



CAPSS, CAS, CABE, CBIA, CCER, CONNCAN JOINT STATEMENT OF LEGISLATIVE GOALS

February 2012

Every student in Connecticut has a right to a high-quality education, regardless of his or her race, ethnicity, wealth, or zip code. Unfortunately, every student in Connecticut is not receiving a high-quality education, as demonstrated by our state's largest achievement gaps in the nation and by the gap between what our highest-performing students learn and what they need to know to meet international benchmarks for learning.

The primary reason for this unacceptable situation is the fact that the education system in Connecticut is not designed to guarantee that every child will learn what he or she needs to lead full and productive lives. We, therefore, must take bold actions that change the system if we want to ensure a brighter future for our students, our communities, and our state.

It is in this spirit that our organizations, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER), and Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN), come together, for the first time, to form a common position on important educational challenges facing our state. Each of our organizations has our own individual agendas and we may not always agree on how to solve problems in our education system. However, we do share common positions on the following issues and we jointly call on our state leaders to take action on these goals during this legislative session.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION

Our current systems to prepare and certify teachers, principals, and superintendents must be improved and become more flexible in order to find the best possible candidates for the jobs. Preparation programs, both traditional and non-traditional, must be more clinically oriented, with

both preparation and certification based primarily on demonstrated ability to perform well on the job.

TEACHER EVALUATION AND SUPPORT

The goal of an evaluation system must be two-fold: to develop and support teachers to become highly effective, and to dismiss ineffective teachers at any career level, including those who do not or cannot demonstrate improvement with support. Recently, the State Board of Education approved a set of guidelines for evaluation systems that include four levels of performance and multiple measures of a teacher's effectiveness, with a clear focus on student learning. These guidelines were developed by the state's Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC). We support the principle evaluation guidelines as adopted by the PEAC and the State Board of Education.

In addition, we believe that:

- Reductions in force, when necessary, should be guided primarily by teacher evaluation results. If dismissals are needed, they should occur within levels of performance, beginning first with ineffective teachers and working up from there.
- Teacher tenure should be earned and kept based on satisfactory evaluation results. At any point, teachers who do not consistently receive at least a proficient rating should be dismissed. We support an expedited due process that is focused on whether the evaluation procedures were followed fairly.
- Teachers who consistently receive the highest evaluation ratings should be eligible for recognition, including promotions along a career ladder and salary increases.

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION AND SUPPORT

Principal evaluation systems should mirror the goals for teacher evaluations: to develop and support principals to become highly effective, and to dismiss ineffective principals, including those who do not or cannot demonstrate improvement with support. We believe that principals must be held accountable for their performance and, at the same time, be given the training, autonomy and authority to build the capacity needed to ensure fair, objective, and effective teacher evaluations. We support the principle evaluation guidelines as adopted by the PEAC and the State Board of Education.

In addition, we believe that:

- Growth of student achievement in the building or instructional unit for which the principal is responsible should be the most significant element in principal evaluation.
- The principal must have high-quality training and support in teacher evaluation.
- The principal should have a significant voice in deciding who is employed in his/her school or instructional unit.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AND LEARNING

We need to measure student learning not by time spent in classrooms, but by mastery of content. The first step in moving toward such a system is to allow local boards of education to award students credit for evidence of work and experiences that demonstrate mastery in relation to the Common Core college- and career-readiness standards, rather than Carnegie Units earned or “seat time” accumulated, regardless of the time required for such mastery. Flexibility in meeting student learning needs must be used both for remediation for students who need additional learning time to master content, and for enrichment opportunities for advanced study.

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

We support a system of differentiated accountability for schools and districts that provides varied support and interventions based on where schools and districts fall across a range of student performance levels. We know that many schools and some districts are consistently underperforming. It is imperative that we improve these schools and districts, and provide their students with high-quality education right away. This goal can be addressed by:

- Developing a system in which our lowest-performing schools and districts receive immediate and intensive support and intervention.
- Ensuring that any increases in funding to these schools and districts is aimed at increasing student achievement.
- Recognizing our high-performing, highest-need schools and replicating their success.
- Supporting innovative models to address the learning needs of every student.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN

All children should have access to programming beginning at age three that is developmentally appropriate and staffed by highly effective teachers, with initial priority given to low-income students. In addition, families need clear information about the quality of their prekindergarten options.

EDUCATION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

During contract negotiations, we encourage the parties to consider new ways of structuring contracts to focus on student learning needs. In education contract negotiations, if the school district and the local teachers union cannot come to agreement, the decision goes to binding arbitration. We believe that the state law on binding arbitration must be amended so that students’ learning needs are the primary factors that guide the binding arbitration process.