

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

Dear Connecticut State Department of Education and State Board of Education Members,

I urge you to reconsider the proposed certification changes to both the literacy specialist certificate and the teacher leader certificate. These changes will negatively impact teachers, schools, and most importantly students.

I am currently the Reading and Language Arts Specialist (or Reading Consultant) at my school. I have been teaching for 21 years. I spent my first seven years teaching third grade and kindergarten. I then trained as a Reading Recovery teacher. I spent ten years teaching one-on-one Reading Recovery lessons and serving as a literacy support teacher taking small reading groups in the other half of my day. When Reading Recovery was no longer funded in my school district my position switched over to a full time literacy support teacher for the three years that followed.

My extensive Reading Recovery training put me in a position of leadership at my school and in my district. I was asked to present workshops and teach teachers. I am a mentor for the BEST and now TEAM programs. Over the years I have helped struggling readers and I have gained the respect of my colleagues and administrators. Last year I was nominated by my colleagues as the East School Teacher of the Year, which was quite an honor.

Our school has been through a lot of transition in the past ten years with teachers and administrators retiring or leaving for other positions. We have had five different principals and five different reading consultants in that time period. It has been difficult to attract and keep strong leaders who have a passion for teaching and learning. Ten years ago when our (highly effective, respected, and long-time) Reading Consultant retired there were only two applicants for the position. The interview team, which I was part of, did not feel comfortable with either candidate, but we hired one of them anyway. She only lasted four years. After that an internal candidate without the reading consultant certification (who is now our principal) took the position for two years. Then another person outside of the district, who was not certified as a reading consultant, was hired and stayed for only two years.

Last school year, my principal came to me and asked if I would please consider applying for the Reading and Language Arts Specialist position because she knew I would be a strong candidate for the position - due to my strong reading and literacy background, my leadership skills, my experience with professional development, and my knowledge of the needs of our students and staff. She also knows I have the passion to move us forward. I applied and went through the interview process. After interviews with teachers, reading consultants, principals, and finally the assistant superintendent I was selected from a group of six for the position. It has been a wonderful year. I am learning a lot and I am moving our teachers and students forward in a positive and exciting manner.


If the proposed certification changes go through I would no longer be able to hold my current position as reading and language arts specialist. As a matter of fact, I would not be able to serve in my former literacy support position either, which I held for thirteen years.

I have a Masters degree plus 15 credits, which I worked on until I started a family nine years ago. I now have two young children and even though I am a life-long learner, forever looking to hone my skills and acquire knowledge; I do not wish to pursue another degree at this time. I am a highly qualified teacher. I attend workshops after school, on weekends, and at my own expense. I read current research about best teaching practices. I lead and engage in professional book study groups with my colleagues. I have a passion for learning and take every opportunity I can to learn – but at this time in my life I need to consider the impact earning an advanced degree would have on my family.

I share my story with you because I am only one of many people in the same situation. The proposed changes will force highly qualified people to lose their jobs, negatively impacting schools and students. Please consider grandfathering the people currently in these literacy positions. If you do not I know, just in Torrington alone, there will be at least 20 teachers who will no longer be able to hold the same position. What will happen to those teachers? How will districts absorb the high numbers of teachers who will no longer be certified and able to hold those positions? I strongly urge you to consider the enormous impact these proposed changes will have on so many lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Most Sincerely,



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