

Remarks of Marie Simoneau
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education concerning
proposed changes to certification in Special Education

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Good afternoon. My name is Marie Simoneau, and I have been a grade 4-5 special education co-teacher in Plainfield for the past 11 years. I've taught in Connecticut since 1988. I was part of the Special Education Focus Group that took place at Killingly Intermediate School last May/June.

I would like for these comments to be shared at the EAST CONN hearing this coming Monday as I am not able to be in attendance.

Highly Qualified Teacher

I graduated from Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1988 with a Master's degree in Special Education. My undergraduate degree is in Music Education and Music Therapy. The program was 42 credits, which thoroughly prepared me for teaching, particularly in the areas of Reading/Language Arts, methods, Evaluation/Statistics/Diagnostics. A few years ago as a result of NCLB it was necessary for me to resubmit my college transcripts and other credentials to prove that I was indeed highly qualified. It was humiliating. Once again, my experience and credentials are being questioned and my status is in jeopardy as a result of the proposed changes to the Special Education certification. Also, because of RTI, it

seems that my role will be moving toward that of a case manager with less direct instruction being provided to special needs students. This is NOT why I went into the profession. Finally, passing the Praxis II in any other subject DOES NOT guarantee a Highly Qualified status for a new teacher in the future. This is something to further think about and discuss.

Grandfathering Certification

It is unnerving that we do not know whose certifications will and will not be grandfathered in. There is no guarantee that the Master's program that I completed in 1988 will meet the new qualifications for a Master's degree in Special Education. Again, despite years of experience and a Master's degree, my qualifications and those of others are continuing to be questioned. If someone does not have a Master's degree in Special Education but has a Bachelor's, will they be required to attain a Master's in Special Education and at what cost?

Future Special Education Teachers

If we continue to require multiple steps to reach a professional certificate in the state of Connecticut and do not grandfather in currently certified Special Education teachers, we will be facing a serious shortage of Special Education teachers in our state. The current leveled program proposed by the CEA makes sense. It allows the doors to open for current and future professionals to attain Master's degree status in a thorough, progressive program the same way as someone who would be doing so at the Bachelor's level. Those with a Bachelor's degree in Special Education can still

teach, gain experience, and move towards a master's degree with a meaningful progression through the requirements.

Continuing Education Unit (CEU) Requirements

Requiring a new teacher to attain a masters degree AND attain 75+ CEU hours simultaneously is ludicrous! Again, we will be pushing away future Special Education teachers. Logistically, there isn't enough time for any sane human being to attain a higher level degree, complete CEU hours, and adjust to the multiple roles of a teacher as a new professional. Lesson planning - when? By the way, who in the district will be responsible for keeping track of CEUs for all of the certification levels? What is the additional cost?

Master's Degree

Requiring a Master's degree and not a Bachelor's degree in Special Education will increase hiring costs significantly. Those candidates beginning with a Bachelor's degree and moving towards a Master's will be a more valuable, experienced, and affordable asset in the long run. These candidates will more than likely stay in their district rather than leaving. The cost of certification will also be more manageable for them as well.

It is critical that Special Education teachers discuss ideas with SDE; particularly regarding leveled certification. Thank you for reading my comments and opinions.