

IDEA/Proposal for CEPCB to Consider

November 28, 2025

Submitted by: Cynthia Ritchie, Ed.D.

- I. Introduction/Purpose for Drafted Proposal:** Connecticut continues to face deepening educator shortages, especially in early childhood, multilingual education, special education, and secondary level math and science. Traditional models of preparation, especially unpaid student teaching, rigid coursework schedules, and limited integration with district needs are not adequately meeting workforce nor student demands. My hope in drafting creative onboarding pathways is to initiate the following:
 - a. Expand high-quality, affordable pathways into teaching
 - b. Strengthening district, EPP, private organization, CEA, and SDE partnerships
 - c. Offer differentiated and affordable professional growth opportunities to educators, at all stages of their career.
 - d. Create new, competency-based routes for current teachers and administrators to earn cross-endorsements
 - e. Address critical shortage areas in CT: such as bilingual, history and S.S., mathematics, science, TESOL, and Special Education
 - f. Professionalize and modernize Connecticut's educator certification system
 - g. Continue to uplift the profession, bring joy to the work, and promote a love for life-long learning
- II. Rationale:** Nationwide, states are shifting toward paid residencies, apprenticeship structures, and micro-credentialing advancement. These models are aiming to:
 - a. Improve teacher readiness and retention
 - b. Reduce financial barriers
 - c. Strengthen the professional identity of teaching
 - d. Create flexible, competency-based acceleration pathways
 - e. Deepen collaboration between school districts, EPPs, private providers, and state agencies
- III. Personalized Background/Context in Drafting Proposals:** My personal experiences as a passionate educator, and educational leaders, a parent, and a community member motivate me to "dream big" and think out of the box. We need to honor the past but move forward to align to the future. Our current system is outdated, and the profession needs to be more modernized. I will share a few anecdotes of some of my recent experiences:
 - a. Detrimental impact of teacher shortages on students and fellow teachers
 - b. Personal stories of financial impact from teacher candidates
 - c. Overview of successful partnership program with Sacred Heart University
 - d. Importance of on-the-job training and differentiated professional development offerings, focused on high quality teaching and content mastery
 - e. Deep belief in the modeling of life-long learning and the application of new skills within the school setting to benefit children
- IV. Brief Description of Today's Proposal:** Below is one proposal.

- a. Launch a Statewide LEARN (*Learn, Engage, Attend, Refer, Nurture*) Teacher Preparation, Partnership, and Onboarding Program.

V. Overarching Aims of the Proposal:

- a. To support the development of high-quality teachers, through a comprehensive approach that taps into the skills and knowledge of EPP, private, CAPSS/CEA, SDE and school district professionals. The goal is to *Unite All in Excellence*, with every entity taking on responsibility for the deep preparation of future educators.
- b. To help solve the immediate problem of teacher shortages
- c. To provide teacher candidates with mentorship and on the job training throughout their program of studies.
- d. To help teacher candidates be able to be employed, while completing degree requirements towards SDE certification.

IDEA/Proposal #1 for Consideration: Statewide LEARN (*Learn, Engage, Attend, Refer, Nurture*) Teacher Preparation, Partnership and Onboarding Program

Component 1: Two Year Paid Residency/Apprenticeship:

- i. Resident teachers who enroll and are accepted into the LEARN pathway will be engaged in the responsibilities aligned to this pathway for 2-5 years as outlined below.
 - a. Those who are brand new to education, with no bachelor's degree, will need 4-5 years to complete the program.
 - b. Those who have a bachelor's degree in another area will need 2 years to complete the requirements.
- ii. Resident teachers, accepted into this program, will serve in partner districts as paid employees, who are fully integrated into the district they are serving in.
- iii. During the first year of their service, resident teachers will be paid as building-based *substitute teachers*.
- iv. During the second year they will be paid as *long-term classroom teacher substitutes, who are on a DSAP status*. (This elevates their pay from the daily sub rate as aligned to the Teachers' Contract.)
- v. Resident teachers will be assigned to a mentor teacher, who will also serve as their TEAM mentor, and will stay assigned to support the resident teacher for a two-year period. Resident teachers will begin the official Team program in Year 3 (if no bachelor's degree) or in Year 1 (has bachelor's degree) of this plan. Flex time will be granted to the candidate to be able to work on their TEAM requirements during planning time and required after school hours, at least 4 hours monthly.
- vi. Resident Teachers will report to one school during the two-year period, and will be placed into a variety of shadowing, co-teaching, small group, and mentoring situations positioning them in a gradual training/release model.
- vii. Resident teachers will be supported through a gradual release model, thus increasing responsibility over time:
 - a. Year 1/Semester 1: Structured observations and shadowing of the classroom teacher, with some small-group instruction assignments of which the homeroom

- teacher guides planning and remains present in classroom with candidate
- b. Year 1/Semester 2: Resident teachers will co-teach, growing in independent teaching practice, with guided support
- c. Year 2: Resident teachers will serve as lead classroom teachers with mentor oversight. Principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, etc. will help coordinate support too.
- viii. Resident teachers will be evaluated according to the district's approved Evaluation plans. Those resident teachers, with no bachelor's degree, will be evaluated as a non-certified employee in Year 1 of this program. Those resident teachers who have a bachelor's degree and/or are in years 2-4 of this program will be evaluated according to the Teachers' Evaluation plan, Step 1.
- ix. Teacher candidates and their evaluator will agree to select professional goals that are focused on content mastery and classroom management and will receive ongoing feedback and training in these areas over a two-year period.

Component 2: Coursework Integrated with Daily Practice

- i. Year One and Two: College coursework will be offered by EPPs, in hybrid or flexible formats over a two-year period, and these foundational courses will be *required*. An idea would be that rising teachers across the state, accepted into the LEARN Pathway, will be able to register for approved courses, aligned to the state colleges, at a free rate.
- ii. Year One and Two: Additionally, school districts who have enrolled candidates in the LEARN Pathway will be allowed to teach college-level coursework, too, after school and in the evenings. This coursework can be delivered by (092 certified) teachers and fellow administrators, within a district, thus promoting more shared leadership, more pay for those involved, and the ability to further promote a love for learning among all staff. EPPs can either cross train and hire these professional educators as "adjunct professors" or share the curriculum/course syllabi for the college level courses with the school districts, thus sharing the responsibility to deliver content knowledge courses to candidates.
- iii. By the end of this two-year period, resident teacher candidates would have completed *30 hours of college coursework*; with an estimated courseload of *15- 18 credits per year*. Teacher candidates would earn an associate's degree in education after this milestone and would be issued a long-term substitute status certificate.
- iv. Year Three: Teacher candidates continue to learn and grow during years 3 and 4. During year three, the CT State Department of Education takes the lead in offering continuing education workshops to teacher candidates in the LEARN pathway. An idea is for each to offer credit hours of virtual (and/or in person) workshops, aligned to required coursework requirements. (Example: The SDE has professional offices for the following: math, reading, special education, early childhood, MLL, family engagement/attendance, etc.) If each department offered one 3-hour workshop (or two 1.5 hours or three, 1 hour) each Teacher Candidate would learn directly from the content expertise from the SDE, would easily earn an additional *18 credit hours*, and would be able to network with fellow educators across the state! This strategy will help make connections between data systems, accountability measures, and resources between the school districts and the SDE for a wider view of educational aims across the state. Resident teachers would begin their official TEAM program during year 3 and complete it in year 4.
- v. Year 4: Teacher candidates would continue to learn during year 4, with the responsibility on building content and instructional capacity falling to various private organizations/educational partners that focus on a key area for supporting educational aims.

Many of these could be focused on career pathways for students and linking certification to the workforce, etc. Others could be focused on healthy emotional development, special populations, etc. Similarly to the above, teachers would be invited to attend virtual, or in-person workshops aligned to a variety of topics of the CCT (Common Core of Teaching). Workshops will be sponsored by all educational partners who sign on, including CAPSS and CEA. Teacher candidates will earn *18 credit hours* over the course of year 4, through attending a variety of learning opportunities sponsored by approved educational partners.

vi. Each teacher candidate following this pathway to initial certification will successfully complete one new module of the TEAM program, focused on content mastery of the area they are seeking certification. The paid TEAM mentor will evaluate success of the candidate on this module. Completion of the TEAM modules will offer an additional *4 credit hours* of coursework/workshop learning.

Component 3: Mentor Teachers

- i. Each resident candidate will be assigned a Master Teacher mentor (proven success, at least 5 years of service, and TEAM trained).
- ii. Mentors are trained, compensated, and supported by each of the partner organizations as follows: Years 1 & 2-the EPP, Year 3-the SDE, Year 4-the Partner Organizations/CAPSS/CEA, and school districts. The amount of the annual mentor stipend will be determined by the constituents.

Component 4: Requirements for Certification Advancement and/or Cross-Endorsement for Candidate:

- i. Resident teachers will qualify for Initial Educator Certification and/or an addition to their current certification by adding an Initial Educator Certification, in a new endorsement area, (of selected endorsement areas) upon:
 - a. Completion of successful paid residency (four years for those with no bachelor's degree; two years for those entering the profession with an established bachelor's degree)
 - b. Demonstrated mastery of competencies, observed and documented by the TEAM-trained mentor teacher
 - c. Successful annual performance evaluations, completed by building principals, with input from mentor teachers
 - d. Completion of targeted coursework for each of the four years of the LEARN program.
 1. Years 1 and 2: 30 hours of college coursework enrolled in a CT college (no bachelors start here)
 2. Year 3: 18 hours of workshop coursework delivered by department of the SDE (with bachelor's start here)
 3. Year 4: 18 hours of workshop coursework delivered by educational partners (including CAPSS/CEA) and school district leaders
 4. Completion of TEAM modules during years 3 and 4. These can count towards an additional 4 college/workshop credits.
 5. Completion of PRAXIS II: This can be accomplished anytime during years 3 and 4 and is required for those who started the program without a bachelor's degree.

Summary: In total, the teacher resident will participate in up to 60 credit/workshop hours of learning, taught by a variety of experts from various organizations and disciplines, over a 2–4-year period. The teacher resident will have 2-4 years of paid and successful work experience. The teacher resident will end their program with either an associate's degree, plus 36 additional learning hours, (earning long term sub endorsement) or with a master's degree, (earning initial certification) or with a 6th year degree if they already had a master's degree and went for a cross-endorsement, (earning a cross endorsement).

- i. Some of the learning hours could take place during the workday, shortly afterwards, and during the evening and weekends through virtual and in-person means. There would be a variety of approved courses a candidate can sign up for, giving a comprehensive view of the technical, the operational, the relational pieces of being a professional educator.
- ii. Teachers, both brand new and veteran, could benefit from these opportunities that aim to bring tools, resources, expertise, and the passion of educators across the state together!
- iii. Note: This framework can be applied to a variety of aspiring educators in the following ways:
Please see chart developed to help show ideas visually on page 7.

Component 5: Comprehensive Evaluation of the Successful LEARN Candidate:

- i. Principals/Department leaders will evaluate the candidate annually, on the CCT Rubric and classroom observations, as aligned to the district's evaluation plan
- ii. The EPP will evaluate the candidate according to successful earning of grades (C or above) on the courses taken.
- iii. The SDE will evaluate the candidate on their levels of participation in the modules provided virtually by each SDE department, by giving a certificate of completion after completion.
- iv. Educational Partners/CAPSS/CEA/School Districts will evaluate a candidate's success by giving the Resident Teacher a certificate of completion after each workshop attended.
- v. Note: it would be awesome if all partners could share in one platform for gathering a teacher's history of workshop training. A suggestion is a platform such as Vector, which we use to have records of employee and teacher mandatory training.

Component 6: Operational Considerations to Ponder:

- i. EPPS would need to coordinate course offerings for each endorsement area for over a two-year period. Perhaps a new track could be formed merging with the CT colleges to share in this work.
- ii. SDE, CEA, CAPSS, and educational partner organizations would need to create virtual learning modules and/or schedule live workshops to be held after school hours a few times per month and/or on the weekends.
- iii. School districts would need to allow candidates to differentiate their professional development hours, allowing voice and choice in what they attend and when, to match this need.
- iv. Teacher/Admin goals would need to be agreed upon to match this desire for initial certification and/or cross endorsement for a two-year period
- v. Additional TEAM-trained mentors may be needed
- vi. What is the financial impact of this proposal?
 - a. Could dollars be saved as we work together?
 - b. Could opportunities for educators across CT be expanded as we work together?
 - c. Could this plan fill shortage area gaps more quickly, placing strong teacher candidates in

front of students, while keeping high quality learning a key factor?

- d. Could this plan elevate the profession, promoting more teacher-leadership roles and shared responsibility?
- e. Could colleges support a shared model towards associates, bachelor's and master's degrees?
- f. Could this plan work with all the mandated trainings a school district needs to deliver?
- g. Would there need to be a cost for college coursework enrollment during the first two years? Scholarships? Discount for partnerships? If not to all, could we aim to get qualified teachers in the classrooms after two years, and then slowly support their continued college coursework payments through special district/college partnership costs and/or unionized contracts and/or through districts being able to offer college coursework on their own sites?
- h. I believe the partners, including CEA, CAPSS, and SDE could most likely provide free training as they are already running so many meetings for districts already. Could other private entities also offer workshops for free during their assigned year?
- i. Could there be other ways to structure some of these ideas?

Thank you for allowing me to “dream big” and *share ideas* for all to digest, consider, modify and respond to! I know this plan is not perfect, but it is an important starting point to drive ongoing thinking, reimagining, and collaboration as our children, our educators, our families and our profession are counting on us!

Sincerely,
Cynthia

A Visual Chart of the Proposed LEARN Framework for the State:

LEARN (Learn, Engage, Attend, Refer, Network)

Teacher Preparation, Partnership, and Onboarding Program

Candidate Status	Year 1 & 2	Year 3	Year 4	Outcome	Certification	Benefits
No college degree	Take 30 college credits at CT colleges	Take 18 hours of SDE workshops	Take 18 hours of educational partners' workshops	Associate's degree	Building/Hybrid sub daily rate for the first two years. Long-term sub certification after year 2.	Higher pay than sub daily rate Integrated professional to a school and district
A two-year associate's degree	Take 30 college credits at CT colleges	Take 18 hours of SDE workshops	Take 18 hours of educational partners' workshops	Bachelor's degree in education	Long term sub rate for the first two years. Pass Praxis II Initial certification after Year 4	Official entrance into teaching profession (with initial certification), to contracted salary, and to TRB
A four-year bachelor's degree in another field	Take 18 hours of SDE sponsored workshops			Micro credentialing	Long term sub rate during first year. DSAP status after completion of workshop hours	Temporary licensure, with the option of the candidate to continue learning by earning another micro-credential and/or moving forward with a master's degree following the

						requirements below.
A four-year bachelor's degree in another field	Take 15 course credits at CT colleges	Take 18 hours of SDE workshops		Master's degree in education	Long term sub rate for the first two years, or until the 15 credits are completed. Pass Praxis II Initial certification granted after	Official entrance into teaching profession (with initial certification), to contracted salary, and to TRB

A four-year bachelor's degree in education and a current CT certified teacher and/or administrator	Take 18 hours of SDE and/or educational partners' sponsored workshops			Micro-credentialing	Cross endorsement in shortage area or other defined area	Newly gained skillset and endorsement; more flexibility to serve students in aligned areas. No cost to educator. No additional testing. Networking with other educators around the state is a plus.
--	---	--	--	---------------------	--	--

<p>A four-year bachelor's degree in education and a current CT certified teacher and/or administrator</p>	<p>Take 18 hours of SDE and/or educational partners sponsored workshops</p> <p>and</p> <p>Take 18 hours of CT college coursework aligned to an endorsement</p>		<p>Micro-credentialing and</p> <p>6th Year Degree awarded</p>	<p>Cross endorsements in shortage area or other defined areas</p>	<p>Newly gained skillset and endorsement; more flexibility to serve students in aligned areas.</p> <p>Reduced cost to educator.</p> <p>No additional testing.</p> <p>6th year status increases pay on most bargaining agreements</p> <p>Networking with other educators and professionals around the state is a plus.</p>
---	--	--	--	---	--

*Note: the SDE requirements would remain in place regarding the successful years of service needed to qualify for professional certificates.