

Remarks of Adrianna Miller  
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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 Adrianna Miller and I'm a special education teacher at Peck Place School in Orange. I'd like to comment on the preparation for the proposed special education certificate.

The proposed certificate includes preparation in 13 different areas, which, for a 30-credit program, is far too many. I have concerns about two areas that are the basis for preparation for a special educator today, and that are the foundation for the rest of my concerns. The first is the reading requirement. All special educators work to support reading skills of students, no matter what subject matter they work with. Having a strong background in reading is more important today than ever before. Including knowledge of developmental reading is a start, but without specifying a certain number of credits in the preparation program, the preparation will have to be woven into other coursework, will vary from one university to another, and will probably be inadequate. Learning about how students learn to read, the challenges they face, what's normal development and

what's not, and how to address those challenges with students who have other learning challenges should be study unto itself. This area is one of the foundations of the work special educators do, and deserves more in-depth study.

The second concern I have with the preparation program focuses on what isn't included. In the list of 13 areas of preparation there is nothing that states that the teacher has to have study of the 13 disabilities under IDEA. Special educators need to have at least a basic knowledge of the 13 conditions, how the conditions display themselves in students at different ages and stages of development, what student behavior associated with each disability 'looks like' in the classroom, and what strategies work most effectively in different types of settings and with different students. However, the proposed preparation program doesn't appear to require specific preparation focused on learning about these issues. The closest requirement in the proposed regulations is "*using evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions in pre-K, elementary, and secondary in literacy and numeracy,*" which addresses only some of the items I mentioned. Specific, focused study about the disabilities themselves lays the foundation for the rest of what a special educator needs to know to be effective. Expecting a preparation program to weave this study into the other areas required in the proposed preparation program is unrealistic and poor practice.

The proposed special education certificate needs more discussion with practicing teachers. I urge you to listen closely to what teachers are saying about both the preparation and roles a special educator can and should play. Include us in the decision-making so that special education students get the service and support they need and deserve. Thank you.