

Literacy Specialist Certification comments received by CEA

I am currently an Elementary Reading Consultant. I hold both Remedial Reading (102) and Reading/Language Arts Consultant certification (097). I have a Master's degree as a Consulting Teacher of Reading. My concern under the new proposal is that I will be essentially demoted to a Literacy Teacher, rather than Specialist, unless I go back to school and acquire 12 additional credits. I have been teaching reading since 1991; why can't those of us that already hold (097) certification be granted Literacy Specialist certification and those that hold (102) be granted Literacy teacher certification?

I believe it is true that we are used interchangeably. Districts should be given clear job descriptions under each new role by the State Department of Education. The districts should adopt these job descriptions, so that we are not used interchangeably. Furthermore, I am very concerned that classroom teachers will take 30 credits and be granted Literacy Specialist certification. What classes will they be taking? Will there be a set program? This needs to be very clear. Thank you for your attention in this very important matter.

Joan M. Marsh, Enfield Public Schools

I currently hold a provisional certificate #102 and an administrator's certificate #092 and have been teaching in the state of CT for five years. I was thoroughly trained by a well-respected university in Maryland and have been trained in administering over 50 diagnostic tests. I do a number of jobs including spearheading the reading program at my school, advising on curriculum, coaching teachers and providing RTI interventions. I have taken a 6th year degree in educational leadership and have been in school for many years. I am shocked that your department thinks I need to take even more credits than I have already taken for certification. It is possible that the only time the state of Connecticut will feel I have finally taken enough courses for a #102 certification will be on the day I retire or lose my house to educational debt or perhaps both. This route is completely unaffordable for me since I have a son in college and tuition costs are escalating everywhere. There are protests being planned as we speak because of the costs of tuition. Does the Department of Education have the funds to provide for my extra education required?

I know no one more than I who has more expertise and practicing ability in my field. I am relied on for improving our test scores and since I was hired in my district just one year ago, my district has made Adequate Yearly Progress for the first time in years. I have spent about \$50,000 on

my post-graduate education that I will never recover and am I now expected to spend more? I have many courses in the area proposed. I do independent research daily to be sure I stay on top of the reading delivery system and I am fully knowledgeable of research -based interventions. I attend professional development regularly. Why are you choosing the most educated teachers to have more required education when 21 year-olds are still receiving inadequate education to pass the state reading/Praxis tests? Do the educating where it is needed and not at the #102 level. While you are at it could you please require teachers to learn to teach phonics? It would make things a lot easier for students and reading specialists.

Have you seen the want ads lately? Do you know what districts are doing? Many are expecting their best and most educated, their #102 candidates to, work only 49% of the time, thereby denying them medical coverage and other benefits. So now we have demands on us for more educational investment for a less than ½ time jobs! Does this make sense? Perhaps the assumption is because the #102 certification was previously exempt from the unsuccessful BEST program it is now time to make all #102 specialists pay up. This is simply absurd and not grounded in educational facts. We have already undergone scrutiny and cost prohibitive, draconian educational requirements. I know that in the “race” to get funding, Education Secretary Arne Duncan has exacted his “one school Chicago success story” agenda and the only way to qualify for funds is to meet the large number of caveats the federal government has insisted upon, but this is the wrong place to look.

Do you have any idea how many students are behind in reading, vocabulary and comprehension in the state of Connecticut? Reading specialists are some of the most driven to excellence, exacting, nit picky, and quality conscious people I know in education. You are driving the good candidates away because they can easily choose another career outside of education where their hard work and skills would be appreciated ...and they won't have this new, federal initiative based axe over their heads. My son who is 24 and has just a bachelor's degree in business is making more money than I am. I just finished educating him, now I have to take even more graduate credits, educate my other son and put myself into further debt for courses I am more qualified to TEACH than to take. Where is the equity?

Don't you know that pride in professionalism is at times the only thing that keeps good teachers afloat with hope in this challenging world of apathy toward literacy and the printed word? Look around and at all the under performing students who spend school days on trips to Disney World or those entering kindergarten without any idea of what the alphabet looks like. Even with

the best education, there is a good chance these students will become remedial readers- and the numbers are growing. Don't you want to attract the best to the field of Reading? Who will you attract? If you took a free market perspective, it would be absolutely obvious that these measures would be counterproductive. The folly of the overblown BEST program should have shown that this type of endeavor only drives teachers with intellect away from Connecticut. Thank you.

Reading Teacher, Thomaston

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I wish to convey my deep concern about the State Department of Education's proposal to essentially combine the current reading certifications, one classroom teacher and one administrative, into one general reading certification. Having been trained for both certifications and working initially as a classroom reading teacher and now as a specialist, I feel well qualified to respond to this initiative.

First and foremost, the two positions are very different, requiring different strengths for success. Classroom teachers of reading have a focus that can be developmental or remedial, but the focus is on working directly with the students. Specialists are focusing on programmatic decisions for both developmental and remedial reading, while at the same time overseeing initiatives that can be school and district wide. Specialists devote much time and energy to establishing working relationships with colleagues so that overall instruction is impacted and every student receives reading instruction through general content instruction. Having the two positions allows for the differing focuses, individual student vs. programmatic concerns, for each to be given substantial and needed resources. No remedial student, no matter how well-meaning their content teacher, will make up deficits with just grade level instruction. Each remedial student is going to need some specific intervention from a professional who is both trained and scheduled to deliver the instruction. All students should be taught through methodology that uses best practices in text instruction, no matter the training of the content teacher. With the needs of a changing population and data collection impacting instructional decision making, the reading specialist needs to view the big picture while the classroom reading teacher needs to be free to focus very specifically on the individual learner's needs. Combining these positions will limit the time and compact the resources needed for each professional to do the job the students need done, the job of teaching reading.

Kristina Cimini, Canton Public Schools

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I am currently working at Granby Memorial High School. I have been teaching for 22 years and hold a Master's degree as well as a Certificate of Graduate Study (6th year). I renewed my professional certificate #102 (remedial reading/remedial language arts) in 2009 and feel strongly that the proposed certification changes are unfair – if my certification is not going to be grandfathered and fees waived. While I consider myself to be a life-long learner, as I pursue workshops and professional development opportunities quite often, the new certification requirements would place a financial and personal burden on me.

Deborah Dussault, Granby Public Schools

It is hard to believe that in this difficult economic climate, with districts finding it impossible to pass budgets and meet the needs of students, that the State Department of Education would be making it even more difficult for educators to do their job. I can't believe that this proposal is even being considered. Please visit our schools and see just how difficult this job is with our already limited resources. This change in certification is uncalled for and would leave many students without the needed services of a literacy specialist.

Charlene Kilcomons, Simsbury Public Schools

I would just like to quickly voice my concerns about the certification changes. It has been my goal to one day become a literacy coach and help to teach new teachers how to be better literacy teachers. I am beginning to go back to school this fall. However, with the change in credit requirement I fear that I will not be able to accomplish this due to financial reasons. Becoming a reading specialist is not my life long dream; and I feel weary that this change in requirements could cause me to get stuck as a reading teacher for longer then I would like to be.

I hope that other teacher leaders will not be as discouraged by this change as I am.

Jessica Landolfi, Granby Public Schools

I am currently a reading teacher. I have a master's in reading and language arts and a reading recovery degree. I have and continue to educate myself through in-services, workshops, and professional books/ articles. I am HIGHLY qualified to do my job! My students' probes indicate great growth in the area of literacy development. I have parents requesting my services before/after school and during summer vacations. I have been teaching for 25 years! It makes no sense to me

that I would need to get a new certification to continue my current teaching responsibilities. My town believes in my ability and my students make progress under my guidance. If this new certification "idea" passes- I would be replaced by a new- inexperienced teacher holding a # 097 certificate. That makes him/her better than me? Someone currently holding a reading teacher position, without a # 097 certificate, should NOT be terminated or made to "go back to school" if the town he/she is working for believes in his/her capabilities!! This is a BAD idea and is making a lot of professional reading teachers very upset!!! Please DO NOT allow this happen and if the state mandates this as necessary for future reading teachers- those already in the system should be grandfathered in!! Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Lynne Gagliardi, Newington Public Schools

I began teaching elementary school in 1972 and left 7.5 years later to raise a family. In 1994, I returned to teaching. I spent 18 years as a third and fourth grade teacher and am currently in my fourth year as a Literacy Teacher. I have been trained in four Scientifically Research Based intervention programs and attended several Columbia Teachers College Summer Institutes in Reading and Writing, as well as their Coaching Institute. I also attended Ct Writing Project. I have been a BEST mentor for over 10 years and now serve as a TEAM mentor. In 2002 I was recognized by my district for exemplary practices. I continually deliver professional development in our building and district in Literacy. Our school's data reflects solid performance on Connecticut Mastery Tests, and our struggling and at risk students' performances and data show positive growth. If this proposal is passed, I am in jeopardy of losing my position.

While I fully understand and support the idea that our literacy interventionists must be highly qualified and competent to deliver specialized instruction for students and model for and coach teachers, to assume that those currently in the position with different certification do not meet those standards is a disservice to students and districts throughout our state.

In my opinion, the proposal breaks down with the statement that no one will be grandfathered.

There should be a criteria established whereby current Literacy Teachers and Coaches can be evaluated using their career history and grandfathered in the position if that criteria is met.

Consideration should be given in the following areas:

- Experience including classroom experience

- Professional Development completed both in and out of district with attached list of workshops and courses attended
- History of Continuing Education Units in Reading
- Programs currently trained in and implementing
- Evaluations by principals and central office administrators

There are highly qualified teachers at risk who could be barred from their positions leaving schools, students, teachers and districts suffering great loss.

I implore you to rethink the current proposal. Should the standards be kept high? Absolutely! But flushing out system after system of qualified and effective teachers will leave a void in our schools that no “degree” can replace for years to come. Set high standards, evaluate fairly what you have in place and build from there.

Anonymous Teacher

Please reconsider the changes to literacy certification. Teachers who currently hold a 102 certificate are highly qualified professionals who have attended numerous professional development courses throughout their teaching years. Having to obtain 12 more credits poses an undo burden on these professionals. Equally important, it is an unnecessary burden as these courses would be redundant and repetitive when measured against their current knowledge and capabilities. There is a need; there is a demand for the role of reading teacher. A 102 certificate is an admirable, valuable role making a huge difference in students' literacy development.

Bonnie Strader, Wilton Public Schools

I am writing to protest the new recommendations for certification for reading consultants and specialists. I have been employed teaching reading and performing staff development since 2001 in Wilton, CT. I make it my job to continually attend professional development all the time and I feel that I am up on the latest research, techniques, and skills for my profession. I am totally against the fact that you are not planning to "grandfather" the people who already are in the field working and making a difference in literacy in children's lives. It seems unconstitutional and I am totally against this new proposal. If you want to change the requirements for the people currently working on their degree and certification, I have no argument with that. However, I am firmly against making

professionals that have been certified in their field, suddenly **not** being certified. **Please re-think this new proposal!**

Sandra Little, Wilton Public Schools

As a reading consultant (097) for over 20 years, I am very concerned with the possibility of changes to our certification. I am sure you are aware of the rigorous coursework both in reading and administration, as well as the clinical practice that is necessary to receive that certification (097). I am concerned that the State Department of Education will diminish the skills necessary in order to achieve that certification, by grandfathering in literacy coaches and reading support staff. This would reduce the certification coursework needed to receive the 097 certification and allow these personnel to obtain this certification without the necessary knowledge and clinical experience.

I tried to think of an analogy that might help me to spotlight my argument. Take for example a medical doctor. We know that in order to receive a general practitioner's license, all doctors take a course or two in neurology. They may even have an intern rotation in neurology. Would they be able to become a neurologist and do brain surgery without obtaining extra coursework and an intensive study in neurology and surgery? I think not. I, for one, would not go to a general practitioner for brain surgery, but would go directly to a specialist in the field of neurology.

Why then would you grandfather teachers who have been a literacy coach or support teacher in reading, making them eligible for a certification that requires much more study in order to achieve the level of competence of a reading specialist/consultant, without requiring the additional study?

Do not diminish the 097 certification by minimizing the necessary coursework and practical clinical experience necessary to achieve that high level of competence. If teachers want to become Language Arts Consultants, they should do the necessary study to raise their level of understanding in literacy. The students in Connecticut deserve no less.

Nora Kurimai, Fairfield Public Schools

I am currently a reading specialist in Stratford. I work with students needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 reading intervention. I was completely shocked to hear that changes may be made to the 102 certification. I spent five years obtaining this certification from Southern Connecticut State University and feel I am extremely qualified in this position. With my schedule now, I would not be able to go back to school for the additional requirements that are being proposed. I am afraid that

many qualified literacy specialists like me would be discouraged and possibly move back into a classroom teacher position. The problem is WE NEED THE READING SPECIALISTS/CONSULTANTS THAT WE HAVE!! Whether someone is titled a specialist or consultant should not matter. That person has a specialty in reading, regardless. I know I have an administrative degree as well, but what I do as a reading specialist has nothing to do with being an administrator. I am a leader in literacy, not an administrator.

Jacqueline Vallillo, Stratford Public Schools

I am writing in regard to the proposal to combine the 102 and 097 reading certifications. I am currently completing my last class towards my 102 certification. I have been in graduate school for three years and was very upset to hear that if this new proposal passes, the work that I have done will be worth nothing. I have talked to people currently in classes towards their 097 certification and have been told that the classes are just more of the same as the 102 certification classes. It's just more time and money that has to be spent and in the end there will be very little compensation for these efforts. At the end of this semester, I will hold three different teaching certifications. Four more courses will not make me more qualified to be a reading teacher, consultant, specialist, coach, or whatever it is being called at the moment. There has to be a better way to resolve this situation. There is a growing need for teachers who have a strong understanding of literacy instruction-not all of this learning will come from a certification or a few more courses. Most of my knowledge of literacy has come from my district and the professional development they have offered-not the 13 + courses on reading I have under my belt.

Jessica Carey, Westport Public Schools

I am writing to express concern about the proposed changes for literacy specialists. I have been a Reading Consultant and Reading Specialist for 28 years and feel that my present credentials qualify me for all dimensions of a literacy specialist. I take many hours of continuing education credits in my area and have kept current with numerous workshops, conferences and numerous professional development activities. I don't think that adding the 12 additional credits will make my role as a literacy specialist any more specialized and I would rather spend my time on CEU activities. I feel that current Reading Specialists/Consultants should be grandfathered into the present requirements for being a Reading Specialist/Consultant.

Nancy Bernasek, Wilton Public Schools

I am writing to express my concerns over the potential changes to our certification. While I can see they would want us to have additional coursework beyond our masters' degree, the question has to be asked, "Who will be paying for the additional coursework?" In many other professions, when people are being asked to continue their education, they are reimbursed. In teaching, the burden is always placed on the teachers who are already overloaded as it is with their daily responsibilities to the students we are educating. I think we need to stop putting the burden on the teachers. Thank you.

Elisa Pitoniak, Region 17 Schools

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I am a Reading Specialist working in a public school in Connecticut. I am opposed to the proposed changes for my certification. I'd like to mention a few of my concerns.

1. I am a Reading Specialist by choice. I do not want to work as a Reading Consultant; I prefer the daily hands-on work with children over more school-wide, administrative tasks. I do work with teams of teachers on building strategies and enhancing our literacy program. But I choose not to be a literacy coordinator for our school. I want to work with children. With the new changes in certification, I would lose that autonomy as a teacher of reading and possibly be forced to work at a more administrative level.
2. I am currently within 10 years of retirement. Although I am always interested in learning more about my craft, through professional development, conferences and workshops, now is not the time for me to return to school for further course work. Having to fulfill requirements for additional credits is not something I am interested in nor am I willing to pay for the proposed classes necessary for continued certification as a Reading Specialist.
3. The responsibilities for this combined position, as outlined in the proposal, appear to be far too broad for any one person working as a Reading Specialist/Consultant. These positions should be separate. Please refer to *The Reading Teacher*, Vol. 56, No. 5, February 2003 for a good definition of a Reading Specialist's primary responsibilities including: expert instruction, assessment and leadership for the school's reading program.
4. Most Reading Specialists are not trained to cover full diagnosis of all levels of learning difficulties. By demanding more diagnostic responsibilities, the Reading Specialist will be less available for support of children and teachers in the everyday work of learning to read. The separation of Consultant and Specialist leaves a clear working division for more of the "special education"

responsibilities such as testing and diagnostics.

5. If consolidation of professional duties and tasks is demanded in the realm of reading, why not other areas as well? One could imagine the consolidation of music and art, and make two teachers go back to a master's program to become an Art/Music Specialist. Or the Principal/Assistant Principal could be one specialized position. Science and Math? ESL and Spanish? Do these proposed changes enhance learning for the children of Connecticut? NO!

Robin Farquhar, Hebron Public Schools

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed changes to the Reading Certification. I currently hold the 102 Reading Certification.

When I sought the certificate, I did so because I wanted to teach students who had difficulties with reading. I had, and have, no interest in being a supervisor or developing such a program, in being a district coordinator, or in training other adults.

The education I received to get my reading certificate prepared me well to work with students. It focused on student needs, reading theory and effective strategies. Since then I have continued seeking professional development in reading so that I could stay current in my field.

To combine the two certificates seems to me to be a move that will make it more difficult for people to be certified to work with students. Why require someone to take courses needed for administration or supervision if they won't be used? By doing so, it seems that in a regular 30 credit program, some of the courses will then focus on areas other than student need, teaching strategies, and reading theory.

I strongly support keeping the two certificates separate. This will mean that the coursework for each will remain focused on the purpose of the certificate. Students in need of remediation need teachers with a solid background in the coursework designed to address student need.

Please don't combine the certification.

Marian Galbraith, Groton Public Schools

It is in the best interest of students and our educational communities that the State Department of Education (SDE) creates multiple literacy specialist certificates and not the one that is currently proposed. The name alone suggests that a specialist has differentiated skills. The CEA has suggested, and I agree, that the SDE should create separate literacy teacher and literacy coordinator certificates. The range of proposed responsibilities is too wide for one certificate and the preparation program

for the initial certificate is too broad for a minimum of 30+ hours of credit. Also the additional 12 credits required for the professional certificate indicates the overall program is too “full” for one certificate. Having multiple certificates would be more efficient than the current ideas being suggested by the SDE. I would also suggest that the SDE continue to investigate, with all stakeholders, the roles and responsibilities that are impacted by this certification change and the skills necessary to fill these positions. This could easily be done by gathering these stakeholders together to share data and ideas for this important certification change so that our schools are served at the highest level possible.

Michael L. Freeman, Stonington

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The SDE's intention to change the requirements for obtaining a Literacy Specialist certificate has recently come to my attention. I have read the proposed changes and I am both disappointed and dismayed. I believe the statement "no grandfathering" should be changed to "current certificate holders will be grandfathered."

I currently hold a professional certificate as Reading and Language Arts Consultant, K- Grade 12 (097) and have for the past 15 years. I earned my Master's Degree in Reading from Eastern CT State University back in 1991 and have been a reading teacher since 1993. During the past 17 years, the district I have worked for has given reading teachers myriad titles and responsibilities. I have worked as a reading teacher, a reading specialist, a remedial reading teacher, a reading recovery teacher, a literacy specialist, and am currently a remedial reading teacher. Even though my title has changed, my responsibilities have not. I still work with struggling readers and my focus is still to increase student achievement. I have earned a total of 45 graduate credits in reading and language arts and consider myself an expert in the field and an effective and successful master teacher. I believe my colleagues, my administrators and the hundreds of parents of the hundreds of students I've taught to read would also agree. I belong to professional organizations and read professional materials, keeping current on literacy issues that come and go throughout the years. I consider myself a lifetime learner.

The SDE has proposed 2 levels of literacy certification (Literacy Teacher and Literacy Specialist). I have worked in every capacity mentioned. I work with students AND their teachers as any reading teacher would. I have trained paraprofessionals and literacy tutors. I have trained teachers and parents. I have developed my own reading programs and have implemented prescribed programs. I continually diagnose reading problems and plan and execute effective remediation.

For the SDE to blatantly state "no grandfathering" directly affects me and hundreds of very

qualified, effective and dedicated reading specialists across the state of CT. I hope the SDE reconsiders the proposal and makes appropriate and necessary changes.

Claudia A. Fridinger, Stonington Public Schools

As a middle/high school science teacher, my own certification is not affected by any of the changes currently proposed by the Connecticut State Board of Education. However, my ability to work productively with my students will be affected by each of these ill-advised proposals. I will let those who are more directly involved as special educators, teacher-leaders, and teachers and consultants of literacy comment on the specific details in each proposal.

However, I feel compelled to comment on one of the rationales given for combining the certificate for remedial reading and language arts teacher and the certificate for reading and language arts consultant into a single certificate. At the State Board of Education meeting in January, the certification bureau chief justified this proposal with the statement that, "administrators don't understand difference between them, and use educators interchangeably."

By way of analogy, my students struggle to understand the difference between "mass" (the amount of matter in an object) and "weight" (the force of gravity acting on that object), and they use the terms interchangeably. Does that mean I should just combine them into one term ("wass" or "meight"???) and forget about the important applications that require knowledge of the difference between the two? Of course not! My job is to find a way to help my students understand the difference, so they can correctly apply their understanding to further learning.

If administrators do not understand the differences between literacy teachers and consultants, it should be the job of the State Department of Education to find a way to help them understand the differences. As outlined in the counter-proposal from the CEA, there are separate and distinct roles for literacy teachers and specialists. Combining the two certificates into one will not serve the educators, like myself, who rely on the expertise of teachers to remediate our students in the single most important skill needed to function in our classrooms. More importantly, it will not serve our students, who will need that skill to function in an information-driven world.

Please do not combine the two certificates. We need literacy teachers who are trained for and dedicated to working with students, and specialists who are trained for and dedicated to working with teachers and administrators, to be sure that our students leave our care with the ability and love of reading.

Susan J. Brooks, Region 6 School District

As a reading consultant myself, I am very concerned over the proposal to have all reading specialists receive their reading consultancy degree. It is an extra 12 hours above and beyond the remedial reading degree and is considered an administrative degree. We do not need all of our reading/literacy specialists to be administrators! I believe that the children will lose out since the extra 12 hours will be a deterrent to someone who would like to be in the reading field. An ideal situation would be to have a reading consultant directly supervise the building or district literacy specialists. I thank you for your consideration.

Diane Lauretano, Litchfield Public Schools

I am a seventh grade social studies teacher in my second year of teaching in Connecticut. I am writing today to express my concerns regarding the proposed changes to certifications for special educators and literacy specialists. As a regular educator, I work hand-in-hand with the special education teachers and reading specialist to develop the best instructional plans for our students receiving services. Our special educators work diligently to meet these students' needs and to provide assistance to teachers like myself who do not have the specific training for the multitude of special needs and abilities.

Under the SDE's proposed changes these teachers would be required to take on additional duties such as training of staff. These duties will have an immediate negative impact on their ability to provide timely and quality services to our students. The budgetary constraints of these new proposals may also impact my ability to teach effectively because if my district cannot afford to pay these teachers at the new mandatory level of holding a Masters Degree, then there may be fewer specialized teachers servicing our student population. This ultimately puts the burden on the regular classroom educator (me) who has not received significant training in special education or remedial literacy.

I understand that the goal of these changes is to improve student learning but these changes will only negatively impact the learning environment for all students.

I urge the CEA to push the Connecticut legislators to rethink their original proposals and to adopt the changes suggested by the CEA.

Cynthia McManaman, Vernon Public Schools

I am a Literacy Coach working in a middle school in Bridgeport, CT. I am a graduate of a reading certification program of Southern CT State University. In order to complete my degree (certification

102), I commuted 100 minutes, once or twice a week for three years to complete my qualifications, and at the same time worked full-time in the public schools. This was an extreme hardship, both physically and financially for my family. But in good faith, I challenged myself and completed the program. What a shock to find out that the bar is now being raised again. I can't believe the State Dept. of Education would be so inconsiderate and mean spirited to working families of Connecticut. While I was involved my program at Southern, it became clear that as a working coach I was very much ahead of the curve. In Bridgeport, all of the research and development was happening right in our district. We needed to change our practice in order to change our results, and very sincerely, we engaged in professional development activities that mirrored what I was learning in graduate school. In fact, one of my courses was totally repeated in a district professional development activity. It had the same materials, same philosophy, and same activities, only was more condensed. This persuaded me that there was nothing to be gained by perusing the consultancy (097) certification, since I was already doing the work in the school. Certainly, there was no financial incentive.

Sherry Takahashi, Bridgeport Public Schools

I am a literacy support teacher in the Torrington Public School District. I provide reading instruction to small groups of children as an extension of regular classroom instruction. At this time the position does not require a specialist certification because I do not provide remedial instruction. I do hold a special education certification, however. This additional endorsement entitled me to a salary increase. If I were to go back to school to obtain yet another degree/ certification for literacy intervention I, like any others required to do this, would be entitled to yet another significant pay increase. How will the state provide for each of these salary increases? As it is, a town like Torrington cannot afford to expand its budget each year. Teachers are laid off each year because state and federal contributions are not provided as necessary. I think the SDE should consider how these changes will affect school budgets.

Heidi Casarola, Torrington Public Schools

I am writing on behalf of a four-person middle school Literacy team in Waterbury, Connecticut. We are writing to comment on the proposed Literacy Specialist certificate. We strongly believe that this new proposal should be revised to grandfather in current Reading/Language Arts, Remedial

Reading/Language, Arts, and English certificate holders.

In addition, teachers holding a master's degree in Reading/Language Arts or English should also be grandfathered in because of previously completed coursework and teaching experiences in those areas. This proposed certificate would have a great impact on our existing Literacy program. With this newly proposed certification, there would be a staffing shortage in our district, and students would not be able to receive the additional Literacy support currently offered in Waterbury. Our existing program has been a great factor in increasing student achievement in academic areas and on mastery tests. Please reconsider revising the proposed certificate changes so the teachers and students of Waterbury do not suffer any negative impact. Thank you for your time.

Michael Pannoni, Jodi Sarlo, Dayna Paternostro, Patience Bonner, Waterbury Public Schools

I am an Early Literacy Tutor in the Fairfield Public Schools. I am currently eligible for the 102 Certification (I have completed the coursework, but have not applied for the certification as of yet). I am concerned about the proposed changes in the current reading certifications in the state of Connecticut, which would combine the two current remedial reading & reading consultant certification into one certificate. The experience and coursework necessary for the positions that each of these certificates qualify a teacher for are vastly different. I am currently an hourly employee with no benefits and therefore no financial support of my continuing education. If someone earning my hourly wage with no support needed the new certification that requires more course hours (and thus more financial strain), they would be unable to complete it. They would be required to have a knowledge base vastly beyond what is required for the position. And they would not be paid at a level consistent with the level of education required for the position. I believe that my position is of great importance to the schools and saves the system money, in that students are remediated and then do not require further services such as special education. I think it is also important to insure that well qualified teachers are maintained in working with struggling students. However, the system simply cannot afford to pay me to continue my education. So unless Early Literacy Tutors are going to be considered "professional staff" with all the benefits associated with such a title, then we cannot require them to have even more advanced certification than is already required. On the other hand, we cannot allow Literacy Tutor position to become a non professional position, where inexperienced and uncertified staff is working with our neediest student population

Furthermore, I expect those serving as reading consultants to have a great deal more training and experience than a Literacy Tutor, as they are expected to train teachers, model for them and manage the entire reading program for the school. I believe very strongly that the two certifications should be kept separate as they serve two very different purposes and prepare educators for positions that have very different levels of responsibility.

I urge you to consider my comments and the comments of others before making such drastic changes.

Lori Chervin, Fairfield Public Schools

