

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Education Committee
March 23, 2009

**TESTIMONY OF
MARK K. MCQUILLAN, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION**

ON

RAISED BILL 6686

**AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEACHER EDUCATION
AND MENTORING PROGRAM**

The Department supports Raised Bill 6686 which seeks to implement the recommendations of the task force which convened last fall, pursuant to Public Act 08-107, to develop a new mentor assistance program to replace the Beginning Educator Support and Training Program (BEST). The new Connecticut Mentor Assistance Program introduces different expectations for teacher induction, teacher certification, assessment, and district accountability. Where BEST was originally a state-based assessment and certification program, the new mentor assistance program focuses more heavily on guided teacher support, coaching, and the completion of five learning modules over the first two years of teaching.

The new program proposes a shift from a state-based to district-based system where regional educational service centers (RESCs), teachers' associations, and institutions of higher education will play a larger part in the

induction process of new teachers in the years to come. The biggest changes will center on how the accountability function for certification, once exclusively the purview of the State Department of Education, will now be shared with districts. Under the new model, the governance of mentoring programs statewide will be decentralized with old and new players assuming different roles in the process.

The basic components of the new program are as follows: Each beginning teacher will be assigned a mentor who has committed to working with that beginning teacher for 50 contact hours over a span of two years. Task force members felt strongly that each mentor be compensated \$500 per year for each beginning teacher that they mentor. The funding for this stipend was included in the program's proposed budget, as laid out in the task force report, so as not to add an additional financial burden on districts.

The mentors will be tasked to work with the beginning teachers to develop a planned set of activities to complete within each module. The beginning teacher will complete a written reflection or project to conclude each training module. That written reflection or project will then be submitted to a local or regional coordinating committee whose members are appointed by the superintendent of schools. The coordinating committee will review the written reflection or project based on a rubric specifically designed for each module. Once reviewed, the coordinating committee will attest to the superintendent the completion of all modules by the beginning teacher. The superintendent, in turn, will notify the state that the beginning teacher is eligible for a provisional educator certificate. Upon a person's satisfactory completion of the mentor assistance

program and the State Board of Education's receipt of a proper application, the State Board shall issue a provisional educator certificate.

The bill proposes that the five modules of instruction will be developed jointly by representatives of the Department of Education and other stakeholders by May 2010 to provide a common framework for the support of beginning teachers, including workshops, online courses and resources. While unfortunately the program will not be ready for implementation in September of 2009, the task force agreed that it was crucial to take the next year for the program to be developed and to allow time for all stakeholders to receive proper training. In addition, time is needed to develop a key feature of the new program: a data system that will be maintained at the state level and made available to each district to access resources and record-keeping tools to manage the program at the local level. We hope to develop the first two modules in the next few months so that they are ready to be piloted in the 2009-2010 school year.

The Department is committed to moving forward with this new induction program for beginning teachers and urges the adoption of Raised Bill 6686.