

Remarks of
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To the Education Committee

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My name is Philip Apruzzese, and I'm a past president of the Connecticut Education Association. I was the CEA President at the time the TEAM program was enacted into legislation in 2008-2009. I'd like to share with you my thoughts, concerns, and questions about SB183, specifically Section 9, which pertains to the TEAM program.

CEA and others worked to develop a strong program that would replace the BEST program which had become a high stakes assessment program for teachers. Connecticut needed a program that would support its new teachers and TEAM has done exactly that, growing in popularity among teachers and administrators into a program nationally recognized as one of the top mentoring programs for new teachers in the country, leading to better outcomes for students.

TEAM funding has been cut from the SDE budget inadvertently by the legislature and needs to be restored so that cuts to the program are negated. SB 183, section 9, proposes cuts to the TEAM program that would result in inconsistent standards for successful completion of TEAM, and pose significant difficulty for districts in implementing this nationally recognized program. There are three areas in section 9 that are significant to the continued success of the program and must not be eliminated: the data system used for TEAM, the module reflection paper, and the superintendent's attestation of beginning teacher's TEAM completion and eligibility for next level of certification.

Three areas - how they are currently used:

DATA System: Currently housed at EASTCONN, a required use of the electronic data base and system used state-wide for all functions in implementing TEAM. This data system plays a large part in the smooth implementation of the program across districts. This is the tool every district uses to match beginning teachers with mentors, track and monitor progress of all

beginning teachers, store and transmit written work done within the five modules. SDE has funded this system since the inception of TEAM. How will districts keep track of the beginning teachers' work and completion of modules if it is eliminated?

The Module Reflection Paper: At the end of each of the five modules, beginning teachers are given a choice, a reflection paper or project. No beginning teacher to date has ever selected a "project". The "project" language should be eliminated. The reflection paper is very important to the beginning teacher in that it indicates how they are thinking and learning about their own teaching and how it grew because of the module activities. It gives the beginning teacher the opportunity to reflect on their assessment of student needs, their own learning to better meet student needs, lesson planning, lesson implementation, the impact on student performance and the impact it all has on their own performance as teachers. The reflection papers must meet the same TEAM completion standard, regardless of the beginning teacher's discipline or grade level. Elimination of the reflection paper increases the possibility of inconsistency and less accountability for implementation of TEAM across districts without the same completion processes and standard. Hence, no state-wide standard for completion of TEAM, which is the basis for moving to the next level of certification. If SDE is proposing that districts "decide for themselves" what they want beginning teachers to do for a culminating activity, and that the district could set the standard for successful completion. This would create a highly inconsistent program across districts, which would be unfair to the new teachers.

Superintendent's attestation of beginning teacher's TEAM completion: Currently, each district verifies that the work of the beginning teachers and the instructional modules have been successfully completed to warrant a provisional certificate. Superintendents have had this authority since the program began almost ten years ago. The elimination of this attestation of completion and without the electronic system will cause greater possibility of problems arising to move new teachers to the next level of certification. It raises these questions – Who will verify beginning teacher successful completion and what will be the standard?

Connecticut has a program that is one of the top mentor programs in the country with over 13,000 teachers successfully completing TEAM, with over 17,000 mentors trained providing

better support and adding to teacher growth and of those teachers completing TEAM becoming mentors in greater numbers to new teachers are testaments to the program's success.

One must ask, when there is a highly successful program to support beginning teachers, a nationally recognized one at that, why then would anyone want to change it? Particularly, when education and teachers are being scrutinized and teacher training and retention are significant issues in education today. Why would you eliminate the requirement of using the electronic data system, an integral part as a reflection paper or district attestation? For that matter, why redesign the mentor segment of the program? There are no reasons for any of these changes! I ask the Education Committee to strongly consider keeping the TEAM program intact without elimination of these key elements which have made it so successful. Finally, I would urge the Education Committee to fund TEAM to maintain its integrity assuring high standards for certification and greater student outcomes in schools.