

Remarks of Jeanne Kaye Eleck
Art teacher
Darien Public Schools

Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee

November 14, 2011

Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

My name is Jeanne Kaye-Eleck, and I'm an art teacher in the Darien Public School system. I'd like to give you my perspective about why I believe Connecticut needs an independent educator standards board.

In June 2009 I applied for the department chair endorsement (105), having taken what I believed was the necessary coursework to meet the requirements. Four of the courses I took at Sacred Heart University are those that are also required for the intermediate administrator endorsement (092); one of these courses was Advanced Curriculum Development which was three credits in curriculum work.

I received an email denying the endorsement, saying that the State Department of Education would not accept course number EDL626 – Assessment and Evaluation – as one that would meet the requirement for three of the six credits in curriculum development. I was told I would need to take another course in curriculum development.

I asked my local association for help in addressing the SDE about this, and was advised to consult with CEA, which I did. This began a lengthy exchange of letters and emails with the SDE. I crafted an explanation of how EDL626 was a curriculum-focused course that provided deep study about how to use assessment of students as the basis for curriculum development. I cited the SDE website and publications, and several other respected sources to support my position that assessment is an important component of curriculum development.

In January 2010 I received a letter from the SDE, stating that they would not accept EDL626 , with this explanation: *“While assessment is most definitely an important element in curriculum development, it is only one component. In order to be accepted, it must focus more broadly on multiple aspects of curriculum development.”* The letter went on to state that the SDE was bound by certification regulations to require six credits in curriculum development.

I questioned this explanation, and the following points were brought out to the SDE:

1. The regulations don't state that the six credits have to focus broadly on multiple aspects of curriculum development.....they simply say 'curriculum development.'
2. There are several areas on the SDE web site, and in publications, that speak to the importance of assessment to curriculum development.
3. Those who are experts in this field agree that it makes no sense to take more than one broad course in curriculum development. The broad course is one's introduction to the field, which is then followed by more in-depth courses that pertain to an aspect of curriculum development (such as secondary curriculum development, curriculum for gifted and talented students, or how to use assessment to design curriculum).
4. Nowhere on the SDE web site is there a list of courses accepted to meet this requirement, and no guidance is given. (I had to request a copy of the list.)

Despite these sound reasons for accepting EDL626, I felt the SDE was not at all interested in discussing the possibility that I could be correct and I never was issued the department chair endorsement.

I believe the SDE made an inaccurate and uninformed interpretation of what the regulations state is required to earn the endorsement (*“...at least six semester hours of graduate credit in curriculum development”*). Practicing educators understand what composes 'curriculum development,' and understand that, when you study in this field, you begin with a broad, general course and delve deeper into specific aspects of curriculum from there. If an educator professional standards board handled certification, this type of uninformed decision made by the SDE would not have been the case. This type of work needs to be overseen and done by practicing educators through a professional educator standards board.