



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Testimony

House Education Committee

HB 1980 – Educator Evaluation System

Ronald Tomalis, Secretary of Education

Carolyn Dumaresq, D.Ed., Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education

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Good morning Chairman Clymer, Chairman Roebuck and distinguished members of the House Education Committee. Thank you for calling this meeting to discuss an issue that is vital to the transformation of public education in our Commonwealth – an effective educator evaluation system.

Governor Corbett announced the administration's fall legislative priorities a few weeks ago, and included in that announcement was an educator evaluation system that will more effectively evaluate teachers, principals and non-teaching professionals in our schools. This past Tuesday, I participated in a statewide forum to discuss this new educator evaluation system and appreciate the interest that over 1,400 individuals from the education community and public expressed in that conversation. I commend Representative Aument for introducing the Governor's proposal in House Bill 1980 and for his leadership and advocacy on this important issue.

I am here today to impress upon you just how necessary this new system of evaluation is for our public school system and the students in our classrooms across the state. Our current system of evaluation includes two ratings for educators – “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory.” Statewide, the results show that 99.4 percent of all teachers and 99.2 percent of all principals, who were evaluated during the 2009-10 school year, received a “satisfactory” rating. Despite these results, student growth on national assessments has been relatively stagnant. Just this week, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were released and the results show no significant growth in student achievement since the 2009 test administration. According to the 2011 results, the percentage of students who are proficient and advanced on the NAEP hovers around 41 percent. Likewise, student performance on the SAT has remained nearly unchanged with average scores falling just a few points in all three categories – critical reading, mathematics and writing – from 2010 to 2011. While we recognize that our student performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) has increased marginally, the lack of growth in student performance on all of these assessments is troubling given that the majority of our educators are rated satisfactory.

Educator quality should be based on a proven tool that measures an educator's impact on student achievement. Unfortunately the current system, which is grounded in statute through the Public

School Code, only uses the unproductive ratings of “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” and provides no useful feedback to educators to allow them to modify their practice for the benefit of students. Furthermore, this statute does not allow student achievement data to be incorporated into an evaluation. It is our goal to implement an educator evaluation system that is linked to student performance and results in meaningful feedback for educators.

First, the new evaluation system proposed would move from a two-tier rating system to a four-tier rating system that more accurately reflects the level of educator performance. The four levels include: 1) distinguished; 2) proficient; 3) needs improvement; and, 4) failing. The second part of the proposal deals with the breakdown of the measures used to evaluate educators. Under this proposal, 50 percent of an educator’s evaluation would be comprised of multiple measures of student achievement. This includes student achievement data on statewide assessments, student growth data through the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS), and other measures of student achievement for grades and classes not assessed. The remaining 50 percent, classified as traditional teacher practices, includes: 1) planning and preparation – selecting standards-based lesson goals and designing effective instruction and assessment; 2) classroom environment – establishing a culture for learning and appropriate classroom management techniques that maximize instructional time; 3) instruction – the use of research-based strategies which engage students in meaningful learning and utilize assessment results to make decisions about student needs; and, 4) professional responsibilities – using systems for managing student data and communicating with student families.

These variables have been developed as a result of research conducted by the Department of Education (PDE) and information garnered from a pilot program that we have been operating for two years. The department has been involved in the pilot program since 2009 aimed at developing the tool with necessary input from the field. The first phase included four pilot sites. We are very pleased to say that phase two of the voluntary pilot – beginning in January 2012 – includes more than 100 education entities across the Commonwealth. These entities include: 83 school districts, 11 intermediate units, 8 charter schools, and 11 career and technical centers. To break this down further, we have 347 buildings, 555 supervisors, 3,339 teachers in PSSA tested

grades and subjects, and 3,727 teachers in non-PSSA tested grades and subjects participating in phase two of the pilot.

To develop a system that is effective and fair, PDE undertook a pilot project beginning in 2009 that has informed the development of the educator evaluation system contained in House Bill 1980. Pennsylvania field tested an evaluation system through a grant from the Gates Foundation awarded to the Team Pennsylvania Foundation (Team PA). With guidance from a steering committee, comprised of representatives from across the educational spectrum, the business community and three research entities, phase one of the pilot took place during the 2010-11 school year. The pilot work proceeded along two main strands. The first strand involved the development of new evaluation models (practice models) focused on the traditional practices of teachers and principals that are proven to increase student achievement. The new practice models were implemented with the participating teachers and principals in four local education agencies (LEAs): Allentown, Cornell, Mohawk school districts and Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5. The second strand involved the correlation of these practices to value-added models to determine what practices most closely align to high achievement of students.

The Gates Foundation grant in the amount of \$800,000 was used to help inform the development of statewide policy, tools and processes to evaluate teachers and principals in which student achievement is a significant factor affecting performance ratings. The grant itself was awarded to Team PA, which acted as the facilitator for discussions and as an administrator of the grant. Alongside the pilot program, PDE closely monitored the work of Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), which also received a Gates Foundation grant in the amount of \$40 million to redesign evaluation policies, tools and processes.

Following the advisory group's review of new tools and processes in the fall of 2010, training for teachers and principals in the four pilot districts mentioned above began in January 2011. Phase one of the pilot concluded at the end of the 2010-11 school year. Participants valued the opportunity to provide input and shape the development of the evaluation system. From those involved in phase one, we found that we had several opportunities for improvement, including: 1) time – how to make the instrument less labor intensive; 2) how to integrate technology into

the process to make it more efficient; 3) how to provide more intensive training on the Danielson model and the Pennsylvania-specific rubric for evaluation; and 4) how technology could provide immediate feedback to teachers.

Currently, we are gearing up for phase two of the voluntary pilot program for other LEAs. Last week, we kicked off the fall training with the trainers for the pilot sites that are set to participate in phase two which will begin in January 2012. Phase two will yield important information that will be vital to the implementation of the system. As the Secretary noted earlier, we are proposing that 50 percent of the evaluation be based on traditional teacher practices and 50 percent be based on multiple measures of student academic achievement. The pilot will help us to gather input from the field about how to best weigh the various measures of student performance, and that will be important for the ultimate implementation of this evaluation system.

In closing, House Bill 1980 puts in place a framework for a statewide educator evaluation system that will more accurately measure the educators in our schools and will provide educators with meaningful feedback about their practices and effectiveness. Often, the most important indicator of student success is the teacher standing in front of the classroom. This measure ensures that we are effectively evaluating our educators. Thank you for your support for this proposal, and we look forward to working with you to enact this essential reform.

