

**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 5, 2010

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

Changing the requirements of teacher certification is serious business, and as Allan Taylor, chair of the State Board of Education has said, rather than do it quickly, it's more important that it be done right. It was also stated at the January State Board of Education meeting that the State Department of Education (SDE) wants to work with CEA and AFT so that the proposed regulations are something we can live with. Since last fall, the proposals have moved through the process quickly, but have not resulted in a product we can all live with.

CEA members have supported making changes to certification requirements and preparation, but teachers' views run counter to those of the SDE. CEA submitted detailed position papers on the SDE certification proposals in three areas: special education, literacy, and teacher leadership. The State Board had full discussion with the State Department about their proposals, and mentioned that CEA had provided interesting comments, but CEA has never had that opportunity for a full discussion with either party. In order to bring about certification changes we believe we can all live with, that discussion needs to take place.

While it is true that teachers were part of the 2008 Certification Review Committee the SDE convened, at which the SDE first introduced proposed certification changes, the participation of those teachers can't be used to say teachers were part of the discussion. The proposed changes introduced in 2008 have since been changed, without any discussion or input from teachers, and some of the changes are significant.

The proposed teacher leader certificate is a prime example of the disconnect between the SDE's words and actions. They talk about teachers being leaders, but then don't include teacher leaders in any discussion about where CT should be heading to prepare, promote, and recognize teachers as leaders. Because experienced teachers know what they need to prepare for and work effectively in today's classrooms, they should be included in all discussions pertaining to changes that affect certification.

Now is the time to do what the State Board and the SDE have stated should be done.... create certification changes we can live with, and do it right, even though it may not be done as quickly. The changes that will be made will affect thousands of teachers and students for at least 10-15 years; we can't afford to not do it right. The educators you'll hear from today are professionals whose experience, expertise, and judgment come from years of active practice in schools, working with students and teachers every day. As you listen to the testimony these teachers give, and read other testimony that is given, keep in mind that there are hundreds of other teachers who share these views. CEA urges the State Board of Education to take the time needed to hold further

discussions with all the key stakeholders involved at the same time before adopting certification changes in special education, literacy, and the field of teacher leadership. The goal should be to create a 'win-win' system of certification we can all support, one that will attract teachers to these important fields and result in better prepared educators who provide higher quality services and support to students and teachers.