

Remarks of Margaret Gaines

Literacy Teacher

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

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Good afternoon. My name is Margaret Gaines. I am a Literacy teacher at Forbes Elementary School in Torrington. I have two master's degrees. My certifications are History and Social Studies 6-12 (026) and Pre-K through 8th grade (003 and 006).

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to give feedback on the SDE's proposed new literacy certification.

For as long as I can remember I wanted to be a teacher. In 1993, that dream came true. For 13 years, I taught second grade at Forbes. For the last four years I have taught reading. I work with small groups of students in kindergarten through fifth grade. I am doing exactly what I did during guided reading groups as a classroom teacher; I just do it all day long now.

The SDE assured us that our regular education certifications cover what we are teaching. Now according to what I am reading I will need to go back to school-- again-- at the age of 59.

This proposal would have several negative effects on me and my teaching:

1. It would be a large added expense. If I were to go for these 30 hours of course work it would cost me \$17,770 at the current cost at a state university. (\$1770 for a 3 credit hour course) This does not include the cost of books, supplies, gas, etc. I do not have enough working years left to offset that cost. It would have to come out of my retirement savings.

2. It would limit time for personal professional study and reflection. It would take three years taking one or two courses a semester while I work. During that time I would have to leave school early one day a week for class. I would need to spend evenings and weekends completing course work. This is time I would normally use for instruction, preparation for instruction, and personal study.

Each summer I plan professional study for myself. For example, a few years ago at my own expense I attended Eric Jensen's Six-day Brain Based Learning Workshop. I spent the following several years implementing and further

studying what I had learned. Last summer I studied Still Learning to Read and Building the Reading Brain. I would no longer have time for this.

Instead the requirement is for teacher leadership coursework even though I do not do any teacher leadership. So instead of learning about what I do, all this time would be on something I do not do.

3. It would mean training at the end of my career. I will be 63 years old when these requirements take effect in 2014. I would have only about two to five years more in my teaching career. My other option would be to retire.

This scenario is true for many, many teachers. Do you know how many? Who will fill those positions? How much knowledge and experience will be lost to education and the children of Connecticut by these forced early retirements?

I am asking you to reconsider this proposal. Thank you.