



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

Testimony of Elaine Zimmerman
Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Children

Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
March 8, 2010

Senator Gaffey and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee:

The Connecticut Commission on Children supports **R.B. 5421, An Act Concerning Educators and Administrators**. This bill ensures scientifically-based reading research models in in-service training for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel.

As you know, Connecticut's achievement gap in reading is vast. On the fourth grade reading test Connecticut has the largest difference in academic achievement between poor and non-poor students of all the fifty states. Connecticut is 45th out of 50 states in long-term job growth (Corporation for Enterprise Development); has the second highest juvenile incarceration rate for Hispanic males and the third-highest rate for African American males (Office of Justice Programs).

Recent testing of our pre-service teachers reveals that we are not adequately teaching our teachers how to assess, intervene and ensure competency in literacy. About one in three test-takers in teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities across the state have failed the exam since the state began using it last year as a licensing requirement. Enclosed please find a chart that summarizes the test results for the four largest teacher preparation programs.

**TEST RESULTS AT THE STATE'S FOUR LARGEST
TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS.**

	Test Takers	Total Passed	Pass Rate
Southern Connecticut State University	168	96	57%
Sacred Heart University	146	111	76%
Central Connecticut State University	132	77	58%
University of Bridgeport	102	70	69%

Studies performed by Dr. Louise Spear-Swerling and Pamela Owen Brucker at Southern Connecticut State University reveal that not only our pre-service teachers, but our teachers in the field have not been taught to diagnose reading skills at each grade level, to intervene, assess again and ensure that each child is at grade level in literacy. These studies also reveal that age nor practice in the classroom predict improvement. Repetition of practice, with poor outcomes, prevails. Dr. Swerling and Brucker reveal a substantial gap between research on reading and teacher preparation in reading.

Scientific research about early reading acquisition and reading difficulties have increased in the past 29 years with strong implications for the teaching of reading. Yet many Connecticut teachers do not know what children are supposed to master in each grade, based on our state's reading benchmarks. If our teachers are not adequately prepared to teach the science of reading in developmentally appropriate ways to our children in kindergarten through grades three, our children will simply not be prepared.

Thank you for your review.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Elaine", followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Elaine Zimmerman