in instructional leadership and reading coursework. We must have administrators who can support, evaluate, and recognize effective literacy instruction. Moreover, they must have a literacy vision for their school or district.

Not all school administrators are knowledgeable of effective literacy instruction. Our Connecticut research has found that of the principals who responded to a survey, only 18% reported having experience teaching reading or coursework in reading. One-third of the respondents revealed confusion about the roles of reading personnel. Reading consultants are being used as remedial teachers rather than being used to help administer school wide reading instruction. Job descriptions are lacking, leading to confusions in responsibilities and chain of command. Unqualified teachers, who lack in-depth training in reading instruction, are being hired as "literacy coaches." We must have informed administrators by providing them with the necessary knowledge about effective reading instruction. The Department of Education's two Blueprints emphasize the importance of having school leaders who are knowledgeable of the instructional approaches in literacy.

As policymakers, members of the Board of Education are the ones leading in efforts to closing Connecticut's achievement gap. Adding reading coursework to teacher preparation is not enough. We need to begin at the top. Connecticut will be ahead of the curve if it guarantees that administrators have the necessary reading background to properly hire and evaluate qualified teachers who will work along with administrators in implementing effective literacy education for all our students. We urge you to incorporate our recommendations into the proposed legislation. We are available for any additional information you may require. Thank you.

Sandy Mangan
Connecticut Reading Association President