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Legislative Document

No. 470

S.P. 209

In Senate, February 11, 2025

An Act to Require School Administrative Units to Adopt Mentoring Programs for Teachers and to Improve Existing Programs

Received by the Secretary of the Senate on February 5, 2025. Referred to the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs pursuant to Joint Rule 308.2 and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Grant'.

DAREK M. GRANT
Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator RAFFERTY of York.

Cosponsored by Representative MURPHY of Scarborough and

Senators: INGWERSEN of York, PIERCE of Cumberland, RENY of Lincoln, Representatives: DODGE of Belfast, MITCHELL of Cumberland, SARGENT of York.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 20-A MRSA §13012-A, sub-§4**, as amended by PL 2019, c. 518, §1, is
3 further amended to read:

4 **4. Requirements.** A school administrative unit may not employ a conditionally
5 certified teacher or educational specialist unless it has a ~~locally designed~~ preapproved or
6 approved locally developed peer support and teacher mentoring system program as
7 described in section 13015-A. A school administrative unit without a peer support and
8 teacher mentoring program may not hire a conditionally certified teacher. For a conditional
9 certificate issued under subsection 1, paragraph A or B, the school administrative unit shall
10 for at least the first 2 years of employment, or longer if determined to be necessary, and,
11 for a conditional certificate issued under subsection 1, paragraph C, the school
12 administrative unit shall for at least the first year of employment, or longer if determined
13 to be necessary:

14 A. Ensure that the conditionally certified teacher or educational specialist receives
15 high-quality professional development that is sustained, intensive and classroom-
16 focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction while
17 teaching; and

18 B. Provide a program of intensive supervision for the conditionally certified teacher
19 that consists of structured guidance and regular ongoing support or a mentoring
20 program, which is separate from any student-teacher requirement that may be required
21 under another authority.

22 **Sec. 2. 20-A MRSA §13012-B, sub-§1**, as amended by PL 2023, c. 200, §1, is
23 further amended by amending the first blocked paragraph to read:

24 A teacher holding an emergency teacher certificate must be assigned a mentor and shall
25 participate in a mentoring program provided by the department or a school administrative
26 unit pursuant to section 13015-A. A school administrative unit without a pre-approved or
27 approved locally developed peer support and teacher mentoring program may not hire a
28 teacher holding an emergency teacher certificate. A certificate issued pursuant to this
29 subsection is issued for a one-year period and no more than 3 emergency teacher certificates
30 may be issued per applicant.

31 **Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §13015-A**, as enacted by PL 2019, c. 518, §3, is amended to
32 read:

33 **§13015-A. Peer support and teacher mentoring system programs**

34 **1. Purpose.** The purpose of a peer support and teacher mentoring system program is
35 to:

36 A. Provide strong support services and mentoring programs that are sustained,
37 intensive and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting effect on
38 classroom instruction and develop good teaching and classroom management skills for
39 teachers certified for less than 5 years and teachers with conditional certificates;

40 B. Provide assistance to and review for all individuals who are candidates for a higher
41 level certificate or who are teaching under a waiver of the requirement to be certified
42 under this chapter; and

1 C. Assist all teachers in becoming better teachers.

2 A peer support and teacher mentoring system program is separate from local practices and
3 procedures regarding the supervision and evaluation of a teacher for retention by a school
4 administrative unit. The system A peer support and teacher mentoring program established
5 pursuant to this section must include opportunities for all educators to share, learn and
6 continually improve their practices as educators in collaboration with peers. Peer support
7 and mentoring must be formative in nature and be for the sole purpose of ongoing
8 professional growth for educators.

9 **2. Peer support and teacher mentoring programs.** The department shall develop
10 pre-approved peer support and teacher mentoring programs to provide support and ongoing
11 peer engagement for new teachers and convene a group of stakeholders to aid in the
12 development of the programs. A peer support and teacher mentoring program must include
13 requirements for mentoring teachers and for each teacher mentored and may use cohort
14 models for mentoring. A school administrative unit shall adopt a pre-approved peer support
15 and teacher mentoring program developed by the department or develop its own. A peer
16 support and teacher mentoring program developed by a school administrative unit must be
17 submitted to and approved by the department.

18 **3. Requirements.** A peer support and teacher mentoring program must meet the
19 following requirements.

20 A. The peer support and teacher mentoring program must provide a stipend of at least
21 \$5,000 per school year to mentoring teachers for each teacher mentored. The stipend
22 must come from the department and may be prorated if the peer support and teacher
23 mentoring program is less than one school year in duration.

24 B. The selection of mentoring teachers must be made from a list provided by or in
25 consultation with a local teacher's association.

26 C. The standards for a teacher to qualify as a mentor must, at a minimum, require a
27 mentoring teacher to have held a teaching certificate in the State for at least 5 years.

28 D. The peer support and teacher mentoring program must have a clear and actionable
29 plan to train mentoring teachers throughout the school year or prior to the beginning of
30 the school year.

31 E. The peer support and teacher mentoring program must have a clear and actionable
32 plan for mentoring teachers to provide support and regular engagement with teachers
33 requiring mentoring pursuant to subsection 5.

34 F. The peer support and teacher mentoring program must require mentoring teachers
35 to engage in regular professional development to improve their mentoring abilities.

36 **4. Peer support and teacher mentoring program review.** All pre-approved peer
37 support and teacher mentoring programs must be reviewed once every 7 years. The
38 department shall convene a group of relevant stakeholders including administrators,
39 mentoring teachers and teachers who have participated in the peer support and teacher
40 mentoring program as part of the 7-year review. The stakeholder group shall determine
41 amendments that should be made to the peer support and teacher mentoring program. A
42 school administrative unit shall submit its peer support and teacher mentoring program to
43 the department once every 7 years. A school administrative unit shall notify the department

1 if it adopts amendments to its peer support and teacher mentoring program as determined
2 by the stakeholder group.

3 **5. Teachers requiring mentoring.** The following teachers are required to have an
4 assigned mentor throughout the school year upon the adoption of a peer support and teacher
5 mentoring program:

6 A. A teacher holding a teaching certificate for less than 3 years;

7 B. A conditionally certified teacher for the duration of the conditional certification
8 period;

9 C. A teacher holding an emergency teacher certificate;

10 D. For the first year of employment in the new school administrative unit, a teacher
11 who has worked in a public school but is employed in a new school administrative unit;
12 and

13 E. A teacher who does not hold a valid teaching certificate.

14 **6. Waiving mentoring requirement; extenuating circumstances.** Under certain
15 circumstances, the commissioner may waive, for no more than one year, the requirement
16 in subsection 5 that a teacher be mentored. The commissioner may only waive the
17 requirement if the school administrative unit has demonstrated that the requirements of the
18 peer support and teacher mentoring program may result in the school administrative unit
19 being unable to operate.

20 **7. Employment of certain teachers.** A school administrative unit that has not adopted
21 and implemented a peer support and teacher mentoring program may not hire conditionally
22 certified teachers or teachers who hold an emergency teacher certificate. Conditionally
23 certified teachers and teachers holding an emergency teacher certificate must be assigned
24 a mentor in order to be employed at a public school.

25 **8. Reporting.** Beginning October 1, 2027 and annually thereafter, a superintendent
26 shall report to the department a list of every mentoring teacher, teachers being mentored
27 and the certification status of teachers being mentored.

28 **Sec. 4. Effective date.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2026.

29 SUMMARY

30 This bill requires the Department of Education to develop peer support and teacher
31 mentoring programs to be adopted by school administrative units. A school administrative
32 unit may develop its own peer support and teacher mentoring program and submit the
33 program to the department for approval. A peer support and teacher mentoring program
34 must include a \$5,000 stipend per school year for mentoring teachers for each teacher they
35 mentor, plans to train mentoring teachers and to provide support for and regular
36 engagement with teachers required to be mentored and regular professional development
37 for mentoring teachers to improve their mentoring abilities. Mentoring teachers must be
38 selected from a list provided by or in consultation with a local teacher's association and
39 must have held a teacher certificate in the State for at least 5 years. All peer support and
40 teacher mentoring programs must be reviewed by the department every 7 years. The
41 Commissioner of Education may waive the requirement for a teacher to be mentored for
42 no more than one year if the school administrative unit has demonstrated that the

1 requirements of the peer support and teacher mentoring program would result in the school
2 administrative unit being unable to operate. School administrative units without a peer
3 support and teacher mentoring program may not hire conditionally certified teachers or
4 teachers holding emergency teacher certificates. The legislation goes into effect July 1,
5 2026.