



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Kelly Donnelly 860.713.6525

Board gives initial approval to new social studies framework and changes to teacher certification system

(HARTFORD, CT)—The State Board of Education on Wednesday approved measures related to Connecticut’s new social studies framework and its teacher certification requirements.

The Board granted initial approval of the elementary and secondary social studies frameworks, which have been in development for over a year and a half. The Board approved a resolution to continue gathering public responses to the frameworks for two more months, then consider final approval in February.

“Reviews of the draft framework have been very enthusiastic and favorable so far, and we are all excited about this re-energized approach to teaching history, civics, geography, and economics,” said State Board of Education Chair Allan B. Taylor. “We invite everyone to share their feedback or comments before we consider final adoption in February.”

“It is essential that, as we pursue academic excellence in our state, we not narrow our focus to literacy and numeracy exclusively. Rather, we must ensure a well-rounded education for our students. We should broaden our focus to include civics, arts, and fitness as we pursue this goal,” said Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor. “Today’s initial adoption of the social studies framework is a key step in the effort to craft a well-rounded educational program in our state.”

The Board also approved a policy that includes a provision to adjust the timeline for the implementation of a new teacher certification requirement.

In 2012, a law was passed stating that on or after July 1, 2016, teachers must hold a master’s degree “in an appropriate subject matter area” related to the teacher’s endorsement area in order to obtain a top-level “professional” certificate in Connecticut’s three-tier certification system.

Due to the amount of time required for higher education institutions to redesign their master’s degree programs and obtain institutional approval, the Department of Education plans to ask the General Assembly to move the implementation date a year ahead to July 1, 2017.

“Today’s initial approval is an important step that will help to strengthen educator preparation in our state. It is my hope that the Educator Preparation Advisory Council will build upon this progress over the coming months,” said Commissioner Pryor.

Over the last two years, the Department of Education has worked with two groups, one representing a broad cross-section of public educators and another composed of higher education representatives, to study how to implement the appropriate subject-matter requirement of the law.

Besides seeking extra time to prepare, the policy the Board approved today offers preliminary definitions for what constitutes an appropriate subject matter area. The policy lists all certification endorsement areas affected, defines related subject areas, and explains how teachers who already hold a master's degree will be affected.

All non-teaching endorsements, for example, school nurses or school psychologists, will be excluded.

Additionally, the policy addresses how people who are already enrolled in a master's degree program will be affected. In May, the Board issued a policy with grandfathered language, stating that only those teachers who are applying for a professional certificate *for the first time* on or after July 1, 2016, will have to meet the new master's degree requirement.

The Department plans to convene a stakeholder workgroup in early January 2015 to review the initially approved policy and discuss needed changes that would further articulate and provide greater clarity to the statutory language. Any recommended changes to the initially approved policy would be brought to the February 2015 State Board of Education meeting for final approval.

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CONTACT: Kelly Donnelly
Director of Communications and Strategic Community Partnerships
Connecticut State Department of Education
Phone: 860-713-6525
Mobile: 860-983-1550
Email: Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov