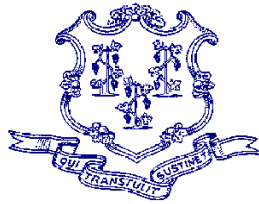


# The Connecticut General Assembly

## House Democrats



**REPRESENTATIVE KIM FAWCETT**  
ONE HUNDRED THIRTY THIRD DISTRICT

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May 2008

Dear Neighbor,

It has been a long and eventful 2008 legislative session. A few noteworthy pieces of education legislation were passed that may be of interest to many of Connecticut's teachers and students. My annual end-of-session letter to teachers is an opportunity to share with you the highlights of these new provisions:

### **1. BEST Program**

Teachers just joining the profession in Connecticut have reason to celebrate with the elimination of the hotly contested BEST program. The video portion of the BEST portfolio will be eliminated for the 2008-2009 school year, and the BEST Program will sunset altogether on July 1, 2009. To replace the BEST Program, a task force will be formed to create a new mentor assistance and training program that will be implemented in 2010.

### **2. Autism and Developmental Disorders**

Autism activists have been busy advocating for changes in education and health laws that impact this growing group of young students. The goal of House Bill 5590 was to improve how autism is defined and addressed within our public school systems. A task force will develop recommendations for a comprehensive state-wide plan to incorporate new methods of teaching children with autism and other developmental disabilities. Additional legislation expands health insurance coverage for autism students if their current policy covers physical, speech and occupational therapy services for other diseases and conditions. Effective January 1, 2009, it will be easier for parents with special-needs children to access private health insurance coverage for many of their child's comprehensive health needs.

### **3. In-School Suspensions**

Controversy mounted over last year's in-school suspension legislation so this year the legislature revisited the issue. Schools will now have more time and flexibility to develop and implement in-school suspension policies that are customized to their district and appropriate for their students.

### **4. School Construction**

As a member of the Education Committee, I worked to negotiate new language that will ensure our towns maintain control over their school construction projects. Due to this new language, several projects in Fairfield can proceed without delays in the bidding process.

Thank you to the many individuals who reached out to me during the session and urged me to support these important education issues. I am proud of these accomplishments, and I am proud to be your voice here in Hartford. Please feel free to contact me for more information on any of these initiatives.

Best Regards,



Kim Fawcett  
State Representative