

Remarks of Mary Loftus Levine  
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education  
Concerning the proposed special education certificate

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Good afternoon. My name is Mary Loftus Levine, and I'm the Director of Policy and Professional Practice at the CT Education Association. Today I'd like to address a specific aspect of two of the proposed certificates. The proposed preparation program for the initial certificate in special education requires 30 graduate credits of study and experience, in a planned program, or a master's degree. To earn the professional level certificate in special education (which the teacher would have to do to retain the certificate) the teacher would be required to earn 75 hours of CEUs in additional specific areas. The proposed preparation program for the initial certificate for a literacy specialist requires 30 graduate credits of study and experience in a planned program. To earn the professional level certificate as a literacy specialist (again, which the teacher would have to do to retain the certificate), the teacher would be required to complete 12 graduate credits *beyond* what is required for the initial certificate.

CEA has two primary concerns about these requirements. First, CEA believes the requirement to earn CEUs, or 12 credits beyond the 30 graduate credits required for the initial certificate, in order to earn the professional level certificate is contrary to what statute cites as requirements for a professional certificate. Section 10-145b(j) of the CT General Statutes states: *"On or after July 1, 1989, to qualify for a professional educator certificate, a person who holds or has held a provisional educator certificate under subsection (g) of this section shall have completed thirty credit hours of course work beyond the baccalaureate degree..... or ... an*

*individual program which is mutually determined or approved by the teacher and the supervisory agent of the local or regional board of education.”* Nowhere in statute does it state that teachers have to earn CEUs, or more than 30 graduate credits, for a professional level certificate. Nor does statute say that the State Department can add requirements, so the SDE has to work within the parameters of statute; regulations can't go beyond what statute says.

Our second concern is of greater importance. The proposed program for special education requires 30 credits to cover 13 areas of study. Twelve of those 30 credits are specified to cover 2 of the 13 areas of study, leaving 18 credits – or 6 courses - to cover study and experience in 11 areas. That, in and of itself, is too much to try to fit into one preparation program for a new special educator. There are also areas of study that aren't included in the preparation, but should be. The proposed 75 hours of CEUs cover another 9 areas of study. Taken together, the areas of study focus on knowledge and skills that begin on a fundamental level and progress to a very advanced level.

The same holds true for the proposed literacy specialist certificate. The preparation program for the initial certificate requires 30 credits to cover 9 areas of study. Six of those credits are required in one specific area, leaving 24 credits – or 8 courses - to cover study and experience in 8 areas. That's barely one course per area. There are areas of study that aren't specifically included in the preparation, but should be, and other areas of study that are very advanced and inappropriate for a new literacy specialist. The proposed 12 additional credits the SDE would require for the professional certificate cover another 2 areas of study, with 6 of the 12 credits in one area. Taken together, the areas of study focus on knowledge and skills

that begin on a fundamental level and progress to a very advanced level, just as the proposed special education certificate does, and could require as many as 51 credits of study.

In our profession, we expect content area teachers to have deep knowledge and skill in their specific subject and how to teach it. The new pre-service teacher competencies focus on knowledge and skills in the areas of development and characteristics of learners, instruction, assessment, classroom management, and professional responsibility. New teachers aren't expected to enter their roles knowing how to develop measurable school goals, assess and overcome barriers to school change, and train other teachers. These are skills that teachers develop much later, after they've worked in their profession for years and have raised their fundamental skills to a high level of expertise. But this, and more, is what the proposed certification requirements for new special educators and literacy specialists expects of them, which is unrealistic. Overloading the preparation programs for these two certification areas will result in underprepared teachers who can't service students effectively. We need to avoid this measure and rethink the roles and preparation for both.