

Remarks of Margaret McGillicuddy

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

April 27, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Maggie McGillicuddy and I'm an integrated science teacher at Torrington High School in Torrington. This is my seventh year teaching.

I earned my Master's degree in education with a concentration in curriculum and instruction from Saint Joseph College. I was hired at Torrington High School and began teaching in the fall of 2003. My first year of teaching was spent trying to stay one or two steps ahead of my students. In my second year, I worked on my BEST portfolio and really began to refine my instruction of the curriculum and assessment of student work.

For the past five years, I have been in co-taught science classes of between 20-25 students with a certified special education teacher. The number of students identified as requiring special education services during these five years has averaged 50%.

The experience that my co-teacher has shared with me has been invaluable. My background in special education was limited during my graduate program, because I wanted to be a science teacher. I knew I would have special education students in my classes. However, I was certainly not prepared to deal with the learning challenges of my students, who brought a vast range of disabilities to our class. My co-teacher brought over 20 years of experience in special education to the classroom, and I believe we have been able to provide a rich learning environment for all of our students.

The spectrum of our students' disabilities has been **broad**, and as you know, each student is unique; instruction needs to be tailored to every student, not just those with an IEP. Teaching a general level class can be a challenge because of the many different abilities, strengths, and needs of our students. When you consider that half of these children also require specialized education services, teaching the class becomes a two-person job. We want to offer the best and most appropriate instruction with still offering a rich and varied content-oriented class. My co-teacher and I have worked together on instructional strategies, modifications, pacing, and assessments. We have truly become a team. This partnership could not have been established with anything other than a certified special education teacher.

Under the proposed certification changes, I would probably lose my co-teacher.

Like other districts, mine faces budget problems that are enormous, and having to

hire special educators beginning at a master's salary level would be a hardship.

What I consider to be a valuable resource for all our students would be gone.

Please reconsider changing the requirements for special education certification.

I very much appreciate your time and attention.