



THE BOARD REPORT



2006-07

November 1, 2006

The following is a summary of the November 1, 2006, meeting of the State Board of Education.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Dr. Robert Reichardt, principal of R-Squared Research and Associates, presented the findings of a study on districts' efforts to attract and retain a sufficient number of high-quality teachers in their classrooms. Dr. Reichardt described the study as a "snapshot in time of current public school system practices of teacher recruitment, hiring and retention." The study was commissioned by the Center for School Change and supported by the State Department of Education, and was based on 11 case study districts.

Findings include the following:

- There is not uniformity in access to high quality teachers. In addition to having generally less-qualified staff, Connecticut's poorest districts have lower retention rates for first year teachers and greater difficulty filling vacant positions.
- Earlier recruitment yields a better response and a higher quality applicant pool. Impediments to early hiring include the timing of the budget cycle and managing paperwork.
- How teachers are treated affects their decision to take and keep a job. Teacher support by principals is an important factor in a new teacher's transition.
- Substantial resources are used to recruit, hire and support new teachers without regard to what is most effective. It costs roughly \$10,000 to hire a new teacher – a total of approximately \$40 million across Connecticut each year. More research-based information on efficient and effective ways to recruit and hire new teachers, as well as data to compare the relationship of teachers to their ability to improve student learning, would be of great assistance.
- Leadership at the district level drives what gets done. Districts that spent more time and effort on recruitment, hiring and support are those whose leaders have made those activities a priority.
- State policies have had both intended and unintended effects. Regulations impact who can be hired and the support program for new teachers, but there are disparities in the level of support that teachers receive from mentors.

The report concludes with recommendations for action at both the state and district levels.

The state should:

- offer systemwide incentives for teachers to give early notice of retirement, resignation or return from maternity leave, to allow districts to activate recruitment earlier;
- produce teacher value-added data based on state assessments;

- help districts reduce delays at the local level by assisting them with paperless processes for new teacher hiring;
- assume some of the risk for early hires, especially in shortage areas; and
- financially support the development of district standards for human resources practices to ensure continuity through leadership changes.

Districts should:

- Examine whether their own recruitment, hiring and support processes are effective;
- Use active staffing plans to reduce costly internal duplication; and
- Work with the state to develop and use a paperless hiring process.

The report concludes, “In order to raise student learning and close achievement gaps, Connecticut educators and policymakers must pay attention to the processes and practices that identify, hire, and support the most important component in student achievement: quality teachers.”

DISTRICT ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS UNDER NCLB

Eighty-one percent of Connecticut’s school districts achieved the standards for adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the 2005-2006 school year under the No Child Left Behind Act. One hundred thirty nine of Connecticut’s 171 school districts met the AYP standards. Thirty-two did not.

AYP identifications are based on the districtwide percentage of students scoring at or above the proficiency level in reading and/or mathematics in Grades 3-8 on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), and in Grade 10 on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). The identifications are based on CMT writing scores (70 percent at or above the basic level or improvement over the previous year), the district graduation rate (70 percent or improvement over the previous year), and participation rates on the tests (95 percent participation required).

The most common reason districts did not make AYP was due to their subgroup performance in math and reading. If a district does not achieve AYP in the same content area across both tests for two consecutive years, it is identified as “in need of improvement.” Of the 32 districts not making AYP this year, 22 were identified as “in need of improvement.” One of these districts is in Year 2 of district improvement, while 21 are in Year 3 of district improvement.

Interim Commissioner George Coleman commended the 11 districts that made AYP for the second consecutive year and, therefore, are no longer considered “in need of improvement.” These include Bloomfield, East Haven, Killingly, Milford, New Milford, North Haven, Plainville, Seymour, Southington, Stafford and Windsor Locks.

Commissioner Coleman expressed his concerns that all 22 districts identified as “in need of improvement” this year are Title I districts, noting that these districts “include our most vulnerable students.” He stated that initiatives designed to assist these districts include high school reform, increased access to preschool programs, a focus on reading, writing, mathematics and science; and engaging parents in the education of their children.

For more information, visit http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/nclb/dist_school_nclb_results/index.htm.

CONNECTICUT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT TECHNOLOGY PLAN

The Board adopted the CTHSS District Technology Plan for 2006-2009. The purpose of the plan is to provide vision and direction in the use of technology to enhance student achievement in each of the technical high schools. It emphasizes the integration of technology into all content areas in both trade and academic areas. While the plan addresses the infrastructure, it focuses on the use of technology to support instructional practices and student learning, as well as professional development for staff. The Plan supports the district’s School Improvement Plan, and will be monitored by the District Technology Committee and the building technology committees on an annual basis.

PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

The Board honored three Connecticut teachers for being selected as a 2006 Connecticut state finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching:

- ❖ Michael Ginsburg, a science teacher at Dr. Robert H. Brown Middle School in Madison, for his exemplary teaching skills in science;
- ❖ Courtney Quigley, a teacher at Tariffville School in Simsbury, for her exemplary teaching skills in mathematics; and
- ❖ Patricia Sabatini, a teacher at Bungay School in Seymour, for her exemplary teaching skills in mathematics.

Mr. Ginsburg, Ms. Quigley and Ms. Sabatini will represent Connecticut at the national level. The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) Program was established in 1983 by the White House, and is administered by the National Science Foundation.

NON-BUDGET LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

The Board adopted its non-budget legislative proposals for the 2007 General Assembly. The list does not include those proposals that are necessary to implement budget initiatives that the Board might submit. The Board approved proposals that would:

- Require towns to provide to charter schools the same health services that they are required to provide to nonpublic schools and make the towns eligible for a portion of the costs to provide these services;
- Make a technical change to clarify that all persons providing instruction or pupil services in charter schools must hold an appropriate educator certificate issued by the State Board of Education;
- Allow vacancies in an interdistrict magnet school to be filled with students from towns that have not agreed to participate in the magnet school (note: This proposal addresses tuition and transportation);
- Limit the grant eligibility of school construction renovation projects to only those facilities where at least 75 percent of the total facility area is at least 30 years old and has not had a major renovation for at least 20 years;
- Provide that for all projects authorized on or after July 1, 2007, all attorneys' fees and court costs related to litigation shall be eligible for state school construction grant assistance only if the town is the prevailing party;
- Limit school construction grant eligibility of site remediation costs so that site remediation costs eligible for state grant assistance not exceed 25 percent of the appraised value of the site, unless the purchase price of the site is adjusted so that the purchase price plus remediation costs do not exceed 125 percent of the appraised value;
- Amend the Connecticut career certificate program statutes to make them consistent with federal statutes, including the deletion of obsolete provisions that were required under the federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994;
- Reconstitute the statewide technical high school advisory committee with members to be appointed by the State Board of Education, and assign the committee with the task of making recommendations to the State Board concerning the consolidation of reporting to the General Assembly;
- Specify that after-school programs funded by grants from the Department of Education have a parent involvement component;

- Provide that the higher qualifications for school readiness staff for 2015 be phased in, such that by July 1, 2010, there be in each classroom an individual who (A) has at least (1) an associate's degree with 15 credits or more in early childhood education or child development; (2) a four – year degree with 12 credits or more in early childhood education or child development, or (3) certification with an endorsement in early childhood education or special education; or (B) is enrolled in a bachelor's degree program of study and has completed 60 or more credits, 15 of which are in early childhood education or child development;
- Amend the definition of “mastery test data of record” to change the date from April 30 to December 31 in each year and the due date for the filing of adjustment requests from March 1 to November 30;
- Amend the pilot early childhood learning grant program to eliminate some of the grant eligibility limitations and add that the programs be eligible for five years and associated with institutions of higher education; and
- Establish a durational permit to qualify certain visiting international teachers to teach in subject area shortage areas in Connecticut.

BUDGET PROPOSALS

Budget Reduction Options

The Board supported the Commissioner's recommendation to respond to the Office of Policy and Management's (OPM) request to submit reduction options, by noting that “there is no logical or reasonable method for reducing the State Board of Education budget by 10 percent without significantly harming the education of Connecticut's children and impacting the municipal tax burden. The 10 percent reduction would equal \$241.6 million. The three options presented were a \$241.6 million reduction in the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant, which would result in a 14.6 reduction in ECS revenue; a \$241.6 million reduction applied proportionately to the state's categorical general fund grants; and a \$120.8 million reduction in ECS and a \$120.8 million reduction in the categorical general fund grants.

Current Services Capital Budget Request (Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009)

State agencies are required to submit their current services Capital Budget request to OPM each biennium. The State Department of Education's \$691.4 million capital request comprises six different programs: school construction-principal/progress (\$655 million in 2007-08 and \$653 million in 2008-09); school construction – interest (\$14.4 million in 2007-08 and \$16.4 million in 2008-09; Connecticut Technical High Schools \$10 million in each year of the biennium;); charter schools (\$5 million in each year of the biennium); school wiring technology (\$5 million in each year of the biennium); and school readiness (\$2 million in each year of the biennium).

Budget Expansion Options 2007-2009

The Board discussed proposals to expand funding in the following areas during the 2007-09 biennium. The proposals target three priority areas of the Board: (1) high academic achievement of all students in reading, writing, mathematics and science; (2) high-quality preschool education for all students; and (3) reforming the state's high schools so all students graduate and are prepared for careers in a competitive, global economy. In addition, the Board reviewed a draft proposal concerning funding for the Technical High School System. The Board requested that proposals supporting a particular initiative be grouped together.

Thereafter, the Board is scheduled to take action on the expansion options at its December 6 meeting. The biennial budget options will be presented to the Office of Policy and Management for consideration during the development of the Governor's proposed budget.

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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NOTE: The Board will meet on Wednesday, December 6, 2006, at Rensselaer at Hartford, 275 Windsor Street, Hartford, Connecticut. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. in Seminar Hall. The agenda will be posted on the Board's website (www.state.ct.us/sde) on Friday, December 1.

