

Remarks of Jennifer A Miller
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed changes to certification in Literacy Specialist

April 5th, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Jennifer Miller and I'm a special education teacher in the Granby Public School district. I currently hold a bachelor's level certificate in special education. I have been teaching in the area of special education since 2006, upon graduating from St. Joseph College in West Hartford, Connecticut. I am currently certified to teach grades K-12 in the area of special education, as well as grades 1-6 in general education. I am in the process of obtaining a master's degree in Reading and Language Arts at Central Connecticut State University. I am 12 credits into my master's degree program, leading towards a certificate in the area of reading, that through the proposed changes, this certificate will be invalid. I would then need to proceed to obtain my 6th year degree to practice as a literacy consultant. Then to continue in the field of special education, I would need to go back to school and obtain a 2nd master's degree in the area of special education, just to make sure that what I am doing for children is the best. Given the information shared here, you are able to recognize, how the changes proposed to be made will impact me not only in the area of special education, but also in literacy.

I have grave concerns for the children in our school systems across the state with these current changes. There will be an extreme shortage of teachers, which will result in a decrease in appropriate services, for the children who need the most support. It will cost districts more to hire teachers at a master's degree level, which will result in a shortage, as well as reluctance in hiring special education teachers at this level. There is not any mention of how the state is supporting this action financially, especially with the economic state we are currently in. How can we afford this? The ones who will suffer are the students who need the most support.

It is unclear to me how a master's degree will provide a teacher with more experience in educating children with disabilities when there is not any student teaching involved in this process. For example, teachers could study an area unrelated to education for their bachelors level degree, then proceed to a master's level program, which would not provide practical classroom experience through student teaching. Therefore, these teachers will be unprepared for what they will face in the classroom, as they have not had previous exposure, as well as a deficiency in instructing students who struggle the most. This is not fair to the children in our schools. As a teacher for four years, I have more clinical, instructional and realistic experience than a master's degree can afford me. I feel confident that my preparation at the bachelor's level has afforded me plenty of experience and support to provide what is best for the students whom I work with. I would like this to be clearly explained as to whether or not

teachers will be grandfathered into this plan. There will be a deficit of teachers, and once again, the ones who suffer most, are the students who struggle the most.

I leave you with many thoughts to discuss based on these proposed changes. I look forward to hearing about the further actions being developed. Please just remember, we do what we do for students, and are these changes in the best interest of who we hold close to our hearts?