



April 13, 2011 - Governor Chris Christie Puts Forward Fundamental Education Reform Legislative Package that Puts Children First and Protects Teachers

For Immediate Release:

Contact: Michael Drewniak
Kevin Roberts

Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2011

609-777-2600

Trenton, NJ – Governor Christie today proposed and sent to the legislature a package of bills that gets at the root of the problems in New Jersey’s public education system by reforming the tenure system to demand results for New Jersey’s children in the classroom and reward the best and brightest teachers. Governor Christie’s proposals tackle public education’s engrained problems from the top-down by reforming a system that continues to fail tens of thousands of children every year, despite consistently high levels of education spending. The Governor’s reforms bring to an end a system that lacks accountability and implements a multiple measured evaluation system that will help differentiate effective teachers from ineffective ones.

“For too long, we have failed to adequately and honestly judge the performance of New Jersey’s teachers based on the only outcome that actually matters – how well our children are learning. Even as education spending has risen dramatically, too many students in too many schools and districts continue to be failed by the system,” said Governor Christie. “If we are going to bring greater accountability to public education and turn around the 200 perpetually failing schools where 100,000 of New Jersey’s children are trapped, then we must be unafraid to challenge the broken and antiquated status quo and stand up to support the very best teachers our state has to offer. These reforms will reward great teachers through better pay and career paths, allow us to identify the struggling teachers and get them the help they need, and put in place a multiple measured evaluation system that will provide an avenue to remove the bad teachers who are not getting results in the classroom.”

The series of bills encompass the Governor’s proposals to establish a statewide evaluations system for teachers and principals, fundamentally reform the state’s tenure system, provide merit pay to New Jersey’s best teachers, and protect good teachers by ending “last in, first out” laws and the practice of forced placement. In introducing the bills, the Governor called for the legislature to take immediate action on the package to finally make the long-overdue transformation of public education a reality for New Jersey families.

“The most important education reform we can make, and the best way we can benefit children, is to make sure a talented, effective teacher is at the head of the classroom. Most teachers are doing an excellent job, and we need to honor, respect and support our best teachers,” said Acting Commissioner Chris Cerf. “But without the ability to really evaluate teachers, so that good teachers can be rewarded and ineffective teachers can be removed from the classroom, we will be stuck traveling the same path that is failing too many children. Now is the time to enact these needed reforms in order to ensure the best teachers are educating New Jersey’s children.”

Specifically, [the group of seven bills](#) submitted to the legislature by Governor Christie calls for:

- Implementation of a multiple measured statewide evaluation system by the 2012-2013 school year that requires observation and evaluation of all educators at least twice per year with summative evaluation at the end of the school year using the rating categories of highly effective, effective, partially effective, or ineffective.
- Tenure attainment with recommendations for tenure eligibility only after four years of service and after ratings of “effective” or “highly effective” have been received for the proceeding three years with guidelines for lesser ratings. Tenure status is lost after an evaluation as ineffective for one year or partially effective for two years.
- Reforming laws governing reductions in force (“Last In, First Out”) so that any layoffs are based on effectiveness -- not seniority -- and determined by an evaluation system established by the Commissioner of Education.
- Mutual consent that calls for agreement by both the principal and teacher on all teacher assignments to schools. Where a principal does not consent to a tenured teacher’s placement in his or her school, that teacher will continue to receive compensation for 12 months while searching for an assignment in the district, after which he or she will be placed on unpaid leave.
- Reforming teacher compensation to focus on an educator’s demonstrated effectiveness in advancing student learning, as well as whether the educator is teaching in a failing school or is teaching in a subject area that has been identified as a difficult-to-staff subject area.
- Due process changes to eliminate a provision requiring a teacher against whom tenure charges were filed to begin receiving full salary and benefits after 120 days of start of the process as well as implementing a firm deadline requiring Administrative Law Judges hearing tenure revocation cases to render a decision within 30 days.

- Allow for school districts to opt out of the Civil Service System.

The Christie Education Reform Agenda: Putting New Jersey's Children First Demanding and Rewarding the Most Effective Educators for our Children

Demanding and Rewarding the Most Effective Education Force in New Jersey

Governor Chris Christie has outlined a package of education reforms designed to challenge the status quo by finally prioritizing the needs of New Jersey's children above all else. The Christie Education Reform Agenda is a series of proposals that demands the most effective education workforce, creates career ready graduates by imposing higher standards, and provides room for innovation and human connections in teaching. While each element of the Governor's reform plan is critically important to ensure failure no longer runs rampant in too many public schools across New Jersey, the largest piece focuses on developing, evaluating and rewarding New Jersey's teachers. Teachers are vital to the success of every child and deserve a system that gives them the ability and the environment with which to do their best job.

Governor Christie's proposals tackle the system from the top-down to reform a system that has been failing too many of our children for too long.

Dramatically Reforming the Tenure System to Ensure Fairness and Effectiveness. Research tells us -- and everyone agrees -- that the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom is the most important in-school variable in determining how well children learn. As with any organization looking to maximize success, it is critical to recruit the very best, ensure they are performing effectively with the right training and support, evaluate performance, and retain and reward those who are succeeding, while making tough decisions regarding the few who are not. The Governor's tenure reform plan eliminates the tenure system in its current form in order to ensure fairness and effectiveness, while focusing on children's success in the classroom. Teachers are the most important part of the public school equation, which is why replacing and reforming failed, antiquated tenure rules will serve to support and reward teachers.

- **Multiple Measures Approach to Teacher Evaluations.** Teaching is a complicated profession and determining the effectiveness of any teacher can be a challenge. For this reason, the Christie proposal embraces the multiple measures approach so that no teacher is assessed based on a single test score. Fifty percent of a teacher's evaluation would be based on evidence of growth in student achievement, while the other half would be based on measures of teacher practice -- proven indicators of student success in the classroom. Additionally, the Christie proposal would require that all teachers be evaluated annually and that the evaluation systems have four categories ranging from highly effective to ineffective.
 - **Measures of Student Achievement Recognizing the Importance and Limitations of Test Scores.** Fifty percent of a teacher's overall evaluation should be based on direct measures of student achievement as demonstrated by assessments and other evaluations of student work. This would be comprised of two required components and one optional component. The largest required component would be an individual teacher's contribution to his or her students' progress on a statewide assessment. However, the other required component would take into consideration other factors that impact a student's growth, including school-wide performance and specific student circumstances. Additionally, districts would be permitted to choose one or more optional measures of student achievement from a list of state-approved measures. Such measures might include student performance on nationally-normed assessments or State-mandated end-of-course tests.
 - **Measures of Teacher Practice Based on Clear Standards and Classroom Observations** The measures of teacher practice will be based on clear performance standards that define effective teaching to help measure educational practice and improvement. Additionally, evaluations will also be based on teacher observations to ensure that the innovation and creativity a teacher employs in the classroom is considered.
 - **Opportunity to Improve and Receive Training.** Struggling teachers would be provided meaningful opportunity to improve before receiving an ineffective rating. Similarly, the proposal would require that districts take action to ensure that teachers understand the new evaluation system and that administrators receive the training needed to ensure effective implementation. Key parameters would be mandatory and the framework would be excluded from the scope of collective bargaining so the process cannot be weakened over time.
- **Achieving and Losing Tenure Based on Performance.** How and whether a teacher keeps the protections of tenure depends on whether the teacher is effective in advancing student learning. Tenure will no longer be granted simply as a result of the passage of time, but on the basis of what should matter -- whether students are learning.
 - Using the multiple measures approach to teacher evaluations, if a teacher is rated effective or highly effective for three consecutive years, he/she will be awarded tenure - whether at the end of the fourth year or the 14th.
 - If a teacher is rated ineffective for one year or partially effective for two consecutive years, he/she will revert to non-tenured status. This does not mean the teacher in question will necessarily lose his or her job, but simply that he/she no longer would enjoy the protections afforded by tenure.

- **Protecting Good Teachers By Replacing the Last In, First Out Rule.** Under current law, districts are required to lay off the most junior educators to protect those with seniority. These decisions are made with absolutely no consideration given to effectiveness which means a superior third-year teacher must be dismissed before a highly ineffective 10th year teacher. This is bad for New Jersey's children, bad for parents and bad for the teaching profession. The Christie proposal would fix this flaw by providing that these decisions be made on the basis of demonstrated effectiveness, not seniority.
- **Ending Forced Placement of Teachers.** Under this practice, teachers are assigned to a school whether or not the principal wants them to join the faculty – and often whether or not the teacher believes it is a good fit for him or her. Districts often force teachers into another school regardless of whether there is a need or a good match. The Christie proposal would end this practice so that no teacher would be assigned to a school in the absence of mutual consent. If a teacher loses his or her job because the position is eliminated, her school is closed, or her program is phased out, she will retain employment rights and her district will assist in securing the teacher a position in another school. If that teacher is unable to find a district teaching position on the basis of mutual consent within a year, she will be put on unpaid leave.

Reforming the Compensation System to Reward Qualified and Effective Teachers. New Jersey needs to attract and retain effective teachers, especially in New Jersey's most challenging schools and districts. Yet, today, teacher compensation is determined by years of service or degree and credit accumulation, neither of which accurately measures a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Further, many current collective bargaining contracts stand in the way of efforts to reward teachers who are getting results for students or working in challenging environments. Governor Christie's proposal turns the current system inside-out and finally puts effective, quality teaching ahead of seniority and lackluster results:

- Requiring salary schedules or compensation policies to be based primarily on effectiveness rather than seniority;
- Prohibiting the use of graduate degree accumulation as a basis, in and of itself, for salary increases, except in areas where graduate degrees have proven to be effective markers of improved teacher performance such as math and science;
- Granting schools and districts the flexibility to reward excellence in the classroom and to attract high-quality teachers to low-performing schools or hard-to-fill positions.

Expanding Opportunities for Great Teachers to Succeed. Governor Christie's proposal recognizes that teachers need to be given development opportunities that drive success in the classroom. Presently, the primary way for a teacher to achieve higher compensation outside of the seniority-based salary guide is to receive graduate credits or to follow a lengthy, cumbersome path to becoming a principal or administrator. Teachers who are innovating and getting results, but wish to stay in the classroom, are given few opportunities to advance professionally.

- **Establishing New Credentials and Career Ladders.** With the designations of "Master Teacher" and "Master Principal," these new credentials will provide the opportunity for highly effective teachers to utilize their skills and experience in a variety of additional ways, including mentoring, professional development of peers, or founding a charter school.
- **Expanding Opportunities to Receive Updated Certification.** This plan will increase the number of alternate route programs for principals and update certification requirements to align with the attainment of skills needed to be an effective leader.
- **Ensuring Our Children Have Well-Prepared Teachers.** Teacher preparation remains a national problem, but is especially serious in New Jersey's teacher preparation programs. A 2009 study by the well-respected National Council on Teacher Quality gave New Jersey a grade of D for teacher preparation. Elementary teachers who do not possess a minimum knowledge of the subject matter continue to receive teaching certificates. Mandating that K-5 and PreK-3 grade teacher preparation programs administer tests in the science of reading and math knowledge, in addition to a general competency test, as a requirement for teacher certification.

Governor Christie has declared 2011 the year of education reform and introduced far-reaching education reform agenda to bring quality education to every New Jersey child. This includes increased funding for every New Jersey school district by [\\$250 million](#) in the FY 2012 budget, approval of more charter schools to expand school choice options and increasing funding for charter schools by [\\$4.6 million](#).

In [January](#), Governor Christie delivered to the Legislature a specific legislative proposal to enact significant changes to strengthen and improve New Jersey's charter school law. These changes include: Improving authorizing and application process, encouraging charter school applicants, and providing flexibility with charter

school operations and administration.

###