



For Immediate Release:

January 29, 2014

Contact: Kelly Donnelly 860.713.6525

Educators Receive Flexibility and Support as Multiple Reforms Implemented Across State

(HARTFORD, CT)—Joined by Governor Dannel P. Malloy, Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman, Senate President Donald Williams, and House Speaker Brendan Sharkey, the state Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) today took action to provide significant relief to educators whose schools and classrooms are currently undergoing multiple and simultaneous changes. At the strong encouragement of the Governor, Lt. Governor, Senate President, and House Speaker, the council agreed to provide educators with additional flexibility in implementing new educator evaluation and support systems.

[The Governor, Lt. Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House co-signed a letter to the PEAC membership](#) urging the group to consider specific recommendations to relieve burdens on teachers and principals and grant more flexibility to districts.

In the letter, the state leaders explained that “since the beginning of the school year, we have heard from teachers and administrators voicing their concerns that too much change is hitting their classrooms at once. This confluence of changes jeopardizes the success of our teachers, and thus our students. We’ve heard their concerns loud and clear, and understand.” The letter continued, “Too much change all at once impedes teachers’ ability to be effective in their classrooms. Teachers and administrators understandably are feeling burdened and together we must take action to relieve this pressure.”

The recommendations agreed on today will enable districts to decouple state standardized test data in educator evaluations for the 2014-15 school year (extended from this academic year), pending federal approval. They also provide districts the option to reduce the number of time-consuming formal observations and further clarify that the minimum number of required student learning objectives for each educator can be one. PEAC also agreed to streamline the data management requirements at the classroom level while ensuring the protection of data from unauthorized users. And it also required that the SDE provide tailored technical assistance to school districts based on their individual district plans.

"In order to ensure that our students reach our new and higher state standards, we must ensure that our teachers and school leaders are given the time, flexibility and support they need to succeed. PEAC's recommendations will provide teachers and administrators with the kind of relief they justifiably have been requesting and will enable them to place a greater focus on the implementation of the Common Core state standards," said Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor. "We thank Governor Malloy, Lt. Governor Wyman, Senator Williams and Representative Sharkey for their leadership in responding to the concerns raised by educators in our state."

The Governor's recommendations and PEAC's actions are responsive to the growing concerns voiced by teachers, school leaders, and local boards of education regarding the burden of the concurrent implementation of the new evaluation and support system and the new college- and career-ready standards.

Connecticut Education Association (CEA) President Sheila Cohen said, "Today's PEAC changes will foster a new climate that moves away from rigidity and moves toward the healthy flexibility that our school communities sorely need—and need as soon as possible. While this is a significant improvement, it is only a first step in modifying existing guidelines and removing obstacles that hinder teaching and learning. PEAC's action has Connecticut making the right turn at a critical crossroads. This right decision did not occur through serendipity, accident, or coincidence. It happened because Connecticut teachers care deeply about their students, and they spoke out intelligently and persuasively about the obstacles that state requirements had placed between teachers and students."

"The governor and legislative leaders have shown they are hearing the voices of educators and parents who have been speaking out for their students and children in our state's schools. All our students deserve a quality education; their opportunities to learn should not be compromised during this transition. And our teachers need appropriate training, professional development and be engaged in developing classroom curriculum during this time," said American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Connecticut President Melodie Peters. "With PEAC's approval of new flexibility options, our state's children will be the primary beneficiaries of this course correction."

Connecticut Federation of School Administrators (CFSA) President Gary Maynard said, "CFSA feels the PEAC changes are definitely a welcome change to all administrators. This is a good initial step to provide districts time to reflect on present practices and conduct training for present plans. Administrators want the flexibility to help teachers grow professionally to provide all students a high quality education."

The Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) "enthusiastically supports the flexibility amendments to the evaluation guidelines. While we all want to see immediate improvements in student learning, we must remember that to reach that end, we must implement changes in an appropriate way, with the emphasis on successful practices," said CAS Executive Director Karissa Niehoff. "Connecticut is a small state but it is not a state of a uniform collection of schools and districts. Every community is different; every school is different; every educator is different; and every child is different. In order to best meet the learning needs of all of our children, we need to allow education stakeholders the flexibility to develop the systems—and the policies and practices within those systems—that best meet the needs of the schools and children in their districts. The evaluation process is just one of those many systems."

The Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) "staff and its members have been advocating with the Governor, legislature, Commissioner of Education and State Department of Education staff that we need to decouple state test results in addition to a major reduction in the number of formal in-class observations for teachers rated proficient and exemplary," said CAPSS Executive Director Joe Cirusuolo. "We are therefore pleased that the Governor, Commissioner, and PEAC members endorsed these recommendations. We believe that both of these measures will result in a more effective evaluation process and, in turn, will result in student achievement."

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) Deputy Director Patrice McCarthy said, "CABE believes the additional flexibility available to school districts will enable educators to focus their efforts on the ultimate goal—the improvement of student achievement."

A group that consists of major education associations and other stakeholders, PEAC developed the framework for the educator evaluation and support system throughout Connecticut. The recommendations made by PEAC today will next go to the State Board of Education for consideration and approval.

PEAC membership consists of the Commissioner of Education and representatives from the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut (AFT-CT), Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Connecticut Federation of School Administrators (CFSA), regional educational service centers (RESCs), and other educational practitioners.

###

CONTACT: Kelly Donnelly
Director of Communications and Strategic Community Partnerships
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-983-1550
Email: Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov