

I am Marilyn Scanlan White, Legislative Chair of the Connecticut Reading Association. I am here today to address areas that will help CT in its efforts to close the achievement gap. Good reading and language arts skills are a key to school achievement and indeed success for life. Reading goes beyond a set of skills - it is a process to derive meaning in all disciplines. It is a complex skill that requires quality instruction. We need educators and leaders who are well prepared to help all students advance in their reading competency.

First, our schools need principals who have an interest in literacy and knowledge of literacy development so that they can identify what good literacy instruction looks like in the classroom and understand the importance of hiring highly-qualified literacy personnel. Schools that have successful literacy programs show evidence of strong principal leaders. (Booth, D., & Roswell, J. (2007). *The literacy principal*. Ontario, Canada:: Pembroke Publishers, pg. 15). To do so, we recommend that the state require principal candidates to have a minimum of six credits in reading/language arts as part of their master's degree program. They need a literacy vision before they become principals.

Second, effective literacy instruction in the classroom is most important. It helps to prevent future remedial reading needs. We recommend that candidates seeking Early Childhood through grade 6 certifications have 12 credits in reading and language arts instruction. We commend the state for requiring content area teachers from grades 6-12 to have courses in teaching reading and writing in their content area.

Third, we agree with the State Department of Education's proposal for the one certification of Literacy Specialist. The current two certifications cause confusion. Unless Connecticut mandates that the remedial reading teacher may only work with students and the reading language arts consultant coordinate and model language arts programs and also work with students, administrators and teachers will continue to confuse the roles of the two positions. Not all school administrators are knowledgeable of the two reading certification. Job descriptions are lacking, leading to confusions in responsibilities and chain of command. Unqualified teachers who lack in-depth training in reading instruction, are being hired as "literacy coaches." The one certification of Literacy Specialist will qualify a teacher to both remediate and lead classroom programs. We need qualified literacy specialists with advanced training in literacy to help alleviate CT's achievement gap.

Fourth, we question the role of the proposed Teacher Leader in Literacy certification. This role is neither teacher nor administrator. This proposed certification is redundant in that the Literacy Specialist will be the Teacher Leader in literacy.

As policymakers, members of the State Board of Education are the ones leading the efforts to close Connecticut's achievement gap. We need effective literacy educators at all levels. We urge you to incorporate our recommendations into the proposed legislation.

Marilyn Scanlan White, Ct Reading Association Legislative Chair