

Regional School District No. 8

P.O. Box 1438

Hebron, CT 06248

Web Site: www.reg8.k12.ct.us

Phone: 860 228-2115 Fax: 860 228-4346

Robert Siminski, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

rsiminski@reg8.k12.ct.us

TESTIMONY ON SB 1097

I am concerned about two provisions of SB 1097 because one of those provisions, in essence, makes the evaluation system for teachers and principals a mandatory topic of bargaining with the bargaining agents for both groups and because another provision substitutes an ineffective implementation plan for the one that was developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC).

Under present statute, the local Board of Education has final authority over the teacher and principal evaluation system as long as representatives of the bargaining unit involved are consulted prior to a decision being made. After working in a state where teacher evaluation was a mandatory subject of bargaining, the negotiation process to implement teacher evaluation was long, arduous, and expensive. Furthermore, the Board's goals in implementing a new Teacher Evaluation Program were never totally achieved. Section 1 (b) of the proposed bill, however, removes from the Board of Education this final authority regarding the system that will be used to evaluate teachers in every school system in the state. The authority would rest with the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee unless the Committee and the Board could not agree. If that is the case, the district would be obligated to implement the state model plan. Region 8 has developed an instrument that satisfies the needs of the Board and has begun the process of informally implementing the program this year. The district's evaluation instrument has been modified to meet the standards set in the State Evaluation Plan. Adoption of this bill would negate all this work, cause a delay in implementing the new evaluation process, and force the district to use an evaluation instrument that is extremely cumbersome.

Only Boards of Education and the Superintendents whom they hire have this responsibility. The bill, then, would give authority over a school system function that is directly related to the results achieved by a school system to a body (Professional Development Committee) that has no responsibility for those results and could ultimately protect people who do not meet the standards set by the Board of Education. This process would also run counter to public opinion within the three communities the region serves.

The bill would also constitute a significant departure from over thirty years of history by making moot the 1986 Wethersfield case that holds that teacher evaluation systems are not a mandatory subject of bargaining.

Regional School District No. 8 Board of Education prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religious creed, age, marital status, military or veteran status, national origin, sex, ancestry, sexual orientation, or past or present physical or mental disability in accordance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the American with Disabilities Act of 1991 and applicable state laws. Minority candidates are encouraged to apply.

Section 1(a) of the bill would require every district to implement the new evaluation system with every certified professional in the district in 2014-15. There would be no phase-in and no resultant opportunity to learn from that experience before we go to full implementation. The difficulty of implementing an evaluation system on a district-wide basis was clearly evident with the implementation of SEED program in the pilot districts. In many cases, during the implementation process, information was not forthcoming in a timely manner and target dates set out in the plan were often not met. To avoid this kind of situation, the PEAC reached consensus on a process whereby 2013-14 would be a bridge year during which districts could choose among acceptable phase-in options. This consensus, while it does not necessarily represent all of the phase-in options that I would like to have seen offered, at least recognizes the fact that going to full implementation in every district in the state in any one year with no bridge year before that, is a recipe for failure.

I urge you, therefore, not to support SB 1097 as it is presently written and instead, to refer to the PEAC the issues which the bill attempts to address. That body is best equipped to make recommendations regarding implementation schedules, phase in options and decision making processes.