

**Remarks of Val Vitalo
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**Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed changes to certification in Literacy**

Tuesday April 27, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Val Vitalo and I'm a Literacy teacher in grades K to 4 in Torrington. I am currently in my 36th year of teaching in CT – 35 of which have been in Torrington. During that time I have earned both bachelor and master's degrees in elementary education Pre-K to 6; and a second masters or 6th year, in Reading and Language Arts as a Reading Consultant. I currently hold 3 state certifications: Elementary Ed. grades Pre-K to 6; Reading Consultant and Remedial Reading. I am currently, under state guidelines, considered highly qualified for my position: literacy instructor in grades K through 4.

I believe that there should be two separate levels of certification for those of us who work in the areas of reading and language arts: one for literacy teachers who focus on direct instruction to students specifically in reading and the language arts and the other being a literacy specialist, whose focus would be on training teachers, testing /evaluating students for diagnosis and intervention purposes, coordinating and supervising the literacy curriculum in a specific school and helping to plan remediation programs and services for that school.

The first level does not require administrative, or advanced diagnostic skills – the second does. These two positions are very different and should require different certifications for future teachers. The latter should have experience as a literacy teacher before receiving the specialist certification, thus making it a higher-levelled

position. These separate preparations and responsibilities allow for greater depth of knowledge and more effective services to students.

I believe that those, such as I, who currently hold separate certifications as a reading consultant and in remedial reading should not have to take any additional credits to receive certifications as a literacy teacher and literacy specialist, but should automatically receive both certifications since we now currently possess them and have previously taken all the courses and received the degrees required for each certification. Of course, even if you were to combine these certifications, as you have proposed them, teachers like me should still qualify to receive your new combined certification if we already have the course work and degrees required, without having to take additional credits or worry about not being "grandfathered."

In other areas of your new certification proposals, it would seem to be cost prohibitive for municipalities to afford to pay its entire body of public educators beginning at a Masters level on a salary scale. For beginning teachers, there is little motivation to put out huge sums of money for education in advance of even receiving a job that holds such little promise for advancement and whose longevity depends on ever-shrinking municipal budgets.

Rather than focusing on the restructuring of teacher certification, it would appear to be more productive to focus on the quality of professional development for teachers in each school district of CT. Districts need support for the choices and funding of professional development activities which bear CEU's. The quality is certainly not universally good throughout the state and, in some, cases, less than mediocre. The restriction of local funds for this and therefore the decisions of district administrators for

these activities are less than adequate. Yet, these can actually be the core of the development of productive, efficient and quality instructors once they have entered the field of CT education. College courses and higher expectations for certification prior to actual teaching experience, I believe, will not produce your intended results, if your goal is to produce the best and brightest to teach our children. The only profit, as I see it, for these certification proposals, is to create more income and jobs for the state.