

Remarks of Phil Apruzzese
President, Connecticut Education Association

Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed changes to certification

April 29, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Phil Apruzzese and I'm a 5th grade teacher and president of the Connecticut Education Association. I'm here today to comment on the proposed changes to certification.

During the course of the past month, I've attended all five of the certification hearings, as have hundreds of my colleagues. Teachers have sent in hundreds of comments and pieces of written testimony, and more than 100 teachers have testified in person about the proposed changes. The message has been loud and clear, and has continuously brought out the same points:

1. The teacher leader certificate is unnecessary and, as proposed, doesn't suit the needs of our districts;
2. There should continue to be two distinct levels of literacy certification, and the differences in the roles of the two certificate holders should be made clear to districts;
3. There should be two levels of special education certification;

4. Teachers should not be required to hold a certificate in another content area prior to earning special education certification;
5. A master's degree in special education should not be required for initial certification in that field;
6. The preparation programs for the proposed literacy specialist and special education certificates are too jammed; and
7. There are too many roles and responsibilities that come under the one proposed certificate for literacy specialists and special educators.
8. Some of the proposed changes are likely to drive teachers away from the fields of literacy and special education, which our profession can't afford.

Teachers have given valid reasons for their opposition, while supporting the notion of change that makes sense. CEA has said from the start that the best way to bring about change that affects teachers is to involve us from the beginning, before proposals are put on the table. Opposition to these proposals that is very strong, for valid educational reasons. We have to reiterate that this many teachers, with high levels of knowledge and years of experience in the field, can't be wrong.

Where do we go from here? As we've been saying, CEA wants to work with the SDE to create sensible changes we can all live with. I urge the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education to do this.