

Remarks of Phil Apruzzese  
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Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara and Representative Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee.

My name is Phil Apruzzese, I'm a fifth grade teacher on leave from the Wethersfield Public School system, and I'm president of the Connecticut Education Association. You've heard from the previous three speakers some examples that illustrate how educators have been involved over the years in setting standards. I'd like to take a few moments to give you a more recent example of one of the most successful programs, designed by educators, Connecticut has ever seen.

Four years ago, The Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) conducted a thorough study of the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program. Efforts by educators from outside the State Department of Education (SDE) to suggest and become involved in making greatly-needed changes to BEST had been shunned. The PRI concluded that BEST wasn't working. Subsequent legislation created a task force charged with designing a new teacher induction program that would appropriately support new teachers in their first two years of teaching.

That was an important step in reforming the way our system is run. The TEAM task force was composed mostly of educators who brought their collective years of experience and expertise from a range of settings - public schools, vocational schools, administration, and school boards - to work collaboratively to design a program unlike that of most others in the country. Once the framework was laid, the TEAM module development team - again composed of educators from various settings - created the modules that new teachers experience as they go through the program. During its first year of implementation, TEAM has been highly

successful, as the results of a survey of new teachers, mentors, administrators, and reflection paper reviewers show:

- 86% of new teachers said that their work in the TEAM module process helped raised their students' achievement;
- 92% of new teachers said having focused conversations with their mentors was most effective in helping them develop new learning about teaching;
- 95% or more of mentor teachers said they introduced instructional strategies to their mentees, provided mentees with constructive feedback about their teaching, and helped mentees grow as professionals.
- 89% of *all* new teachers, mentors, administrators, and reflection paper reviewers agreed or strongly agreed that participating in the TEAM module process raised student achievement.

Am I surprised by TEAM's success? Not at all. I could have predicted it, because it was designed BY educators, FOR educators, and is implemented by educators with decision-making authority in their districts. TEAM is a shining example of why educators *should*, and how educators *can*, have much more decision-making authority in our profession.

The fact that educators have demonstrated their ability to set and live up to high standards is one good reason to increase their authority in the profession. A second, equally important reason, is that our current system has problems and challenges, which other speakers will address. I believe many of these challenges would have been dealt with much more efficiently and effectively if they were handled by a professional educator standards board. I hope you'll consider these issues in further discussions about a standards board. Thank you for your time today.