

**Friis, John**

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**From:** Marissa Smith [marissa.a.smith@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 15, 2009 7:06 PM  
**To:** Friis, John  
**Cc:** eca\_pace@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** Support ECA

To whom it may concern:

My name is Marissa Smith. I am a high school English teacher at Amity High School in Woodbridge, CT. As a double major from Connecticut College in English and dance, I am double certified in the state of CT in both English AND dance. (I hold the 015 English 7-12 and the 110 unique endorsement in dance.) With Susan Matheke's help, I was able to obtain this new dance certification back in 2006. I also have been dancing with Susan's adult group since 2001 .

I believe very strongly in the role of the arts in shaping lives of all ages, but especially in providing self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment and original thinking in young people. **I write to you as both an educator and a dancer who feels through personal experience that ECA is able to offer area students a unique component to their education not obtainable in the mainstream classroom. As a state certified teacher myself, I am asking that the state of Connecticut waive the certification requirement for current ECA teachers.**

I ask that you consider this for the following reasons:

- 1) ECA teachers are not only accomplished professionals in their own fields, but professionals who have proven to be successful teacher. For instance, 16 ECA dancers went onto colleges and conservatories. If college acceptance is a standard for good teaching, then these ECA professional have met it.
- 2) I have had the opportunity to know the same students both as students in my mainstream classroom at Amity High and as ECA dancers and musicians. These students thrive in the ECA setting, whereas in the public school they struggle with social issues and sometimes classroom management issues. The kind of teachers they experience at ECA speak to them and teach them as human beings sharing a love and knowledge of various art forms, whereas in the public schools, these same students are subjected to the kinds of standardized "activities" and "methods" promoted in certification classes but that do not always meet the needs of exceptional students.
- 3) Please consider the fact that certification alone does not mean good teachers, otherwise why would there be some many initiatives and mandates currently in public education to address the deficiencies in currently state certified teachers?
- 4) **ECA is already accomplishing what the state purports to want, namely STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING and APPLIED APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE. The current curriculum, the current teaching staff, and the current methods of teaching already meet the highest goals of education. Why ruin a good thing?**

3/16/2009

Lastly, personally I know that Susan Matheke's classes and performance workshops held my adult life together during some challenging transitions in my 20's and 30's (including becoming a public school high school teacher). I can only imagine how much more the programs at ECA are a fundamental glue in the lives of the teenagers who make ECA their home.

I ask that the Connecticut Education State Department look deep into their hearts about why they ever got involved in Education in the first place. Please look beyond the beaurocratic moves, the ability to create an illusion of power and arbitrary standards, and look at what should be the most important aspect in education: the students. **The current structure in place at ECA is able to serve student needs in a way that escapes many public schools with certified teachers. Please allow it to continue as it is.**

Thank you for reading,

Marissa Smith

Amity High School, English Department

ECA Adult Dancer