

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

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Good afternoon. My name is Phil Apruzzese and I'm a 5th grade teacher and president of the Connecticut Education Association.

The proposed certification changes aren't a product we can all live with, as you've heard teachers say at the previous two hearings. One of the main reasons for this, we believe, is that key stakeholders haven't been involved in discussions to iron out details; this has left gaping holes and significant questions about the impact of the proposed changes. We need to discuss issues such as the following:

1. If teachers wouldn't be grandfathered in reading or special education, *why wouldn't* they be? Why would they be qualified for their positions on June 30 and not be qualified on July 1? What would have happened to them overnight? What impact would it have on services to students if teachers *weren't* grandfathered?
2. How does requiring a master's degree in special education for that certificate interact with the law that goes into effect this July 1 that allows a person who can pass the Praxis II test in a shortage area (which special education is) to have the coursework waived? Would *that* person be exempt from getting a

master's in special ed to earn the certificate? How would *that* person be more qualified to teach special ed than a person who completed a full bachelor's program that included student teaching?

3. The proposed regulations state that a person could take and pass Praxis II in lieu of getting a certificate in any other content area prior to getting a master's and certification in special education. How will *that* person be better prepared when the master's program proposed doesn't include student teaching as a current bachelor's level program does? Clinical experience is not the same as student teaching.
4. Special educators have recommended that preparation should include 2 student teaching placements – one under the supervision of a special educator, and one in a co-taught classroom under the supervision of an experienced classroom teacher. Why hasn't that been discussed with teachers?
5. If the special education and literacy specialist proposed certificate programs have so much course content that they require CEUs or additional credits to earn the professional certificate, isn't that an indication that there's too much being jammed into one certificate? Shouldn't we be looking at those areas in

such a manner that allows the preparation programs to have more depth and the certification to be tiered?

Teachers who practice in the classroom on a daily basis know what will prepare them most effectively to do their jobs. Teachers need to be actively involved in discussions about how to change and strengthen certification for the years ahead.

I urge the SDE and State Board of Education to initiate these conversations and work with us to create certification changes we can all support.