



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

GOVERNOR DANIEL P. MALLOY

January 28, 2014

Dear Members of the Performance Evaluation Advisory Council:

In light of your meeting tomorrow, we write to you today to urge you to amend the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation to provide our educators greater flexibility in the implementation of the new evaluation and support system, and to relieve the significant demands and pressures on teachers and administrators who simultaneously must also implement the Common Core State Standards.

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. 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.

Just as the evaluation and support system is about improvement and professional growth, so must we adapt and improve the system to make it more usable and helpful to teachers and administrators. It is more important that we get it right than to do it fast and all at once.

Today, we ask you to make the following changes to the PEAC guidelines:

1. Enable the exclusion of state standardized test indicators (CMT, CAPT, or SBAC) in next school year's evaluation (pending federal approval). Last summer, PEAC waived the state standardized test indicators for the current school year.
2. Enable school districts to have flexibility in the implementation of evaluation in the current school year and future school years – and alleviate unnecessary burdens on educators– by providing districts with the option of reducing the number of time-consuming formal observations and by clarifying that the minimum number of goals/objectives required for each educator can be 1.

3. Streamline the data management requirements at the classroom level while ensuring the protection of data from unauthorized users and access to technical assistance to all school districts.

It is imperative that we smooth the process of evaluation implementation, and not get bogged down in rigid compliance and time-consuming paperwork. By easing the rules around evaluation our hardworking educators can focus on and put more energy toward implementing the Common Core with fidelity. We all want our students to be successful, but they won't succeed unless teachers have the support to succeed.

In addition, we ask PEAC to convene an ongoing subcommittee of classroom teachers and administrators to share obstacles faced in the implementation of evaluation and make recommendations to improve the evaluation system in future school years. We ask that the subcommittee make its recommendations not only to PEAC, but also to the four of us, the General Assembly, and the State Board of Education by January 1, 2015. We must have a continuous dialogue on improving our evaluation and support system with the teachers and administrators doing this work if we are to make it effective.

Furthermore, we encourage PEAC to meet as a full body over the coming year so that additional clarifications and revisions can be made to make the evaluation and support system more effective and usable.

We know this work is difficult, particularly adapting to the Common Core State Standards. It is a very heavy lift to implement the Common Core and we have the greatest respect for the hard work our teachers are doing to prepare our youngsters to be college and career ready. We hear these concerns and share the desire to get Common Core implementation right.

To that end, we believe we must engage in a more robust dialogue to improve the implementation of Common Core and address gaps in Common Core preparation. In the next two weeks, I will establish a Common Core State Standards working group that will include teachers and other educators from across the state to make recommendations on Common Core implementation. We need to hear about the gaps and needs in the classrooms of our state if we are to implement the Common Core well and enable our teachers to prepare students and enhance their learning experience. It is important that we listen to educators' concerns and get this right.

Thank you, in advance, for taking action tomorrow to make improvements during this school year; we look forward to continuing this dialogue.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Malloy
Governor

Nancy Wyman
Lieutenant Governor

Donald E. Williams Jr.
Senate President Pro Tempore

J. Brendan Sharkey
Speaker of the House