

General Email comments on proposed certification changes received by CEA:

These new changes are extremely confusing, lengthy, and very involved. These changes will discourage young people from coming into teaching and veteran teachers will retire before they need to in order to avoid these confusing changes.

Whoever wrote these new proposals cannot be an educator or they would have seen the absurdity of their implications to the future of education in the state of Connecticut.

Katherine Tarutis, Bloomfield Public Schools

I am writing to voice my concerns regarding the number of teachers that are to be cut from the budget in Enfield this year. I am trying to be rational and understanding to the needs of the town to cut the budget and the need for teachers. However I think that if these drastic cuts go through that it will cripple the school systems in Enfield. The class sizes in my school are averaging at around 26-28 students. Right now I am seeing students falling behind more than usual. It is just impossible to give the proper one on one attention that is needed for a class of this size. If the cuts go through, the school will most likely have average class sizes that are near 30+. It is not fair to the kids in the classes who are not receiving an adequate education, because the people in town don't want to raise taxes. Everyone complains that taxes should stay down because the times are tuff but because of these tuff times taxes need to be raised. Every town will have to choose between the basic services being provided including education or a raise in taxes its' as simple as that. To cut the towns services is to condemn a lot of children from having a promising future. Thank you.

Matthew R. Gaffney, Enfield Public Schools

Not grandfathering in staff who have served in such positions is ridiculous. Just because there is a change in legislation does not mean there is a change in the ability of someone to do a great job.

Teachers work hard - let us continue to do our jobs.

Gabrielle Laux, Canton Public Schools

Public schools are in serious danger. Parents are hoping to be the lucky ones whose children win the lottery ticket for magnet or charter schools. Why? Because those schools focus on the specific needs and interests of the students who attend. Those students want to be there. If they do not succeed, they are not invited back. These schools are not run by the same rules and regulations as the public schools. They can operate independently. Therefore, the playing field is not even. When the newspapers and television compare the success of charter and magnet schools to the failure of public schools, it is a huge mockery because there is little basis for equal assessment. Rather than increase teacher certification to bridge the achievement gap or allow parents to take over a failing system, why don't we address the real issues of why our public schools

are failing? When I refer to lottery tickets I am not just referring to inner city schools, I am talking about suburban students, also.

Christine Gerritt, Cromwell Public Schools

Teachers are not the only ones responsible for the education of our children. We care deeply about the each and every one of our students. Please reconsider the intent of these proposed regulations changes. Why would you take away our ability to educate the children of this state? Please continue to support our efforts as educators to enlighten and help our students reach their fullest potential.

Marsha Burckson, Bloomfield Public Schools

I am opposed to the new certification laws. It is time to see that this is not the way to go. Heaping new requirements is not the answer. We need to take what we have and reevaluate, not add. Those of us who have taught for years can best tell you what is needed. Go to the classroom teacher who is the first line of defense and you will understand what is really needed. After 37 years of teaching I stand ready to help. I am opposed to the direction you are taking

Marie Herbst, Retired

Please do not change the certification guidelines. I think we will lose many good teachers if this continues.

MaryEllen Leen, Wilton Public Schools

I am writing to let you know that I do not support the proposed certification changes for Special Education, Teacher Leaders, or Literacy Specialists. The changes mean that I will receive less support from each of these educators, and/or the support they do give will be compromised by the increased workload and new responsibilities. Please do not proceed!

Margie Jones, Danbury Public Schools

It is my understanding that due to the possible changes in the certification process, I will lose precious time with, and support from, my amazing support staff that I have at my school. With the possible changes, my numeracy coach will have more responsibilities placed upon her, and as a first year teacher, I rely on her advice and leadership to assist in my daily teaching. Losing any possible time with her will greatly affect the support and feedback I receive as I am developing my teaching skills, in turn affecting the education I give to my students.

In addition, I also rely on my special education support staff to assist in educating my students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). There are several students at my school already who do not get the support from the resource staff that they are required by law to get through their IEP. This is because our special education/resource staff is already spread thin as it is. If this change goes through, more of my students will lose the resource time that they deserve and need in order for them to continue catching up to grade level academic and social skills/standards.

In conclusion, I disagree with the proposed changes, as it would negatively affect my students' education. I work in education for my students, not for a paycheck. Work me harder, I won't care...but take chances and resources away from my kids, and I will fight as hard as possible for them. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Emily Shumway, Bridgeport Public Schools

RE: Townspeople taking over school districts

Inadequate yearly progress in one town while others are safe does not happen because subpar teachers all gather in that town. It is because the socially-economic uniformity of towns leads to discrepancies. Poor people gather where property is inexpensive. Wealthy people gather elsewhere. There is nearly always a high correlation between wealth and school success. People with high-paying jobs probably succeeded in school. They probably also prepare their children well to succeed in education.

Also, The United States is a representative form of government. There is a reason we have representative boards of education. Opening up immediate school decisions to all people would be similar to opening up the US Senate to all citizens. Most issues are much too complicated for laypeople. People would also get direct control over decisions that would benefit their child. Decisions could be impacted by a person trying to get something for themselves instead of looking to benefit the good of all. Giving all townspeople direct control of our schools would produce anarchy.

It would be more helpful if politicians stopped trying to “fix” teaching and focused their efforts on helping families improve student readiness prior to entering kindergarten.

Andrew Wainacht, Killingly Public Schools

As an educator for 31 years, I strongly believe that the proposal to turn schools that are failing over to parents in the community would not create improved change. Parents are involved in their own careers and in raising their families. They have not been trained in education.

Also, tying teacher evaluation to student success or failure would be unfair. Students fail for various reasons which have nothing to do with the educator in the classroom. True, a few teachers are not effective in the classroom but they should be weeded out in the first two-three years of teaching by the evaluating administrator(s).

My experience has been that schools which are failing don't have enough resources such as teachers, paraprofessionals, books, even adequate physical spaces, equipment, etc. for the kind of population of students and community that they are trying to serve.

Barbara Dobrocki, Plainfield Public Schools

I am writing to tell you of my great concern for the proposed certification changes that are being discussed at the State level. I am completely AGAINST these changes. I am a Hebron teacher who was educated right here in Connecticut, earning my bachelors degree and my master's degree at Central Connecticut State University. I work in a school in which our resources are rich and our children work very hard to accomplish not only high test scores, but to create deep friendships, love academics at school, and are apart of a well-rounded school community. With the proposed certification changes, those who are in favor would take the fabulous, caring, highly trained teachers from their positions! I feel that if people who are working on these negative changes actually knew/came into our schools and observed every day work done by these great professionals, they would not remain in favor of changing the certifications. I feel that we cannot combine and put more stress on the committed teachers in our public schools!

Also, I feel that if changes are to be made, they need to be done at the college level. CLEAR requirements for all students who are in the education programs should know and understand what steps need to be taken in order to become a teacher. People who are willing and excited to come into the teaching profession need to be aware of CLEAR and precise steps that they take in order to become a Reading Specialist, Special Education teacher, etc., in our state. DO NOT change the certification requirements for those who have already spent thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours in college classes, and countless hours away from their family members!!

Thank you for your time and I hope that enough teachers from around Connecticut have e-mailed and contacted your office so that all who are involved know that I (and hundreds of other teachers) am against the proposed certification changes!

Sarah Costa, Hebron Public Schools

I am writing in response to the proposed changes to the teacher certification procedure. As a Certified School Psychologist in a relatively large high school with a challenging population, I have had firsthand

experience with situations that arise when a program lacks qualified, dedicated teachers. This proposal appears to hinder anyone attempting to enter the field when, in fact, they should all be encouraged to pursue these demanding, often thankless positions.

As fewer teachers are available, schools will be forced to “lump” students together in inappropriate groupings based on teacher availability rather than ability. I urge you to reconsider these changes, in light of the impact they will have on anyone choosing to enter the field, as well as on all of the students they serve. Identifying and retaining dedicated, well – trained educational staff is already difficult enough – why create additional barriers for those who want to enter this field? Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Stephanie Hamed Borowy, Torrington

I’m writing to express my concern regarding the certification changes. I have been an Elementary teacher for 25 years. Our district is addressing the new SRBI regulations by implementing Supplemental Skills. I’m working with the students who struggle in math. I do not have a math certification and at this stage of the game I don’t think I should be spending hours getting one. I continue to take any professional development I can in order to keep abreast math concerns and changes. Why change this now? We veteran teachers have a good bag of tricks to help our students. Is it that important for a degree? Why not grandfather those veterans in?

Lori Shuhi, Litchfield

My testimony is that I don’t think that these changes have students’ best interest in mind. I think these changes might spread teachers even thinner, making it hard for the students with special needs to get the attention they really need and deserve. Also, I know that I couldn’t afford to get more studies at this time. I owe over \$20,000 as it is and am barely scraping by.

Joy Castro, Orange Public Schools

I understand the need for competency among teachers. However, some of the new proposals are totally out of line for what is being expected from teachers. I can understand asking for additional CEUs to be gathered in the area of expertise that one is teaching in for the purpose of staying up to date and current with methodology and pedagogical issues. I do not feel that not grandfathering certain certifications is fair at all, nor is it in the best interests of the many CT school systems or their students. School systems that do not have the needed personnel will be scrambling while those teachers who had the needed prior certification are left not being able to service our students. Who loses? The students lose and so do the regular education teachers who rely on these specialists to help them with educating students with

disabilities or weaknesses in these areas. Please rethink this whole certification changing issue as it will not benefit anyone. Rethink and come up with other ways to be sure professionals are competent such as the requirement of an additional 15 or so hours in your level of expertise for CEUs among the 90 now required every five years. This will ensure that the professionals are staying current with the latest ideas and satisfy the need for the state to know that CT teachers do their best day in and day out to serve the students in the greatest way possible to be sure their education is one of the finest in the country.

Holly Wood, Sterling Public Schools

I am a sixth grade Special Education teacher. As we address educational issues in these trying financial times, we are faced with numerous hazards to the educational process. We, as educators, make less money each year due to contract changes, rising insurance costs, and freezes. Districts pay more each year for curriculum needs and management operations, as legislators continue to mandate restrictions that inhibit the human process of great teaching. Now we are being faced with losing or significantly altering the only resources we have that we never have to give up on...EACH OTHER! There is a cost built into what we provide each other also, but we never run low on blood, sweat, and tears! Our tears should come from pride in student achievement. Our sweat should come from the grueling efforts we put forth every day for our students' gain. Our blood should race through our veins, as we meet our deadlines, compile our data catches, and prepare our diversified curriculum with limited allotments of time. Oh, it is true that this all does happen now, with the collaborative efforts of general and special educators. In addition, we squeeze in collaborative consultation amongst colleagues.

Why make our blood, sweat, and tears flow through a hierarchy, on an island, feeling alone, disjointed, and disconnected from all who fuel our creative intellectual energies? Why segment and overload us all, which will ultimately hurt the very community members we choose to serve and dedicate our lives to? Why strip new teachers of the opportunity to learn from the valued expertise of seasoned veterans who can pass on the wealth of an educational generation, for the next to be richer? Why deny an exemplary professional the opportunity to continue the magical methods from which learning comes, simply because certification changes did not honor or respect the donation of a passion to shape the future?

Since when do learners only learn from one method? Isn't diversified instruction addressed through multi-sensory strategies? Why would you deny a student teacher from witnessing, experiencing, and executing brain and academic development strategies, but then ...expect them to go do it!! What would make these highly qualified professionals be, just that, if they had not been able to live and learn? Gifted, talented

teachers become them from doing it. Much of what we learn about teaching is from the student learners themselves. Now, this is not to say that training, BEST practices, or Effective Teaching Strategies are not used, but rather how they are implemented or task analyzed throughout the processes and procedures needs to be gleaned from student data displays. How they think, often reflects how we teach, which mirrors back, how they learn. If you isolate sounds and words for being within text, students cannot learn to read in context. If you isolate staff skills and strategies, others cannot comprehend the true progressive development of a child. We must value our educators who have devoted their lives to humanity, before it became more bureaucratic like a conglomerate of business. All professionals working with children must continue to actually be with them, on some instructional level. Consultation is a highly valued resource that we have all benefited from greatly. It is always difficult to have time to share with colleagues, for practical application in the classroom. Often it is outside of the school day, but building it into the school day, while eliminating or reducing student contact hours may damage student accomplishments more than help them.

What happened to “It takes a village”? We must keep our members of our scholastic community working collaboratively together. Departmentalizing tasks and reducing the blended expertise of professional and student interaction needs to be looked at more closely. In the age of data analysis, we have proven that to raise student achievement you must have laser-like focus areas to strategically address, which in turn raises student achievement across the board. Why, then, would the expectations for the preparation programs have such a broad spectrum, and superficial areas of study, rather than a laser-like approach to create specialists?

State Department of Education, please, put forth your character traits of respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, honesty, and caring, so we as professional educators may persevere to practice what we preach, and TEACH!!!

Denise Beaulieu, East Hartford Public Schools

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I have been a teacher in CT for sixteen years. I have continually worked to improve my teaching abilities and skills in order to always be the best teacher possible. I received my initial teaching certificate in the early nineties when opportunities for teachers were not readily available.

I substituted for a year and taught as a Special Education teaching assistant for two years before receiving my first teaching position. I now have my Professional certificate as a Reading Specialist. I completed my

Master's at SCSU with the additional course work for Reading Consultant in 2001 but did not submit the paperwork in time to receive this certification.

Then in 2006 I was selected by my district for training as a Reading Recovery teacher. Recently I enrolled in the Sacred Heart University Educational Leadership program and have achieved the five courses or fifteen credits required to test for the CT Administrative certification.

I believe that the State of Connecticut and the State Department of Education need to consider that many teachers, especially those who chose to specialize are very serious and committed professionals. I have achieved and completed most of my certifications completely on my own source of funding with the exception of the Reading Recovery training. I hope you will accept this statement as a part of your public record for comments from Connecticut Educators regarding changes in certification.

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Margaret Kennedy,