

Remarks of Cindy Davis  
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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 Cindy Davis and I'm a reading teacher in Danbury. I am strongly opposed to the proposed SDE certification changes. I earned my master's degree as a Remedial Reading teacher in 1983 and I have worked at the intermediate and middle school level in both New York and Connecticut. In all those years, I have not fully utilized all the skills and training I learned in that master's program. Each grade level requires the use and application of different skills and training.

The SDE is now proposing to combine the remedial reading and reading consultant into one certification. The additional mandate to acquire skills and training as a consultant would not benefit me in my role as a remedial reading teacher. I provide direct instruction to whole class, small group, and one on one instruction in my classroom. I do not consult with other teachers or educational staff. The impact and requirement of this certification proposal would lessen teacher instruction and delivery, not strengthen or improve student achievement or performance. The "one size fits all" model will not work for me in my classroom environment.

I have chosen to take additional courses beyond my master's degree and have fulfilled the 30 credit beyond master's to enhance and expand my knowledge base and performance as a teacher. I acted from a need for professional growth and a belief in personal achievement. A state mandate that I must fulfill additional courses to earn required credits sends a pedagogical message that I am not qualified regardless of my many years of service in the classroom. This is counter professional and truly strikes at my perception of how the SDE views the "teacher in the trenches".

It is my understanding that one rationale for combining the Remedial Reading 102 and 97 Reading Consultant certification into one certification is based upon a district's confusion or inability to differentiate the role each teacher performs. To me, this is a district to state issue, and not a push onto the teacher issue.

Clarification from the SDE to the district superintendent to the district principal would rectify this problem. The role of the Remedial Reading teacher is to assist the learning of the student needing support for improvement. The role of the Reading Consultant is to support the staff and the child. Requiring a literacy teacher to perform all tasks all the time would result in lesser performance; not greater performance. In these troubled academic times when teachers are being squeezed and restricted due to state revenue shortages, district budget constraints, numerous teacher layoffs, parental demands for student success, and increased state score achievement the impact of this additional SDE certification change would hinder the teacher in the classroom.

I became a teacher because learning was important to me. I was not a quick learner, but instead I had to work very hard to learn and rarely earned "A"s. I learned and achieved because of self determination and tenacity. I earned a "D" in fourth grade and that was a failing grade. I then knew I wanted to become a teacher because I knew what is like to fail, and I also knew that I could use that experience to be sensitive and compassionate to struggling students. I believe that learning is intrinsic because it comes from the "wanting to know". The proposed SDE certification changes demonstrate the opposite to me.

Change needs to be based upon sound information and practice. These proposals are not based upon sound information, practice, or judgment.

The concept or premise that the "teacher can do it all" devalues the role of the teacher. The dismissal of expertise and years of service to fit a new certification model sends the message to me that the teacher is not viewed as a professional. I entered this profession because I believed in my role as a teacher. I truly hope my testimony and its message will be heard and understood because the proposed SDE certification changes are wrong and based upon marred premises, faulty concepts, and void of teacher input. Let the teacher voice be heard because it based upon actual classroom expertise. Thank you.