



For Immediate Release:

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**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TAKES ACTIONS AT JUNE 27 MEETING:
ADOPTS CONNECTICUT GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATOR EVALUATION,
DEFINITIONS OF EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES TO IMPROVE STATE
TRUANCY REPORTING**

The Connecticut State Board of Education Wednesday approved action items designed to elevate teaching and learning, improve educator effectiveness, and help develop comparable data on student absences from school.

In a unanimous vote, the Board approved consensus guidelines developed by the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC). The guidelines will inform implementation of model teacher and administrator evaluation and support systems in pilot districts throughout the state during the 2012-2013 school year.

The adoption of these guidelines is a paradigm shift for Connecticut. It establishes a system that utilizes evaluations to provide smarter, more targeted supports for educators; that conditions the receipt of teacher tenure on the receipt of positive annual evaluations; and, when necessary, allows for the removal of ineffective educators.

Public Act 12-116, *An Act Concerning Education Reform*, requires annual performance evaluations of principals, administrators, and teachers, based upon a new standard of "effective practice" and a consensus framework developed by PEAC. The University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education will analyze administration and results in the ten pilots and report back to the General Assembly by October 1, 2013. Statewide implementation of the new evaluation and support system will begin in the 2013-2014 school year.

State Board Chairperson Allan Taylor said: "PEAC members should be congratulated for finding consensus among stakeholders on issues such as evaluation and performance. These guidelines will ensure that the new statutory definition of 'effective practice' in our schools is judged with breadth and fidelity."

Stefan Pryor, the Connecticut Commissioner of Education, said: "These guidelines will bring fairness, multiple inputs, and a well-rounded set of perspectives to measuring and improving teacher and principal practice in Connecticut. The quality of teachers and school leaders are the most important in-school factors affecting student achievement. The guidelines adopted today serve as a

cornerstone of our talent strategy, in which the state will partner with district leaders to enhance educator quality -- with the ultimate goal of driving increases in student performance.”

Beginning in November 2010, PEAC (formally named in July 2011 when Section 10-151b was revised) began meeting to discuss the evaluation of teachers and administrators. This group met regularly to develop eleven foundational principles upon which an effective teacher and administrator evaluation process should be based. On January 25, 2012, PEAC reached unanimous agreement on the required evaluation framework for teachers, and on February 6, 2012, PEAC reached unanimous agreement on the required evaluation framework for administrator evaluations. On February 10, 2012, the State Board of Education, as required by statute, adopted PEAC’s evaluation framework for teachers and principals.

PEAC includes representatives from the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Connecticut Federation of School Administrators (CSFA), Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC), Connecticut Education Association (CEA), and the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut (AFT-CT), among others.

In other action, the State Board adopted definitions for excused and unexcused absences that will allow the State Department of Education to collect and publish comparable data on truancy. Required under Public Act 11-136, *An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes*, the new definitions are to be used by regional and local boards of education to determine which students qualify as truant for state reporting purposes.

Under the new state definitions, local districts would retain the right to maintain their existing definitions for making decisions on areas such as promotion and grading. The new state definition would apply to reporting data to the state that it is already required to collect and aggregate by statute. The new definitions, along with State Department of Education guidelines that are in development, will enable resources and supports to be more efficiently deployed to students and families in need, and will allow the truancy law to be applied more equitably across the state.

Current law defines truant as a student who has four unexcused absences in a month or ten unexcused absences in a school year.

Variations in local absence policies have resulted in data that are not comparable being reported to the State Department of Education, uneven application of Connecticut’s Families with Service Needs statute (which is triggered when a student is deemed truant), and inconsistent data reporting on truancy to the federal government.

Allan Taylor said: “Clearly, the statutory definition of truancy, coupled with divergent definitions of excused and unexcused absences by local districts, had created an uneven picture of truancy at the state level. In offering both a state definition and guidance for districts, this policy will give a clearer, comparable measure of attendance data statewide.”

Commissioner Pryor said: “The variance among definitions of absences at the district level has made it extremely difficult to create, and report on, reliable data on truancy, one of the Department’s statutory responsibilities. Today’s action will preserve local decision-making while ensuring that families with children at risk of truancy receive the supports they need in the most timely manner.”

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