

Remarks of Rae Baczek  
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Before the State Dept. of Education and State Board of Education Concerning the  
proposed changes to certification in Teacher Leader

April 6, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Rae Baczek, and I am a high school math teacher in Greenwich, CT. I am here to speak against the proposed new Teacher Leader Certificate. The nicest thing about teaching in Greenwich is that our district makes many efforts to adapt to the needs of our teachers and students. About 14 years ago when I was President of the Greenwich Education Association, we had an interesting problem. We were hiring a large number of new teachers and we did not feel we were giving them all the support they needed. We were also going to be losing a number of special education teachers due to a change in the program. The superintendent and I sat down and developed a program called the "coaching program." We were going to be releasing teachers from their direct teaching responsibilities to work one-on-one with the new teachers. Teachers would be released anywhere from .2 to .6 direct teaching positions depending on the number of new staff in their building. Their responsibilities ranged from meeting with the teachers, observing them, going over lesson plans, reviewing the department curriculum guides, evaluating their

assessments and doing demonstration lessons in their classrooms. These “coaches” were chosen by the district based on their background which had to include mentor training. The staff development director met once a month with the coaches by grade level and gave some specific coaching guidelines to help them do their job.

I was privileged to be one of the “coaches” for the high school math teachers. This program was invaluable for our new staff. With this help I was able to help these teachers develop their skills and meet the demands of the school and district. Because of my experience as a math portfolio scorer, assessor and trainer, the teachers got an added benefit from my experience in helping them develop and submitting a successful portfolio. The “coach” was responsible for the new teacher until they got tenure. So the coach had teachers in their first, second, third and fourth years during the time they served the district in that capacity.

We also had a “tech coach” (.5) who worked on the technology pieces of the job.

That included all issues relating to taking attendance: using Gradequick; implementing Smartboard technology in the classroom; and any other issues that came up in that area of dealing with the computers.

Our district also has a position called “learning facilitator” which takes a teacher out of the classroom for a few periods, to meet the needs of our very big high school (3000 students).

If a person had to get certified as a “teacher leader” to meet the district’s needs there would be a lot of programs that would be lost along the way. The ability of a school

district to evaluate the needs and react in a positive way would be eliminated if this certification would be required. I can't help but think what would have happened if we had not been able to provide our "coaching" program to our new teachers. We would have lost many of them over those years.

Please do not approve this certification proposal. Thank you.