

Remarks of Gail Felberbaum  
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Before the State Department of Education and State Board of Education concerning  
proposed changes to certification of Literacy Specialist

April 6, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Gail Felberbaum and I'm a language arts teacher in Fairfield. I would respectfully like to offer my reasons against the proposed changes in certification for teachers currently holding 102 and 097 certifications in Language Arts. These changes would create hardships for both current teachers and future teachers in this field.

Effects on Current Certificate Holders

As a teacher in CT for the past twenty-four years, I have seen incredibly talented and successful colleagues working hard in this field. This group of professionals gives an incredible amount of time before, during, and after school to assist readers and writers every day. We, as a group, are very well-educated, with many of us holding several master's degrees, and even sixth, and seventh year degrees. Our education, our backgrounds, and our years of work experience have helped us become exceptional at what we do each day. It is unfair to ask us to add more coursework in our field to continue to do the same jobs we currently are in. As it is, we are continuously training, obtaining Continuing Education Units, going to outside workshops, reading journals, and having deep discussions on how to best help our students. Will you please

strongly consider “grandfathering” current certificate holders? We are working hard for the State of Connecticut and our students and you would place an unnecessary burden on us by requiring changes in our certifications.

### Role Distinctions

We see the proposal has the Literacy Specialist and Literacy Teacher in one category. There will be a problem with this plan. Some teachers thrive when teaching small groups. Others excel at professional development and making tough decisions for their schools. By having just one category, some teachers may be forced to do jobs that do not suit their strengths. Since budget times are very tough, it would be highly unusual for a district to place enough personnel in each building so that every school has one Literacy Specialist and one Literacy Teacher, each holding the role in which they are best qualified. This could lead to a diminishment of best practices, especially for our struggling readers.

Additionally, just as with the current certification, districts will not pay the Literacy Specialist an Administrator’s salary, even though Administrative work is being required. The current 097 is listed as an Administrative Certificate, but is an unfunded requirement in some districts. Will you ask districts to pay for the Literacy Specialist degree which will require more education and more responsibility?

### Future Literacy Leaders

It would be wonderful if colleges were able to graduate the best and the brightest each year and these students would become educators. If we make the regulations to become Literacy Leaders so long and involved, teachers may choose to stay in the classroom rather than going on for complex, lengthy graduate school programs. Or, they might not choose to go into education at all. Much of the work in the field of reading revolves around loads of experiences with kids, with mentor teachers, and with professional development at the points at which they need it. Are we willing to lose future quality educators because we are making the regulations so long and difficult? Thank you for considering my requests.