

Remarks of Kerry Dutton
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education
Concerning the proposed changes to certification in Special Education

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Good afternoon. My name is Kerry Dutton and I'm a Special Education Teacher who is teaching Alternative Education in Vernon, CT.

I feel that it is unreasonable to require a Master's degree to become a Special Education teacher. This will put too much of a financial burden on young men and women who might be considering entering into the profession, and will create even more of a shortage of excellent, motivated individuals who want to work with this population.

I am extremely concerned that there is no student teaching required. I feel that hands on, real life experience in a classroom situation is the only true way to understand the intricacies and realities of teaching. As a Mentor teacher who has helped prepare many student teachers in my classroom, I have seen first hand the impact that student teaching can have on teachers in training. One cannot get a realistic understanding of what teaching entails without direct experience. Isn't that why our colleges and universities that train teachers require so much field experience? To eliminate this portion of the training process would be a huge disservice to the profession.

There seems to be a push to change Special Education teachers into case managers and consultants. That is not what most Special Education teachers want... we want to teach. We want to teach children, not other adults. I, personally, would not ever want to give up being a classroom teacher, making a difference in the lives of the children in my class. I am afraid that in order to continue teaching in a classroom, I would be required to go back to school and get a regular education certificate. This is an unrealistic proposition for me, as I currently have two college age children, and one child who requires full time care.

To address the concerns of those of us who want to teach, as well as the need for consultants to regular education teachers, please consider creating two levels of Special Education- a Teaching level and a Specialist level. This would allow for teachers to decide which direction they might want to pursue. I feel that it is vital that input is received from teachers who are currently in the schools, those whom these changes will impact the most. After all, it takes an especially motivated teacher to want to teach Special Education, and many of us have dedicated our lives to educating the children who need the most care and individualized instruction. The proposed changes, as they stand, will make becoming or remaining a Special Education Teacher too burdensome and prohibitive, and will inevitably lead to the loss of excellent teachers in the field. Thank you for your time.