

Governor Signs Bill to Improve Teacher Preparation

Senate Bill 51 elevates teaching profession with higher standards for preparation programs and prospective teachers

Dover, DE – Fulfilling the commitment from his [2013 State of the State](#) to better prepare Delaware’s educators for the classroom, Governor Jack Markell signed legislation today that raises the bar for entering the teaching profession. Joined by Education Secretary Mark Murphy, the bill’s sponsors, and advocates from the state’s business and education communities at Wilmington University, Markell outlined efforts in Senate Bill 51 to improve teacher training, require that prospective teachers complete a rigorous assessment, and track performance of all preparation programs in the state.

✘ “Growing Delaware in this fast-moving economy depends on having an education system that prepares our students to out-compete and out-innovate their peers around the world,” said Markell. “The research on how we tap into the talents of Delaware’s future workforce is clear – teacher quality is the single most important school factor in a student’s academic success. The law being signed today represents a vital step in elevating the teaching profession by ensuring our educators have the skills they need to excel in their essential mission.”

The legislation establishes high-quality student teaching experiences, ongoing evaluation of prospective teachers, and specific literacy and math instruction geared to the needs of elementary school teachers. In addition, Delaware’s new teachers will have to pass assessments of their content knowledge and performance before licensure. In his State of the State, Markell called for “a rigorous exit assessment” that “includes demonstration of content knowledge as well as

teaching skills.”

“We need to make sure our new teachers are well prepared to get our children ready to face an increasingly challenging world,” said Sen. David Sokola, D-Newark, who sponsored the new law. “It is our hope that this new program will help grow our efforts to have the nation’s best-prepared and qualified teachers.”

“Raising the standards for our teacher preparation programs and raising the bar for the students admitted to these programs helps us to ensure that we are graduating high quality teachers from our state universities and teacher certification programs,” said Rep. Darryl Scott, D-Dover, the bill’s lead House sponsor. “I believe that well-prepared, well-educated and hard-working teachers are the key to improving the educational experience for the children of our state. I am proud to have been a part of this and thank all those who supported the bill and helped to make Delaware educator preparation standards stronger.”

Delaware State Education Association President Frederika Jenner and Jon Sell of Sussex Tech, who was named Delaware’s 2013 Teacher of the Year, have spoken in favor of the new law.

“Standards for the profession should be established and maintained by members of the profession and comprehensive, in-depth, up-to-date, real world preparation programs should include contributions from skilled members of the profession,” said Jenner when the bill passed the General Assembly. “Strengthening teacher preparation goes hand-in-hand with adequate, meaningful support for new teachers; dedicated recruitment of minority candidates; upgrading starting salaries, and creating career advancement opportunities that keep teachers involved in teaching.” 

“Governor Markell’s focus on improving educator preparation is much needed and it illustrates how Delaware is committed to

providing the absolute best teachers for our students,” said Sell when the bill was introduced. “The teaching profession has changed dramatically in the 21st century, and it requires specialized skills covering a wide variety of areas. Ensuring our teachers enter the profession armed with those skills should be a key focus so that our students can receive the very best education possible. Preparing and retaining highly qualified teachers in Delaware needs to be a central focus if we aim to make our schools national models of excellence.”

Research shows:

- The top education systems recruit and retain top educators: Only 23% of U.S. teachers come from the top third of college graduates compared to 100% in Singapore, Finland & Korea.
- A significant portion of Delaware teachers are new to the profession, and the majority of those teachers were educated in Delaware: 1 in 4 teachers employed in Delaware public schools have 5 or fewer years of education experience. Of those teachers, 59% received their bachelor’s degrees in Delaware.
- New teacher turnover is significant, and state efforts to improve educator preparation lag the nation: 2 in 5 new teachers leave teaching in Delaware within 4 years. The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has consistently given Delaware a “D-” for “improving teacher preparation,” placing Delaware in the bottom 8 states nationwide for addressing this issue.

Video from the signing is on [YouTube](#) and photos can be viewed on [Flickr](#)