

I am Nancy Souza, President Elect of the Connecticut Reading Association. I am also a certified Language Arts Consultant, working in Ledyard, CT. I am also an adjunct instructor at Sacred Heart University, Griswold Campus teaching Master's level students in the education department. I am here today to address areas that will help CT in its efforts to close the achievement gap. Good reading and language arts skills are a key to school achievement and indeed success for life. Reading goes beyond a set of skills - it is a process to derive meaning in all disciplines. It is a complex skill that requires quality instruction. We need educators and leaders who are well prepared to help all students advance in their reading competency.

First, our schools need principals who have a background in literacy and knowledge of literacy development so that they can identify what good literacy instruction looks like in the classroom. Administrators must understand the importance of hiring highly-qualified literacy personnel. Schools that have successful literacy programs show evidence of strong principal leaders. (Booth, D., & Roswell, J. (2007). *The literacy principal*. Ontario, Canada:: Pembroke Publishers, pg. 15). To do so, we recommend that Connecticut require principal candidates to have a minimum of six credits in reading/language arts as part of their Master's degree program or 6<sup>th</sup> Year programs. They need training in the field of literacy before they become principals. These are the people who are in charge of teacher evaluation and classroom supervision. A critical role.

Second, effective literacy instruction in the classroom is a critical to student achievement. Effective literacy instruction prevents children from failure to learning to read. We recommend that candidates seeking Early Childhood through grade 6 certifications have 12 credits in reading and language arts instruction. We commend Connecticut State Department of Education for requiring content area teachers, grades 6-12 to have courses in teaching reading and writing in their content area.

Third, we agree with Connecticut State Department of Education's proposal for the one certification of Literacy Specialist. The current two certifications cause confusion. The children of Connecticut need qualified literacy specialists with advanced training in literacy to help alleviate Connecticut's achievement gap. Unqualified teachers who lack in-depth training in reading instruction, are being hired as "literacy coaches." Unless Connecticut mandates that the remedial reading teacher may only work with students and the reading language arts consultant coordinate and model language arts programs and also work with students, administrators and teachers will continue to confuse the roles of the two positions. Not all school administrators are knowledgeable about the two reading certifications. Job descriptions are lacking, leading to confusions in responsibilities for each position. The one certification of Literacy Specialist will qualify a teacher to both remediate and lead classroom programs. Another point to consider is the RTI/SRBI Tiered model of intervention that is in currently being used in Connecticut schools. When students move into Tiers 2 and 3, a certified reading teacher needs to be in a school to either supervise the intervention for students or to provide direct services to these students. Only a trained literacy specialist can do this. A school district needs to make informed decisions about the delivery of these reading support services and who will be in charge of these interventions. Teachers with advanced degrees and training in reading must deliver reading instruction to at risk readers. This alone can become a full time job, no matter what the size of the school.

Fourth, we question the role of the proposed Teacher Leader in Literacy certification. This role is neither teacher nor administrator. This proposed certification is redundant in that the Literacy Specialist will be the Teacher Leader in literacy.

As policymakers, members of the State Board of Education are the ones leading the efforts to close Connecticut's achievement gap. Connecticut children need effective literacy educators at all levels. We urge you to incorporate our recommendations into the proposed legislation.

Nancy Souza, Connecticut Reading Association, President, Elect