

in repose to the call for comment on sb24:

A. The link presents the bill in all its legalese which:

B. ...should not have got this far without comprehensive review , (comment, questions, suggestions, etc.) from those, especially teachers, who are in the schools daily and others (we the people, citizens, taxpayers, etc., the employers of those who are elected to represent our interests and appointed to do our business).

C. ...should have been accompanied by a summary of actions proposed and, when applicable, a comparison with present regulation/policy/statute. The summary distributed by Rep Guliano at a recent public meeting, (the kind of meeting that should have been held in numbers and frequency demanded by the importance of the subject well before the drafting of this document), was helpful and has served as an armature for these necessarily hasty, and far from comprehensive, remarks. A more thoroughly annotated version of such a summary would have been a proper preamble to the actual sb24 link.

D. ...should have been more legibly framed to make the tangle of section headings and designations, (1), (a), [b...], etc. rather more useful than challenging, (any one who has dealt problems of outline format and data representation in a classroom could have helped) and...

E. ...considering the hurdles of legalese (clumsy stuff at that) and such other "amenities" in the presentation as sending the citizen-reader back to statutes not stated or summarized, is, at least, inconsiderate, see 18 (c) 2 (line 1704) and its double-back to statutes 10-74g, etc., (for establishment of innovative schools), for an example of the hundreds of such impositions. Imagine, if you will, your own, (that's the collective elected "your own"), perplexity if given a variorum edition of, say, "Hamlet", which even though it offers more concrete reference than SB24 is, still, loaded with arcane critical commentary and citations that occupy as much, if not more, space on the page as the actual text, and imagine, too, that the you're given this monster one week before the exam.

EVALUATION: the grade (legislative multiphasic mastery score conversion), is F, entered pending pending timely appeal.

From what can be extracted from the document, and the outline, these observations:

1. The problems with tenure in colleges and universities as well as schools stem from a lack of rigor in definition and application. If tenure is granted as a form of social promotion or recognition of longevity, the system has no one to blame but itself for subsequent difficulties such as "tenured deadwood" or, worse, the advancement of unqualified persons to positions of authority (chairs and deans, for example, in universities, who bring their flaws into the development and application of even lower standards for the next generation).

1A..The proposed rules of tenure, like so much of SB24, create measures and processes without considering, first, the establishment of standards/policies that will elevate tenure and, in turn, have a positive influence elsewhere as well - say on teacher training.

1B. Tenure should mark those teachers whose presence in a system defines the system at its best, teachers who have fulfilled their potential and contributed measurably to the development of teaching and/or scholarship in their field and to the advancement of their institutions.

1C. Once granted, to the highest standards, tenure should be reviewable only for clearly stated moral or academic causes.

1D. Tenure should be granted and reviewed only by other teachers with tenure, with added input

from outside reviewers in the candidate's subject area . Opposing voices from outside the peer review - administrators, school board or other officials, et al, should offer their opposition in substantial form relevant to the conditions for granting or reviewing tenure established in the contract.

1E. Below tenure there could be rank similar to the university model. The notion of "probationary tenure" is embarrassing...have what "testing" periods and ladders of rank you will prior to granting a "hold" but call them that and rather than denature the concept of tenure, (and bruise the language), enrich or, at least clarify it, as the protection of both freedom of inquiry (pursuit of truth) and exemplary talents as it was intended to be in its academic use.

1F. There is nothing objectionable about a grant of tenure that includes periodic review to protect against abuses by the tenured. Absent demonstrated abuse, however there should not be any conditions attached to continuing tenure as if it were "regranted" or "defended."

1G. There are questions of evaluation (judgement) not answered in the bill that leave too much of the tenure process open to internal administrative/political manipulation. Too much, too, of terms which, lacking clear definition, like the whiplash "probationary tenure," are more likely to obfuscate than illuminate. (Bias declared: school administration is already too much in the hands of "educationists" who should be employed rather in support of cadres of senior tenured teachers - whose vision should determine the needs of management - than given authority to govern. While it may be the intention to specify after the bill passes (there is much reference to "establish," "ensure," etc., various "processes," "practices," "interventions," etc.) those debates prior to legislative conclusions might make for more effective legislation.

1H. The impartial arbitrator is a mistake and time and cost are poor justification for decision making that may lead to incalculable time and cost issues over the lifetime of a binding decision. A panel consisting of a tenured teacher, a senior administrator, a school board member and outside authorities relevant to the question (subject area teaching effectiveness, personality issues/manifest disorders, etc.) would be more suited to a fair appeal process.

And for many of the others:

2. Early Childhood Education
3. Turnaround
4. Expanded Choice

2-4A. All are rather limited by emphasis on bandaging of prior wounds, (to some extent necessary to stop hemorrhage), than treatment by rehabilitation, (re-cognition?). Even the best example-schools are operating under the weight of policy and administrative practices entrenched by custom and law and, now, though they may be modified slightly per SB24, will be further layered over by new law and, so, all the more difficult to revive and review in the future.

5. Most promising is the suggested effort to promote innovation, which, at least, gets us into the proper place to frame more informed approaches to learning and, by declension, the administrative approaches required to SUPPORT, (as opposed to govern), our ever-evolving understanding of learning and its translation into practice, (and, by further declension, effective enabling legislation). Here, a simple statement of the objectives that any and all legislation and policy are intended to serve might be helpful, something like the preamble to the constitution that is short on method but clear in purpose, to "promote the general Welfare" and "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity." As it is, the present habit of governance is heavy-handed and often rather impedes than empowers creativity. (see NYT 2/20 attachment below).

5A. There should be, for starters, at least one laboratory school where cognition/learning, child

development, etc., authorities as visiting fellows in support explorations of curriculum design, pedagogical method and even tests of the k-12 model and the present, (and, it says here, ineffective and inefficient school day and grade divisions). The same for vocational studies per se and the potential curricular benefits of more informed integration of vocational/academic elements, especially in early learning. From this lab the goals and methods needed to improve our ability to nurture the potential of each and every kid will come more readily and more certainly than they will from hastily drawn legislation or institutionalized educationism.

5A1. It may be that underperforming schools might be good places for "satellite labs"...targets for the experimental lab shock troops who are sent to act (maybe not as quickly or dramatically, but...) in the manner of the FDIC agents who descend on a failed bank and get it cleaned up and back on line over a week-end). Of course, we need to create the shock troops, but if the FDIC and the NAVY have done it we know it can be done, taught and learned.

6. The certification process certainly needs attention. First, the teacher training effort should be more intensely directed toward "scholar training" - the development of life-long learners whose teaching ambitions would only be "rough-hewn" during their BA, MA studies (by some course work in cognition and learning psychology/child development, for example, and summer internships in various sorts of schools here and abroad) and more finely shaped, by a medical-school-style intern/residency sequence, from the most basic through more sophisticated effort that would, as in medicine, answer for "probationary" requirements prior to granting professional licenses. Later, further formal qualification, (again as in medicine), may be added for specialty, mastery or other distinction. And...

6A....of course pay teachers according to their professional standing as it is now, (as they actually charges as opposed to how they are judged by officials and lay persons unfamiliar with the challenges they face), and as it they will be charged to be under increasingly rigorous qualification in the future.

6B. Consider, too, provisional certification of men and women who have demonstrated skills and leadership in business, industry, the military and, of course education (!)...some may need a period of audition and rehearsal to assess their aptitudes in transforming their capabilities to public school teaching (the effectiveness of those who have taught in the military, measured against stated goals, is extraordinary), others not, (someone with, say, 25 years in the college classroom who is likely to have achieved senior rank and tenure may even have something to teach the certifiers). Recruitment of these unique resource persons might be worth a try, (see SB24 references to "coaches"), and could be limited to secondary school assignments if there is no evidence of teaching or leadership involving elementary and middle school age groups. In this regard, there should be no prior bar to hiring anyone who has been had a career or a number of years, say 5, teaching in accredited institutions, provided resume and references are suitable to the opening advertised. The need for any further instruction may be suggested during evaluations or perhaps satisfied by the internal effort of...

6C. Job-embedded teams are a very good idea, a consistent home-team resource for ongoing assessment and enrichment of teaching could be a vital practical resource and an agent for the development and maintenance of professional and institutional morale. Again, the emphasis here should be on the role of senior teachers in establishing and overseeing such teams, (as a part of a hoped-for shift in school leadership and governance from administrators to teachers as noted above in 1G).

Offered 2/20'12 by J Ranelli, Old Lyme, CT who has never taught a day in the k-12 system but has had considerable experience with the college and university performance ,(reasoning, writing, speaking, study habits, discipline, initiative), of hundreds of its graduates and who remains profoundly grateful to his own elementary and secondary school teachers who may not have had the most modern training in their day but were less regulated in their efforts to tutor each

according to need.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/20/education/states-address-problems-with-teacher-evaluations.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha23>