

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

April 29, 2010

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address you on the proposed changes to teacher certification. My name is Sharon Drumm and I am a special education teacher completing my 32<sup>nd</sup> year of service. I currently serve my district as Inclusion Facilitator and Elementary Special Education Department Chair. My comments today are directed toward the proposed changes in special education certification.

My first concern is with the preparation program for initial certification and the proposed areas of study for degree status. I believe that the coursework, as proposed, is far too broad for a 30 credit Master's program and would, in fact, be 42 credits. Several of the proposed coursework descriptors might best be addressed as multiple classes – only adding to the credit load. The all – encompassing program design will create a workforce of teachers who know a little bit about a lot of things – but that is not what builds competency. Competency develops from supported practice and practical application. There appears to be no student teaching requirement for initial certification and yet teachers would be considered qualified to provide coaching and

training to classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to support the effective delivery of instruction. It is conceivable however, that if a teacher goes directly into a Master's program, he or she could be required to provide such coaching without the benefit of any practical experience of their own. The outcome of inadequate preparation will significantly damage collaborative efforts and negatively impact students at all levels.

I am also concerned that requiring a Master level degree status for initial certification will be cost prohibitive to both teachers and Boards of Education. I believe that the proposal runs the risk of increasing the shortage in special education teachers and that the shortage, as well as increased cost, will effectively force districts to provide less support to special needs students.

I applaud the SDE for recognizing the need for change in teacher preparation, but I am fearful that as proposed, these changes will not create the highly qualified and well prepared educators needed to serve our most vulnerable student population.

I thank you, once again, for your time and attention.