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Governor Christie Signs Education Reform Agenda Initiative Into Law To Expand Teacher Leadership and Mentoring Opportunities

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Measure Supports Professional Development and Peer Leadership Among New Jersey's Educators

Trenton, NJ - Acting on a commitment to provide teachers with opportunities for professional advancement, Governor Christie today signed into law a measure that will allow outstanding teachers the opportunity to earn a "teacher-leader" designation as part of their teaching certificate. The specialized endorsement is intended to extend career ladders for teachers seeking to advance as leaders while remaining in the classroom, and to further support these teachers as they build upon their capacity to design, lead, and support professional learning opportunities for local schools and districts.

The measure matches an initiative first called for by Governor Christie in 2011 as part of his far-reaching Education Reform Agenda to establish new career credentials, ladders, and professional development opportunities for New Jersey's best teachers. Under the new law, the "teacher-leader" designation will allow our state's most effective teachers to grow professionally, expand their roles in their schools, and mentor their peers, all while allowing them to stay in the classroom practicing their craft.

"This bill makes good on an important reform I have called for since 2011 by creating a pathway for growth, professional development, and peer leadership for our best, most inspiring and innovative teachers," said Governor Chris Christie. "The reality is that we know great teachers are already leaders in their schools and communities, but this law honors and recognizes those contributions and designates that leadership in a real way, without making them go outside the classroom to pursue those opportunities. This goal – to provide teachers with career ladders – is an essential component of this Administration's education reform agenda."

The bill signed today, S-165, affords educators the opportunity to earn a "teacher-leader" designation on their teaching certificate upon the successful completion of an approved program of study. An 11-member Teacher Leader Endorsement Advisory Board will make recommendations to the State Department of Education about the requirements for eligibility and the program of study for the endorsement. The advisory board will represent teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, and teacher-preparation programs and is expected to provide its recommendations within six months after its formation.

According to the legislation, the "teacher-leader" endorsement will prepare educators to meet a number of expectations, such as fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning; supporting professional learning communities; using research and facilitating improvements to advance student learning; and improving collaboration with families and the community.

Commissioner of Education David C. Hesse pointed to the importance of extended roles for New Jersey's top teachers. "As we continue to identify outstanding educators across the state," he explained, "this legislation will provide another avenue for those individuals to grow and to share their expertise with their colleagues. The key to improving student achievement lies in improving classroom instruction, and this legislation helps get to the heart of the matter."

Commissioner Hesse added, "We are excited about the potential for this endorsement to serve as another way to attract and retain outstanding teachers in New Jersey, and to promote authentic professional learning that drives

student success.”

Legislative sponsors include Senators Jim Whelan (Atlantic) and Teresa Ruiz (Essex) as well as Assemblypersons Mila M. Jasey (Essex/Morris), Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr., (Middlesex), David W. Wolfe (Ocean), Ralph R. Caputo (Essex) and Angelica M. Jimenez (Bergen/Hudson).

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