

Summary of the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program

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Issue

Summarize the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program and explain how the recent budget cuts have affected it.

Summary

TEAM is the state's beginning teacher mentoring program that pairs new teachers with experienced teachers and provides for (1) guided support and coaching and (2) completion of instructional modules that address key areas of teaching. Teachers holding initial (first-level) educator certificates must successfully complete TEAM in order to receive a provisional (second-level) certificate. Most beginning teachers are in the program for two years, with some exceptions.

State law places requirements on the State Department of Education (SDE), local and regional school districts, and regional educational service centers (RESCs), as well as the beginning teachers and mentors who participate in TEAM ([CGS § 10-145o](#)).

SDE announced in a [November 8, 2017 letter](#) to school districts that due to budget cuts imposed under the budget act ([PA 17-2](#), June Special Session), SDE will not provide the funding to local districts for the \$500 stipend that mentor teachers receive for each TEAM participant they mentor. While the state funding was cut, the law is unchanged that requires school districts to pay the stipends. The TEAM stipend money is part of SDE's talent development line item, which funds a number of items related to teacher development. It was funded at \$6.1 million for FY 17 and was reduced to \$650,000 each year for FYs 18 and 19.

Under the statute, beginning teachers in TEAM are required to write reflection papers and the local districts are required to document TEAM participation in SDE's database, but the letter from SDE states that these two items will no longer be required.

SDE Responsibilities

The law that created TEAM in 2009 requires SDE to:

1. develop a statement, including goals for the statewide program,
2. distribute state funds to local districts to help implement TEAM,
3. manage and make data systems available to local districts to document teachers' successful completion of the required instructional modules,
4. monitor local program implementation,
5. issue provisional teacher certifications (second-level certification) to teachers who successfully completed the program,
6. develop guidelines for the creation and approval of local TEAM plans, and
7. oversee an outside evaluation of the statewide program every three to five years.

SDE must also work in collaboration with EASTCONN (one of the state's six regional educational service centers (RESC)), the RESC Alliance, colleges that have teacher preparation programs, and other stakeholders to develop the instructional modules, train local and regional mentors, train district teams and principals to design and administer TEAM at the local level, and provide technical assistance to districts.

Local or Regional Board of Education Responsibilities

Under the law, each school board must develop a three-year TEAM plan that incorporates SDE goals and community and student needs and form, with teachers' union representatives, a local or regional coordinating committee to guide its plan activities. Each board must develop an annual budget based on its plan and submit it to SDE to receive state assistance for its TEAM Program activities.

The law also requires each board to:

1. recruit mentors from within and outside the district and assign them to work with the district's beginning teachers;
2. ensure coverage by substitute teachers to allow mentors and beginning teachers to participate in the program;
3. communicate regularly with beginning teachers about training opportunities, workshops, and support groups; and
4. coordinate TEAM with the district's teacher evaluation and supervision program, but keep the two separate.

The board must verify, through the coordinating committee, that beginning teachers have completed the TEAM requirements for a provisional certificate and attest that the teacher is eligible for the provisional certificate. A board is prohibited from considering a teacher's completion of the program in its decision to continue his or her employment.

The law details a number of other duties for local boards including ensuring that schools (1) approve individual mentoring plans, (2) make time available for teachers to achieve TEAM goals, and (3) submit an annual report on mentor and teacher activities to the district's coordinating committee for review and approval.

Beginning Teacher Requirements

The law generally requires each beginning teacher to develop a two-year individualized mentoring plan and complete five instructional modules. (There are some exceptions, such as vocational teachers may complete a one-year program with two modules.) Unless the education commissioner provides otherwise, teachers must complete two modules in the program's first year and three in the second.

The modules must address the following:

1. classroom management and climate, including addressing school bullying and youth suicide;
2. lesson planning and unit design;
3. delivering instruction;
4. assessing student learning; and
5. professional practice.

The beginning teachers must work with their mentors to develop planned activities that reflect the teacher's needs assessment to complete each module. The activities can be presented (1) by mentors in person, (2) in workshops, (3) through online courses, or (4) by completing a set of readings. For each module, teachers must apply the knowledge gained through such activities in a lesson, project, or demonstration of how the activity affected students' learning. Teachers must also submit a reflection paper for each module that summarizes, describes, or analyzes what they and their students learned and how it contributed to the teacher's development. The paper or project must be signed by the mentor and sent to the district's coordinating committee for approval. The SDE letter indicates that teachers will no longer be required to write these papers, although the requirement has not been changed in law.

TEAM Mentor Requirements

TEAM mentors must have a provisional or professional educator certificate and have at least three years of teaching experience in Connecticut, including at least one year in the district where they are employed. Retired certified teachers who complete a RESC mentor training program may also serve as mentors.

Each mentor is assigned two beginning teachers, although in certain circumstances they can have three. Mentors must provide 50 contact hours with each of their beginning teachers during the program, with an expectation of approximately 10 hours per module.

The local or regional board must give mentors a minimum annual stipend of \$500 for each beginning teacher assigned to them.

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