Remarks of Jane Logie
Reading Teacher
Mill School, Fairfield, CT

Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education concerning changes to certification in Literacy Specialist

April 12, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Jane Logie and I'm a reading teacher in Fairfield. This letter is written in response to the certification changes in reading/literacy certification proposed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. My recommendation is that the CSDE continue to offer the two reading certifications presently available to Connecticut educators, referred to as the number 102 "reading teacher" certification and the number 097 "reading/language arts consultant" certification. I make this recommendation without equivocation. My own education, as well as my experiences working in Connecticut public elementary schools, allows me to make no other recommendation if the goal is to teach our at-risk students to become proficient readers who choose reading to learn, enjoy, and yes, even escape from time-to-time as they mature.

Why do I make this recommendation unequivocally? As stated above, it is the result of both my education and my experience working in Connecticut public schools. By way of background, I earned my initial certification in elementary education and have taught children in a pre-first, second, and fourth grades. I went on to earn my reading

certification and have worked as a reading/language arts consultant (#097) in schools situated in DRGs A, B, and E. I also spent an invaluable year becoming trained as a Reading Recovery teacher and worked in this capacity with at-risk first graders for four years. Additionally, I earned my Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in reading, which is a major lens through which I view the status of the teaching of reading in our Connecticut public schools today.

Teaching at-risk students to read proficiently cannot be left to individuals who do not have the preparation that certifies them to be either a reading teacher (#102) or reading/language arts consultant (#097). It is teacher expertise, not packaged programs, that can make all the difference in determining whether a student becomes a reader or not. At-risk readers vary from one to another and it takes education beyond classroom teacher certification for a person to be able to adequately assess, diagnose, and prescribe a path that will lead to student success. I understand these needs and limitations as I began my career as a classroom teacher.

Teacher expertise at all levels is key. Consider the demand for expertise within schools set in motion by the advent of RTI/SRBI. Take the case of the elementary school. Begin with first grade. We know from research that 20% of the first grade student population is at-risk in reading. Research also tells us, both in medicine and education, that intervention is key—intervene early before the problem metastasizes.

In addition to delivering excellent daily small group instruction, SRBI directs us to provide these students with a second and sometimes a third 30-minute lesson aimed at closing the gap between these students and their on-grade-level peers. Does a paraprofessional have the educational background to accelerate a struggling reader so that the child can catch up with his/her classmates? What does the research tell us? That is an impossible feat. So why not assign the in-house reading/language arts consultant to work with these students since she is highly qualified?

The foregoing scenario pinpoints precisely the problem with combining the two reading certifications into just one. An in-house K-5 reading/language arts consultant, for example, cannot possibly work with all first graders who need reading intervention. If that isn't frustrating enough, imagine the one in-house reading/language arts consultant trying to meet the needs of students in the other five grades, not to mention the professional development needs of the teachers. That is why I have always supported, and continue to support, two certifications in reading/language arts. I am an advocate of the CEA proposal for two levels of literacy certification, the literacy **teacher** and the literacy **specialist**. Reading/language arts consultants need **literacy teachers** who have received additional coursework in the reading/language arts to work with those at-risk readers who are beyond their caseloads. The reading/language arts consultant (or specialist) has a host of other responsibilities; she cannot possibly do it all herself. A literacy teacher would provide

that essential support that can make a difference in the lives of many children. Fortunately, I have spoken with a number of educators who have said that they enjoy being reading teachers; they have no desire to lead a school's instructional program, provide professional development, and fulfill the other responsibilities that are within the province of a reading/language arts consultant (or specialist).

Finally, I would like to suggest that the state department of education examine its practice of allowing districts to hire literacy coaches who lack reading certification. Reading is a complex, cognitive process that cannot be understood simply through a quick survey course or two. It takes dedicated time to read and absorb what the various theorists and researchers have proffered about the intricate workings of the mind. And then more time to understand how to put these learnings into practice. As each generation says to the next, there are no shortcuts. And so it is with gaining expertise in the teaching of reading.

It is my hope that input from professionals such as myself, working on the front line with public school students and teachers, will be considered as Connecticut decides how best to develop and deploy literacy specialists to meet the needs of our readers.

Thank you for considering my perspective and recommendations.