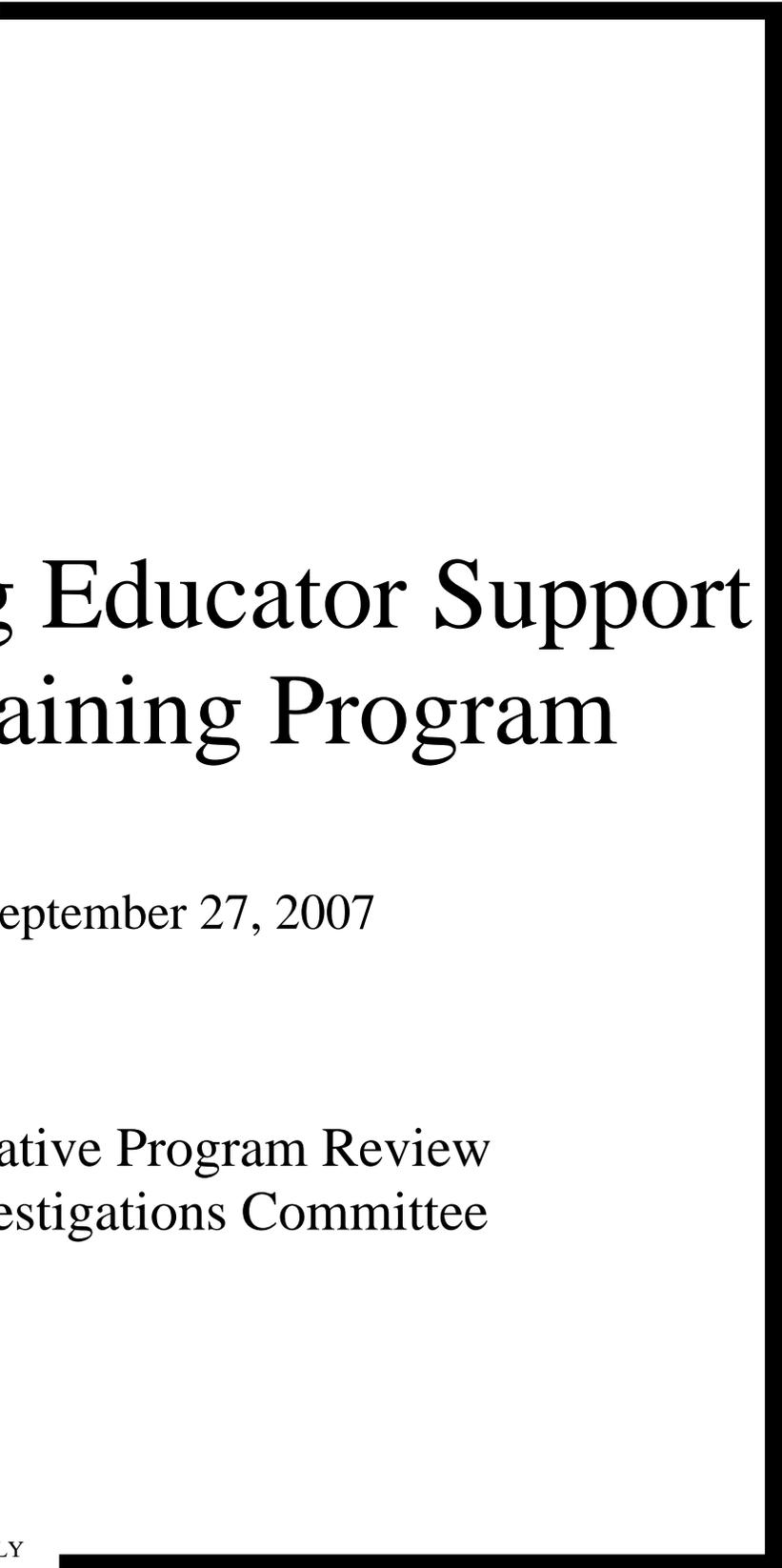


Staff Briefing



Beginning Educator Support and Training Program

September 27, 2007

Legislative Program Review
& Investigations Committee

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Introduction

Over the years, Connecticut has modified its teacher certification requirements. A primary goal of these adjustments has been to increase the overall quality of teachers. In 1986, the state adopted an extensive education law that included a teacher certification overhaul. Known as the Education Enhancement Act (EEA), the law was a direct response by the state to address Connecticut's growing problem of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers.

A key component of the act provided the means for local school districts to increase teachers' salaries, which was seen as a way of attracting teachers to the profession and keeping teachers in Connecticut. At the same time, the EEA strengthened the standards for teachers in several ways. Chief among those increased standards was the establishment of a three-tiered teacher certification system that codified new requirements for beginning, experienced, and veteran teachers. State certification for a beginning teacher, called initial certification, required public school teachers starting their careers in either the profession or the state to participate in a state-run program providing support and assessment (i.e., a teacher induction program).

The teacher induction program developed at that time by the State Department of Education (SDE), in conjunction with input from educators throughout the state, was the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program. The overall intention of BEST has remained the same since its origination: to ensure students in public schools throughout the state are taught by teachers who have been deemed competent through meeting minimum standards approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE). As highlighted by this report, the program provides a combination of support for and assessment of teachers who are at the start of their teaching careers in Connecticut.¹

Study Focus

Advocates of the BEST program believe it is properly designed for inducting beginning teachers into the profession. Through the program, beginning teachers are to be provided support in their local schools and via state efforts. At the same time, teachers are to be assessed to make sure they meet minimum competency standards set by the state. Opponents, however, maintain the current process offers insufficient support to -- and is onerous for -- beginning teachers. Critics also question the overall efficacy of the evaluation instrument used in Connecticut to assess beginning teachers (i.e., the teacher portfolio).

Understanding the ability to recruit and retain qualified, competent teachers in Connecticut is a vital element of the state's public education system, and the potential impact the state's teacher certification requirements have on school districts' capacity to meet those objectives, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee is examining teacher certification in two phases. Phase One includes a performance review of the state's BEST program, which is one aspect of teacher certification. Phase Two of the study, as determined in

¹ Includes full-time and part-time teachers in local or regional schools, charter and magnet schools, regional educational service centers, approved private special education facilities, schools operated by the Departments of Children and Families, Correction, or Mental Retardation, or an approved special education facility.

more detail by the committee, will examine Connecticut's teacher certification system more broadly, including its relative impact on the state's ability to recruit and retain qualified teachers, to the extent such impact can be identified.

This review of the BEST program focuses on the program's effectiveness in achieving its intended objectives of supporting beginning teachers in Connecticut and assessing their overall teaching skills and knowledge. Some areas identified for review by the committee include: examining the role of SDE and local school districts in the operation and oversight of the program; describing the process used to recruit, train, and oversee the various resource personnel associated with the program at the state and local school district levels; and assessing program activities and results to determine if the program is meeting its intended objectives.

Methodology

To date, committee staff has utilized various sources of information. Staff has met with the education department commissioner, associate commissioner for the Division of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, and chief of the Bureau of Educator Preparation, Certification, Support, and Assessment. Staff has had extensive interviews with key BEST program personnel within the department, as well as BEST field staff representatives from the six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) in the state and the executive director of the RESC serving the central role in administering the support component of BEST.² The state's two unions representing public school teachers have been interviewed regarding their positions on the program. Representatives from the Department of Higher Education's Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program also have been interviewed. Committee staff has attended multiple training sessions conducted for beginning mentors, beginning and experienced portfolio scorers, and administrators, and several live portfolio scoring sites have been visited. State statutes, regulations, and national information have been reviewed, as have several actual teacher portfolios.

The study is scheduled to conclude with staff's findings and recommendations, if any pertinent, presented to the committee in December 2007. This interim report provides background information relevant to the study, including detailed descriptions of the BEST program's support and assessment components. When applicable, preliminary program data and analysis have been provided. Additional analysis of the program will be included in the December report.

Report Organization

This report is organized into four sections. Section I provides background information about teacher induction programs, with an emphasis on the origin and history of Connecticut's BEST program. Section II outlines the administrative organization of BEST, including program staff and budget resources. Sections III and IV provide detailed descriptions of the support and assessment components of BEST, which are the core parts of the program's current operation. A glossary of terms relevant to the BEST program is provided prior to the appendices.

² Committee staff met collectively with all RESC BEST field staff as part of the field staffs' regular monthly meeting process. Individual interviews with three of the six RESCs have been held to date, and interviews with the remaining three will be conducted to gain a more detailed understanding of the issues facing each RESC as they relate to BEST.

Section I: Background

Beginning Educator Support and Training Program

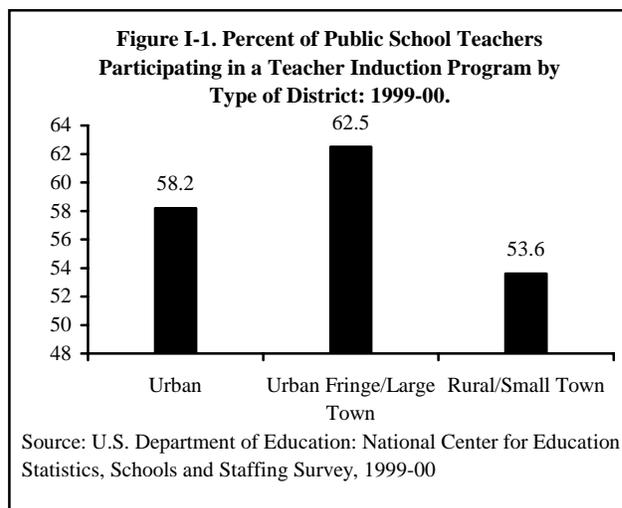
As with the start of any type of professional career, beginning teachers are faced with numerous demands. Novice teachers are concerned not only with the classes and students they will teach, but also with understanding the culture of their new school and school district. Learning the basic logistics of their school can be challenging for new teachers, as well.

One way to ease the transition for beginning teachers is through their participation in teacher induction programs. Such programs are intended to provide new teachers with the assistance and guidance necessary to successfully introduce them to their new careers. This support generally is delivered by assigning more experienced teachers as mentors to beginning teachers, conducting formal orientation programs, and having beginning teachers participate in formal professional development. Teacher induction programs commonly focus on some combination of the following topics:

- teaching methods;
- curriculum content;
- classroom management;
- orientation (to building, staff, and community); and
- district and school policies and procedures.

Many view quality teacher induction programs as a way to recruit and retain teachers. If a school district recognizes, addresses, and supports the needs of beginning teachers during their first years of teaching, particularly through quality induction programs, prospective teachers may be more apt to work for such a district. At the same time, as indicated below, attrition rates for beginning teachers who participate in teacher induction programs are lower than the rates for those teachers who do not participate. Therefore, teacher induction programs can boost teacher retention.

The most recent national data from the federal Department of Education indicate a majority of all public school teachers with up to five years' experience participated in a formal induction program for new teachers; approximately 60 percent did during the 1999-00 school year (SY).³ As highlighted in Figure I-1, the percent of teachers participating in teacher induction programs varies by the districts' geographical location. The figure shows 58 percent of teachers in "urban" districts

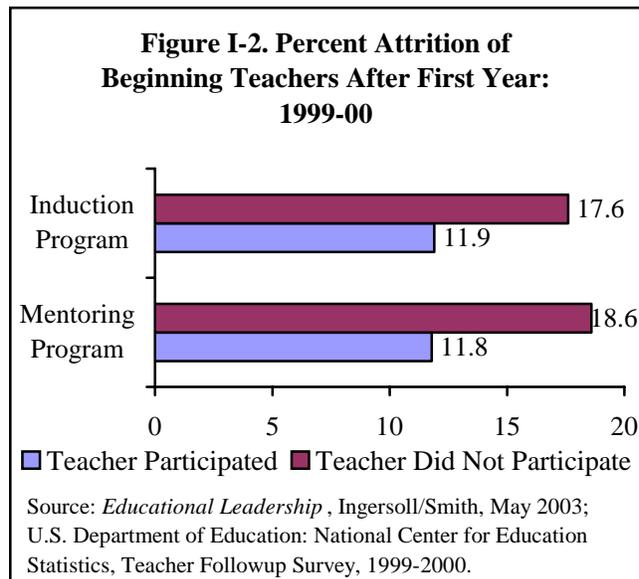


³ U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-00.

participated in teacher induction programs, as did 63 percent of teachers in “urban fringe/large town” districts, and 54 percent of teachers in “rural/small town” districts. The national data also indicate 47 percent of beginning teachers in public schools worked with a mentor in the same content area during the school year. Having novice teachers work with experienced mentors, particularly in the same content area, is seen by many as an important way to support new teachers as they start their teaching careers.

The national literature provides evidence that teacher induction programs are an important factor in retaining new teachers. For example, as highlighted in Figure I-2, data from a survey by the National Center for Education Statistics show for school year 1999-00, attrition rates for first-year teachers were lower when teachers received support by participating in a formal induction or mentoring program.

The overall effect new teacher induction programs have on student learning, however, is more difficult to measure. While national data in this area are limited, studies on this topic are emerging.⁴ Understanding the need to more fully evaluate the impact teacher induction programs have on student achievement, the federal Department of Education has recently contracted with a private research company to conduct a national study of new teacher induction programs and their relative influence on student achievement, improvements in teachers’ instructional practices, and teacher retention.⁵



Teacher Induction in Connecticut

A statewide induction program for new teachers has been in place in Connecticut since 1989. Known as the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program, BEST is part of a larger, standards-based certification continuum established for most teachers in the state. The standards in place are designed to ensure teacher quality throughout the various stages of a teacher’s career, from when a student decides to enter a formal teacher preparation program at a Connecticut college or university through the highest level of state certification for veteran teachers. BEST is the program within the continuum that supports and assesses teachers beginning their careers in Connecticut to ensure they meet minimum state standards necessary to continue their state teacher certifications. For school year 2006-07, the number of certified teachers in Connecticut providing student instruction totaled 42,843. Of those, 4,913 (11 percent)

⁴ See: *The Impact of New Teacher Induction on Teacher Practices and Student Learning*: Thompson et.al., April 2003; *Does New Teacher Support Affect Student Achievement?*: Research Brief, Michael Strong, New Teacher Center, January 2006.

⁵ The contractor is Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a private company that provides research, analysis, and data on various public policy issues. For information about the study, see: <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/education/teachinduc.asp>.

participated in the BEST program, which accounted for approximately 90 percent of all new teachers in the state.

BEST is comprised of two key components: *support* and *assessment*. As detailed more in Section III, support of beginning teachers required through BEST augments districts' orientation for new teachers. School districts are not required by law to formally conduct an orientation for teachers, but SDE estimates most, if not all, districts across the state have some form of program to acclimate new teachers to their districts. No data on districts' programs are formally tracked at the state level.

The assessment component of BEST, as discussed in Section IV, was developed as the vehicle to ensure beginning teachers meet minimum competency standards approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE). Beginning teachers are evaluated as part of a state-administered assessment process within BEST. The actual instrument used to assess new teachers has changed over time, as discussed below.

Original BEST Program

Recommendations from several study groups in the early to mid-1980s helped lead to passage of the Education Enhancement Act in 1986. The act was an extensive initiative to address Connecticut's teacher shortage through attracting and retaining qualified teachers in the state's public schools. The key components of the law were a substantial increase in teachers' salaries and the establishment of more rigorous standards to ensure the overall quality of teachers.

Chief among the EEA's increased standards for teachers was the creation of the Beginning Educator Support and Training program. BEST was developed to provide a statewide structure for uniform support and assistance for beginning teachers, primarily through mentoring and training. At the same time, the program established a new statewide system to assess beginning teachers' abilities in the classroom. Under the new system, only upon successful completion could a beginning teacher attain the proper state certification to continue teaching in the state's public schools. Before BEST, teachers were evaluated by their individual local schools/districts, with varying degrees of evaluation systems in place.

Support. BEST was implemented in 1989, and was originally a one-year commitment on the part of new teachers. A second year in the program was an option for teachers who did not satisfactorily complete the program's assessment component. School districts were, and are still, required by law to support beginning teachers during their first year as they transitioned to their new careers.

The core of the support provided through local school districts was the use of state-trained mentors. Mentors were experienced teachers within school districts recognized for their ability in the classroom. Committees of district staff within each district -- known as district committees -- were responsible for selecting mentors. State law required that mentors: 1) be Connecticut certified teachers; 2) have two years of satisfactory teaching experience within their current school; and 3) have an understanding of the state's teaching competencies, as discussed below.⁶

⁶ C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a (2) (in effect July 1, 1989)

The use of mentors at the inception of BEST was, and continues to be, the primary means of the program's support component for beginning teachers. The mentors' duties and responsibilities were extensive when originally implemented, but mainly included:⁷

- meeting weekly with the beginning teacher during the school year and recording such activities;
- observing the beginning teacher and providing classroom demonstrations for the teacher on at least eight occasions during the school year and at least 10 times for alternate route beginning teachers (discussed later);
- providing support for the development of beginning teachers' skills, including instructional planning, classroom management, and instruction and assessment of student learning;
- assisting beginning teachers in preparing for the state assessment process; and
- completing any follow-up training as required by the state Department of Education.

BEST further required school districts to meet additional obligations for supporting beginning teachers. For example, districts were to provide "release time" from classroom duties for mentors and beginning teachers to meet during the school year. By regulation, no fewer than four school days, consisting of at least eight meetings, were required for planning, demonstration, observation, and feedback on teaching between the mentor and new teacher. The release time requirement for alternate route beginning teachers was a minimum of five school days and 10 meetings. As noted Section III, there are different interpretations of the release time requirement.

State law originally provided for compensation for mentors. The initial rate was \$1,000 for each mentor who worked with a beginning teacher for a school year. The program also required mentors to submit activity logs to SDE. The logs served as the department's way to oversee the mentor support component of the program and hold mentors accountable for their work with beginning teachers. Mentors would only receive their compensation if their logs were submitted.

In FY 92, funding for mentor compensation shifted, from a state obligation to a district's discretion. Each public school district now decides whether and at what level to compensate mentors. Moreover, mentors are no longer required to submit any type of activity report to the education department. The department attributes this to several factors, including the elimination of state funding for mentor stipends in the early 1990s and limited BEST staff resources to receive and review any type of mentor reports. As a result, accountability of mentors is now a function of local school districts.

Training for new mentors was a state function required under the original BEST program. A "refresher" training program for mentors who had not mentored a beginning teacher for three or more years also was required by the original program, although this obligation no longer exists. Over time, new training sessions for district personnel (e.g., administrators) have been implemented.

⁷ Regs. Conn. State Agencies Sec. 10-220a-6 (in effect July 1, 1989)

Assessment. The assessment component of BEST fulfills the 1986 legislative mandate that beginning teachers be required to achieve a satisfactory evaluation on a “professional knowledge clinical assessment” within one year of teaching in a public school.⁸ The BEST statute and regulations outline the specific assessment requirements. The way new teachers have been assessed, however, has changed over time.

Initially, the assessment of beginning teachers was based on structured classroom observations. A series of up to six classroom observations conducted by state-trained assessors over the course of the beginning teacher’s first year was required. The classroom observations were conducted by two teacher assessors and two administrator assessors from outside the beginning teacher’s district, and two state assessors, with each assessor responsible for one observation per teacher. The observations, which took place at various intervals throughout the first year, were scored by the assessors. A teacher needed to achieve a minimum score from the assessments to maintain his or her state teaching certification. If the teacher did not achieve a passing final rating during his or her first year, the evaluation process would be repeated during the following school year.

The BEST assessment process also required teachers to complete an assessment information form prior to each classroom observation. The form sought general descriptive information about the teacher’s classroom/students and more specific information about the context and purpose of the lesson the assessor would observe. Assessors would review the completed form, and then meet with beginning teachers before the actual observation to discuss the information. After the pre-observation interview, the assessor would observe the beginning teacher give a lesson in the classroom (generally 45-60 minutes). The assessor used a standardized evaluation form to record, among other things, how the teacher engaged students, handled questions, and monitored his or her classroom. The assessor would then meet with the teacher once the evaluation was completed for a script-driven interview.

Following each classroom observation, the beginning teacher would receive a formal feedback report from the assessor outlining the teacher’s strengths and areas needing attention. A composite report showing the combined scores of the independent observations also was sent to the teacher. Teachers achieving a satisfactory rating were eligible to continue their state certification; a second year of observations was available for all other teachers.

The actual tool used by assessors to evaluate teachers within the classroom observation structure was the Connecticut Competency Instrument (CCI). The CCI, unique to Connecticut, was created by a development team consisting of SDE staff, practitioners, and national researchers during the 1980s. The instrument was revised through a formal validation and testing process.

The Connecticut Competency Instrument was formulated from a set of 15 general teaching competencies originally adopted by the State Board of Education in 1984. Based on those competencies, called the Connecticut Teaching Competencies, the assessment tool/evaluation form used for the classroom observations was organized into 10 “dimensions of effective teaching behaviors.” These were grouped into three categories that mirrored what were

⁸ C.G.S. Sec. 10-145f(d)

then considered to be the major components of the instructional process: 1) classroom management; 2) instruction; and 3) assessment of student understanding.

According to SDE, the on-site classroom observation process and the Connecticut Competency Instrument had several problems. These included:

- the logistics of scheduling assessors to visit classrooms due to the overall volume of beginning teachers and on-site observations;
- assessors who were teachers having to leave their own classrooms during the day required securing many substitute teachers and was seen as detrimental to their students' learning;
- the subject specialty of assessors often did not match that of the beginning teachers they were evaluating, and consequently the assessors did not know when the content was wrong;
- the evaluation instrument was not focused on student learning in terms of looking at student work, how teachers were assessing students and teaching them based on these assessments, or observing how lessons built on one another; and
- the CCI lacked a content pedagogy⁹ component (i.e., how to monitor, assess, and adjust teaching for a particular content area).

Revised BEST Program

In 1993, the BEST Blue Ribbon Panel was established to examine changing the BEST program, in part, because of:

- changes in the research base related to effective teaching practices;
- limitations of the assessment of generic teaching competencies;
- the need to reduce the program administrative burdens on local districts;
- continued concerns about the adequacy of support for and feedback to beginning teachers; and
- the need to involve principals more directly in the BEST program.

The blue ribbon panel consisted of 27 members representing various constituencies, including teachers' unions, local school districts, higher education, and education associations. The purpose of the panel was twofold: 1) assist the state education department in redesigning the BEST program to meet the needs of Connecticut's students in the 1990s; and 2) suggest alternatives to the current systems of accountability and professional development both for novice and experienced teachers.¹⁰

Prior to the creation of the BEST panel, SDE was interested in a way to measure general and content-specific pedagogy of beginning teachers, but no assessment of that type had been

⁹ Pedagogy generally refers to the art and/or science of being a teacher, and to the strategies of instruction or a style of instruction.

¹⁰ "Final Report to the BEST Blue Ribbon Panel – BEST Program: A New Performance Standard Continuum," Connecticut State Department of Education, June 1993.

developed. The department worked with the Teacher Assessment Project of Stanford University on developing new performance evaluations, including a portfolio-based assessment. SDE believed the assessment needed to integrate three types of knowledge: 1) content; 2) general pedagogical; and 3) students as learners. The department's eventual goal was to create this type of assessment(s) as part of the BEST program.

Based on SDE's work developing an integrated assessment tool for beginning teachers, the department's collaboration with outside consultants, including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards,¹¹ and the endorsement of the BEST Blue Ribbon Panel, a second generation of the BEST program was initiated. The main change to the program was the development of a portfolio-based evaluation tool for new teachers.

Portfolio-based evaluation. In 1995, SDE began pilot-testing a content-specific assessment process based on a portfolio (i.e., a structured document developed by the beginning teacher around a unit of classroom instruction.) The portfolio instrument was developed in accordance with standards for educational and psychological testing developed by the Joint Commission of the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. SDE also worked with the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC), which is part of the Council of Chief State School Officials, on developing a prototype for the mathematics content area.

The portfolio was systematically tested by SDE for its reliability and validity as a formal measurement tool for beginning teachers, including review and consultation from Professional Evaluation Services and the Educational Testing Service. SDE also involved various constituencies within Connecticut in developing the portfolio, including teachers, administrators, and higher education faculty.¹²

The BEST program's new assessment process based on a content-specific portfolio was implemented incrementally from 1999 to 2005, as indicated in Table I-1.¹³ Beginning teachers in the English language arts, mathematics, and science content areas were the first to complete and submit portfolios as their formal assessments under BEST for SY 1999-00. Over the next several years, portfolios for the remaining seven content areas were researched, developed, tested, and implemented. World languages, the last of the 10 content areas to transition to the portfolio format, was added in the 2004-05 school year.

¹¹ The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan organization formed to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for experienced teachers.

¹² State Department of Education, "BEST Portfolio Performance Results: Five Year Report 1999-2004, August 2005 Draft Report," p.7.

¹³ *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007*, p. 2. The 10 content areas include: elementary education, English language arts, history/social studies, mathematics, science, music, physical education, special education, visual arts, and world languages.

Table I-1. Implementation of BEST Portfolio Assessment Method by Content Area: Areas Added Each School Year				
1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2003-04	2004-05
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Lang. Arts • Mathematics • Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Educ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Educ. • Music • Physical Educ. • Social Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Lang.
Source: Adapted from SDE materials				

Common Core of Teaching

At the same time the new portfolio assessment instrument was being developed, SDE was working on a revised set of competency standards for teachers. The Common Core of Teaching (CCT) was ultimately adopted by the State Board of Education in 1999. The CCT articulates the expectations and understandings teachers must have about their professional knowledge and practice (i.e., pedagogy), students, and evaluation of student learning. As with the development of the portfolio, the department involved various constituencies in establishing the Common Core of Teaching standards.

The Common Core of Teaching includes foundational skills and competencies that are common to all teachers from pre-K through Grade 12. The CCT also includes discipline-specific professional standards that represent knowledge, skills, and competencies unique for teachers in the 10 content areas that require portfolio assessments. (Appendix A provides the foundational standards of the Common Core of Teaching.)

The Common Core of Teaching, which was based on the national research current in 1999, represented a shift in how effective teaching was viewed. Moreover, the relevant competencies previously assessed through the Connecticut Competency Instrument were integrated into the standards used in the Common Core of Teaching. The CCT ultimately replaced the Connecticut Teaching Competencies.

It is important to note that the Common Core of Teaching standards extend beyond BEST, although the BEST teaching portfolio has been designed to assess the foundational skills and the discipline-specific standards contained in the CCT. The CCT incorporates the full continuum of standards-based teaching in Connecticut, and serves as the foundation for the: 1) state's definition of effective teaching; 2) guidelines for teacher evaluation, professional development, and the issuance of continuing education units; and 3) adoption of the BEST program's portfolio assessment model.

Overview of Current BEST Requirements

Connecticut has three levels of teacher certification, as outlined in Table I-2. The table shows the type of state teaching certificate, the duration of the certificate, and the requirements either to advance to the next-level certificate upon expiration of a teacher's current certificate or to maintain the professional educator certificate, which is the state's highest level teachers'

certificate. Additional descriptions of the Durational Shortage Area Permit and the state's Alternate Route to Certification program are provided in Appendix B.

Table I-2. State Teaching Certificates (Issued After July 1, 1989)		
Type of Certificate	Duration	Requirements Summary*
Tier 1 Initial Educator	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completed all SDE preparation and eligibility requirements; met requirements for entrance into the BEST program
Tier 2 Provisional Educator	8 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completed the requirements for the initial educator certificate and either: 1) completed at least 10 school months of successful teaching in a public school and successfully completed BEST; or 2) completed at least 30 school months of successful teaching in a public school or nonpublic school approved by SBOE (or another state's education governing body) within 10 years of applying for provisional certificate; or Successfully taught with a provisional teaching certificate (issued prior to 1989) for the year immediately preceding applying for provisional educator certificate in a local/regional school or state-approved special education facility
Tier 3 Professional Educator	5 years upon renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completed 30 school months of successful teaching in a CT public school or nonpublic school approved by SBOE while holding a provisional certificate AND successfully completed either a Master's degree or at least 30 semester hours of graduate credit Must complete at least 90 hours of continuing education in an SDE-approved program during each five-year renewal period
Interim Educator Certificate	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issued for educators with Connecticut test deferrals and/or specific course deficiencies as provided by SDE certification regulations
Alternate Route to Certificate (ARC)	90 days upon renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successfully completed Alternate Route to Certification program
Durational Shortage Area Permit (DSAP: Issued to School Districts)	School Year upon renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First, the district is required to assign a mentor or mentor team for at least two years. Second, the district must create and implement a special plan of supervision. Each plan must incorporate an orientation to the district, in addition to at least ten classroom observations of or demonstrations for the teacher
<p>* See R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-145d-409-426 for full certification requirements. Source: SDE website and LPRIC staff analysis.</p>		

Beginning teachers must complete the BEST program to obtain their provisional educator certification, currently the second level of the state's three-tiered teacher certification structure. A beginning teacher in the following categories is required to participate in the BEST program:

- employed full-time or part-time in a Connecticut public school or an approved private school; and
- holds a Connecticut initial educator certificate (or interim certificate), or was hired under a long-term substitute status provided the teacher holds a valid Connecticut certificate and teaches in the corresponding endorsement area (i.e., content area) of that certificate.

Table I-3 highlights the support and assessment requirements for beginning teachers in their first through third years in the BEST program. For most individuals, participation in the program is a two-year process. During their first year, all beginning teachers required to participate in BEST are to receive support either from a state-trained mentor or mentor team, regardless of the subject they teach. As the table also shows, the formal assessment of beginning teachers typically occurs in their second year in the program. A third year is an option, if necessary, for those who fail to submit a satisfactory portfolio or who are granted a deferral.

Table I-3. Overview of Current BEST Support and Assessment Requirements		
BEST Phase	Types of Support	Assessment
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based mentoring • Statewide, regional, and online seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science safety self-assessment (recommended for all science teachers)
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional school-based mentoring (except for those teaching under DSAP and for ARC graduates) • Statewide, regional, and online seminars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEST portfolio assessment
Year 3 (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Assessment Conference with SDE staff or trained portfolio scorer • School support (optional) • Statewide, regional, and online seminars (optional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEST portfolio assessment (up to two opportunities in Year 3 to submit a portfolio)
Source: Adapted from SDE materials		

Although the vast majority of beginning teachers in Connecticut are required to participate in both the support and assessment components of BEST, there are some exceptions. Table I-4 shows which teachers, based on their state teacher certification codes, are included in the support and assessment category, the support only category, or those for whom the BEST program does not apply.

Table I-4. BEST Participation Categories by SDE Certification Areas

Category 1 Support and Portfolio Assessment	Category 2 Support Only	Category 3 Certification Areas NOT Participating in BEST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Mathematics • Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biology - Chemistry - Physics - Earth Science - General Science • Special Education • Elementary Education • History/Social Studies • Art • Music • Physical Education • World Languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Education • Vocational Agriculture • Agriculture • Health • Home Economics • Technology Education • Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages • Partially Sighted • Hearing Impaired • Blind • Teacher-coordinator Marketing Educator • Occupational or Trade Related Subject in Technical High School • Trade, Industrial, and Health Occupations in Comp. High School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver Education • Speech and Language Pathologist • School Library Media Spec. • School Counselor • School Psychologist • School Social Worker • School Nurse-Teacher • School Dental Hygienist-Teacher • Vo-Tech Administrator • School Business Admin. • English to Non-Speaking Adults • Intermediate Admin/Supv • School Superintendent • Reading and Language Arts Consultant • Remedial Reading/ Remedial Language Arts • Teacher Coord. Co-op Work Education/Diversified Occp. • Department Chairperson • HS Credit Diploma Program • Ext. Diploma Program Non-Mandated Program • Practical Nurse Ed. Instructor • Health Occps. V-T Schools

Notes: Anyone teaching under a DSAP in one of the above subjects in the support/assessment category will be registered into BEST for the purpose of receiving support until all requirements for the initial educator or the 90-day certificate have been met. Subsequently, if teaching under an initial certificate or 90-day certificate in a subject area for which a portfolio assessment is required, the teacher must participate in and complete the portfolio requirements. Also, teachers with middle school and/or bilingual education endorsements must complete “completion standard” portfolios, which are used to evaluate beginning teachers with particular certification endorsements for which a full performance-based portfolio is not fully developed or implemented.

Source: SDE, *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007*

Beginning teachers are automatically enrolled in the BEST program by their school districts. Districts are responsible for informing SDE of all beginning teachers hired each year. Based on the registration information, the beginning teacher is provided with the necessary BEST program materials. Among other information, beginning teachers will receive a BEST program guide CD-ROM, which describes the program and details what is required of beginning teachers. The information for beginning teachers is also available online through the SDE and BEST websites. Beginning teachers registered into BEST after December 31 of a given school year are considered late registrants and will start their participation in BEST the following school year.

BEST Advisory Committee. A recent development regarding the BEST program was the creation of a BEST Advisory Committee by SDE in late 2005. The committee was actually part of a larger committee process convened by the department to examine Connecticut's educator continuum from a macro perspective. Similar to the BEST Blue Ribbon Panel of 1993, the BEST Advisory Committee was to examine the program and recommend improvements.

Advisory committee members were chosen by SDE. The members represented various constituencies, including teachers' unions, educators, beginning teachers, administrators, associations, and private business. Committee membership totaled 31, and the group was facilitated by an outside consulting firm.

The advisory committee met on several occasions and used various methods to collect information. The group was divided into smaller subgroups to discuss the BEST program, and the state's two teachers' unions held three sessions to collect feedback from beginning teachers about BEST. This information was then synthesized for the committee. Ultimately, the advisory committee prepared a draft report in June 2006 outlining various recommendations for improving BEST. (Appendix C includes the committee's recommendations.)

The process for developing the final report, however, was met with dissent from several of the committee members. Although not part of the committee's final report, some members voiced concerns in writing that the recommendations generally agreed upon by the committee for improving the program were not adequately reflected in the final report. Specific objections centered on the development of a new assessment system to replace the current portfolio. There were also questions about the overall objectivity, validity, and representativeness of the data collected and used in the committee's process. The advisory committee's report was never formally adopted by SDE or presented to the State Board of Education; technically it remains in draft form at present.

General Program Data: Summary

During the 2006-07 school year:

- a total of 42,843 certified teachers provided instruction in Connecticut public schools;
- 4,762 were beginning teachers who participated in the BEST program in some capacity;
- approximately 2,500 certified educators (e.g., teachers) served as mentors for first- and second-year teachers;

- about 450 certified staff served as BEST portfolio scorers; and
- just over 2,800 portfolios were submitted and scored.

Additional preliminary program data, including support and assessment data, are provided later in the report and will be finalized for the committee staff's findings and recommendations report.

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Section II: Organization and Resources

The State Department of Education administers and oversees the Beginning Educator Support and Training program. Organizations at the regional and local levels also play critical roles in implementing the program's support and assessment components. An outside contractor is used to maintain and analyze BEST program data and to assist with general program operations.

State and regional activities of BEST are solely funded through Connecticut's General Fund. As discussed in this section, the program's allocation and expenditures dropped sharply when the state experienced budget difficulties in 1992. BEST expenditures have remained relatively flat, without adjusting for inflation, since that time. The funding decline led to lower program staffing levels at SDE and the six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), which play a key role in implementing the support component of BEST. RESCs are regional organizations that provide a variety of training, technical assistance, and other support to school districts in their regions. (A map of the municipalities served by each RESC is provided in Appendix D.)

Program Organization

Generally, SDE provides broad program oversight and handles the assessment component of BEST. Regional Educational Service Centers serve the lead role in offering support to district- and school-level personnel. Individual school districts provide direct support to beginning teachers at the local level.

State Department of Education. SDE staff coordinates BEST program activities and policies, leads the assessment efforts, and oversees the support of beginning teachers in the program. The roles of department staff are:

- *Program director, program manager, and project administrator:* oversee policies, procedures, and activities; produce and disseminate program-wide documents; and answer overarching program questions;
- *Project leaders:* organize and oversee the assessment for their particular content area (e.g., mathematics);
- *Teachers-in-residence (TIRs):* school district educators on contract with SDE (typically for two years) assist project leaders in organizing and overseeing assessments, lead seminars, and answer assessment-related questions for beginning teachers;

- *Assessment consultants*: ensure the assessment instruments are valid and reliable; and
- a *data manager*: analyzes BEST program data and works with the sub-contractor, Professional Evaluation Services (PES), that maintains and analyzes program data.

The SDE staff responsible for implementing and overseeing BEST consists of full-time department employees, including administrative support staff who assist where needed. Some staff, however, split their time between either multiple roles within BEST (e.g., between assessment consultant and project leader), or between BEST duties and other projects (e.g., assessment/validation for BEST and for the school administrator examination).

Teachers-in-residence are not SDE employees, but local educators, administrators, and sometimes higher education employees. They are recommended by their local school districts or institutions of higher education and selected by SDE through an application process. SDE recruits educators to become teachers-in-residence due to their outstanding achievements as teachers and leaders at the local level. A total of ten teachers-in-residence are chosen each school year.

Teachers-in-residence enter into a contract with SDE to work four days each week in the department. The fifth day is spent within the districts; some teachers' districts allow them to work with district pay in the central district office for the final weekday. School districts, in turn, are reimbursed \$40,000 per school year by SDE, approximately the salary of a beginning teacher, to find a replacement for the TIR. A few TIRs serve as the project leaders for smaller content areas, such as music, world languages, and visual arts. Each content area must have either a designated department project leader or a TIR serving as the project leader.

The department's BEST staff levels for 1999 and 2007 are compared in Table II-1. SDE personnel information for prior years of the program is not available. The department notes staffing levels have decreased due to a decline in program funding. Since FY 1999, the earliest year for which data was available, the BEST professional staff level has dropped by nearly half, from approximately 16.5 to 9.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff.¹⁴

Table II-1. SDE BEST Staff Positions: FTEs in 1999 and 2007		
Position	1999	2007
Program administration	5	2.8
Data managers	2	1
Assessment consultants	2	1
Dual role: assessment and project leader	3	2
Project leader	4.5	3.3
Totals	16.5	9.1
Source of data: SDE		

¹⁴ This calculation excludes support staff because LPRIC staff received no information on that group's time allocation to BEST.

Regional Educational Service Centers. Each of the six RESCs has one field staff representative who works part-time on the support component of BEST. In addition, one representative coordinates regional support full-time, and another leads the creation and adjustment of standardized trainings on a part-time basis. Collectively, this eight-person group is referred to as the RESC or BEST “field staff” throughout this report. A ninth RESC staff member manages BEST data regarding mentoring and trainings. The state education department and RESC staff coordinate BEST activities through regular internal and inter-organizational meetings and via formal reports sent to the department.

The BEST field staff was substantially larger before the state funding cuts in the early 1990s. Originally, each RESC allocated two staff members to assessment and support activities, totaling between 1.0 and 1.7 FTE positions, according to the current field staff. With the staffing decline, RESCs were no longer responsible for assessment work and shifted their focus solely on support. The field staff time currently devoted to BEST is one part-time position for each RESC, aside from the field staff coordinators.

The field staff coordinates with and receives guidance from SDE through monthly meetings of a policy team. The policy team members are the SDE Education Manager who oversees BEST, SDE BEST Program Coordinator, EastConn Executive Director, and EastConn BEST field staff member who is the program’s lead trainer. The group reviews and adjusts program operations, policies, and procedures. In addition to the policy team meetings, the field staff and BEST program office communicate on an as-needed basis.

Under a contract with the state education department, EastConn funds the regional activities. The current three-year agreement totals nearly \$10 million and expires August 2009. SDE has another contract with Professional Examination Services for data management services and data-related operations. The PES contract totals just over \$1 million for a three-year term, also ending August 2009.

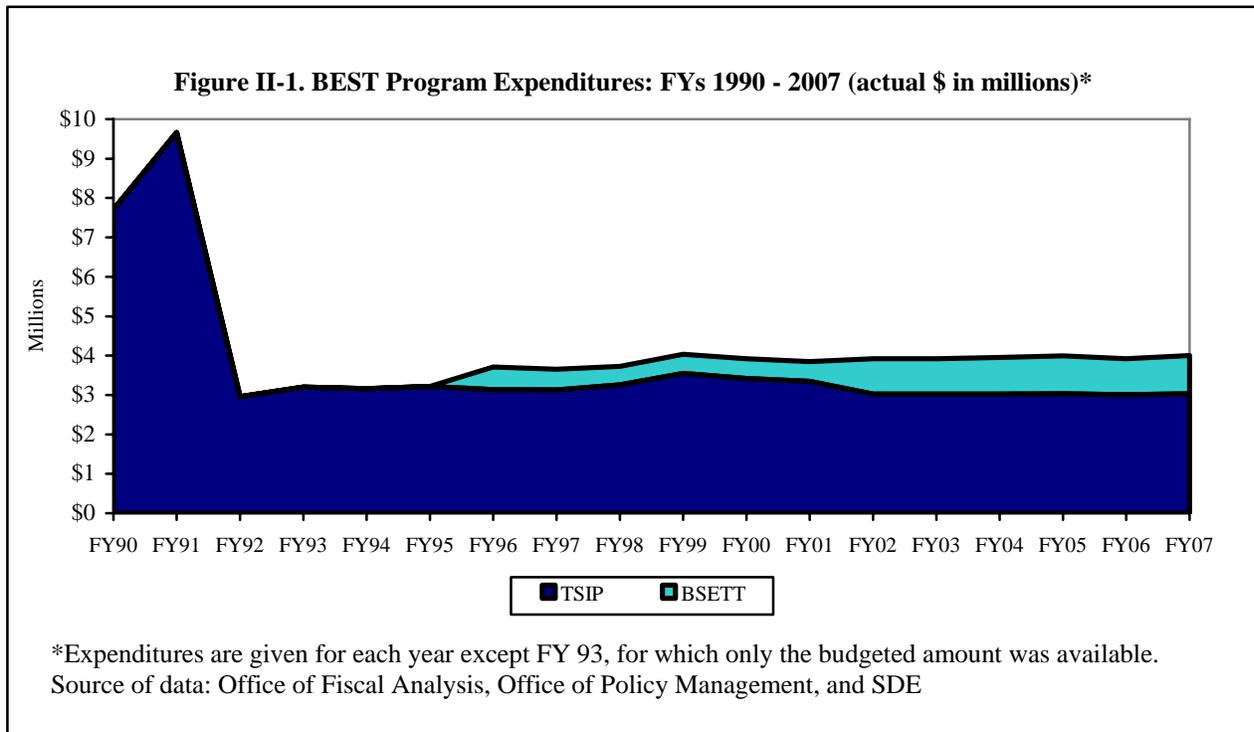
Local school districts. The state law governing BEST requires local school districts to provide mentoring and other support to beginning teachers participating in the BEST program. As described more fully in Section III, each district designates a coordinator, called a district facilitator, to oversee BEST at the local level. Every district also is responsible for recruiting teachers to serve as mentors, either alone or in a team, and for choosing assessment scorers.

Districts receive no funding from the state to implement either the support or assessment component of BEST. Some, however, choose to offer compensation from district monies to program facilitators, mentors, and scorers as highlighted in Sections III and IV.

Budget

The BEST program is funded through two separate program funds within SDE’s budget: the Teacher Standards Implementation Program (TSIP) and the Basic Skills Exam Teachers in Training (BSETT) fund. All TSIP funds -- and part of the BSETT funds -- are spent on BEST

operations, research, and staffing.¹⁵ BEST funding from both sources between FYs 1990 and 2007, unadjusted for inflation, is depicted in Figure II-1 below.



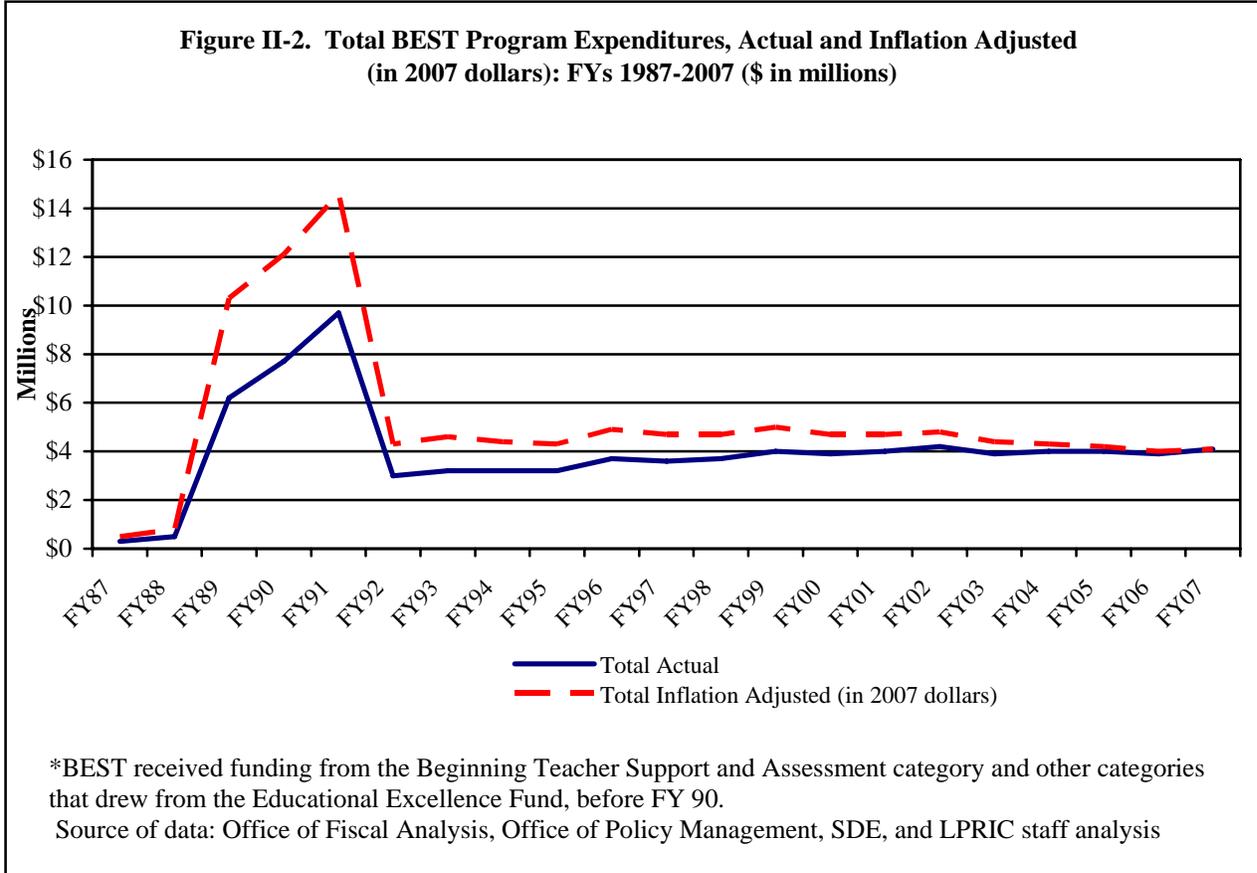
During the program’s early years, funding increased until it peaked in FY 1991 at about \$9.7 million. Funding was cut by more than two-thirds in the following fiscal year, which SDE attributes to poor state fiscal conditions. BEST program expenditures have remained at about the same level since then, and totaled approximately \$4.0 million for FY 2007.

TSIP consistently has provided the majority financial support for BEST. Since the FY 1992, TSIP funding has ranged from nearly \$3 million in that fiscal year to about \$3.6 million in FY 1999. The BSETT category, which started partially funding BEST in FY 1996, has contributed as little as approximately \$470,000 in FY 1998 to nearly \$1 million in the most recent fiscal year. BSETT’s portion reached \$900,000 in FY 2002 and has since remained above that figure. Committee staff is further examining the relationship among the BEST program’s staffing, contracts, and expenditures.

Figure II-2 illustrates that when TSIP and BSETT funding is adjusted for inflation, total BEST expenditures are at their lowest real levels since the program was fully implemented in 1989. The most current annual expenditure amount was just over one-quarter of the program’s

¹⁵ The BSETT funding dedicated to BEST was about 45 percent between FY 96 and FY 01, and has been approximately 80 percent since FY 02. No BSETT funding was used on BEST before FY 96.

real funding peak, which was equivalent to \$14.6 million in today's dollars. BEST's expenditures generally have been declining in real terms since FY 1999, after fluctuating throughout the 1990s.



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Section III: Support

Providing support to beginning teachers is a key component of the BEST program. The types of support for teachers and the sources of such support are varied. In addition to the different kinds of formal support, beginning teachers may receive help informally from other teachers or administrators, outside of BEST or other structured efforts.

Formal support for beginning teachers primarily consists of mentoring, which involves more experienced teachers being assigned to work with beginning teachers. Other strategies to assist novice teachers are implemented in several ways through different providers, with most support provided at the local school district level by faculty and administrators. The remainder of formal support is offered through the State Department of Education and the Regional Educational Service Center system.

Overview

A wide variety of individuals and organizations offers BEST support to beginning teachers. At the local level, trained individual mentors and mentor teams work most closely with beginning teachers, helping them in at least their first years to succeed and improve. School and district-level administrators, master mentors, and veteran teachers may also provide support. At the state level, the RESC field staff offers both training and individual assistance to all these support groups. SDE provides online learning units focused on developing effective teaching techniques, guides to BEST and the portfolio, and portfolio-focused seminars to beginning teachers.

The various types of formal support offered through BEST and their purposes are summarized in Table III-1. More detailed descriptions of the support provided at the district level and through state sources are highlighted in this section.

District Level Support

Mentors

State regulations require local school districts to support beginning teachers through mentoring. For most beginning teachers, districts are required to provide support during the novices' first year of teaching.¹⁶ Beyond that, districts have the discretion whether to provide beginning teachers with additional mentor support.

Nearly 15,000 trained mentors were available and teaching as of May 2007. An additional 6,500 teachers were eligible to mentor and were not teaching. Committee staff is working with SDE and EastConn to obtain more information on the availability and assignments of mentors.

¹⁶ Beginning teachers who graduated from the Alternate Route to Certification program and those employed under a Durational Shortage Area Permit are required to have a minimum of two years of mentoring from their local school districts.

Table III-1. Summary of BEST Support		
Type by Group	Provider	Support Purpose
For Beginning Teachers		
Mentoring	In-district mentor/team, master mentor, and district facilitator	Induction
BEST orientation & seminars	SDE	Portfolio
Computer resources	SDE leads; also RESCs	Induction and portfolio
Handbook for beginning teachers	SDE	Overview of program
Content-specific handbooks	SDE	Portfolio
Personal help with portfolio	In-district mentors/master mentors, or SDE	Portfolio
For Mentors		
Trainings and seminars	Mostly RESCs; one by SDE	Role and teaching
Computer resources	SDE leads; also RESCs	Role and teaching
Guide	RESCs	Role and teaching
Personal help with role	In-district master mentor/district facilitator, or RESCs	Role
For District Facilitators		
Position manual	SDE	Role
Group meetings	RESCs	Role
Computer resources	SDE leads; also RESCs	Role
Personal help with role	RESCs	Role
For Master Mentors		
Training	RESCs	Role
Personal help with role	RESCs or district facilitator	Role
For Administrators		
Training	RESCs	Role and administrating
Desk reference guide	RESCs	Role
Personal help with role	RESCs	Role
For Other Teachers		
Trainings (any teachers)	RESCs	Role and teaching
Leadership Academy (portfolio scorers)	SDE	Teaching
Online resources (any teachers)	SDE leads; also RESCs	Role and teaching
Source: LPRIC staff		

Formal requirements for mentoring. State regulations, internal BEST policies and procedures, and formal reference guides distributed as part of the BEST program all describe the requirements for mentoring. These reference sources, however, vary regarding the actual level of mentor support required. Most sources prescribe different degrees of mentor commitment, as highlighted in Table III-2. Committee staff recognizes that several mentor support guidelines given by the table's sources differ from the regulatory requirements. The department also recognizes this and states that its definition of support outlined in the table's various source documents has expanded from the original regulatory intent to meet district-based induction programs or processes.¹⁷

Table III-2. Formal Requirements for Mentoring		
Source	Contact Frequency	Formal Release Time for School Year^a
State BEST regulations	Weekly	Four days for mentors and beginning teachers for planning, observations, and feedback, for at least eight meetings or observations ^b
<i>BEST Program Policy and Procedures Manual</i>	Biweekly, totaling 30 hours of significant contacts	Eight half-days for mentors and beginning teachers, for observations or professional development ^b
<i>A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007</i>	Biweekly, totaling 30 hours of significant contacts, including staff meetings and professional development	Eight and a half days for mentors and beginning teachers, for observations or professional development
<i>District Facilitator Manual, 2006-2007</i>	Weekly for 30 minutes plus 8 occasions of 1.5 hour observations/meetings, ^b totaling 30 hours	No specific amount given
<i>SDE: A Statement of Understanding [for mentors]</i>	Biweekly	Not mentioned
^a Release time is administrator-approved, district-funded time spent working but outside the classroom. ^b Beginning teachers in the Alternate Route to Certification program or teaching under a Durational Shortage Area Permit must meet or hold observations on ten occasions, and, with their mentors, receive five days of release time. Source: LPRIC staff		

¹⁷ SDE, *District Facilitator Manual: A Supplement to the Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007*, 2006, p. 23.

BEST regulations require mentors meet weekly with the beginning teacher and formally record the meetings. The mentor also should observe or be observed by the mentee on at least eight occasions throughout the school year, via four days of release time provided by the school district. Release time is administrator-approved, district-funded time spent working but outside the classroom. These requirements, in various wordings, have generally been in regulation since the implementation of BEST in 1989.

SDE's internal *BEST Program Policy and Procedures Manual* (2005-06) sets forth different meeting and release time expectations. The mentor and beginning teacher should meet at least biweekly but there is no mention of a recording requirement or recommendation. Over the year, the beginning teacher must have at least 30 hours of "significant contacts" with the mentor(s), content colleague(s), principal, or district facilitator. Districts should provide eight half-days of release time for beginning teachers to observe or be observed, or to engage in professional development.

A few BEST publications give additional guidelines. *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007*, which is a handbook providing comprehensive overviews of the program requirements and resources distributed to beginning teachers, differs from the *Policy and Procedures Manual*. The *Guide* includes regularly scheduled staff meetings and professional development activities in the 30 required hours of significant contacts. In addition, the *Guide* states districts should provide eight and a half days of release time from the classroom, for either observation or professional development.

Two key providers of BEST support receive still different mentoring guidelines. The *District Facilitator Manual*, distributed to each district's BEST coordinator as described later in this section, interprets the 30 hours as equal to "one-half hour of contact on a weekly basis over 36 weeks, plus 8 occasions of 1 ½ hour classroom observations/conferences." In addition, district facilitators should work to secure release time for beginning teachers and mentors, although no amount is stated. SDE's *A Statement of Understanding*, which is signed by teachers who complete mentor training, stipulates mentors must meet at least biweekly with their mentees and does not address release time.

Duties and responsibilities. Mentors provide beginning teachers with the most direct and on-going support. According to state regulation (R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-6), mentors' overall tasks are to develop their beginning teachers' skills, in accordance with the state standards, and help them prepare for the BEST assessment throughout at least the first year. *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-07* explains that mentors specifically should assist beginning teachers in:

- exploring a variety of teaching strategies that address diversity in students and their learning styles;
- identifying the effective teaching strategies that conform to the foundational skills and competencies as well as discipline-specific standards of Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching;
- reflecting on the effectiveness of teaching and how well students are learning; and

- documenting the types and frequency of support provided to the assigned beginning teachers.

Mentors complete these tasks in two main ways. First, they meet with beginning teachers formally throughout the year to share information and provide feedback on lesson plans, teaching techniques, student assessment, and school culture. Mentors generally meet with their beginning teachers during shared breaks in teaching, or before or after classes. Some administrators facilitate mentoring by scheduling mentors and their mentees for the same lunch or preparation periods. Second, mentors should observe and be observed by their mentees to facilitate dialogue leading to beginning teachers' improvement.

The state requires mentors to work with their assigned beginning teachers throughout the first year. School districts may choose to extend formal mentoring into the beginning teacher's second year. Between 76 and 88 percent of school districts have such a policy, according to two recent SDE surveys of district facilitators.¹⁸

Recruitment and selection. Personnel mainly at the district level recruit teachers to become mentors who first meet the initial requirements. School district officials and principals encourage teachers they view as having higher level teaching ability as well as leadership qualities to become mentors. Some principals purposefully recruit veteran teachers of the same areas or grade levels as incoming beginning teachers. SDE and RESC field staffs also help recruit prospective mentors. For example, at portfolio scoring, department of education project leaders ask all scorers to consider becoming mentors.

Each district is required to establish its own process for nominating mentors.¹⁹ Neither SDE nor the RESC field staff monitors how or whether each school district does this. BEST regulations state that the pool of nominees should be narrowed by a district committee that oversees BEST resource personnel selection. This committee must be representative by teaching level, include both teacher and administrator bargaining representatives, and have a teacher majority. A prospective mentor should present evidence (via an application) that he or she meets the mentor qualifications. The committee is to consider the application, giving preference to those who: 1) completed BEST portfolios; 2) are portfolio scorers; or 3) earned National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification.²⁰ The district committee is to recommend its nominees to the local Board of Education, which makes the final decision. After educators

¹⁸ SDE does not independently monitor whether each school district requires or offers mentoring in the second year. The existence of a two-year mentoring policy would not guarantee mentoring actually occurs in the second year, unless districts verify support in some way. The cited SDE surveys were the BEST Program Impact Survey, conducted in 2005 in conjunction with the University of Connecticut, and a survey conducted in 2004-2005 for the Portfolio Performance Results Five-Year Report.

¹⁹ R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-2

²⁰ National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification is a rigorous, multi-year process veteran teachers may choose to go through. Some states have chosen to reward those who successfully complete National Board certification through financial bonuses, reimbursement for the application and process fees, and/or permanent salary increases. In Connecticut, SDE and the state's chapter of the American Federation of Teachers offer partial subsidies to defray the process costs for a limited number of candidates. About four-fifths of states, including Connecticut, automatically grant certification to National Board-certified teachers who were previously licensed in other states.

register for training to become mentors, EastConn checks with the districts to ensure formal approval was given for the teacher to attend the training.

To become a mentor, a teacher must be experienced, suited for the position, and trained. Since 1993, a prospective mentor has been required to have:

- a provisional or professional educator certificate (i.e., Tier 2 or 3 certification);
- at least three years of teaching experience;
- been employed for at least one school year in the same district;
- demonstrated effective teaching skills;
- the ability to work effectively with a team and adult learners, as well as be articulate and reflective; and
- dedication to new teacher induction.

Any teachers or administrators who are qualified and approved by their district may go through mentor training and become mentors. Most mentors are current teachers with full-time teaching duties. Mentors could also be teachers or administrators who are working part-time, on temporary leave, or recently retired, as long they have a valid Connecticut teaching certificate.

SDE records the names of all eligible mentors and of mentors who are assigned to beginning teachers, but it does not track the proportions of mentors by current employment status. The percent of educators qualified to be mentors varies according to a school district and school's staff turnover rates and experience levels. Committee staff is working with SDE in an attempt to calculate the exact figures for each district.

Training. Educators must complete formal state training to become mentors or maintain their mentor status. Training differs for new and experienced mentors.

Teachers who want to become mentors must attend one of three trainings. Nearly all prospective mentors choose the three-day Initial Support Teacher Training (IST). Each RESC holds two sessions of the IST training, summer and fall. IST prepares teachers to serve as both mentors and cooperating teachers²¹ by providing information and exercises on:

- beginning teachers' needs and how to address those needs;
- how to teach according to Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching;
- effective teaching and coaching strategies; and
- the BEST portfolio.

Teachers who are already trained portfolio scorers and want to be mentors may participate in the one-day Mentor Training for Portfolio Scorers training, held each fall at several locations throughout the state. Because these participants are already familiar with the CCT standards and BEST portfolio process, this training focuses on addressing beginning teachers' needs and effective mentoring strategies. Further, science teachers who want to become

²¹ Cooperating teachers supervise and work with student teachers (students who are enrolled in a teacher preparation program).

mentors and portfolio scorers may be trained for both roles simultaneously through the one-week Science Leadership Academy, which is described in Section IV.

Table III-3 portrays how many new mentors attended each type of training for the 2006-07 school year (SY). In total, 1,245 teachers attended training for new mentors. Of those prospective mentors, the bulk was trained through the IST training. As mentioned, committee staff is working with SDE to calculate the percent of all teachers qualified to be mentors.

Table III-3. New Mentors Trained: 2006-07 SY		
Type of Training	Number	Percent
Initial Support Training (IST)	1,211	97%
Mentor Training for Portfolio Scorers	22	2%
Science Leadership Academy	12	1%
Total	1,245	100%
Source of data: EastConn		

According to information from interviews by committee staff, before the beginning teacher assessment method changed to the portfolio process in 1999-00, mentor training was considerably different. The training did not as heavily emphasize effective teaching methods, coaching strategies, or the state standards, because most veteran teachers were comfortable with what was then expected of every teacher. Many experienced educators, however, were unfamiliar with teaching as demanded by the CCT and the portfolio. As a result, mentor training was substantially revised to teach veteran educators how to both implement the state CCT standards and push beginning teachers to reach those standards.

At training, the new mentors receive binders with materials to help them support beginning teachers. Examples of materials are conversation guides and suggestions on how to solve common teaching problems. Teachers who are trained as mentors must agree to work with a beginning teacher if asked at any point over the next two years following their training.

Training for experienced mentors. Mentors are not formally required to receive follow-up training once initially trained. SDE, however, recommends all mentors update their training every four years by attending one day of additional instruction. Update training helps mentors polish skills, keep abreast of new techniques, and learn about any changes to the portfolio. Mentors who need to update their training should be verbally reminded by their district facilitators annually, until they attend a workshop.

Experienced mentors may choose to participate in either Portfolio Support Training (PST) or, new in 2007-08, Coaching for Instructional Excellence, to update their training. Each is offered once a year by every RESC.

Although SDE strongly advises mentors to update their training, mentors may continue to support beginning teachers without doing so. About 8,700 of the nearly 15,000 trained, teaching, and available mentors (about 59 percent) were overdue for update training in May 2007.

The original BEST regulations provided for SDE-led mentor update and follow-up trainings. SDE had to provide update training for mentors who had not mentored in three years or more. In addition, SDE was to hold follow-up training that mentors were responsible for attending, but no specific frequency or topics were specified.

Mentor assignment process. Ideally, mentors and beginning teachers teach in the same building, content area, and grade level. There are several situations in which an exact match is not possible, however. First, in small schools or for particular positions like special education, the beginning teacher may be the only teacher in that content area or grade level. Second, a school may have few trained mentors to serve a large beginning teacher group. Third, a school with frequent teacher turnover may simply lack educators with the experience and training necessary to mentor.

Current statutes and regulations do not provide mentoring match guidelines. Initial BEST regulations, however, required both the beginning teacher and mentor be stationed in the same building. While some districts choose to assign a mentor who teaches in the same building, others opt to designate a mentor from another school within the district who teaches the same subject or grade. Regardless of the actual arrangement, each beginning teacher is to have a “mentor of record” and the names of such mentor must be on file with SDE.

In certain situations, a beginning teacher is assigned a mentor team, also called a support team. The team is composed of teachers, and sometimes administrators, with expertise that the single mentor of record lacks. For example, a beginning teacher could be assigned a trained mentor from another school who teaches the same subject at the same grade level, but she or he would also be given a support team composed of one or two in-building teachers. This arrangement gives the beginning teacher content- and grade level-specific pedagogical and instructional assistance from the assigned mentor, and help in understanding the school’s culture from the support team members. The team is led by a trained mentor, but the other members need not complete any type of formal support training. Principals, department chairs, and other supervisors, along with teachers, may be part of a mentor team, but they cannot be a mentor of record due to their roles in evaluating beginning teachers. SDE does not monitor the frequency of or participation in support teams.

There are a few differences among guidelines regarding who assigns mentors to beginning teachers. According to the *District Facilitator Manual*, as developed through SDE, the BEST district facilitator is charged with ensuring beginning teachers are matched to mentors within 10 days of either hiring or the first day of teaching. This task is assigned only generally to the district by regulation. Each August, the district facilitator sends the names of all the district’s beginning teachers to SDE. The department then sends every district facilitator a list of the district’s qualified mentors that shows each mentor’s school, date of most recent training, and primary teaching assignment. The district facilitator uses these documents to match beginning

teachers to mentors. The facilitator is encouraged by the *Manual* to work closely with curriculum supervisors and principals in assigning mentors.

The current BEST regulations, however, state that the district facilitator needs only to provide school administrators with the lists of beginning teachers and mentors. Then, building-level administrators are to assign mentors (R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-6).

Regardless of how a mentoring match is determined, mentors may be assigned to assist one, several, or no beginning teachers in a given year, depending on their school and district's volumes of beginning teachers and mentors. In the 2006-07 school year, 14 percent of all mentor matches involved a mentor working with more than one beginning teacher; most of these mentors were assigned to two teachers. The initial BEST statute stipulated that a mentor may have only one beginning teacher, but this requirement is no longer in place.

If a mentor match is not working, the beginning teacher, mentor, and administrator may end the pairing. The district committee is charged with developing the process for reviewing and approving such discontinuations. Because a beginning teacher must be mentored for the whole first year, presumably he or she is then assigned a different mentor.

Oversight. District facilitators are responsible for monitoring and ensuring mentors provide support. Throughout the school year, district facilitators are to “verify that beginning teachers and mentors are meeting together regularly and that appropriate support is provided to each beginning teacher,” according to the *District Facilitator Manual*. There is no formal oversight process at the state level to ensure district facilitators carry out this duty, nor are there consequences if district facilitators do not monitor and provide for mentoring.

Currently, according to the *BEST Program Policy and Procedures Manual*, districts should record support activities and SDE may review those records. SDE review of mentoring occurs only when a beginning teacher has asked the department for additional time to complete the portfolio on the grounds that he or she has received insufficient support. In this case, SDE may examine whatever evidence of support the district chooses to provide; the district is not required to submit mentoring records.

SDE has noted some school districts choose to monitor mentors by requiring logs or other verification. Many, if not all, of these districts provide mentor stipends through their own funds. The number of school districts that require mentor documentation, however, is not tracked at the state level.

Neither SDE nor the RESCs have issued formal recommendations to districts on consequences for mentors who are failing to complete their duties. SDE staff believes that the beginning teachers matched to these mentors should be reassigned for that particular year.

Support for mentors. Mentors may receive support and technical assistance from a variety of sources. These include RESCs, district facilitators, master mentors, and school districts.

RESCs provide mentors with a few types of guidance in addition to trainings. First, each RESC offers a Mentor Seminar Series held three evenings throughout the year. Participants explore new strategies and materials on effective teaching. The series does not count as mentor update training.

Second, mentors who are having trouble working with their beginning teachers may contact the RESC field staff for personal assistance. Individual mentors needing guidance regarding the portfolio assessment also may contact SDE project leaders and teachers-in-residence. Third, by the end of fall 2007, a newly developed guide for mentors will be given to all new mentors at training and posted on the program's website.

At the local level, mentors are assisted by the district facilitator and, where available, by master mentors (described below). The district facilitator may arrange meetings for mentors, sometimes in combination with their beginning teachers, to discuss how to fulfill beginning teachers' needs. Master mentors should meet regularly and as needed with mentors in their building or district.

Stipends. Some districts give mentors financial compensation for their time and effort. As mentioned earlier, when BEST was first implemented in 1989 SDE used state funds to provide a \$1,000 stipend directly to each mentor upon receiving a log from him or her. The amount stayed the same, regardless of how many teachers an individual mentor worked with, but was pro-rated if a full school year of mentoring was not completed.

When the program's budget was severely cut in the early 1990s, SDE used federal Title II funds to replace the stipend with a Professional Development Fund allocation of \$200 per beginning teacher to each district. This funding could be spent in any way that would assist the beginning teacher. Some districts chose to use it as a mentor stipend, either alone or in conjunction with district monies, with different degrees of mentor accountability. In the mid-1990s, the Professional Development Fund was terminated and stipends were left to school districts' discretion.

Committee staff analyzed collective bargaining agreements to determine the frequency and amounts of mentor stipends, as well as other types of mentor benefits. Today, at least 83 local and regional school districts, including two public academies, offer mentor stipends.²² Although most stipends are approximately \$500, they range from \$100 to \$1,500 for one year of mentoring. Some districts give additional amounts for mentoring more than one beginning teacher and for mentoring the same beginning teacher(s) over two years. Table III-4 shows basic information on stipends and other benefits for mentors, such as reduced duties or release time.²³ Some districts may provide mentors benefits that are not stipulated in the collective bargaining agreements; these districts' information is not included in this report. (Appendices E and F provide more information on mentor stipends and other benefits by district.) From committee

²² "School districts" includes the 174 town-based, regional, and RESC-based districts, as well as a few public academies, for which the state's two teachers' unions have contracts on file.

²³ Release time is provided to mentors in five school districts, in varying amounts: two days for mentors in Glastonbury and Ridgefield, four hours or periods in Canton and Windsor Locks, and an unspecified amount in Thompson.

staff's interviews, most districts that provide stipends have some type of mentor accountability. Overall, though, accountability varies from no district oversight to supervision through required logs.

Table III-4. Mentor Contract Provisions: 2006-07		
	Number	Percent of All School Districts *
School Districts	174	---
Provide stipends for Year One	83	48%
Provide stipends for Years One and Two	23	13%
Provide additional amount for additional mentee(s)	29	17%
Provide additional amount for mentoring a Year Two mentee when also a portfolio scorer	2	1%
Stipend Amounts		
Median for Year One mentoring	\$500	---
Range for Year One mentoring	\$100-\$1500	---
Range for Years One and Two mentoring, combined	\$100-\$3500	---
Other Provisions		
Reduced duties	0	0%
Release time of one day or less	3	2%
Release time of more than one day	2	1%
* The percents listed are based on 174 school districts as described in Footnote 7. Source of data: Connecticut Education Association and American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut		

District Facilitators

State regulations require each school district to appoint a district facilitator for the BEST program.²⁴ District facilitators are the main contact person for the BEST program at the local level. They serve as the direct link between SDE and individual school districts. Nearly all districts, regardless of size, choose only one district facilitator. District facilitators must be school district employees. They are principally guided by the *District Facilitator Manual* developed by SDE.

By state regulations, district facilitators must:

- submit to SDE the names of potential mentors, cooperating teachers, and assessors, by March 30 every year;

²⁴ R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-2

- work with their school districts to determine the size of the district committees; and
- familiarize the district committees with the BEST mentoring and cooperating teacher programs.

Additional responsibilities of school districts are listed in regulation, but these are the only obligations specifically assigned to district facilitators.

Duties and responsibilities. The district facilitators' overall responsibility is to ensure the BEST support program is implemented at the district level.

According to the *District Facilitator Manual*, every district facilitator must:

- register beginning teachers with SDE, a responsibility usually delegated to district office personnel, and coordinate mentoring;
- educate the district's administrators and teachers on BEST and on how to support it;
- ensure mentors meet state qualifications;
- recruit portfolio scorers; and
- place student teachers with cooperating teachers.

In practice, the district facilitators' main BEST support responsibility is ensuring beginning teachers have access to mentoring. One aspect of this is securing release time. By the *Manual*, district facilitators are charged with approaching administrators to organize time during the school day for meetings and observations between beginning teachers and mentors (i.e., release time). District facilitators also should verify that beginning teachers are receiving support throughout the year.

RESC field staff recently has been asking district facilitators to spend more time working with principals and district officials, as part of an effort to boost administrator involvement in BEST. District facilitators are encouraged to have conversations with them about the program and how to support beginning teachers.

Recruitment and selection. Each summer, every district must select a district facilitator. The superintendent is ultimately responsible for naming the district facilitator, but may choose to delegate the task to another district official. The district facilitator may be anyone in the district: a full- or part-time teacher, a principal, an assistant superintendent, or anyone else at either the district or school level. No particular levels or years of experience are required. Once chosen, school districts are responsible for sending the names of their district facilitators to the State Department of Education via EastConn.

Annual and within-year turnover is an issue among district facilitators. Using SDE data on district facilitators, committee staff calculated about 17 percent of district facilitators in 2006-07 had not held that position the previous school year.

Training. RESC field staff work closely with new district facilitators on an individual basis. In the late summer and early fall, every new district facilitator is provided an opportunity to meet with a RESC field staff member to review the manual for the position, ask questions, and

receive additional guidance. In addition, sometimes new district facilitators meet as a small group in conjunction with the two regular district facilitator meetings led by the region's field staff member. New district facilitators are encouraged to call RESC field staff at any time for additional assistance.

Oversight. District facilitators are not monitored directly. According to SDE's contract with EastConn, RESC field staff must provide training and technical assistance to them, but not oversight. Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, RESC field staff will attempt to systematically contact returning district facilitators in the fall and all facilitators in the spring.

The field staff intends to raise three new subjects during the conversations to encourage district facilitators to take an active role in induction. First, the field staff will try to learn what specific actions each district facilitator and district is taking to promote induction. The field staff plans to disseminate the resulting list of induction practices to districts. Second, a new way of managing data will enable field staff to supply district-specific information to district facilitators during the conversations. Third, the field staff also will ask district facilitators whether their districts formally record and track support for beginning teachers.

District facilitators are not obligated or encouraged to submit verification of mentoring to SDE, aside from the requisite mentor match information. Further, when SDE provided mentoring stipends, the district facilitators had no role in ensuring or documenting mentoring actually occurred. As such, there are no consequences set at the state or RESC levels for district facilitators who do not perform their duties. School districts may have their own internal policies regarding district facilitator performance.

Support for district facilitators. District facilitators receive guidance from RESC field staff and SDE. RESC field staff:

- annually send a *District Facilitator Manual* to each facilitator by the start of the school year;
- lead fall and spring meetings; and
- send monthly e-mails to district facilitators, giving information on training dates for mentors and beginning teachers, as well as reminders of the task deadlines explained in the *Manual*.

Over the last few years, the RESC field staff has focused on assisting district facilitators in urban areas. Examples of this assistance include the field staff members meeting regularly with those in their region and helping them design beginning teacher orientations. To augment the targeted support to urban district facilitators, any facilitator may call RESC field staff for help.

SDE gives district facilitators materials to use and distribute within their districts. Prior to the start of each school year, district facilitators receive guides to BEST, presentation slides, and flyers advertising the beginning teacher seminars. The district facilitators are to hand out and present these materials at either the district's orientation for beginning teachers or at a separate BEST introductory meeting for the group, held by the district facilitator. Each October,

the facilitators are sent BEST Program Resource CDs that contain the program’s *Guide*, the Common Core of Teaching, portfolio handbooks for each content area, a science lab safety simulation, and certification application forms. District facilitators are expected to distribute the CDs to mentors and support team members throughout the district.²⁵

Table III-5. All Districts Offering District Facilitator Stipends in Contracts: 2006-07*	
School District	Amount
Franklin	\$950
Preston	\$400
Region #12	\$669
Sherman	\$1,152
Thomaston (2007-2008)	\$1,877
Waterford	\$2,587
Windsor Locks	\$1,000
*Wilton’s contract gives \$13,631 to a “K-12 BEST Position,” which may or may not be equivalent to a district facilitator’s role. Source of data: Connecticut Education Association and American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut	

Stipends. Some districts provide facilitators with stipends. As discussed earlier, PRI staff analyzed contract information for the districts and public academies whose teachers are represented by the state’s two unions. From this review, seven district contracts specifically mention stipends for district facilitators. Their compensation ranges from \$400 to more than \$2,500 as shown by Table III-5. Some districts may provide district facilitators with stipends, outside of the contract provisions.

Master Mentors

Another level of support at the local level for beginning teachers is provided through “master mentors.” Master mentors are experienced educators who provide additional guidance to beginning teachers and mentors at the school or district levels. Master mentoring was developed by the BEST policy team, described in Section II, in response to two needs. First, beginning teachers wanted portfolio assistance but many mentors were not fully familiar with the assessment. Second, BEST needed school-level leaders to help create positive change in teaching. About 125 teachers from 44 school districts have been trained as master mentors since the program began in the 2002-03 school year.

Duties and responsibilities. Master mentors serve as the liaisons between district facilitators and individual schools. They may also assist their district facilitators in monitoring and helping both mentors and beginning teachers across their districts. Although the master mentor role is neither required nor described by regulation, they are expected to:

- meet regularly with mentors and mentor teams;
- assist beginning teachers with their portfolios and in obtaining support;
- lead at least one in-district BEST Portfolio Support Training annually; and
- work with building and district administrators to improve support for mentors and beginning teachers.

²⁵ As discussed later, beginning teachers are sent the BEST Program Resource CDs directly by the department of education each fall.

Recruitment and selection. The master mentor selection process is run through the school district. Each spring, SDE notifies all district facilitators that districts may apply to send teachers to master mentor training. Superintendents ultimately decide whether their districts will become involved in the program. Districts choosing to participate must each submit an application to SDE, explaining what support the district currently offers, how the district will assist the master mentor, and which schools are interested in participating. The superintendent, district facilitator, and involved principal(s) must nominate one master mentor per included building through a process of their determination. No complete applications have been denied by SDE.

The application also records the “mutual expectations” agreement of the district facilitator and principal(s) to:

- meet with the master mentor and a RESC field staff person before training begins to ensure all parties’ expectations are clear;
- grant release time for training to the master mentor;
- give time for master mentor duties through release time, a reduced teaching load, and/or fewer or no extracurricular duties; and
- either attend or designate other people at the district and school levels to give feedback at an annual meeting.

The mutual expectations agreement was created and implemented in the program’s second year after master mentors’ initial experiences revealed communication among the district facilitator, principals, and mentors is key to success.

Master mentor nominees are chosen by the district; they do not submit separate applications to SDE. To qualify, master mentor nominees must be experienced BEST mentors *and* portfolio scorers. In addition, they must have either served as trainers of their colleagues in a professional development or similar capacity, or been trained to do so. Recently, some teachers are choosing to become master mentors to fulfill their professional development goal.

Training. Master mentor nominees are trained for three days throughout the year by RESC field staff, with assistance from SDE teachers-in-residence. The nominees train prior to the year in which they will begin to serve as master mentors. The sessions focus on facilitation, communication, and developing plans on how they will work with mentors, beginning teachers, and building administrators. Participants also review the Common Core of Teaching, BEST, and portfolio concepts specific to certain content areas. Master mentors who choose to attend an additional one-day session become qualified to lead Initial Support Teacher and Portfolio Support Trainings in their own districts.

Support and oversight. Trained master mentors meet annually in early fall to discuss strategies for successfully fulfilling their role and meeting needs. They also must attend mentor update training. Master mentors who require individual assistance throughout the year contact their region’s RESC field staff person.

Master mentor compensation and oversight varies. In a few districts, master mentors receive higher stipends than their district's regular mentors. The three situations in which this occurs are detailed in Table III-6. Master mentors' performance is not systematically monitored by RESC field staff or SDE. Similarly, neither is the level of school districts' support for master mentors monitored.

Table III-6. Master Mentor Stipend Contract Provisions Where Master Mentors' Stipends Exceed Regular Mentor Stipends: 2006-07		
School District	Master Mentor Amount	Ratio (Master Mentor Amount: Regular Mentor Amount)
Hebron	\$900	2:1
Monroe	\$1,000	10:1
Torrington	\$1,000	1.85:1
Source of data: Connecticut Education Association and American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut		

Lead Mentors

The lead mentor concept will be piloted in the New Haven school district in the 2007-08 school year. Training began in the summer and will continue in the fall, with implementation occurring throughout the school year. The pilot program's design is similar to the master mentor concept. Lead mentors will be expected to support mentors and beginning teachers, encourage administrators to provide induction support, and spur change in teaching methods.

The program was created to meet these needs in districts that have few portfolio scorers and, therefore, lack teachers eligible to become master mentors. Lead mentors must already have mentored, but are not required to have completed portfolio scorer training. SDE and the RESC field staff have not yet decided whether lead mentors will be able to train teachers to become mentors, as master mentors may do.

District/School Orientation

Orientation held at the district or school levels is not part of BEST but it is a source of support for beginning teachers. In addition, orientation may be a beginning teacher's first introduction to BEST.

School districts are not required by state statute or regulations to offer orientations before the school year begins or when a new teacher is hired. Although the exact number is not tracked by SDE, the department notes most local districts provide some sort of formal orientation for beginning teachers.²⁶ The orientation may be led by school district personnel, RESC field staff, union representatives, or a combination thereof. Orientation varies in leadership, scope, and length according to each district's policies.

²⁶ Orientation is not offered by some unique school districts, such as the Department of Correction district, special education district(s), and those regular districts that have very low student enrollment.

According to RESC field staff, some school districts offer multiple orientations or a program that lasts a few months. Others provide orientations of just a few hours. Similarly, topics covered during orientations differ. Districts may choose simply to cover contract information and basic district policies; others may opt to familiarize beginning teachers with the community, curriculum, BEST, and effective teaching strategies. Additional orientation topics can include district coordinators' roles, special education, classroom management, and instructional technology. Some districts also involve BEST mentors in their orientations.

BEST offers some guidance regarding orientation. *An Administrator's Guide to New Teacher Induction*, a summary document about the program and an administrator's role within it, encourages principals to offer building-level orientation that includes:

- touring the building and supplying materials;
- discussing building culture/expectations;
- answering beginning teachers' questions;
- meeting with mentors and beginning teachers to discuss mutual expectations;
- offering to coordinate mentor/beginning teacher schedules so they can meet/observe each other;
- setting up a schedule of times to meet with beginning teachers;
- offering tips on how to be successful in the first month of school; and
- helping beginning teachers understand how they will document their good teaching in their BEST portfolios.

State Level Support

SDE

SDE offers a range of assistance to beginning teachers and other educators involved in BEST. Formal trainings, web-based information, and BEST resource materials are all provided through the department. Specifically, SDE provides portfolio-centered orientations and seminars for beginning teachers, as well as a formal professional development experience for veteran teachers. Table III-7 below gives an overview of trainings and seminars held by SDE.

BEST orientation. During the original implementation of BEST, SDE offered large-group orientations to the program for all beginning first-year teachers. These sessions covered only the assessment component of the program. In the mid-1990s, school districts asked that information on the BEST portfolio simply be incorporated into their regular beginning teacher orientations. SDE agreed to give portfolio materials to district facilitators each year, for use in district orientations.

Since then, SDE has offered one beginning teacher orientation to the portfolio at each RESC annually in the late fall. SDE encourages only those who did not attend a regular district orientation to attend the state-level orientation. Such teachers usually either are from districts that did not offer an orientation because of small size or were hired after regular orientation had

been offered. In fall 2006, less than six percent of all first-year teachers participating in BEST registered for an SDE orientation.²⁷

Table III-7. Current State-Level BEST Support Trainings and Seminars				
Participants	Title	Season(s) Held	Duration	Year Began
Beginning Teachers				
Year 1 teachers	BEST Orientation (optional)	Late Fall	One 2-hour evening	1987
Year 1 teachers	Content Area Seminar (one)	Spring	One 2.5-hour evening	1995 ^a
Year 2 teachers	Content Area Seminars (two)	Fall and spring	Two 2.5-hour evenings	1995
Mentors				
New: open to science teachers only	Science Leadership Academy ^b	Summer	Five full days	2000 ^c
Teachers and/or Administrators				
Invited portfolio scorers teaching in K-8	Teacher Leadership Academy	Begins in fall	12 meetings over two school years ^d	2005
^a CCI clinics, the predecessor to the portfolio-based Content Area Seminars, began in 1992. ^b Science Leadership Academy participants are qualified to be mentors and portfolio scorers after completing training. ^c The Science Leadership Academy integrated mentor training in 2000, after it began training science teachers to become scorers around 1997. In 2004, the Academy changed from two weeks of training during the summer and one follow-up day during the school year, to its current format, due to budget concerns. ^d Participants have six group and six individual meetings each school year. Source: SDE staff				

Content seminars. All beginning teachers who must complete BEST portfolios are strongly encouraged by SDE to attend a series of three content-specific seminars. SDE holds between one and three sessions of each seminar throughout the state for each of the ten content areas. The exact number of sessions depends on how many beginning teachers work in the area. For example, in 2006-07 one session of each seminar type was held for Visual Arts teachers, while for Elementary Education teachers, an area in which nearly half of beginning teachers currently teach, three sessions of each type were offered. Beginning teachers learn of the seminars through their mentors, district facilitators, letters from SDE, and the BEST websites.

Each of the seminars covers different topics. The first of the three seminars, intended for beginning teachers in the spring of their first year, introduces teachers to the portfolio. Leaders explain the teaching practices the portfolio intends to promote, required tasks, and how the assessment is scored. The second and third seminars in the series are designed for beginning

²⁷ According to data provided by EastConn and SDE, 141 of 2,402 teachers registered as first-year BEST participants attended an SDE orientation.

teachers in the fall of their second year of teaching. The second seminar, which focuses on instructional design, provides a connection between the portfolio and the state's teaching standards, strategies on how to successfully complete the portfolio, and examinations of exemplar portfolios and scoring rubrics (discussed in Section IV). The third seminar concentrates on how to assess student learning and use that knowledge for adjusting instruction. Participants also view video components of portfolio submissions and speak with teachers who completed the assessment. All beginning teacher trainings are created by SDE project leaders but presented by teachers-in-residence and portfolio assessment leaders. Seminar logistics are handled by part-time staff hired by each RESC specifically to handle these tasks for all seminars within the RESC's region.

According to SDE information, in 2006-07, more than two-thirds of first-year teachers registered for the first seminar. Nearly 90 percent of beginning teachers completing the portfolio that year (second-year teachers) registered for the second and third seminars. Because beginning teachers register for the second and third seminars together, as one course, it is impossible to determine what percent intended to attend either or both. Furthermore, only seminar registration – not attendance – is recorded.

Teacher Leadership Academy. Veteran teachers in grades K-8 who are already portfolio scorers can participate in the Teacher Leadership Academy program, which began in early 2007. This program is run by two experienced BEST staff with expertise in elementary and special education, and by a Connecticut State University system education professor who teaches educational leadership.

The program is designed to attract teachers who want to further their knowledge of effective teaching. During the first year of the program, participants are guided through studies of their own classrooms to discover strategies for solving instructional problems. Over the second year, participants help their non-Academy colleagues implement these strategies in their classrooms.

Due to the time commitment and rigor of the program, prospective teachers who want to participate are screened by SDE for their motivation and interest in professional development. Twenty-two of the 35 original participants completed the program's first cycle, which was only open to elementary school teachers, in spring 2007. It is anticipated that program alumna will become advisors to the second group of Academy participants. An added benefit of the program is that graduates are qualified to serve as BEST mentors.

Computer-based resources. In addition to trainings, SDE offers a variety of computer-based resources for beginning teachers, mentors, scorers, and administrators. Anyone may access BEST-related materials through either of two websites: www.ctbest.org (described below) or the department's BEST home page.²⁸ The web-based materials currently include:

- *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers*;
- portfolio handbooks, forms, feedback rubrics, and exemplars;

²⁸ SDE, Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2607&Q=319186&sdePNavCtr=#45440>

- contact information for teachers-in-residence, SDE project leaders, and RESC field staff;
- content area-specific e-mails sent from TIRs;
- *Conversation Points*, a guide for mentors;
- Common Core of Teaching standards;
- aggregate portfolio performance reports from 1999 through 2003; and
- an online course (a “learning unit”) for each of the 10 content areas with a portfolio requirement.

The online courses, first launched in the 2001-02 school year, provide explanations and examples of the teaching concepts embedded in the portfolio. Each course includes five topical units. For example, in 2006-07, the social studies units were: an overview of the BEST social studies program; an overview of designing effective social studies instruction; inquiry-based instruction;²⁹ assessment of student learning; and reflection on teaching. Every unit across content areas is composed of a:

- lesson;
- practical exercise that helps the viewer process the lesson;
- “Portfolio Corner,” which explains the link between the unit’s content and a portfolio requirement;
- “Mentor Corner,” which supplies questions to help mentors focus their support to particular topics; and
- “Resources” section, which gives references for the lesson, related websites, and sample portfolio excerpts.

In addition to posting the online resources, every fall the department sends BEST Program Resource CDs directly to first and second year beginning teachers. Before SDE began sending out BEST Program Resource CDs in the fall of 2002, it delivered hard copies of the *Guide* and portfolio handbooks to beginning teachers. SDE continues to publish, although not widely distribute, hard copies of the *Guide*.

The CD contains the *Guide*, portfolio handbooks, certification forms, the CCT, and the Science Lab Safety Simulation. The science lab simulation focuses on how to identify and solve dangerous situations in a science lab. SDE launched it as a computer-based assessment in 1994 through National Science Foundation funding because many new teachers were not properly trained in lab safety. Until 2000, every new science teacher was required to complete the simulation at one of the RESCs, as a test. However, the assessment was expensive, so science teachers no longer must formally complete it. SDE sends the simulation on CD to every science supervisor and strongly encourages them to give it to their teachers, as either an exercise or assessment.³⁰

²⁹ Although there is no universally accepted definition, generally inquiry-based instruction is a method of teaching that encourages students to ask critical questions and explore in order to reach conceptual understanding.

³⁰ The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires each school to offer safety awareness training and designate a safety officer.

Regional Educational Support Centers

EastConn field staff schedule and coordinate both SDE- and RESC-led BEST trainings. Trainings are developed and coordinated by the RESC field staff, in conjunction with the BEST policy team. The policy team approves any major additions or changes to the trainings. The manuals used for training are updated annually to meet new needs perceived by the department, RESC field staff or from feedback received from training participants. Responsibility for producing the training materials and disseminating them to the field staff is centralized in one RESC, Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES). The RESCs are responsible for most of the BEST-related trainings and materials offered to teachers and administrators. Trainings led by RESCs are summarized in Table III-8 and described below.

Table III-8. Current RESC-Led BEST Support Trainings					
Participants	Title	Season(s) Held	Duration	SY Began	2006-07 SY Attendance
Mentors					
New	Initial Support Training (IST)	Summer	Three full days	1989-90	1,211
New, who are already portfolio scorers	Mentor Training for Portfolio Scorers	Fall	One full day	2002-03	22
Previously trained	Mentor Seminar Series	Winter and spring	Three 2-hour blocks	2004-05	115
	Portfolio Support Training (PST) (update) ^a	Fall	One full day	Mid-1990s	706 ^b
	Coaching for Instructional Excellence	Winter	One full day	2007-08	--
Master Mentors					
New	Master Mentor Training	Begins in fall	Three full days in year	2002-03	12
Administrators					
School district and building	Administrator Institute	Summer and winter	Three full days	2005-06	161
Principals	New Teacher Induction: A Principal's Role	Fall	One 3-hour day	2004-05	45
Teachers and Administrators					
All	Portfolio Support Training	Fall	One full day	Mid-1990s	--
^a A precursor to Portfolio Support Training called Mentor Update Training began in the mid-1990s.					
^b This number includes both mentors, and regular teachers and administrators.					
Source: RESC BEST field staff					

Trainings and presentations. In addition to leading mentor training, the RESC field staff holds other sessions that help experienced educators understand how to support beginning teachers. For example, Portfolio Support Training and the Coaching for Instructional Excellence training are single-day workshops open to any teachers, although they count as mentor update trainings. PST covers how to help beginning teachers succeed on the BEST assessment and become more effective teachers. Coaching for Instructional Excellence focuses on guiding

beginning teachers to better practices through reflective questioning. Participants receive professional development credits for completing each course.³¹ Over the past few school years, about ten percent of the Portfolio Support Training registrants were non-mentors.

The RESC field staff also offers two workshops for administrators. These sessions were launched after RESC field staff and SDE realized administrator support, critical to successful induction and improving teaching, needed to be strengthened. The three-day BEST Administrator Institute, introduced in 2005-06, is held at four RESCs during each summer for superintendents, principals, department chairs, and other district administrative personnel. Participants explore the state CCT standards, BEST, how to conduct and use assessments, and tools to promote effective teaching and learning. The Administrator Institute has trained 254 leaders since it began; 161 of those attended from the summer of 2006 through the spring of 2007.

“New Teacher Induction: A Principal’s Role,” begun in 2004-05, is a three-hour workshop held at each RESC in the fall for only principals. RESC field staff review the administrators’ guide and the CCT, describe exemplary induction practices to meet beginning teachers’ needs, and summarize BEST requirements. In the 2006-07 school year, 62 principals attended this training. For context, nearly 3,500 administrators, including roughly 2,000 principals, are employed in public schools throughout the state.³²

On-site training. Upon request, RESC field staff will conduct BEST training, either established sessions or newly created, on site at any individual school district. Provided a minimum level of attendance is met, the training is free; the district needs only to provide copied materials, refreshment costs, and custodial services.³³ If the minimum attendance threshold is not met, the district may choose to hold the training but will pay a fee. Further, each school district receives about two hours of any BEST-related professional development at no cost to the district. Many districts take advantage of this opportunity to have field staff work with beginning teachers, mentors, or administrators, according to RESC staff. Table III-9 shows all in-district BEST trainings recently held by RESC field staff.

Field staff collects feedback from all participants in each in-district or RESC training session. The feedback is reviewed, used to adjust trainings, and then stored at ACES, the central training RESC.

In addition to trainings, every fall the RESC field staff volunteers to present on BEST and how managers can support beginning teachers at districts’ monthly administrator meetings. A few districts accept this offer each year, according to the field staff.

³¹ Teachers must earn a certain number of professional development credits (i.e., continuing education units /CEUs), to progress to the next level of certification, or to keep their current certification if already at the highest certification tier. Participants in these trainings will receive 0.6 CEUs per session attended.

³² Connecticut State Department of Education: Connecticut Education Data and Research, “Assignments of Certified Personnel in Connecticut Public Schools By Sex, Race, Age and Experience, October 2006,” <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/staff/index.htm>.

³³ The individual RESC that leads the training session receives an annually set amount of reimbursement from EastConn through the SDE contract. The 2007-08 reimbursement is \$500 per training, for most types.

Table III-9. In-District BEST Trainings: 2006-07			
Type of Training	Number of Districts	Percent of All Districts³⁴	Number of Participants
Initial Support Training	30	20%	465
Portfolio Support Training	21	14%	414
Administrator Institute	3	2%	66
New Teacher Induction: A Principal's Role	1	<1%	11
Total	--	--	956
Source of data: RESC BEST field staff			

BEST Website. Since 2003, EastConn has maintained and updated a website named BEST Connections (www.ctbest.org). This website has three functions. First, teachers and administrators use it to register electronically for all BEST trainings and seminars. Second, educators may choose to sign up to receive periodic e-mails specific to their BEST role (e.g. mentor) and content area. The e-mails contain reminders of upcoming training dates and deadlines, as well as resources and tips relevant to BEST duties. Copies of the e-mails are posted on the website for the duration of the school year. Third, the website provides access to useful documents through posted resources, such as presentation materials for district facilitators, and links to the SDE online resources described above. As shown by Table III-10 below, the website's usage has grown tremendously: by 2006-07, more than 17,800 people had registered for BEST Connections.

Table III-10. BEST Website Registration Over Time*			
Role	Number Registered in 2003-04 (First Year)	Number Registered in 2006-07	Percent Change
Beginning teacher	4,146	9,758	135%
Mentor	1,185	4,985	321%
District facilitator	279	478	71%
School administrator	67	698	942%
Portfolio scorer	867	1,064	23%
Other interested educator	104	751	622%
Staff (RESC or SDE)	49	65	33%
Student	20	72	260%
Totals	6,717	17,871	166%
* A subscriber may register on the web site as having unlimited multiple roles in order to receive those roles' periodic e-mails. Source of data: RESC BEST field staff and data manager			

³⁴ The total number of districts used to calculate this column's entries is 152. This number includes town-based school districts, regional school districts, and the technical school district. This number does not include town-based districts that are part of regional districts, the RESC districts, charter or other independent schools, or special schools or districts such as those run by the Department of Correction.

Administrator's Guide. In addition to the mentor and district facilitator guides, RESC field staff distributes *An Administrator's Guide to New Teacher Induction* every fall. The guides previously have been sent directly to all principals, but this year, district facilitators will receive them with instructions to pass them on to the group. Developed in the fall of 2005, the guide is a desk reference that covers many topics, such as:

- exemplary induction techniques and orientation components that meet beginning teachers' needs;
- guidelines for CCT-based administrator conferences with and evaluations of teachers;
- contact information for RESC field staff, teachers-in-residence, and SDE project leaders;
- BEST support and assessment requirements;
- BEST Connections website;
- BEST trainings for administrators and teachers; and
- calendars for administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers.

Individual Assistance

Any educator involved in BEST may seek out district- or state-level assistance. Beginning teachers are encouraged to approach their mentors, master mentors where available, district facilitators, and EastConn for support. Those needing guidance on the portfolio are encouraged to first seek out mentors, if possible, and then SDE teachers-in-residence or project leaders. Contact information for RESC field staff, teachers-in-residence, and project leaders is available on the SDE website, BEST Connections website, and in portfolio handbooks, all the various *Guides*, and mentor training materials.

Section IV: Assessment

Overview

The current method used to assess beginning teachers is a teacher portfolio. This section highlights the BEST portfolio process, including the purpose of the portfolio, the information included in a portfolio, who is required to complete a portfolio, time frames for completion, the portfolio training and scoring processes, and what happens when a beginning teacher does not pass the portfolio. Preliminary analysis of BEST portfolio data is provided at the end of the section.

Purpose of Portfolio

Beginning teachers in Connecticut are required to submit a teaching portfolio near the end of their second year of participation in the BEST program, under most circumstances. Portfolios are based on a beginning teacher's content area, as determined by the state certification endorsement obtained under the teacher's Initial Certification. The purpose of the BEST portfolio is to assess a beginning teacher's knowledge and application of the general and content-specific standards contained in the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching.

Portfolio Contents

The BEST portfolio is a structured, multi-part document developed by the beginning teacher around one unit of classroom instruction. Although there are certain portfolio requirements specific to each of the 10 subject areas, the general framework and contents of a portfolio are the same. The actual requirements of, and process for, completing a portfolio are detailed in the content area handbooks that beginning teachers receive as part of their participation in BEST.

Table IV-1 highlights the general structure of a portfolio. Specifically, teachers are asked to: 1) organize a unit of instruction around an essential concept in a series of lessons; 2) engage students in exploring that essential concept in a series of lessons; 3) assess student learning and use this assessment to adjust future instruction; and 4) reflect on their students' learning, the quality of students' learning, and the quality of their own teaching. Within the BEST program, this process is known as the cycle of effective teaching. The actual contents of the portfolio include:

- daily lesson plans for one unit of classroom instruction with one class;
- a videotape showing the teacher's classroom instruction;
- examples of work from two students and the teacher's assessments of the work;
and
- commentaries by the teacher reflecting on his or her teaching practices and on students' learning.

Table IV-1. General Structure of the BEST Portfolio

<i>Teaching Task</i>	<i>Teacher Task</i>	<i>Portfolio Contents</i>
Planning a Learning Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select one class of students • Design a short unit (about 5-8 hours of instruction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class description • Unit goals
Teaching the Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the unit • Monitor student learning • Videotape two different lessons featuring instructional foci • Document the unit every day in one to two pages of daily logs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings about student learning • Daily instructional adjustments • Videotaped instructional segments • Daily activities and instructional strategies • Daily student written work
Assessing Student Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select two students • Assess student learning • Analyze student work using articulated evaluation criteria • Provide feedback to students on their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original student work containing teacher feedback comments • Analysis of strengths and weaknesses in student learning
Reflecting on Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze teaching based on students' learning • Suggest ways to improve own teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-commentary on teaching and learning

Source: SDE

The unit of instruction used in the portfolio is typically five to eight hours of classroom time. The full written portion of the portfolio is generally up to 70 pages. Roughly 20 pages are teacher commentaries while the remainder are supporting documents, including student work, daily logs, and lesson plans. The video component of the portfolio is usually a 15- to 20-minute segment of the teacher's classroom instruction.

Beginning teachers are provided with the general BEST *Guide* handbook and individual content area handbooks based on the subject(s) they are certified to teach. The content area handbooks detail the requirements for each of the four sections of the portfolio: planning, instruction, assessment, and self-reflection. The handbooks also provide suggestions for teachers

regarding what evidence assessors will look for when scoring the portfolio. Although there are individual requirements within each of the 10 content areas that are unique to that subject, the general purpose of the portfolio is the same: to ensure a beginning teacher meets the minimum competency requirements established by the state for new teachers.

Elementary education teachers. Portfolios for beginning teachers in elementary education are somewhat different than those for the other content areas. Elementary education teachers who are certified to teach *both* literacy (i.e., integrated language arts, developmental reading, or remedial reading/language arts) and numeracy (i.e., mathematics or remedial mathematics) are required to submit a two-part portfolio: one for literacy and one for numeracy. Both parts include the same four principle components as other portfolios, applied to each area. In essence, these teachers complete two portfolios. Elementary education teachers certified to teach only literacy *or* numeracy submit one portfolio for their respective subject area.

Timelines for Submitting a Portfolio

Teachers completing their first portfolios must do so by May 15 of their second year of teaching. Teachers also have the option of submitting their portfolios in the spring of their first year of teaching. A formal application is required, which must be reviewed and approved by the district facilitator and the teacher's principal and then submitted to SDE for review and approval.

Different dates apply to teachers submitting a second or third portfolio, as discussed later in this section. Teachers electing to submit portfolios in their first year and who fail the portfolio have opportunities to submit additional portfolios, similar to second-year teachers.

Extensions. Beginning teachers may receive an extension for submitting their portfolios under certain circumstances. An extension of up to five days past the deadline may be granted by the SDE project leader for minor procedural or technical problems encountered by a teacher in completing the portfolio. No documentation is necessary from the teacher for this type of extension.

For circumstances beyond a teacher's control (e.g., family difficulties or illness), an extension may be granted until June 1 of that year for portfolios due mid-May. The request must be sent to SDE in writing either by the district facilitator or the teacher's principal. If the request involves a medical problem, a teacher may submit the request directly to SDE without first obtaining district approval.

Any extension made beyond June 1 of a teacher's second year requires "extreme extenuating circumstances," according to the BEST policy and procedures manual. Approvals for this type of request are determined by the SDE bureau chief overseeing the BEST program. The department also reserves the right to return any portfolio submitted late without the proper authorization.

Deferrals. There are times when a beginning teacher participating in BEST may have a different teaching assignment than that of the previous year, which would affect completing the portfolio. A teacher in this situation may receive permission from SDE through an application process to defer submitting his or her portfolio.

An example of this situation is when a teacher is assigned to one of the 10 portfolio content areas (e.g., science) in year one of BEST, and then is assigned to teach a different subject (e.g., math) during year two of BEST when the portfolio is due. When this occurs, the teacher is not expected to complete a portfolio for his or her new content area after only one year of teaching the subject. BEST provides an opportunity for the beginning teacher to “roll-back” submitting his or her portfolio by one year. This gives the teacher another year of teaching experience within the new content area. For teachers between their first and second years in the program, their status in BEST is considered the same as a teacher in year one in the program; between years two and three, their BEST status rolls-back to year two. In other words, if a science teacher during year one in BEST is re-assigned to teach math during year two, the teacher’s BEST participation reverts to year one status and they are not required to submit a math portfolio until after the second year of teaching (which is actually their third year of participation in BEST). This is only one example of when a deferral is necessary; there are multiple scenarios warranting deferrals according to the BEST policies and procedures manual.

Teachers may also roll-back their BEST status upon verification by SDE of a claim that the teacher did not receive mentoring. School districts are required by law to provide at least one year of mentoring to all beginning teachers participating in BEST.

One example of when a roll-back is not permitted is when elementary school teachers change grade levels within the elementary school. Teachers endorsed to teach elementary school and assigned to a different grade level than the one they taught the previous year must still fulfill BEST requirements for the elementary education portfolio as scheduled, even though they are teaching a different grade.

Exemptions. Beginning teachers may request a full or partial exemption from completing the portfolio. Those who believe their teaching assignment precludes them from meeting the portfolio’s requirements may choose to ask for a full exemption. A formal application on behalf of the teacher must be submitted to SDE with signatures from the beginning teacher, principal, district facilitator, and superintendent.

Requests for an exemption are permitted only during the teacher’s second or third year in the BEST program. According to BEST policies and procedures, examples of teaching assignments eligible for exemptions include pre-kindergarten, computer technology, remedial reading/language arts, and special education for students with severe or profound disabilities.

A BEST review committee within SDE is responsible for reviewing portfolio exemption requests. The committee, consisting of BEST staff (i.e., administrators, project leaders, and teachers-in-residence) and district personnel (e.g., district facilitators), notifies the beginning teacher and district facilitator (or principal) once a decision is made, which must occur within 40 days of SDE receiving the exemption request.

Elementary education beginning teachers who are certified in both literacy and numeracy but teach in only one of these areas may request a partial exemption to their portfolio requirements and submit a portfolio only for the subject they teach. A formal application is required and a review process similar to full exemption requests is conducted.

Portfolio Scoring

The overall process for scoring BEST portfolios is extensive. It involves selecting and training scorers, retraining scorers each year they score portfolios, and actually scoring portfolios. SDE has attempted to standardize the process wherever possible, and the system used to score portfolios is consistent across content areas.

Scorers

BEST portfolios are scored by various professional educators within Connecticut. Teachers and administrators from school districts throughout the state, including retired educators, and higher education faculty score portfolios. Each of the Regional Educational Service Center field staff for BEST also scores portfolios. SDE project leaders and teachers-in-residence oversee the scoring process.

Portfolio scorer candidates are recruited in various ways. District facilitators, mentors, administrators, professional colleagues, SDE program employees, RESC field staff, and personnel from teacher preparation programs throughout the state are involved in trying to recruit educators to become portfolio scorers. Candidates also are recruited from several pools: 1) current and former SDE teachers-in-residence; 2) Connecticut teachers certified by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards; 3) current and former state teachers-of-the-year; and 4) graduates of the BEST program who demonstrated high levels of performance on the BEST portfolio.

Requirements. Certified teachers with at least five years of recent classroom experience are eligible to become portfolio scorers upon recommendation from their district. The recommendation is based on the teacher's professional abilities and experience within the education field and school district. School district administrators and central office personnel, as well as higher education faculty, also are eligible to be scorers. According to BEST policies and procedures, they must show they have regular contact with -- and involvement in -- classrooms and the appropriate content backgrounds. Portfolio scorers may only score portfolios in their respective content area(s).

An application to become a scorer must be submitted to SDE for approval by the content area project leader and Teacher-in-Residence. Prospective scorers are asked to commit to finishing the requisite training, completing proficiency testing, and attending 10 days of scoring each year they score. Prospective scorers also are expected to agree to score portfolios for at least three years out of the next five. Administrators may elect to score portfolios for only five days and make a two-year commitment to being a scorer. Portfolio scorers also must sign an agreement as to the confidentiality of the portfolio training materials, scoring documents, and actual portfolios.

Training. All portfolio scorers, whether new or experienced, must complete specific training conducted by SDE. Training is provided by content area, since scorers only score portfolios in the content area for which they are certified to teach. Scorers with multiple state endorsements may choose which portfolio content area they want to score portfolios based on

their current teaching assignment. Table IV-2 shows the training requirements for all portfolio scorers.

Table IV-2. Training Requirements for BEST Portfolio Scorers				
Type of Training	Purpose	Length	New Scorer	Experienced Scorer
New Scorer Pre-Training	Orientation to portfolio scoring process	3-4 Hours (one evening during school year)	Yes	No
New Scorer Training	Learning how to score portfolios in a reliable and objective way	4 Days (during school year)	Yes	No
Annual Scoring Refresher	Review scoring-related materials, procedures, and completion of scoring exercises	1 Day (during school year)	Yes	Yes
Scoring Calibration	Review benchmark portfolios and build consensus among scorers	2 Days (during summer)	Yes	Yes
Proficiency Testing	Portfolio scoring test given to new and experienced scorers annually; must pass to score portfolios	Self-Paced (several hours - part of calibration training)	Yes	Yes
Bias Training	Designed to alert scorers against possible biases during scoring process	Approx. 1-2 hours (during calibration trng.)	Yes	Yes
“Cusp” Training	Scorers discuss previously-scored borderline pass/fail portfolio to discern expectations for competent performance	Several Hours (during calibration trng)	Yes	Yes

Source: Adapted from SDE materials by LPRIC staff

Over the course of several months, typically from April to early July, all new scorers receive an orientation to portfolio scoring and four days of initial training to understand the process of scoring portfolios. Calibration training is for all scorers. This training provides scorers with “benchmark portfolios” at each rating level used in portfolio scoring (the portfolio rating scale is discussed later in this section).

Benchmark portfolios used during scorer training are actual portfolios from previous years that have already been scored. The SDE project leader, Teacher-in-Residence, and other selected personnel review the benchmark portfolios for each content area prior to using them for training purposes. This vetting process is designed to ensure the score given to the benchmark portfolio

appropriately reflects the portfolio and that there are relatively few, if any, ambiguities regarding the portfolio scores.

Training for portfolio scorers also includes reviewing, scoring, and discussing a portfolio considered a “cusp.” Cusp portfolios are those that scorers had a difficult time deciding whether the portfolio should pass. This type of training is intended to provide scorers experience in handling the nuances that may occur when scoring portfolios.

SDE trains scorers to identify and avoid various biases that could surface during live scoring. The BEST portfolio scoring process is designed to be as objective as possible, although a scorer’s personal judgment plays a role in the process.³⁵ Types of bias that may influence scorers to view a portfolio more subjectively include: a beginning teacher’s writing style; a scorer’s emotional reactions either to the video or portfolio contents; or the physical appearance of the portfolio. Scorers are trained to be cognizant of these and other possible sources of bias and how to avoid their influence.

As a final step to their training, scorers must undergo proficiency testing each year they want to score portfolios. This testing occurs during the summer right before the live scoring session starts, except for scorers in science, as discussed below. Scorers are provided a benchmark portfolio for which only SDE knows the score given.³⁶

Prospective scorers are required to individually review the portfolio during the final training session and score it as they would during a live scoring session. In contrast to live scoring there is no interaction with SDE staff, which is allowed and encouraged during live scoring. The scoring documents used by each scorer are collected and reviewed by the SDE project leader, Teacher-in-Residence, and other experienced portfolio scorers as determined by SDE (discussed below). The SDE-led group grades the prospective scorers using a standardized scoring document. Prospective scorers may be graded as:

- **Proficient:** Scorer is permitted to begin scoring portfolios.
- **Proficient with Review:** Deemed not fully proficient. Scorer works with an experienced scorer as determined by SDE to identify and correct deficiencies. Upon completion of this additional training, the prospective scorer is eligible to score portfolios. For the first two portfolios scored during regular scoring, there is to be a complete review by SDE of the new scorer’s work to ensure the issues identified during the proficiency testing process have been resolved.
- **Non-Proficient:** The prospective scorer does not satisfactorily meet the SDE proficiency standards and must score another proficiency benchmark portfolio. The process is repeated until proficiency standards are met, the prospective

³⁵ SDE, *Beginning Educator Support and Training, Portfolio Scoring Processes and Forms*, June 2007.

³⁶ For proficiency testing, experienced scorers are not permitted to score a benchmark portfolio that they actually were involved in scoring.

scorer quits the process, or the scorer is asked by SDE not to continue the scoring process for that year.

One exception to the standard portfolio scorer training is for science portfolio scorers. A separate Science Leadership Academy has been established to train portfolio scorers for that area. The academy is a week-long training for prospective scorers held annually in July. Instead of having the training sessions occur over several months, as other content areas do, portfolio scorer training for science is held over the five-day session.

The science academy training serves a dual purpose: it trains participants as portfolio scorers and cross-trains them as mentors. The science content area has always trained its scorers through the academy, and the materials and activities used during the academy have essentially remained the same since first implemented seven years ago.

A key difference in the training schedule for the science portfolio scorers and those in the other content areas is that all *new* science scorers who finish the Science Leadership Academy do not score portfolios until the following year. In the interim, those scorers must attend three additional days of training during the school year. They will then attend the next year's science academy to fulfill their calibration, bias training, and proficiency testing, with all the experienced scorers. Once satisfactorily completed, they are eligible to begin scoring. In the other content areas, scorers are eligible during the same year they are trained and determined proficient.

Compensation. Portfolio scorers receive a flat stipend of \$100 for each portfolio scored, which has remained unchanged since the early 2000s. The compensation for other scoring personnel is \$250 per day for table leaders, \$275 per day for assistant site leaders, and \$300 per day for site leaders. SDE also provides limited stipends for scorers during training.

For payment purposes, there is no minimum or limit to the number of portfolios one person can score. Payment for portfolio scorers is processed through EastConn. The scorers' compensation also includes meals (breakfast, lunch, and snacks) available on all training and scoring days.

Portfolio scorers receive Continuing Education Units for their training and work as scorers. As outlined in the BEST policies and procedures, portfolio scorers can earn between 5.6 and 7.0 CEUs, depending on whether a person is a new or experienced scorer, fully completes training, and scores portfolios.

Scoring Logistics and Site Organization

Almost all of the BEST portfolios in a given year are submitted by the May 15 deadline during a teacher's second year in BEST. Teachers submitting their *second* portfolio (in Year 3) must do so by mid-February, and those submitting a *third* portfolio (also in Year 3) must meet a mid-June deadline.

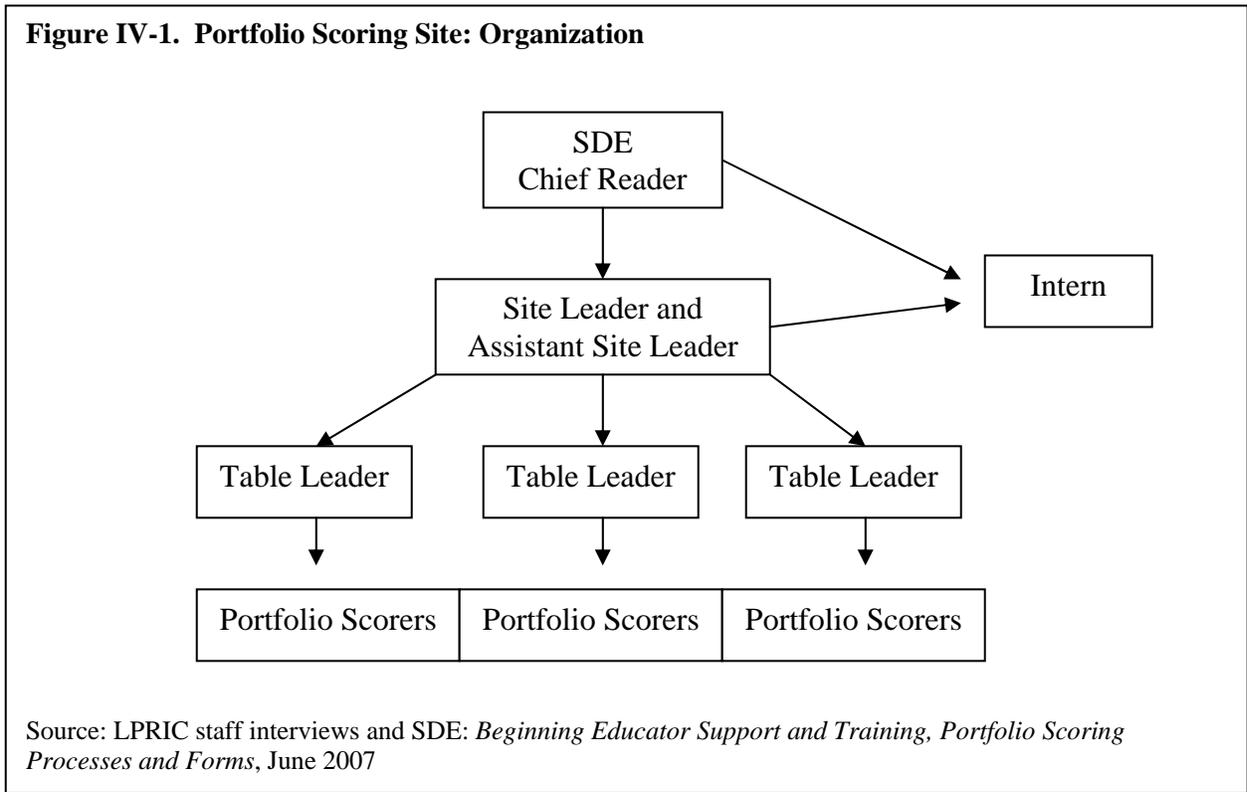
All teachers submit their portfolios to EastConn by mail or in-person. EastConn serves as the BEST program's central repository and clearinghouse for portfolios. It is responsible for cataloging and numbering all the portfolios it receives based on the content area of the portfolio

and the date submitted. EastConn distributes portfolios to the individual scoring sites around the state. Upon the completion of portfolio scoring, EastConn collects the portfolios from each site and retains them for future use or reference, if necessary.

Multiple sites are used for scoring portfolios. The sites are generally public schools, although some private sites, such as Quinnipiac University, have been used. For public school sites, EastConn works with school districts to confirm the dates and times facilities are needed for portfolio scoring, and what services the district will provide. EastConn makes all arrangements for catering services at the individual scoring sites.

Individual scoring sites have a central location where portfolios are housed and distributed to scorers. Sites also have video viewing equipment for scorers to use. A computer at each site is used to monitor the distribution of portfolios and track portfolio scores. Individual scores are sent to SDE at the end of each day of scoring. The SDE project leader, or another designated staff person, is responsible for overseeing and managing the portfolio scoring operations for his or her particular content area. Portfolio scoring generally occurs over a two-week period each July.

Site organization. Scoring sites must be organized in a manner according to SDE guidelines. Figure IV-1 depicts the portfolio scoring site hierarchy for each of the 10 content areas.



Each scoring site is overseen by the SDE project leader for the respective content area. For the three content areas currently without an assigned project leader (Music, Visual Arts, and World Languages) or when multiple scoring sites are simultaneously used for a particular content area, an SDE-designated staff consultant, often a Teacher-in-Residence, for the content area oversees site operations. The SDE staff serve as the scoring site's Chief Reader who has final authority on approving all portfolio scores and scoring documents emanating from the scoring site.

SDE project leaders are assisted by site leaders. Site leaders have general supervisory duties at the site, as determined by the Project Leader, including assigning portfolios to scorers. Site leaders are responsible for reviewing portfolios and scoring documents, particularly those with multiple failing scores. Site leaders also make scoring decisions (i.e., adjudicate) when previous scorers cannot fully decide what score(s) to give a portfolio. Teachers-in-residence serve as the site leaders.

Assistant site leaders provide another layer of review and oversight to the portfolio scoring process. They are responsible for assisting the SDE site team in whatever manner deemed necessary, including working with portfolio scorers and table leaders whenever questions or issues arise with a portfolio. Assistant site leaders also help prepare scoring documents for reviews by site leaders and chief readers. Assistant site leaders are experienced educators and portfolio scorers approved and trained by SDE.

The Table Leader is the first-level contact person for portfolio scorers. Table leaders are experienced educators and portfolio scorers approved and trained by SDE. Their responsibilities are varied, and include: 1) discussing concerns or issues scorers have about the scoring process or a particular portfolio; 2) working with scorers to determine the scoring rationale for portfolios; 3) checking and reviewing scoring documents for completion, accuracy, and coherence; and 4) assisting with the overall operations of the scoring site.

As the first level of support for portfolio scorers, table leaders serve an important role in the overall portfolio scoring process. They are generally assigned to oversee six to eight portfolio scorers. To be a table leader, several stages of training are involved, including one half-day of training by the SDE content area project leader. The training is devoted to learning how to conduct completion and accuracy reviews of completed scoring documents.

Along with the other scoring site team members, table leaders assist SDE in choosing benchmark portfolios for use in scorer training, which is part of the table leaders' overall training. Each year prior to portfolio scorer training, table leaders chosen by SDE individually read and score possible benchmark portfolios. The table leaders then discuss the performance of each benchmark portfolio and finalize the scoring documentations as a group, under SDE's direction. The process takes several days to complete.

Table leaders are responsible for reviewing and discussing the scoring documents for portfolio(s) used for proficiency testing, which is another level of their overall training. The process ensures each table leader derives the same score for the proficiency portfolio. Table

leaders also help supervise the proficiency testing process and provide feedback to prospective scores following proficiency testing.

Interns are used by SDE at each scoring site to enter portfolio score information into the computer program that electronically tracks such information. Interns usually are college students studying education who have been recommended by their programs to SDE.

Scoring System

The system used to score a BEST portfolio is complex and involves numerous people. SDE notes the portfolio process has become more refined over time, as has the scoring system.

Rating scale. Portfolios generally are scored using a rating scale of 1-4. As summarized in Table IV-3, the individual scores correspond to: “1” (conditional), “2” (competent), “3” (proficient), and “4” (advanced). A score of “4” means the evidence of meeting the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching standards -- as provided by the beginning teacher’s portfolio and determined by the portfolio scoring process -- is exemplary. Teachers receiving a portfolio score of “3” show consistent evidence of meeting CCT standards, while a score of “2” shows sufficient evidence. A portfolio score of “1” indicates the portfolio shows limited evidence of the teacher meeting the CCT standards. Teachers must score a “2” or higher to pass the portfolio and maintain their state teacher certification. Beginning teachers have up to three opportunities to pass their BEST portfolio assessment without losing their certification at any point.

A portfolio may receive a zero or no score. A score of zero is given when a breach of ethics is found within the portfolio during the scoring process. Ethical violations include, among others, strong evidence the teacher falsified information or misrepresented his or her teaching. Teachers in their second year in BEST who receive a zero score are eligible for a third year if a written request by the superintendent is made and approved by the SDE commissioner. Teachers in their third year of BEST are ineligible for continued certification.

There also are times when a portfolio cannot be scored, due to incomplete or inadequate portfolio documentation that interferes with the accurate and fair scoring of the portfolio. This results in a rating by the portfolio scorer of “not scorable”. Teachers in their second year of BEST are eligible for a third year, and those in their third year lose their certification and may re-apply for their certification under certain conditions, as discussed later in this section.

Portfolio evaluation process and framework. Scorers are required to follow several fundamental steps that form the basis for the BEST portfolio scoring process. The steps are to be followed by all portfolio scorers and are the same across all content areas. The bulk of the training scorers receive is centered on understanding and refining this process. The scoring process is fully described in the content area handbooks each beginning teacher who is required to complete a portfolio receives, and is summarized below:

1. *Familiarity check:* A scorer briefly views the portfolio’s video to determine whether the scorer knows the beginning teacher, either personally or professionally. If the scorer knows the beginning teacher, the portfolio must be returned to the table leader and another portfolio assigned to the scorer.

Table IV-3. BEST Portfolio Scoring Levels

Performance Standard	Performance Level Descriptions	Result
<p>ACCEPTABLE</p>	<p>4- <u>Advanced</u> performance in meeting the standards</p>	<p>Eligibility for the Provisional Educator Certificate, provided all other certification requirements are met.</p>
	<p>3- <u>Proficient</u> performance in meeting the standards</p>	
	<p>2- <u>Competent</u> performance in meeting the standards</p>	
<p>NOT ACCEPTABLE</p>	<p>1- <u>Conditional</u> performance in meeting the standards</p>	<p>If in Year 2 of BEST: Eligibility for a 3rd year in BEST and submission of up to two additional teaching portfolios. If by the end of Year 3 of BEST: Ineligibility for continued certification. (<i>Eligibility for re-issuance only after a period of Intervening Study and Experience as approved by SDE.</i>)</p>
	<p>Not Scorable – incomplete or inadequate portfolio documentation that interferes with the accurate and fair scoring of the portfolio.</p>	<p>If in Year 2 of BEST: Eligibility for a 3rd year in BEST and submission of up to two additional teaching portfolios. If by the end of Year 3 of BEST: Ineligibility for continued certification. (<i>Eligibility for re-issuance only after a period of Intervening Study and Experience as approved by SDE.</i>)</p>
	<p>0- Evidence of conduct in violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (Conn. State Regs. 145d-400a.)</p>	<p>If in Year 2 of BEST: Eligibility for a 3rd year in program only if requested in writing by the superintendent of schools and upon a finding of good cause by the state education commissioner. If by the end of Year 3 of BEST: Ineligibility for continued certification.</p>

Source: SDE

2. *Read and view portfolio:* Actual scoring begins with the scorer reading -- and rereading as many times as necessary -- the portfolio and fully viewing and reviewing the video. This gives the scorer a sense of the overall content of the portfolio and an understanding of the central question/lesson the teacher is using as the basis of the portfolio.
3. *Collect evidence:* The assessor uses a standardized form to collect evidence and record relevant data from the portfolio's lesson logs, teacher commentaries, student work, teacher reflections, and the video. The evidence collected by the scorer is factual; no judgments are made by the scorer at this stage. The scorer reviews this evidence and interprets it to identify patterns of performance (i.e., pattern statements) related to the series of Guiding Questions outlined in the content area handbook. The Guiding Questions teachers must answer in their portfolios are derived from the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching standards.
4. *Determine score:* The scorer analyzes the identified patterns using a standardized process to determine the overall portfolio performance score.

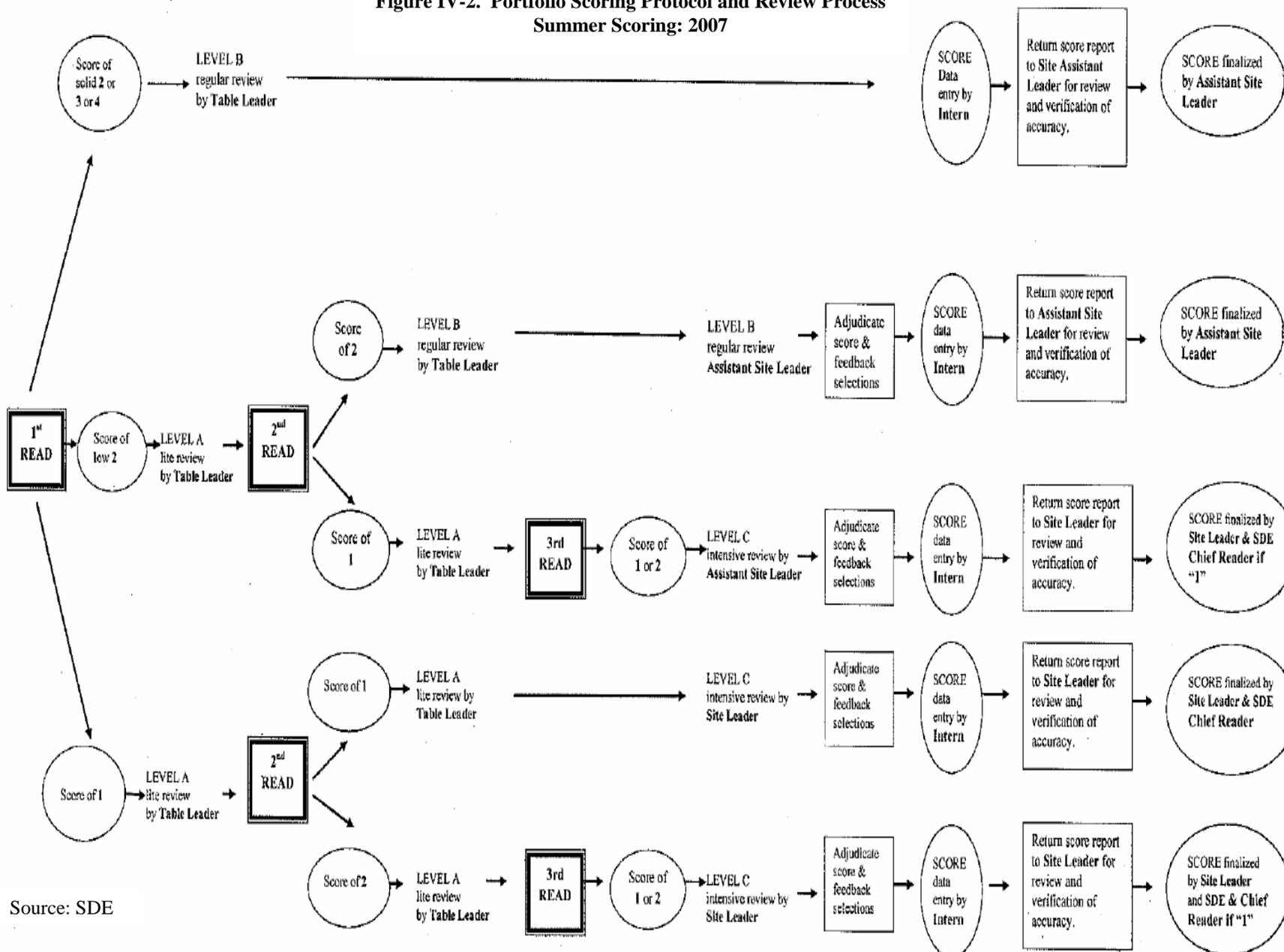
The analysis, evaluation, and scoring of the portfolio is based on a rubric format. The rubric is a table that identifies a set of 13 specific performance indicators that form the framework for the scorer's analysis and evaluation. The performance indicators are aligned with the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching standards and are the same across all content areas. A copy of the 2007 BEST Portfolio Performance Rubric for Social Studies is provided as reference in Appendix G.

The rubric table also outlines the BEST performance continuum based on the rating scale of 1-4. Each of the 13 performance indicators of the rubric has standardized language to describe the different teaching performance levels based on the rating scale of 1-4. Scorers apply the pattern statements they have developed from their evidence collection and analysis of the portfolio to the rubric for each performance indicator. Using the performance continuum provided in the rubric, assessors match their interpretation of the teacher's portfolio performance for a particular performance indicator with the corresponding descriptor in the performance continuum that best matches the scorer's.

Scorers assign a score for each performance indicator in the rubric based on the teacher's performance in the portfolio as determined by the scorer. An overall score is arrived at by comparing the portfolio performance for each performance indicator to a performance profile that describes typical teaching performances at each rating and to comparisons with benchmark portfolio information. SDE estimates the average amount of time that an assessor spends with the initial review of one portfolio is generally between four and six hours.

Scoring protocol and review process. As mentioned earlier, like all evaluations conducted by people, the BEST portfolio scoring process involves a level of subjectivity. In this respect, the portfolio is no different from the various assessment methods used since the program was first implemented. Checks and balances within the current portfolio scoring process have been established to help ensure the process is consistent and fair. Figure IV-2 outlines the portfolio scoring protocol and review process -- called "back reading" -- used by SDE for the 2007 summer scoring session.

Figure IV-2. Portfolio Scoring Protocol and Review Process
Summer Scoring: 2007



Source: SDE

The protocol outlined in the figure is a multi-level review process. Overall, the process is intended to ensure: 1) the necessary scoring documentation is completed; 2) the scorer(s) has accurately interpreted the portfolio data and integrated the identified indicator and category performance patterns into a justified portfolio score; and 3) the final score and sign-off by SDE verifies the overall accuracy of the process and final portfolio score.

Each portfolio scored is reviewed at least three times, in some capacity, by a combination of the following people: initial scorer, table leader, assistant site leader, site leader, and project leader/chief reader. In addition to the review by the initial scorer, at least two people back-read each portfolio. The extent of the back read review depends on the portfolio score, and is more involved for portfolios receiving failing or borderline passing scores. At any time during scoring, a portfolio may be assigned for a second or third blind read, which is conducted by portfolio scorers with no knowledge of any previous score given the portfolio. The time devoted to the back read review process, what the reviews entail, and who performs the reviews are summarized in Table IV-4. (Note: Table IV-4 is a more detailed description of the process identified in Figure IV-2.)

Table IV-4. Levels of Back-Read Review for BEST Portfolios				
Review level	Time devoted	Components included	Applied to scores:	Done by
Level A	10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completeness review 	Initial 1 and Low-2	Table Leader
Level B	30-45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completeness and Accuracy reviews 	2, 3, & 4	Table Leader
Level B	30-45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completeness and Accuracy reviews ▪ Adjudication ▪ Sign-off 	Multiple independent reads of passing scores	Assistant Site Leader
Level C	45-60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portfolio scan ▪ Completeness and Accuracy reviews ▪ Adjudication ▪ Sign-off 	Two independent scores of Low-2	Assistant Site Leader
Level C	45-60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review original portfolio ▪ Completeness and Accuracy review ▪ Adjudication ▪ Sign-off 	Two independent scores of 1 or split multiple 1/2 scores.	Site Leader and SDE Project Leader/ Chief Reader
Source: SDE				

Incident reports. Situations may occur during the scoring of an individual portfolio that could interfere with the fair evaluation of that portfolio. Examples include technical problems with the portfolio video (e.g., inaudible tape or distorted picture), omission of parts of the portfolio, portfolio directions not followed, evidence of possible violations of procedures or breach of ethics, and evidence of safety violations. SDE has a standardized process for reporting and reviewing incidents occurring during portfolio scoring. As discussed above, incidents may result in a portfolio either not being scored or, if determined egregious, being issued a score of zero.

Portfolio scorers are encouraged to make a significant effort to score every portfolio. In the event of an unusable video, SDE's policy is to attempt contacting the beginning teacher to determine if an immediate replacement video is available.

SDE requires all beginning teachers to submit a letter of authenticity signed also by their principals with the complete portfolio. The letter attests to certain conditions, including that the material submitted with the portfolio is not misrepresented or falsified in any way and the principal has reviewed the portfolio for its completeness and authenticity.

Score results and feedback. Altogether, scoring and distribution of the results takes several months to complete. Portfolio results are generally available to teachers by the beginning of September for portfolios submitted in May. Superintendents also receive a list of all beginning teachers in their districts and their portfolio scores. District facilitators receive lists of only teachers who passed their portfolios, although the lists do not include teachers' scores. Teachers may view their results on line using the BEST Connections website.

SDE has developed an automated system that creates a feedback report to accompany portfolio results. The system uses information from the actual rubric statements to create the report. The feedback report includes information about the teacher's topic and then gives the pattern statements for each performance indicator within the rubric.

The department piloted a more detailed feedback response several years ago that provided individual examples as back-up information to the rubric statements. The process, however, was determined too time-consuming because it involved a detailed editing process necessary to specifically tailor supporting rubric information with individual feedback letters and ensure the feedback was written adequately well.

Failing a portfolio. Teachers who submit their portfolios at the end of their second year participating in BEST and receive a score of "1," may submit a second portfolio during their third year in BEST. The second portfolio must be submitted by the following February 1. If the teacher receives another failing score, which is determined by April, he or she is eligible to submit a third portfolio. This, however, is only permitted at the written request of the teacher's superintendent, partially due to the potential hiring implications.

Third portfolios must be submitted by June 15 of a teacher's third year in the BEST program. Scores for all third portfolios are sent to beginning teachers and their superintendents by mid-August. This is to allow the district to make hiring adjustments if the teacher fails a third time and therefore no longer is certified to teach in Connecticut.

Teachers not fulfilling the BEST requirements after a full three years in the program, either due to failing their portfolio or not submitting a portfolio, are eligible to qualify for re-issuance of their certification under certain conditions. Teachers must apply to SDE for the “Intervening Study and Experience” status within BEST, which is a process that must be completed before a teacher’s certification is re-issued. This process requires a teacher to:

1. develop a plan of intervening study, which includes a minimum of six undergraduate or graduate credits related to developing teacher competency as defined by BEST; and
2. complete a plan for classroom teaching experience, which includes teaching for a minimum of one school year in: a long-term substitute position, a Connecticut state-approved private school, an out-of-state public school under a valid certificate for that state, a state-approved private school in another state, or under a Connecticut Durational Shortage Area Permit.

SDE will consider reinstating a beginning teacher’s initial certification only upon satisfactory fulfillment of the above plans. The teacher must then re-enter the BEST program as a first year beginning teacher, and submit a portfolio in the following (second) year.

Portfolio Assessment Conference. Teachers who receive failing scores on either their first or second portfolios are eligible to participate in individual Portfolio Assessment Conferences (PACs). The PAC is an in-person conference with a portfolio scorer (not the beginning teacher’s actual portfolio scorer), often a table leader, who helps the teacher interpret his or her portfolio results. PACs are scheduled through EastConn at the locations and times established by the SDE project leaders. Attendance at a PAC is voluntary on the part of the teacher. SDE notes several attempts are made to contact a teacher regarding the availability of the assessment conference.

The Portfolio Assessment Conference is not a formal appeals process for BEST portfolio scores. Teachers wanting to appeal their scores must do so through the appeals process developed within SDE for state teaching certifications. This process is used infrequently. Moreover, there has only been one legal challenge to the overall validity and reliability of the portfolio process, but the challenge was dropped early in the legal process, with no ramification for the BEST program.

Portfolio Resources for Beginning Teachers

There are several resources available to beginning teachers to assist them in developing their portfolios. As mentioned throughout this report, BEST websites designed to help beginning teachers have been developed by SDE and EastConn, as are handbooks, training, and resource personnel at the district and state levels.

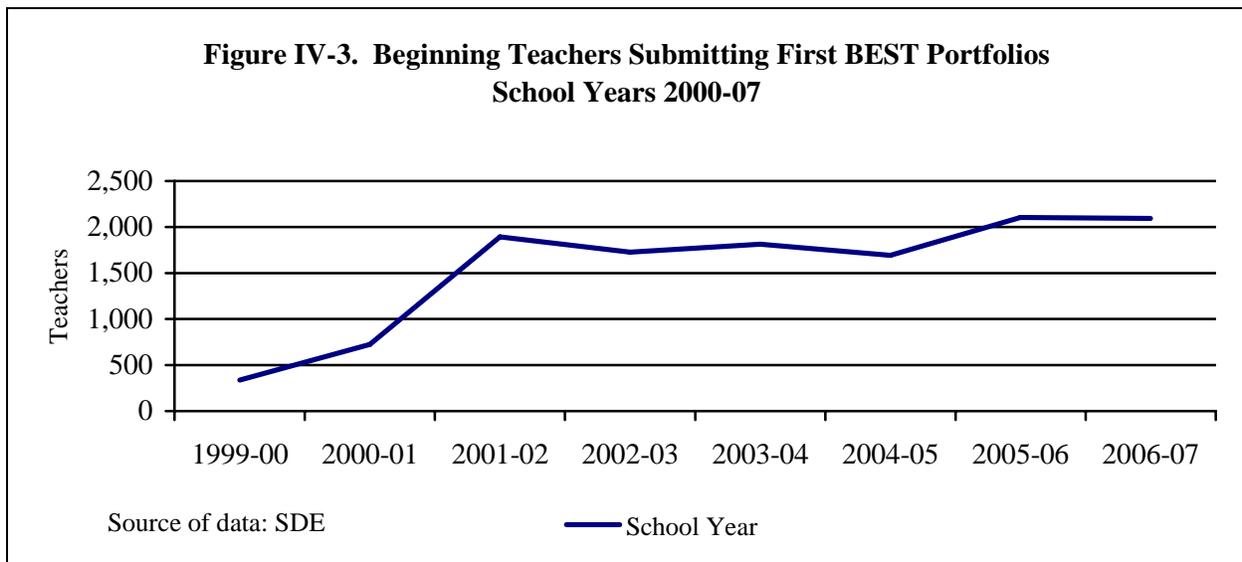
Beginning teachers and table leaders also have access to examples of portfolios that are considered outstanding by SDE (i.e., received a score of “4”). These portfolios, called “exemplars”, are available online and hard copies are available for review at each RESC. School districts also have the option of purchasing copies of exemplar portfolios to have on-site for their teachers. New exemplar portfolios are introduced every year for each content area.

Preliminary Portfolio Data Analysis

Program review committee staff has collected BEST portfolio data from SDE. This includes statistics on portfolio submissions, exemptions, and outcomes. Information has also been collected about beginning teachers who submit portfolios, portfolio scores, and teacher contracts provisions regarding release time for beginning teachers to complete portfolios, and stipends for portfolio scorers. The information provided is preliminary; committee staff will continue collecting and analyzing portfolio data.

Beginning Teachers Submitting First Portfolios

Figure IV-3 shows the progression of the number of teachers submitting first portfolios between school years 1999-00 through 2006-07. Implementation of the portfolio requirement was phased-in between 1999-00 and 2005-06 for the 10 content areas, with most of the increase occurring in the early-2000s. The increases in the numbers of beginning teachers submitting portfolios in SY 01-02 and SY 05-06 correspond with the portfolio requirement added for the visual arts and world languages content areas.



Demographic Data

Table IV-5 highlights selected demographic data for beginning teachers submitting their first portfolios in school years 2004-05 through 2006-07. The table shows portfolios by content area, demographic group, gender, and school level. In summary, the table shows most beginning teachers submitting their first portfolios over the three-year period were elementary school teachers, white, and female. In each of the three years, between 36 percent and 40 percent of the portfolios submitted were in the Elementary Education field, followed by teachers in Special Education and English Language Art. In terms of race, the vast majority of beginning teachers were White, accounting for over 91 percent in each year. Roughly three-quarters of the beginning teachers submitting their first portfolios in each year were Female.

Table IV-5. Selected Demographic Data for Beginning Teachers Submitting First Portfolios: School Years 2004-05 through and 2006-07						
Total BEST Portfolios (1st Submissions)	2004-05		2005-06		2006-07	
	N=1,749	%	N=2,205	%	N=1,966	%
Content Area						
Elementary Education	633	36.2%	782	38.6%	782	39.8%
English Language Arts	189	10.8%	198	9.8%	191	9.7%
Mathematics	128	7.3%	168	8.3%	163	8.3%
Music	80	4.6%	90	4.4%	67	3.4%
Physical Education	73	4.2%	102	5.0%	91	4.6%
Science	154	8.8%	165	8.1%	155	7.9%
Social Studies	140	8.0%	167	8.2%	173	8.8%
Special Education	181	10.3%	181	8.9%	195	9.9%
Visual Arts	65	3.7%	60	3.0%	58	3.0%
World Languages	106	6.1%	112	5.5%	91	4.6%
Demographic Group						
American Indian	6	.3%	6	.3%	3	.2%
Asian American	14	.8%	37	1.8%	26	1.3%
Black	54	3.1%	54	2.7%	47	2.4%
White	1,628	93.1%	1,855	91.6%	1,813	92.2%
Hispanic	45	2.6%	65	3.2%	61	3.1%
Missing	2	.1%	8	.4%	19	.8%
Gender						
Male	431	24.6%	527	26.0%	502	25.3%
Female	1,316	75.2%	1,496	73.9%	1,450	73.8%
Missing	2	.1%	2	.1%	14	.7%
School Level						
Elementary School	755	43.2%	896	44.2%	924	47.0%
Middle School	379	21.7%	404	20.0%	395	20.1%
High School	557	31.8%	634	31.3%	571	29.0%
State-Appvd Special Education Facility	57	3.3%	81	4.0%	65	3.3%
Missing	1	.1%	10	.5%	11	.6%
Note: Demographic information is available for the vast majority of teachers each year, but not all. Source: SDE						

Portfolio Deferrals and Exemptions

Table IV-6 shows full and partial BEST portfolio exemption information for 2006-07. A total of 127 (6 percent) of the 1,948 beginning teachers supposed to submit a BEST portfolio were exempted from the process. Sixty-three (3 percent) elementary education teachers received partial exemptions. The table shows the exemptions, including for literacy and numeracy portfolios.

Table IV-6. Portfolio Exemptions First-Time Submissions: SY 2006-07		
Type of Exemption	Granted	Denied
Teachers submitting portfolios=1,948	--	--
Full Exemption (N=127)	96	31
Partial Exemption (N=63)	63	0
Literacy	18	0
Numeracy	45	0
Source of data: SDE		

Portfolio Scores

The distribution of BEST portfolio scores for May 2007 is shown in Table IV-7. The information is for beginning teachers submitting their first portfolio. As the table shows, almost six out of every ten beginning teachers submitting their first portfolios in 2007 scored a “2” (competent), and another 27 percent scored a “3” (proficient). Three percent of beginning teachers’ portfolios were scored a “4” (exemplary), while 11 percent scored a “1” (conditional).

Table IV-7. BEST Portfolio Scores for Beginning Teachers Submitting First Portfolios: May 2007					
Content Area	Portfolio Score				Totals
	1	2	3	4	
Elementary (Literacy)	66	486	236	11	799
Elementary (Numeracy)	110	476	178	12	777
English	23	118	66	8	217
Math	17	111	43	2	174
Music	5	25	34	5	69
Physical Education	8	50	28	9	95
Science	5	84	57	22	170
Special Education	33	89	52	9	183
Social Studies	17	152	34	2	207
Visual Arts	12	32	14	4	62
World Languages	10	44	31	11	98
Totals	306 (10.8%)	1,667 (58.5%)	773 (27.1%)	95 (3.3%)	2,851
Note: Total does not include either 10 portfolios scored as “unscorable.”					
Source: SDE					

Portfolio assessment conferences. As discussed earlier, beginning teachers failing their portfolios are provided the opportunity attend an individual Portfolio Assessment Conference (PAC) to meet with SDE-designated staff to discuss their portfolio scores. Of the 269 teachers receiving a portfolio score of “1” in SY 2005-06, portfolio assessment conferences were held for 218 teachers (81 percent).

Portfolio Scorers

Table IV-8 shows the number of new and experienced portfolio scorers for SYs 2003-04 through 2006-07. Scorers new to the portfolio scoring process received scorer training that year; science portfolio scorers received their training the previous year through the Science Leadership Academy. Regardless of when a scorer is trained, they must participate in benchmark portfolio training and be deemed proficient by SDE for each year they score portfolios. As the table shows, in each of the four years new scorers accounted for roughly 40 percent of all scorers, while about 60 percent were experienced scorers.

**Table IV-8. New and Experienced BEST Portfolio Scorers
School Years 2003-04 Through 2006-07**

Content Area	2004			2005			2006			2007		
	New	Exp	Tot									
Elementary Educ.	67	89	156	60	80	140	62	77	139	60	101	161
English	23	23	46	22	21	43	26	15	41	21	22	43
Math	11	17	28	13	20	33	0	30	30	10	21	31
Music	5	15	20	8	12	20	8	15	23	6	17	23
Physical Educ.	8	19	27	7	13	20	10	7	17	13	11	24
Science	13	25	38	0	30	30	16	23	39	15	22	37
Social Studies	9	25	34	14	24	38	12	23	35	15	22	37
Special Education	15	48	63	16	28	44	9	33	42	17	35	52
Visual Arts	12	5	17	11	8	19	8	9	17	9	8	17
World Languages	8	16	24	10	14	24	11	16	27	7	20	27
Totals	171	282	453	161	250	411	162	248	410	173	279	452

Source: SDE

Scorer compensation. Several school districts compensate their teachers who score BEST portfolios in addition to the amount provided by SDE. Based on contract information received from the state’s two teachers’ unions, the following districts offer compensation to their teachers for scoring portfolios:

- Redding (\$250 per year of portfolio scoring);
- Region #9 (\$250 per year of scoring); and
- Weston (\$250 per review of a teacher's portfolio, when review is authorized by the superintendent or her/his designee).

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Beginning Educator Support and Training Glossary

- **Alternate Route to Certification (ARC):** ARC is a program that prepares professionals to become teachers. Its graduates are required to receive more BEST support than regular beginning teachers.
- **Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program:** A program administered by the State Department of Education (SDE) intended to provide support for novice teachers in Connecticut. The program also requires most beginning teachers to pass a state-administered assessment to continue their state teaching certification.
- **BEST Connections:** A website that provides resources, links to resources, and the way to register for BEST trainings and seminars.
- **Common Core of Teaching (CCT):** Connecticut's general and content area-specific standards for teachers that were adopted in 1999.
- **Connecticut Competency Instrument (CCI):** The CCI was used to guide BEST evaluators who conducted in-classroom observations from 1989-1999.
- **Connecticut Teaching Competencies (CTC):** The state's teaching standards upon which the CCI was based (1989-99).
- **Cycle of effective teaching and learning:** A multi-step process upon which the BEST portfolio assessment is based.
- **District facilitator (DF):** A teacher or administrator designated by a school district to be the BEST program liaison between the district and State Department of Education.
- **Durational Shortage Area Permit (DSAP):** A temporary, single-year renewable permit that allows districts to hire uncertified teachers to meet a shortage.
- **Master or lead mentor:** An experienced educator who has received special training to be a school or district resource for mentors and beginning teachers.
- **Mentor/mentor team:** An experienced educator(s) who has been trained in how to provide a wide range of assistance, from logistical to instructional, to beginning teachers. Mentor team members are not required to complete mentor training, but at least one member per beginning teacher must be a trained mentor.
- **Portfolio:** A structured, multi-part document developed by the beginning teacher around one unit of classroom instruction to meet the current BEST assessment requirement. Teachers in ten content areas must pass the portfolio by their third year of teaching to continue their certification.

- **Portfolio Assessment Conference (PAC):** Beginning teachers who do not pass the portfolio may meet with an experienced portfolio scorer to interpret their portfolio feedback.
- **Portfolio scorer:** An experienced educator who has been trained by SDE in how to evaluate portfolios according to state guidelines and procedures.
- **Release/Released time:** Time provided to a beginning teacher to work on BEST-related activities during the school day (i.e., released from classroom duties).
- **Regional Educational Service Center (RESA):** Local Education Authorities created by the legislature in the 1960s to enable school districts within a region to come together to provide programs and services that they could not otherwise provide as single districts. There are six RESAs throughout the state.
- **RESA-BEST Field Staff:** A set of RESA employees that provides training, guidance, and other assistance to district- and school-level personnel to encourage and enable them to support beginning teachers.
- **Support:** One of the two BEST components, support is designed to attract and retain beginning teachers. Districts are required to ensure all beginning teachers are mentored in at least their first year of teaching. Support may be offered formally within BEST (e.g., mentoring) or outside the program (e.g., orientation).
- **Teacher induction program:** A program that provides the assistance and guidance necessary to successfully introduce teachers to their new careers. BEST is Connecticut's teacher induction program.
- **Teachers-in-Residence:** Experienced, highly qualified educators temporarily hired by the State Department of Education to assist with BEST support and assessment.

Foundational Skills and Competencies

I. TEACHERS HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF:

Students

1. Teachers understand how students learn and develop.
2. Teachers understand how students differ in their approaches to learning.

Content

3. Teachers are proficient in reading, writing and mathematics.
4. Teachers understand the central concepts and skills, tools of inquiry and structures of the discipline(s) they teach.

Pedagogy

5. Teachers know how to design and deliver instruction.
 6. Teachers recognize the need to vary their instructional methods.
-

II. TEACHERS APPLY THIS KNOWLEDGE BY:

Planning

1. Teachers plan instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the curriculum and the community.
2. Teachers select and/or create learning tasks that make subject matter meaningful to students.

Instructing

3. Teachers establish and maintain appropriate standards of behavior and create a positive learning environment that shows a commitment to students and their successes.
4. Teachers create instructional opportunities that support students' academic, social and personal development.
5. Teachers use effective verbal, nonverbal and media communications techniques which foster individual and collaborative inquiry.
6. Teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies that enable students to think critically, solve problems and demonstrate skills.

Assessing and Adjusting

7. Teachers use various assessment techniques to evaluate student learning and modify instruction as appropriate.
-

III. TEACHERS DEMONSTRATE PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH:

Professional and Ethical Practice

1. Teachers conduct themselves as professionals in accordance with the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (Section 10-145d-400a of the Connecticut Certification Regulations).
2. Teachers share responsibility for student achievement and well-being.

Reflection and Continuous Learning

3. Teachers continually engage in self-evaluation of the effects of their choices and actions on students and the school community.
4. Teachers seek out opportunities to grow professionally.

Leadership and Collaboration

5. Teachers serve as leaders in the school community.
6. Teachers demonstrate a commitment to their students and a passion for improving their profession.

The following sections explain more fully what each standard means in terms of critical knowledge, skills and abilities. The more detailed description of these standards is intended to encourage professional discussion of effective teaching and administration. Moreover, it should communicate expectations for professional practice to prospective teachers, practicing teachers, principals, school administrators and individuals who prepare teachers.

It is important to note, however, that this document must not be taken verbatim as a checklist or an evaluation/assessment instrument to be used to evaluate individual teachers. Expectations for the demonstration of these competencies will vary depending upon the experience level of the teacher, whether in the pre-service phase, during the initial years in the profession or during the years of experience as a veteran educator. Any assessment or evaluation instrument developed on the basis of the CCT must reflect these different expectations, as well as the use for which it is intended (e.g., for recommendation for initial licensure by an institution of higher education, for licensing by the state as part of the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program, or as a basis for local district evaluation of the nontenured or tenured teacher).

All school districts must develop their own teacher evaluation and professional development plans that address the competencies identified in the CCT. However, those plans also must take into account district and schoolwide learning goals and provide for the appropriate training of teachers and administrators about the evaluation criteria established by local school districts.

I. Teachers have knowledge of: Students Content Pedagogy

Students⁴

1. *Teachers understand how students learn and develop by:*
 - a. becoming knowledgeable about the major concepts, principles, theories and research related to the normal progression and variations in students' physical, emotional and cognitive development to construct learning opportunities that support students' development, acquisition of knowledge and motivation; and
 - b. learning about exceptionalities in learning – including learning differences, visual and perceptual differences, socio-emotional differences, special physical or mental challenges, and gifted and talented exceptionalities – and challenging students with exceptionality as well as seeking sources of support within the school.

2. *Teachers understand how students differ in their approaches to learning by:*
 - a. being aware of how student learning is influenced by language, culture, heritage, family and community values and incorporating students' experiences and community resources into instruction;
 - b. learning about and utilizing strategies for building understanding, acceptance and a positive sense of community into the classroom; and
 - c. becoming knowledgeable about language development, including the process of second-language acquisition, and employing strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English.

⁴Students include children, adolescents and adults served by the public school system.

Teachers have knowledge of . . . (continued)

Content

3. *Teachers are proficient in reading, writing and mathematics*⁵.
4. *Teachers understand the central concepts and skills, tools of inquiry and structures of the discipline(s) they teach by:*
 - a. becoming knowledgeable about the major principles and concepts of the subject to be taught⁶ and presenting appropriate lesson content;
 - b. learning about and using computer and information technology as an integral part of teaching their discipline(s);
 - c. knowing and utilizing national and state standards within their discipline(s);
 - d. being aware of the evolving nature of subject-matter knowledge and the need for keeping abreast of new ideas and understandings within one's discipline, including the impact of technology and information sources on the nature of teaching, communications and the development of knowledge;
 - e. understanding that literacy skills and processes are applicable in all content areas and helping students develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that enable students to construct meaning and make sense of the world through reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing; and
 - f. understanding and using concepts and skills inherent in numeracy to enable their students to represent physical events, work with data, reason, communicate mathematically, and make connections within their respective content area in order to solve problems.

⁵Essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics are assessed through the PRAXIS I CBT examination.

⁶Content knowledge is assessed through the PRAXIS II content-area examinations.

Teachers have knowledge of . . . (continued)

Pedagogy

5. *Teachers know how to design and deliver instruction by:*
 - a. understanding that the specific content taught is part of and connected to a larger universe of knowledge represented in a K-12 curriculum;
 - b. recognizing the importance of focusing and sequencing curricular objectives to connect with students' previous and future learning and to prepare students to master state and local achievement goals; and
 - c. choosing when and how to expand beyond the articulated curriculum to meet student needs and to make connections among different subjects and among school, career and work.

6. *Teachers recognize the need to vary their instructional methods by:*
 - a. recognizing individual differences in approaches to learning and identifying how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment; and
 - b. varying their role (e.g., instructor, facilitator, coach and audience) in the instructional process in relation to the content and purposes of instruction.

<p>II. Teachers apply this knowledge by: Planning Instructing Assessing and Adjusting</p>

Planning

1. *Teachers plan instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the curriculum and the community by:*
 - a. designing instruction and assessment to achieve long- and short-term learning goals that are specific and measurable;
 - b. selecting appropriate materials – including a wide range of technological resources – to help students find information, interpret the quality of sources, and effectively synthesize and communicate information;
 - c. sequencing learning tasks into coherent units of instruction derived from the curriculum and incorporating hands-on, real-world experiences and community resources from which students can build an understanding of abstract concepts and knowledge; and
 - d. anticipating common misperceptions, diverse levels of student interest and available resources, and making adjustments as appropriate.

2. *Teachers create a structure for learning by selecting and/or creating significant learning tasks that make subject matter meaningful to students by:*
 - a. designing tasks that meet curricular goals, build upon students' prior learning, and advance the student toward important learning goals;
 - b. addressing various learning styles, incorporating multicultural content and fostering interdisciplinary connections; and
 - c. making purposeful choices about whether students should work individually or collectively.

Teachers apply this knowledge by . . . (continued)

Instructing

3. *Teachers establish and maintain appropriate standards of behavior and create a positive learning environment that shows a deep commitment to students and their success by:*
 - a. ensuring that standards of behavior are explicit and applying them consistently over time with fitting consequences;
 - b. maximizing the amount of time spent in instruction by effectively managing routines and transitions;
 - c. organizing, allocating and managing resources of time, space, activities and attention to ensure high levels of student engagement and participation;
 - d. establishing high expectations for achievement, promoting shared responsibility for learning, and nurturing the development of ethical and responsible behavior in students;
 - e. demonstrating enthusiasm, self-confidence and caring about the well-being of students;
 - f. structuring student interactions and academic discussions in a nonthreatening, safe learning environment that supports varied learning and performance styles, student interests, and encourages intellectual risk-taking among learners; and
 - g. using understandings of individual and group motivation to foster students' independent thinking, perseverance and confidence as learners.

4. *Teachers create instructional opportunities to support students' academic, social and personal development by:*
 - a. developing effective lessons by organizing instructional activities and materials to promote achievement of lesson objectives;
 - b. employing techniques that address a variety of learning styles as well as incorporate a wide range of community and technology resources;
 - c. promoting the development of critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills and the deeper understanding of concepts; and
 - d. integrating into all curriculums and programs opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate ethical and responsible student behavior.

¹A "safe" learning environment in the context of science classrooms also implies physical safety. Beginning science teachers' knowledge of laboratory safety practices is assessed through the Science Safety Laboratory Assessment.

Teachers apply this knowledge by . . . (continued)

5. *Teachers use effective verbal, nonverbal and media communications techniques which foster individual and collective inquiry by:*
 - a. communicating clearly, using precise language and acceptable oral and written expressions that convey expectations for students; and
 - b. engaging students in purposeful discourse⁸ by using appropriate questioning strategies – i.e., knowing when to provide information, when to clarify an issue, when to model, when to lead and when to let students struggle with a difficulty.

6. *Teachers employ a variety of instructional strategies that enable students to think critically, solve problems and demonstrate skills by:*
 - a. becoming familiar with principles and techniques associated with various instructional and assessment strategies, including how to use multiple representations and explanations of concepts; and
 - b. identifying strategies to create learning experiences that make subject matter meaningful for students, encourage students pursue their own inquiries and interests, and help students make connections between school and career.

⁸Discourse is defined as the purposeful interaction between and among teachers and students, in which ideas are represented, communicated and challenged, with the goal of creating greater meaning or understanding. Discourse can be oral dialogue (conversation), written dialogue (reaction, thoughts, feedback), or visual dialogue (charts, graphs, paintings or images that represent student and teacher thinking/reasoning).

Teachers apply this knowledge by . . . (continued)

Assessing and Adjusting

7. *Teachers use various assessment techniques to evaluate student learning and modify instruction as appropriate by:*
 - a. monitoring student understanding of the lesson at appropriate points and adjusting teaching when necessary;
 - b. reflecting upon and analyzing the process of teaching based on student learning or failure to learn, and modifying future plans and instructional approaches accordingly;
 - c. sharing assessment criteria with students on a regular basis as well as guiding students to use these criteria for self-evaluation;
 - d. collecting data over time by analyzing student work and determining whether or not instructional strategies promote desired student learning outcomes; and
 - e. using multiple sources of data (such as classroom observation, student work, teacher-constructed assessment tasks, standardized test information, state examination student scores or released items, school records, etc.) to examine their students' progress in light of national, state and local performance standards.

<p>III. Teachers demonstrate professional responsibility through: Professional and Ethical Practice Reflection and Continuous Learning Leadership and Collaboration</p>

Professional and Ethical Practice

1. *Teachers conduct themselves as professionals in accordance with the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (Section 10-145d-400a of the Certification Regulations).*
2. *Teachers share responsibility for student achievement and well-being through means such as:*
 - a. working collaboratively with school administrators, colleagues and families to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning;
 - b. involving families of students in the education of their children by keeping them informed about their students' learning and seeking input to support and meet children's needs; and
 - c. identifying appropriate agencies in the larger community, businesses and professional organizations that can provide resources for students, classrooms or schools.

Reflection and Continuous Learning

3. *Teachers continually engage in self-evaluation of the effects of their choices and actions on students and the school community through means such as:*
 - a. working with administrators and colleagues to explore student work and progress, to examine the effectiveness of instructional strategies, to identify school and program needs based on student data, and to ensure that the collective needs of the school are addressed.
4. *Teachers seek out opportunities to grow professionally through means such as:*
 - a. sharing practices with professional colleagues within the school or district; and
 - b. enriching their knowledge about content, learners, pedagogy, technology and the U.S. public school system through the examination of professional literature, participation in professional organizations, attendance at professional development seminars or ongoing graduate-level course work.

Teachers demonstrate professional responsibility through . . . (continued)

Leadership and Collaboration

5. *Teachers serve as leaders in the school community through means such as:*
 - a. working with colleagues to create a positive, collaborative school culture;
 - b. working with colleagues and/or community leaders to secure community support for students and schools and actively promoting strategies that support the continuous improvement of student learning; and
 - c. working with colleagues in addressing other identified needs of the school and student body.

6. *Teachers demonstrate a commitment to their students and a passion for improving their profession through such means as:*
 - a. bringing their enthusiasm about learning and about life into their daily work; and
 - b. showing a commitment to developing the minds and characters of their students.

Appendix B

Alternate Route to Certification

The Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program is a teacher training program for people who did not complete either a teacher preparation course of study in college or a post-graduate degree in education. ARC is designed to prepare experienced professionals with at least Bachelor's degrees to become teachers in geographical and subject areas with teacher shortages. The state-run ARC program is the focus of this subsection, although other organizations – for example, Teach for America – are credentialed by the state to deliver their own ARC programs. The state's ARC program has prepared about 3,400 teachers since it began in 1988. Graduates of the ARC program who are hired as teachers become part of the BEST program but they are required to receive enhanced support.

Organization and resources. ARC is part of the Department of Higher Education (DHE). The State Board of Education, however, must agree to any proposed programmatic changes. ARC is funded through tuition charged to participants, an ongoing program budget surplus, and its general fund allocation. The Higher Education Board of Governors approves ARC's budget.

Recruitment and selection. Individual applicants proceed through the recruitment and selection process. ARC works with certain programs, many of which are in the science and technology sector, aimed at transitioning mid-career professionals into the classroom. Others learn of the program through the DHE or SDE websites. Applicants must submit a comprehensive written application, college grades, and either college entry exam results or Praxis I test scores. Some are selected for admission interviews, and of these, about 240 applicants – approximately 40 percent of the applicant pool – are accepted into ARC each spring.

Program description. ARC provides participants with a series of courses, student teaching, and assistance upon becoming a teacher. ARC offers two sessions, one that meets on weekends throughout a school year and another that consists of intensive training during the summer. By the end of ARC courses, participants must have passed the Praxis II (content) exams in order to be recommended for certification.

ARC participants are taught both teaching methods and content area courses by ARC faculty. The ARC faculty is hired by the program staff, and often are adjuncts at colleges' teacher preparation programs. Each faculty member must be an experienced teacher, hold at least a Master's degree, and possess the state's professional (highest-level) teaching certificate.

ARC participants have a student teaching experience, during which they are evaluated by the program's coaches, who are described below. Student teaching lasts about four full-time weeks. Those who are teaching under a Durational Area Shortage Permit while taking ARC classes need not complete student teaching. ARC participants graduate from the program upon successful completion of the courses, student teaching, and final evaluation.

ARC graduates who are placed into teaching positions receive support from the program's coaches and seminars. ARC coaches are retired administrators and teachers who are paid to visit and assist the teachers on a one-to-one basis. At least two in-person meetings are expected, although many more may occur. About one-third of ARC participants decline coaching because their BEST mentors (see below) provide sufficient assistance. In addition to the ARC coaches' mentoring duties, they also lead seminars for the program's beginning teachers. One or two free seminars are held each month for ARC graduates who are in their first through third years of teaching. Seminar topics include parental communication, observation, multicultural teaching, and special education, among others. Participants receive 0.3 CEUs for each seminar attended.

Certification and BEST. All ARC graduates initially receive a special 90-day certificate to teach. ARC graduates are the only teachers who are given the 90-day certificate. Their superintendents must recommend them for the initial educator certificate to continue employment beyond the 90 days. This system, which has been in place since the program began, is due to the relative shortness of the training period.

All ARC graduates become part of BEST. They receive more support, however, than other beginning teachers. Each ARC beginning teacher must work with a BEST mentor for two years, in addition to receiving assistance from the ARC coach. Each ARC teacher must also have ten observation occasions.

Durational Shortage Area Permits

Districts receive Durational Shortage Area Permits (DSAPs) to fill positions for which certified teachers are unavailable. Most often, urban districts and those seeking teachers in high-demand fields, such as secondary science, seek DSAPs. Teachers hired under a DSAP have not completed a teacher preparation program and therefore cannot be certified yet, but they have met several requirements. In 2006-2007, 560 people – about one percent of the state's current teachers – taught under a DSAP.

Formal requirements. R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-16 lists two primary tasks a school district must complete under BEST to assist a DSAP teacher. First, the district is required to assign a mentor or mentor team for at least two years. Second, the district must create and implement a special plan of supervision. Each plan must incorporate an orientation to the district, in addition to at least ten classroom observations of or demonstrations for the teacher.

Recruitment and selection. A district submits one application to SDE for each requested DSAP candidate. The application requires the district to describe efforts that

were made to hire a certified teacher and why other applicants are unacceptable. In addition, the district should explain why this particular selected teacher is the best candidate to fill the shortage. Finally, the district is required by the regulations (R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-145d-421) to submit documentation that the teacher meets all the following requirements:

- holds a Bachelor’s degree;
- meets the Praxis I requirement for entry into a teacher preparation program, or receives a waiver based on college entry standardized test scores;
- has completed at least 12 semester hours of credit in the permit subject;
- has enrolled in or been admitted to a Connecticut teacher preparation program leading to certification, and is taking at least nine credits each academic year;
- satisfies the Praxis II requirement in the permit subject for certification by SDE; and
- agrees to be supervised for one full year by the higher education institution signing the DSAP.

Most of the requirements were stipulated in the program’s original regulations. The final two restrictions listed above were became effective SDE policy on September 1, 2005. They were added at the direction of federal officials to ensure DSAP teachers were highly qualified, in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Seven of Connecticut’s sixteen approved teacher preparation programs do not offer DSAP supervision.

Once hired, teachers under a DSAP become part of the local collective bargaining unit, and subject to the unit’s agreement with the district.

Each DSAP may be renewed for two subsequent years, provided the teacher continues to meet all the requirements above. A teacher may teach under a DSAP for additional years only if she has changed certification areas, e.g. moved from a DSAP and coursework in elementary education to secondary English. Table B-1 provides a breakdown of DSAPs by year of issuance in the 2006-2007 school year.

Table B-1. Teachers Hired Under a DSAP: By Year of Issuance 2006-2007 School Year		
Issuance (Year)	Number	Percent
First	283	51%
Second	181	32%
Third	94	17%
Fourth or More	2	<1%
Total	560	100%
Source of data: SDE		

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Teacher Induction Sub-committee **BEST Advisory Committee** **Recommendations**

The BEST Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of the Connecticut Teacher Induction Committee, completed its work on June 6, 2006. The sub-committee met on seven occasions, reviewing the research on teacher induction, survey data on the current teacher induction program (BEST), and feedback from teachers currently completing or having recently completed the BEST portfolio. This report identifies for the Teacher Continuum Committee the major issues with regards to the current induction program that need to be addressed and corresponding recommendations to address those issues. There are three areas for your consideration:

- **Support for new teachers in Connecticut**
- **The BEST Portfolio Assessment Process**
- **Transitions while a new support and licensure program is developed and validated**

SUPPORT

To address the primary issues of:

- Inequity and availability of in-district support of trained mentors in the same content area/grade level; available release time for meeting with beginning teachers (BTs); stipends/incentives to serve in role etc.
- Inconsistencies in mentor quality
- Need for on-going intensive support and on-going training for mentors.
- Induction support not valued nor promoted as a cultural norm (BEST not viewed as part of comprehensive district induction process and a means to promote a collaborative learning community within a school).
- Teachers needing support beyond Year 1
- The need to encourage support, and teach ongoing reflective practice

The committee recommends the following:

Connecticut State Department of Education will establish a corps of educators who will provide direct support to beginning teachers and/or teachers new to Connecticut for no less than 2 years.

- I. Induction/Support Corps members:
 - will be assigned to new teacher in the same discipline and/or grade level
 - will provide a developmental continuum of support to meet the different needs of beginning teachers
 - will not have full-time teaching responsibilities
 - could be, but not limited to:
 - current district mentors
 - teachers on "special assignment"
 - retired teachers
 - teachers on leave
 - will be required to attend on-going training in best practice to support beginning teachers
 - will be compensated
- II. Connecticut State Department of Education and RESCs will work cooperatively to identify and recruit a cadre of teachers to serve a role in this process
- III. Connecticut State Department of Education will develop a mechanism for accountability of Induction/Support Corps members (quality of mentoring) to provide equity across districts and in classrooms
- IV. Connecticut State Department of Education will provide districts entitlement grants to support the stipend/released time for Induction/Support Corps members in those district where an Induction Corps exists and the above standards are met.
- V. Connecticut State Department of Education should explore career ladder opportunities for teachers involved in the Induction/Support Corps.

To address the primary issue of:

- Inconsistent involvement of principals/direct supervisors

The committee recommends the following:

Connecticut State Department of Education will develop procedures to define, expand, and support the role of the district board and administrators/supervisors in new teacher induction.

- I. Connecticut State Department of Education will establish policy and develop procedures that require district central office staff to document the principal's participation in the induction of each new teacher during his/her first three years. In addition, the availability of resources should be linked to administrative involvement in the teacher induction process.
- II. Connecticut State Department of Education will establish policy that requires supervisors (092 certification) to earn a specified number of CEU's related to teacher induction/support.
- III. Connecticut State Department of Education and Department of Higher Education work to include in administrative preparation programs (092) experiences and coursework related to teacher induction

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT PROCESS

A. To address the primary issues of:

- Support for the development of a teacher's portfolio is becoming a private enterprise
- The portfolio has become a process/format for "passing" rather than a method to improve craft
- Lack of differentiation in the portfolio assessment process
- Equity of video resources
- Portfolio being seen as the BEST process
- A single high stakes assessment has led to dishonesty in the portfolio preparation process
- Unintended outcomes and consequences are by-products of the portfolio (i.e. negative impact on instruction and student learning)
- No feedback is provided in reference to teaching – one source assessment
- There are varying degrees of clarity of process and handbooks for different subject areas
- Timing of score/feedback
- In some situations the portfolio is a duplicate experience (if portfolio is required in higher ed.)
- Lack of and/or negative support from the Connecticut State Department of Education

- Inconsistent information being provided to beginning teachers by seminar leaders
- Portfolio process is perceived as artificial

The committee recommends the following:

The Connecticut State Department of Education will identify, develop, and pilot alternatives to the portfolio assessment. Alternatives must demonstrate the quality of instruction required to receive licensure in Connecticut.

(NOTE: The advisory committee has identified a few possible alternatives should the Teacher Continuum like to review an initial list.)

Until alternatives can be developed, piloted, and validated the portfolio will remain in place with specific changes listed below:

- Portfolios will be scored as “Proficient” or “Not Proficient”
- Elementary teachers will choose one portfolio for submission, either numeracy or literacy, for instruction over 5-8 hours
- Secondary English teachers will submit a single integrated portfolio on the interpretation of literature and writing process, for instruction over 5 to 7 hour
- Beginning teachers be given the option to complete the portfolio in Years 1, 2, or 3 with equivalent timeframes for completion (due May of each year)
- Detailed and specific feedback with comments from scorers will be provided for all submissions
- The State Department of Education will develop an appeal process for portfolio scores
- Department of Education will provide additional support in teaching pedagogy and unit design for ARC candidates

The advisory committee also addressed the video component of the BEST Portfolio as part of the transition plan. Significant difference of opinion was found and the committee could not reconcile their differences. This issue needs to be reviewed by the Teacher Continuum Committee.

The issue: Equity and access to equipment is a major problem. The committee could not reach consensus on the elimination of the video component of the BEST Portfolio. The question: If the video component of the BEST Portfolio is eliminated, what are the implications for licensure?

Consensus could not be reached on the following transition recommendations:

Eliminate the video component of the BEST Portfolio and replace it with principal/supervisor observation of the lesson and principal sign-off

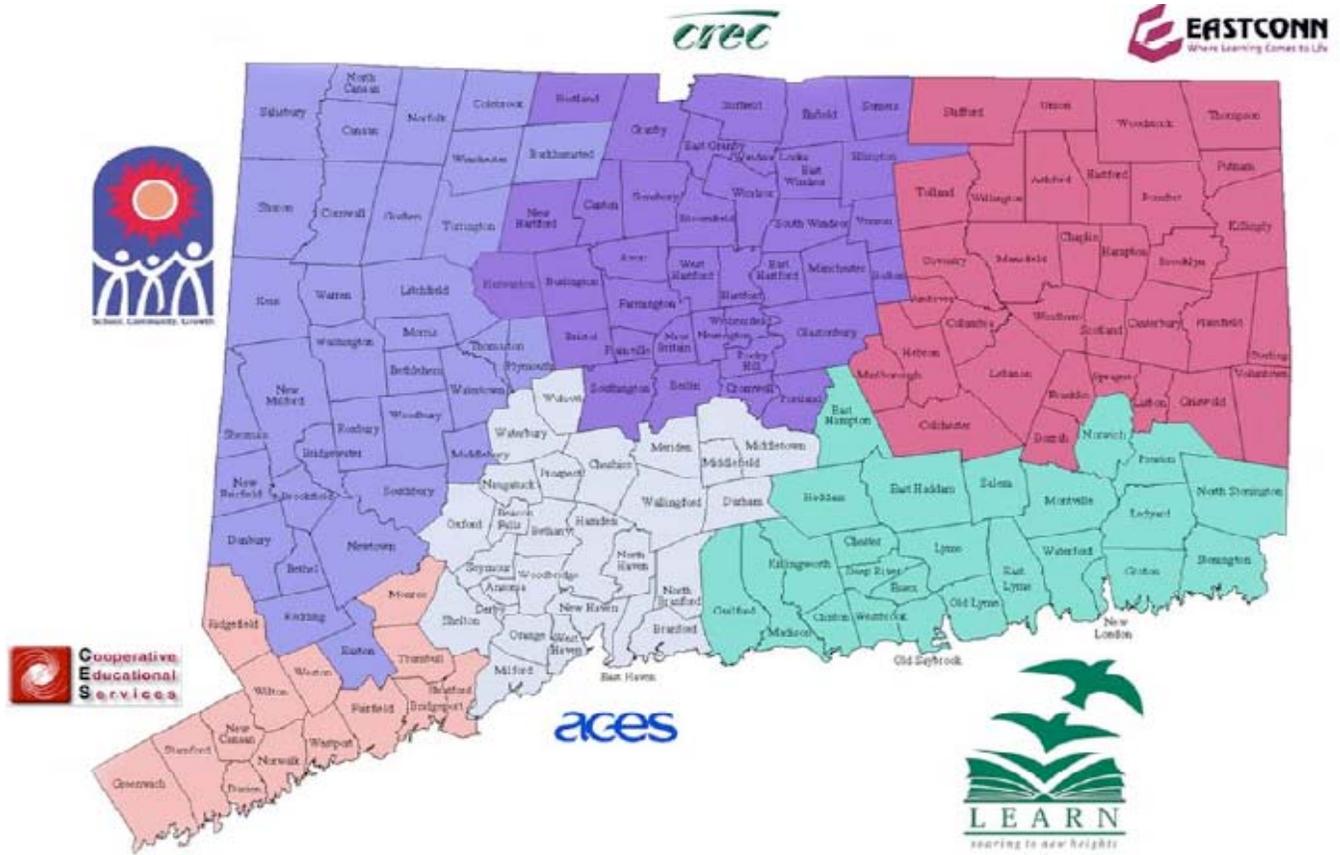
Or

Maintain the video component of the BEST Portfolio and the Connecticut State Department of Education establishes a policy that requires equipment and personnel for videotaping and editing be available to each Connecticut teacher completing the BEST Portfolio Assessment.

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Appendix D

RESC Map



Source: CT RESC Alliance, <http://www.ctrescalliance.org/ctrescs.html>

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Appendix E

Table E. Mentor Stipend Contract Provisions by School District: 2006-2007 School Year						
School District	Stipend for Single Year One Beginning Teacher			Additional Amount for:		Total Stipend for Two Years
	\$100-\$499	\$500-\$999	\$1,000 and Up	Year Two	Each Additional Mentee	
Ashford		\$524		---	\$524	\$524
Avon	\$202			---	---	\$202
Barkhamsted	\$220			\$420 ^b	---	\$640
Bethel	\$300			\$300 ^b	--	\$300
Bloomfield		\$500		---	\$500	\$500
Bolton		\$500		\$800 ^b	---	\$1,300
Bridgeport		\$500		---	\$100	\$500
Brookfield			\$1,355	---	---	\$1,355
Canaan ^a	\$206			\$206 ^b	\$206	\$214
Canterbury		\$590		---	---	\$590
Canton	\$210			---	\$210	\$210
Chaplin	\$200			\$450	\$200; \$450	\$650
Clinton		\$796		---	---	\$796
Columbia		\$800		---	---	\$800
Cornwall	\$309			\$309 ^b	---	\$618
Coventry	\$200			---	---	\$200
Cromwell	\$275			\$275 ^b	---	\$550
Darien		\$500		\$500 ^b	\$500	\$1,000
East Granby ^a	\$400			---	\$200 ^c	\$600
East Haven		\$772		---	\$772	\$772
East Windsor		\$500		---	---	\$500
Eastford	\$215			---	\$215	\$215
Easton			\$1,000	---	\$1,000	\$1,000
Fairfield			\$1,077	---	---	\$1,077
Gilbert School ^a		\$500		----	---	\$500
Glastonbury	\$400			\$400 ^b	---	\$800
Granby ^a		\$500		---	\$500	\$500
Greenwich		\$750		---	\$750 ^c	\$750
Groton		\$600		---	\$600	\$600
Guilford ^a			\$1,188	---	---	\$1,188
Hebron	\$450			---	---	\$450
Kent ^a	\$206			\$206 ^b	\$206	\$412
Lebanon	\$106			---	---	\$106
Litchfield			\$1,000	---	\$1,000 ^c	\$1,000
Marlborough	\$300			\$600	---	\$900

Table E. Mentor Stipend Contract Provisions by School District: 2006-2007 School Year, Continued

School District	Stipend for Single Year One Beginning Teacher			Additional Amount for:		Total Stipend for Two Years
	\$100-\$499	\$500-\$999	\$1,000 and Up	Year Two	Each Additional Mentee	
Monroe	\$100			---	---	\$100
New Hartford	\$450			\$450 ^d	\$450	\$900
North Canaan	\$200			\$200 ^b	---	\$400
Oxford ^a	\$227			---	---	\$227
Portland	\$329			---	---	\$329
Preston	\$300			---	---	\$300
Redding			\$1,500	\$2,000 ^{b, d}	---	\$3,500
Region #1	\$200			\$200 ^b	---	\$400
Region #4		\$937		---	---	\$937
Region #6			\$1,373	---	---	\$1,373
Region #7		\$866		---	---	\$866
Region #8	\$450			---	---	\$450
Region #9			\$1,468	---	---	\$1,468
Region #11	\$208			\$209 ^b	---	\$417
Region #12		\$557		---	\$557	\$557
Region #13		\$900		---	---	\$900
Region #15 ^a	\$300			---	---	\$300
Region #17	\$377			---	---	\$377
Ridgefield		\$500		---	\$500	\$500
Rocky Hill		\$700		---	\$700	\$700
Salisbury	\$257			\$258	---	\$515
Seymour	\$350			---	---	\$350
Sharon	\$309			---	\$309	\$309
Shelton ^a	\$308			---	---	\$308
Sherman		\$865		---	---	\$865
Simsbury		\$500		\$800 ^b	---	\$1,300
Somers		\$858		---	---	\$858
South Windsor		\$500		---	---	\$500
Sprague	\$133			---	---	\$133
Stafford		\$600		---	---	\$600
Stamford			\$1,061	\$1,061	---	\$2,122
Suffield			\$850	---	---	\$850
Thomaston ^a		\$500		---	---	\$500
Thompson	\$450			\$450	---	\$900
Torrington		\$540		---	\$540	\$540
Trumbull	\$300			\$300	---	\$600
Union	\$300			---	\$300	\$300

**Table E. Mentor Stipend Contract Provisions by School District: 2006-2007 School Year,
Continued**

School District	Stipend for Single Year One Beginning Teacher			Additional Amount for:		Total Stipend for Two Years
	\$100- \$499	\$500-\$999	\$1,000 and Up	Year Two	Each Additional Mentee	
Voluntown		\$617		---	---	\$617
Waterbury		\$500		---	\$500	\$500
Watertown			See note ^c	---	---	---
Westbrook			\$1,206	---	---	\$1,206
Weston	\$300			\$500	\$300; \$500	\$800
Westport	\$300			---	---	\$300
Wilton		\$615		---	\$308	\$615
Windsor ^a	\$257			---	\$257	\$257
Windsor Locks			\$1,000	---	---	\$1,000
Wolcott	\$250			---	\$250	\$250
Woodbridge	\$200			\$300	---	\$500
Woodstock	\$300			---	\$100 ^c	\$300
Woodstock Academy		\$684		---	---	\$684

^a Language for 2006-2007 contracts of these districts was unavailable, so language for 2007-2008 was used.

^b These districts only issue the Year Two mentoring payment if the same beginning teacher is mentored in the second year.

^c These districts limit the additional per mentee payment to either the amount shown, or more often, to the amount multiplied by two, regardless of how many beginning teachers are mentored.

^d These districts, New Hartford and Redding, give an additional \$400 and \$250, respectively, to mentors who are also portfolio scorers, when they work with Year Two beginning teachers.

^e Watertown established a mentor stipend fund. Mentors are to evenly split the fund but receive no more than \$1,500 per mentor.

Source of data: Connecticut Education Association and American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut

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Appendix F

Figure F. School Districts With No Mentor Provisions in Contracts: 2006-2007 School Year		
ACES	Hartland	Old Saybrook
Amity	Integrated Day	Orange
Andover	Isaac	Plainfield Plainville
Ansonia	Killingly	Plymouth
Berlin	Ledyard	Pomfret
Bethany	Lisbon	Project Learn
Bozrah	Madison	Putnam
Branford	Manchester	Region #10
Bristol	Mansfield	Region #14
Brooklyn	Meriden	Region #16
CES	Middletown	Region #18
Cheshire	Milford	Region #19
Colchester	Montville	Salem
Colebrook	Naugatuck	Scotland
CREC	New Britain	Shared Services
Danbury	New Canaan	Southington
Derby	New Fairfield	Sterling
EASTCONN	New Haven	Stonington
East Haddam	New London	Stratford
East Hartford	New Milford	Tolland
East Hampton	Newington	Vernon
East Lyme	Newtown	Wallingford
Ellington	North Branford	Waterford
Enfield	North Haven	West Hartford
Farmington	North Stonington	West Haven
Griswold	Norfolk	Wethersfield
Hamden	Norwalk	Willington
Hampton	Norwich	Winchester
Hartford	Norwich Free Academy	Windham

Source of data: Connecticut Education Association and American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut

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BEST Portfolio Performance Rubric for Social Studies 2007

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN: How well does the teacher use his/her knowledge of students to organize content, instructional strategies, materials and resources around essential social studies concepts?

		Performance Continuum			
Performance Indicators		The portfolio unit focused on learning related social studies events or topics.	The portfolio unit focused on understanding social studies concepts and their applications in different contexts.	The portfolio unit focused on learning social studies concepts.	The portfolio unit focused on understanding social studies concepts and their applications in different contexts.
I.1 Structure and conceptual focus of the unit	<p>a. The portfolio unit focused on loosely related social studies events or topics.</p> <p>b. The portfolio unit focused mainly on social studies facts.</p>				
I.2 Students' learning needs	There was limited evidence that the teacher used knowledge of students' learning needs to design instruction.	The teacher designed instruction to address students' general learning needs	The teacher designed instruction to address students' specific academic learning needs and interests.		
I.3 Resources and activities	The unit's resources and activities provided students with limited opportunities to actively learn the content.	The unit's resources and activities provided students with opportunities to actively learn and understand concepts.	The unit's resources and activities provided students with opportunities to actively explore the unit's concepts and their relevance to different historical or current events.		

BEST Portfolio Performance Rubric for Social Studies 2007

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION: How well did the teacher actively engage students in discourse, learning through inquiry and the use of essential social studies skills?

Performance Indicators		Performance Continuum			
II.1 Essential social studies skills use	Student work indicated there was little or no opportunity for students to develop or use essential social studies skills.	Student work indicated the application of essential social studies skills to enhance the learning of content.	Student work indicated the application of essential social studies skills to critically examine unit concepts.	Student work indicated the application of essential social studies skills to critically examine the unit's main concept and its relationship to a broader theme.	
	<p>a. In the featured activity, students responded to fact-based questions or summarized information about a topic.</p> <p>b. The inquiry activity was not clearly related to the concepts or issues addressed in the unit.</p>	In the featured inquiry activity, students summarized information and expressed opinions about a unit-related issue.	In the featured inquiry activity, students analyzed information to draw evidence-based conclusions about a unit-related issue.	In the featured inquiry activity, students analyzed primary and secondary sources, considered alternate points of view, and drew evidence-based conclusions about a unit-related issue.	
II.3 Student discourse	<p>a. During class discourse the teacher involved students in responding primarily to fact-based questions.</p> <p>b. The class discourse was unrelated to the content or issues addressed in the unit.</p>	During class discourse the teacher engaged students in expressing opinions about unit-related content.	During class discourse the teacher engaged students in expressing informed opinions about unit-related issues.	During class discourse the teacher engaged students in expressing informed opinions and considering different points of view about unit-related issues.	

BEST Portfolio Performance Rubric for Social Studies 2007

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING: How well did the teacher monitor and assess student learning, communicate expectations, and provide useful feedback?

Performance Indicators	Performance Continuum				
	The teacher monitored students' completion of tasks and activities.	The teacher monitored students' progress towards developing an understanding of the lesson's content.	The teacher monitored students' progress towards understanding of the lesson's concepts.	The teacher monitored students' progress towards understanding the unit's main concepts.	The teacher monitored students' progress towards understanding the unit's main concepts.
III.1 Daily Adjustments	Findings about student learning were rarely used to adjust instruction.	Findings about student learning were mainly used to adjust pace and procedures.	Findings about student learning were mainly used to adjust instruction for the whole class.	Findings about student learning were used to adjust instruction for the whole class and specific groups of students.	Findings about student learning were used to adjust instruction for the whole class and specific groups of students.
III.2 Daily Adjustments	Findings about student learning were rarely used to adjust instruction.	Findings about student learning were mainly used to adjust pace and procedures.	Findings about student learning were used to adjust instruction for the whole class.	Findings about student learning were used to adjust instruction for the whole class and specific groups of students.	Findings about student learning were used to adjust instruction for the whole class and specific groups of students.
III.3 The type(s) of student performance measured by the assessment methods	The assessments provided information mainly about students' recall and summary of social studies information.	The assessments provided information mainly about students' knowledge of the unit's content and the use of some essential social studies skills.	The assessments provided information about students' understanding of the unit concepts and the use of essential social studies skills.	The assessments provided information about students' understanding of the unit's main concepts, the use of essential social studies skills and their ability to make connections between the unit's concepts and other historical or current events.	The assessments provided information about students' understanding of the unit's main concepts, the use of essential social studies skills and their ability to make connections between the unit's concepts and other historical or current events.
III.4 Evaluation criteria for student assessments	a. The evaluation criteria for student work generally focused on task procedures. b. The evaluation criteria for student work were unclear.	The evaluation criteria for student work focused on understanding the unit's content.	The evaluation criteria for student work focused on understanding the unit's concepts.	The evaluation criteria for student work focused on understanding the unit's concepts and using essential social studies skills.	The evaluation criteria for student work focused on understanding the unit's concepts and using essential social studies skills.
III.5 Feedback provided to students about the quality of their work	a. Assessment feedback provided to students about the quality of their work was limited. b. Assessment feedback provided to students about the quality of their work was inaccurate or unclear.	Assessment feedback primarily consisted of general comments about students' strengths and/or weaknesses.	Assessment feedback included a mix of general and specific comments about students' strengths and weaknesses.	Assessment feedback provided specific comments about students' strengths and weaknesses and offered some strategies to improve their performance.	Assessment feedback provided specific comments about students' strengths and weaknesses and offered some strategies to improve their performance.

BEST Portfolio Performance Rubric for Social Studies 2007

ANALYSIS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING: How well does the teacher analyze student learning and reflect on the connections between teaching and learning?

Performance Continuum	
<p>Performance Indicators</p> <p>IV.1 Analysis of student learning</p>	<p>The teacher's analysis of student learning focused mainly on student understanding of content and development and use of essential social studies skills. Some of the conclusions were supported by the submitted student work.</p>
<p>IV.2 Reflection on practice</p>	<p>The teacher's analysis of student learning focused mainly on students' learning of the content.</p>
<p>The teacher's analysis of student learning was limited or vague and/or focused on task completion, grades or behavior.</p>	<p>The reflective commentary on teaching described general connections between teaching practices and students' learning.</p>
<p>The reflective commentary on teaching described limited connections between teaching practices and students' learning.</p>	<p>The reflective commentary on teaching described specific connections between teaching practices and students' learning outcomes and, based on those connections, identified relevant improvements.</p>

Source: SDE