



Substitute House Bill No. 5871

Public Act No. 08-107

AN ACT CONCERNING THE BEST PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Subsection (d) of section 10-220a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2009*):

(d) The Department of Education may fund, within available appropriations, in cooperation with one or more regional educational service centers: (1) A cooperating teacher program to train Connecticut public school teachers and certified teachers at private special education facilities approved by the Commissioner of Education and at other facilities designated by the commissioner, who participate in the supervision, training and evaluation of student teachers; and (2) institutes to provide continuing education for Connecticut public school educators [, assessors] and cooperating teachers₂ [and teacher mentors,] including institutes to provide continuing education for Connecticut public school educators offered in cooperation with the Connecticut Humanities Council₂ [; and (3) a beginning teacher support and assessment program to train Connecticut public school teachers and other qualified persons approved by the Commissioner of Education and certified teachers at such private special education and other designated facilities who serve as mentors or assessors for

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beginning teachers and who supervise, train and assist or assess beginning teachers in their initial years in teaching and to pay stipends to assessors.] Funds available under this subsection shall be paid directly to school districts for the provision of substitute teachers when cooperating teachers [, teacher mentors, beginning teachers and assessors] are released from regular classroom responsibilities and for the provision of professional development activities for cooperating and student teachers. [, teacher mentors, assessors and beginning teachers.] The cooperating teacher [and beginning teacher support and assessment programs] program shall operate in accordance with regulations adopted by the State Board of Education in accordance with chapter 54, except in cases of placement in other countries pursuant to written cooperative agreements between Connecticut institutions of higher education and institutions of higher education in other countries. A Connecticut institution may enter such an agreement only if the State Board of Education and Board of Governors for Higher Education have jointly approved the institution's teacher preparation program to enter into such agreements. Student teachers shall be placed with trained cooperating teachers. [Beginning teachers shall participate in a beginning teacher support and assessment program as made available by the board. School districts shall be responsible for providing support to beginning teachers which shall include, but not be limited to, the placement of beginning teachers with trained teacher mentors who may be full or part-time teachers in the same or a different building than the beginning teacher and provision of trained assessors to conduct assessments of beginning teachers. Cooperating teachers, teacher mentors and assessors may serve concurrently in more than one capacity and may be assigned more than one student teacher or beginning teacher in each such capacity. The assessment of each beginning teacher shall be based upon, but not limited to, data obtained from observations conducted by assessors using an assessment instrument. A beginning teacher shall be assessed by educators with teaching experience in the same

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general subject area as such beginning teacher.] Cooperating teachers [and teacher mentors] who are Connecticut public school teachers [and assessors who are employed by school districts] shall be selected by local and regional boards of education. Cooperating teachers [and teacher mentors and assessors] at such private special education and other designated facilities shall be selected by the authority responsible for the operation of such facilities. If a board of education is unable to identify a sufficient number of individuals to serve in such positions, the commissioner may select qualified persons who are not employed by the board of education to serve in such positions. Such regulations shall require primary consideration of teachers' classroom experience and recognized success as educators. The provisions of sections 10-153a to 10-153n, inclusive, shall not be applicable to the selection, placement and compensation of persons participating in the cooperating teacher [and beginning teacher support and assessment programs] program pursuant to the provisions of this section and to the hours and duties of such persons. The State Board of Education shall protect and save harmless, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-235, any cooperating teacher [, teacher mentor or assessor] while serving in such capacity.

Sec. 2. (*Effective July 1, 2008*) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 10-220a of the general statutes, as amended by this act, or any regulation adopted by the State Board of Education pursuant to said section, for the 2008-2009 school year, the Department of Education shall not require any beginning teacher being assessed as part of the beginning teacher support and assessment program to complete a video component as part of such assessment program.

Sec. 3. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a task force to develop a plan to replace the beginning educator support and training program with a mentor assistance program starting with the 2009-2010 school year. The plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

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(1) Requirements for an initial educator's successful completion of the mentor assistance program, (2) sequential modules based on state standards as set forth in the Common Core of Teaching, as developed by the Department of Education, (3) requirements concerning (A) mentor eligibility and assignments and training of mentors, and (B) the frequency with which mentor teachers should meet with beginning teachers, (4) methods to encourage collaboration from the Department of Education, Regional Educational Service Centers and local and regional school districts to identify, recruit and retain mentors, (5) recommendations concerning the transition between the beginning educator support and training program and the mentor assistance program, including, but not limited to, an evaluation process and procedures concerning initial educators who completed one or more professional knowledge clinical assessments, but have not received a satisfactory evaluation by June 30, 2009, (6) recommendations concerning possible exemptions from the mentor assistance program for educators who taught previously in another state, taught previously in a nonpublic school or have teaching assignments for which such program may not be relevant and any other situation for which the task force determines that an exemption may be appropriate, and (7) recommendations concerning the development of a data collection and evaluation system for monitoring the mentor assistance program on local and state-wide levels. The task force should consider whether legislative changes should be made, including, but not limited to, amending section 10-220a of the general statutes to (i) require a reduced classroom teaching work load for mentors, as determined by the school district, (ii) expand the categories of persons who can become mentors, (iii) require that beginning teachers receive and complete the mentor assistance program during their first two years of certification, and (iv) require that school districts receive full funding to implement the mentor assistance program.

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(b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

(1) The chairpersons and ranking members of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, or their designees;

(2) The chairpersons and ranking members of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee, or their designees;

(3) Two appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of the Connecticut Association of Schools and one of whom is a member of the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators;

(4) Two appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom is a teacher at a regional vocational-technical school and one of whom is a member of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents;

(5) Two appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a faculty member of the Connecticut State University system who teaches in a teacher preparation program and one of whom is a member of the Connecticut Education Association;

(6) Two appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a teacher in a public school who participates or participated as a mentor teacher in the beginning educator support and training program and one of whom is a member of the Connecticut chapter of the American Federation of Teachers;

(7) Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is a member of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and one of whom is a representative of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges;

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(8) Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom is a member of the Connecticut Parent Teacher Association and one of whom is a teacher in a public school who holds an initial educator certificate; and

(9) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee.

(c) All appointments to the task force shall be made no later than thirty days after the effective date of this section. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority.

(d) The chairperson of the task force shall be the Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee. The chairperson shall schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held no later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(e) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

(f) Not later than January 1, 2009, the task force shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and to the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee. The task force shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or January 1, 2009, whichever is earlier.

Approved June 2, 2008