

*Remarks of Sharman Wheatley  
K-12 Arts Instructional Leader and 6-8 Art Teacher  
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Before the Education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24, Section 28 (*Certification Requirements*)  
Section 29 (*Teacher Tenure*)  
Section 30(*Teacher Evaluation Ratings*)  
Section 31 (*Salary Based upon Certification*)  
Section 33 (*Superintendent Certification Waiver*)

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischman, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Sharman Wheatley, and I teach Art in middle school and am a K-12 Fine and Performing Arts Coordinator in Wilton. I would like to comment on Senate Bill 24, Sections 28, 29, 30, 31, and 33.

Having taught in Westchester County for 10 years and in Fairfield County for the past 21 years, I have worked hard to raise standards for educators in Connecticut and take great pride in our achievements in the past two decades, particularly in the public schools. I can see how the assessments in place and the curricular units have been most effective in teaching students and training teachers.

Dr. Scott Schuler, CSDE Arts Consultant, invited me, five years ago, to join his Summer Curriculum teaching team of 5 other visual arts coordinators in differing districts in the state, to train teachers in curriculum and assessments at Yale University and Fairfield University. I understand the disparities in student achievement in Connecticut but I do not believe one can blame teachers and undermine their professional standards and educational degrees. It is a difficult profession and one needs all of the training and collaboration, and encouragement, to work with young children.

Students directly benefit from teacher preparation and professionalism, particularly if they have come from a disadvantaged background. Teachers can help students to raise their own visions for success and are often the very mentors and role models children need to counteract some of the unfortunate situations they see in their homes and communities.

Administrators in every school district have assessment and evaluative procedures in place to remove teachers from their responsibilities if they are not performing. They should exercise these responsibilities with the current “checks and balances” system in place or modify it collectively with the teacher organizations so everyone is respected and trusted for working for the best interests of our children.

We are already having difficult times finding well qualified teachers who understand children

and are committed to continue training about best practices in teaching children. Latest neurological research has altered many teaching methods over the past decades and teacher education and professional development only increases the quality of the teacher for the child.

Should standardized tests be the leading indicator of educational successes when we look at developing children and preparing them for their futures? Why punish a teacher who is kind enough and patient enough to work with lower performing students or students with special needs since they will always “underperform” on standardized tests?

Of course, as in any profession, experience and levels of education and training should encourage teachers and compensate them accordingly rather than look for short term “teaching to the test” numbers to evaluate student and teacher successes. To assume this is a correct measurement is to assume that the test is a valid gauge for learning.

Research has indicated that students need more 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills as in the higher order more creative thinking in Bloom’s Taxonomy. Analytical thinking and creative approaches will better serve students to adapt to a technologically advanced global economy when they adapt working on their own careers. Research has also indicated that most students will have at least 14 different jobs throughout their working lifetimes so they need these skills both to adapt to this economy and thrive.

Please support certification requirements for teachers, tenure, and evaluations, as effective standards which encourage experienced teachers to serve as mentors and role models for new teachers.

Cutting standards by giving “benevolent despot” control to Superintendents assumes that there are no economic or other pressures leading the Superintendent to bypass the certification laws.

Please treat the people who are with your children each day with respect and honor that they deserve and appreciate their efforts to grow and improve their skills. Please do not support this debacle of the whole teaching structure and all of the people who have worked over the years to form it. Please be respectful of collective agreements and honorable to the people who have dedicated their lives to educating children.

Thank you for your support and I do hope we can work with our legislatures to improve education together.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharman Wheatley

