

Remarks of Melanie Cockerham
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed changes to certification in special education

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Good afternoon. My name is Melanie Cockerham and I'm a special education teacher in Vernon. I am very concerned about the proposed certification changes to special education certificates. I have been a special education teacher in the classroom for seven years. There have been many changes since I first began. I currently co-teach numerous classes. In my spare time, I am taking Master's Degree courses in Literacy. I am very concerned with how the initial and provisional special educator certificates will be changed. I have gone to school a long time and currently hold two Bachelor's Degrees. Will my current provisional certificate hold up to the changes? Also, since I am working on my Master's, will that program no longer be eligible for possible certification in literacy? The teachers that currently hold these positions need to know what will happen and how this will impact our lives. This will greatly impact how the special education students are serviced in our district. If initial certificates, are only given at the Master's level, there will be a gap in new teachers and it will cost a lot more money to become a special educator? Would people still want to do it? In the mean time, the special educators that are left teaching will have to work themselves to death in order to complete what they need to, to service the students in need. Another

major point is what about the student teaching experience? Prior to finishing my schooling in 2002, I did student teaching at an elementary and middle school. They were both very different experiences. I was grateful for both and learned a tremendous amount! I cannot imagine eliminating such a vital piece of the puzzle. The mentor teachers were very helpful and I asked many questions. This helped me prepare for my first teaching job! A better alternative would be to involve current special education teachers in designing responsibilities for each proposed certificate level. Working together, in such a way, will allow for many viewpoints and conclusions to be drawn.