

  
Connecticut Council  
for  
EDUCATION REFORM

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING**

**FEBRUARY 15, 2013**

The Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER) believes that every child in Connecticut deserves an exceptional education, without exception. Last year's education reform act moved the state towards our goal of eliminating the achievement gap. Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and esteemed members of the Education Committee, CCER offers testimony on three bills which will move this education reform effort forward:

**H.B 6357 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION**

This bill would:

- I. Dedicate the vast majority of new Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to the state's lowest performing (Alliance) districts to fuel education reform programming at the school and district levels. The Alliance Districts enroll:
  - a. 38% of all of Connecticut public school students
  - b. 71% of all low-income students
  - c. 67% of minority students and
  - d. 79% of students whose first language is not English (ELL)
  
- II. This year, about \$40 million was made available conditionally to Alliance Districts which were required to create plans to improve student achievement. All thirty of the districts had tiered intervention plans approved for the FY 2013 school year.
  - a. A substantial majority of this funding had to be devoted to education reform efforts that could include research based programs for:
    - i. *Early literacy*. Research indicates early interventions, especially in reading, are especially helpful to low-achieving students.<sup>1</sup>
    - ii. *Additional learning time*. Research shows that low-achieving students can improve with effective, extended learning time.<sup>2</sup>
    - iii. *Talent, to attract, retain and reward great teachers and leaders*. Research demonstrates that the lowest achieving schools like those in the Alliance Districts could improve with highly effective teachers.<sup>3</sup>
    - iv. *Training for school leaders about the new teacher evaluation system*. Research has shown that leaders need to be trained to do accurate observations so they provide positive feedback to teachers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NorthCentral Educational Regional Laboratory, *Critical Issue: Beyond Social Promotion and Retention-Five Strategies to Help Students Succeed*. Retrieved from: [www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/at\\_risk/at800.htm](http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/at_risk/at800.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Education, *Race to the Top Application, Executive Summary*, November 2009, pg. 12. Retrieved from [www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf). see definition of highly effective teacher.

<sup>4</sup> TNTP: Reimagine Teaching. *MET Made Simple: Building Research Based Teacher Evaluations*, January 2012. Retrieved from [http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP\\_METMadeSimple\\_2012.pdf](http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_METMadeSimple_2012.pdf)

- v. *Coordination of early childhood programs and kindergarten.* Research suggests that gains made by children in preschool programs are best preserved by coordinating transitions of children from preschool to kindergarten.<sup>5</sup>
  - vi. *Wraparound services.* Research of three similar programs have "shown positive results."<sup>6</sup>
  - vii. *Other approved reform efforts.*
- b. With the new ECS formula, this bill would provide an additional \$48 million in FY 2014 and \$96 million in FY 2015 to further advance education reform efforts in the Alliance Districts. The first year Alliance District plans initiated systems of reform that will occur over a period of years. Additional funding, in the form of the budget recommendations for FY 2014 and FY 2015, are necessary to ensure continued progress towards improving student achievement.
  - c. All of these districts will be required to have second year plans which may now include school and district changes necessary for Common Core Standards implementation. (Common Core Standards will ensure that state students graduate from high school college- or career- ready).

CCER endorses these provisions because the new ECS financial resources are needed to maximize school reform in these low performing districts.

- III. Increase charter school rates, albeit at a lower level than originally expected
  - a. Per student charter rates are raised from \$10,200 to \$10,500 in FY 2014 and \$11,000 in FY 2015 and beyond

As part of a menu of opportunities (especially for families with children in low-performing school districts), CCER believes charter schools are part of a robust package of public school choice options and they should be adequately financially supported.

### **H.B. No. 6358 AN ACT UNLEASHING INNOVATION IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS**

This bill would:

- I. Establish a waiver process to free up to twenty high-performing school districts from certain statutory requirements (such as the length of school days) for three years. The requirements that could be waived include:
  - a. Length of school days (but not annual instructional hours)
  - b. Minimum days (but not annual instructional hours)
  - c. Length of school year (but not annual instructional hours)
  - d. Subjects and course credits for high school graduation

CCER supports these strategies but they could be improved by including more districts in an expanded waiver process. This waiver program could include any school districts interesting in maximizing the amount of instructional time for low-performing students. Research shows that extended learning time is helpful in remediating learning deficits for struggling students.<sup>7</sup>

- II. Create a Teaching Profession Initiative Pilot program that would allow the SBOE to waive teacher and leader certification requirements for three districts and finance programs for great teachers and leaders

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<sup>5</sup>Yumiko Jolly and Sherry Orbach, *Smoothing the Transition to Kindergarten*, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Retrieved from : [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp\\_site/storage/fckeditor/file/pdfs/degree-programs/oca/pae-jolly-orbach-transition-to-kindergarten.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp_site/storage/fckeditor/file/pdfs/degree-programs/oca/pae-jolly-orbach-transition-to-kindergarten.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Isobel Owen, *Breaking the Mold Combining Community Schools with Expanded Learning Time to Help Educationally Disadvantaged Students*, Sept. 2010. Retrieved from : [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/elt\\_community\\_schools.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2010/09/pdf/elt_community_schools.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (2006) Borman, Geoffrey D. and N.M. Dowling. *The Longitudinal Achievement Effects of Multi-Year Summer School: Evidence form the Teach Baltimore Randomized Field Trial*. Retrieved from [http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_837.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html).

- a. Superintendents and collective bargaining agents must agree to changes on innovations to attract, develop and retain high quality teachers and administrators
- b. These innovations could include the:
  - i. Establishment of a local professional standards board that may the waiver of certification requirements for teachers and administrators and develop
  - ii. Recruitment of high quality teacher and administrator candidates and development of selection criteria for them
  - iii. Career ladders that offer professional advancement in recognition, responsibilities and compensation
  - iv. Criteria to supplement the standards established by the department for the issuance of a distinguished educator and
  - v. Other innovations designed to attract, develop, retain, recognize and reward high quality teachers and administrators.

The research demonstrates that teachers make all the difference in whether a child will succeed or not in school.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, CCER champions excellent teachers and leaders and innovative programs that will attract, retain and reward them.

### **H.B. No. 6359 AN ACT CONCERNING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM**

This bill would:

- I. Create an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) which will (over a two year implementation period) provide a comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative set of early childhood programs under one roof, the OEC.
  - a. Currently, most early childhood programs reside in five state agencies:
    - i. State Department of Education (School Readiness, Child Day Care and state funded Head Start)
    - ii. Department of Social Services (Care4Kids, Children's Trust Fund)
    - iii. Board of Regents (Connecticut Charts- a- Course which provides professional development opportunities for child care providers)
    - iv. Department of Developmental Services (Birth to Three) and
    - v. Department of Public Health (licensing of child care homes and facilities)

According to renowned Harvard research scientist Dr. Jack Shonkoff, "Early childhood policies and practices are highly fragmented, with complex and confusing points of entry that are particularly problematic for underserved segments of the population and those with special needs. This lack of an integrative early childhood infrastructure makes it difficult to advance prevention-oriented initiatives for all children and to coordinate services for those with complex problems. Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grants help states and communities to build and integrate early childhood service systems that better meet the needs of children and families."<sup>9</sup> An early childhood system will provide the important quality programs that research shows improve educational outcomes for low-income children.<sup>10</sup>

CCER supports the creation of an early childhood system as a predicate to improving educational outcomes for all children, but particularly for those who are low-income.

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<sup>8</sup> Eric A. Hanushek and Steven G. Rivkin (2006) *Teacher Quality: The Handbook of the Economics of Education*. Retrieved from <http://edpro.stanford.edu/hanushek/admin/pages/files/uploads/HESEDU2018.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Jack Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, National Academy Press, 2000, Retrieved from <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309069882>

<sup>10</sup> National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research, Rutgers University (2009). *Providing Preschool Education for all 4-year-olds: Lessons from Six State Journeys*. Retrieved from: <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/19.pdf>