

Remarks of Anne Pasco
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For the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 30
Teacher Evaluation

February 21, 2012

Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee: My name is Anne Pasco. I have worked in the Fairfield School system for over 40 years and am presently the President of the Fairfield Education Association, which represents approximately 1000 certified education professionals. I speak for all of my members when I state that the FEA is strongly opposed to the Governor's proposed legislation. Here is why.

Governor Malloy, in his "State of the State" address claimed that, while he did not support "teacher bashing," teachers only had to "show up" to get tenure. The Governor's unfortunate comment not only shows a lack of understanding of "tenure," but a fundamental disrespect for both teachers and education. It is no surprise that his proposed legislation is nothing more than an extension of this misunderstanding.

First, the Governor failed to say that Connecticut currently has one of the longest and most rigorous probationary periods in the country. New teachers go through a 40 month evaluation process during which they are mentored, required to write extensive papers, and go through additional training. No teacher in my 40 years of experience would describe these rigors as "showing up" and if they did, they would not remain for long in the profession.

The Governor's proposal is to only have a 30 month probationary period for teachers who receive two exemplary evaluations and a 50 month probationary period for teachers who receive lesser evaluations. At the same time, his legislation waters down the certification requirements for actually becoming a teacher. The Governor has cited no research to show why his approach would be more effective than the current system.

The same problem applies to the creation of a "Master Teacher" position. Again, the Governor bases this category upon "Exemplary" evaluations. The evaluations are, in turn, partially based upon the standardized test scores of the teacher's students as well as parent and student reviews. The legislation fails to describe how certified professionals can ever achieve exemplary ratings if they teach in subjects or work in areas that do not have standardized tests, such as Special Education, Social Studies, Physics, Chemistry, Art, Music, Student Guidance, Student Psychology, and School Administration to name a few.

Moreover, the Governor's proposed evaluation system does not take into account the fact that some teachers may receive lower achieving students in some years and higher achieving students in others.

The fact that the Governor's approach is entirely results-oriented is demeaning to education professionals (including myself and my members), who have devoted their lives to providing the best possible educational experience and a supportive environment for students. Neither teaching nor learning is an exact science; and personal development and maturity are not subject to test scores. Consequently, rewarding teachers based upon a competition model of achieving "exemplary ratings," will have nothing to do with educating students, but teaching for a result which looks good on paper and is demoralizing in practice. Certainly, Connecticut can do much better.

Education in the state of Connecticut is not broken. This total overhaul is unwarranted. The Governor seems to be caught up by the slogan "Just Do It." Instead, the focus should be "Do It Right." The dismantling of the educational system may be "swift and bold," but one must remember that the fashioning and building of this structure took decades. Please vote against this bill. Thank you.