

Oral Testimony
Submitted to the
Education Committee

HB 6666 AN ACT CONCERNING TEACHER CERTIFICATION

March 16, 2009

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Mary Clough.

I have come here today as a representative for the Educational Center for the Arts parent group PACE (Parents for Art-Centered Education) to speak in support of HB6666 section 5: an amendment written to protect our unique & time tested arts program from the SDE's mandate requiring that all part-time teachers become certified by 2014.

My daughter Jill is a freshman in the theatre department at the part-time, 280-student, Educational Center for the Arts High School in New Haven. ECA it is a highly regarded 35 year-old, inter-district arts magnet school operated by ACES. Jill takes her core classes every morning at Hamden High School, eats her lunch on the bus and then spends an additional 12 hours per week taking honors level elective arts classes in the afternoons at ECA --along with students from 17 other towns. The time she spends at ECA is the highlight of her week.

The new SDE's certification mandate stems from Connecticut's interpretation of the 1000 page federal NCLB legislation, which states that all students should be taught by "qualified" teachers. Although the detailed document did not define qualified to mean one had to be certified, it seems to be the position of both the Commissioner of Education and the SDE that only a certified teacher can be considered qualified.

PACE strongly supports the idea that all full-time & part-time teachers that work at a full-day regular public or magnet school be both qualified & certified --especially those that teach non-high school aged children.

What brings me in front of you today is our deep concern that forcing mandated certification into the highly successful ECA model of mentoring high school arts students with faculty comprised of practicing, professional artists will mark the end of our school!

ECA's part-time faculty have chosen being an artist as their primary career, and for most of them they simply can't find/justify the time & money needed to pursue certification for a 6-12 hour a week job that takes them off their career path & provides them no working benefits.

Our school is not brokeit does not need fixed!

We are asking the Education Committee to allow part-time, arts magnet school teachers to be issued an adjunct instructor certificate to teach at part-time, high school, arts magnet schools so students can continue to reap the benefits of working with and learning from professional artists.

Note:

For 41 years the Connecticut ISSP program (Independent Study and Seminar Program) has offered academically talented and gifted high school students the opportunity to attend seminars & take college classes for credit at participating post-secondary institutions including Yale University. My older daughter took 3 college courses as a sophomore and junior in high school which I am certain were not taught by a state of Connecticut certified college professor.

ECA serves a similar purpose for talented and gifted high school arts students.

On behalf of PACE we would like to thank the Education Committee for your continued support of Connecticut students.