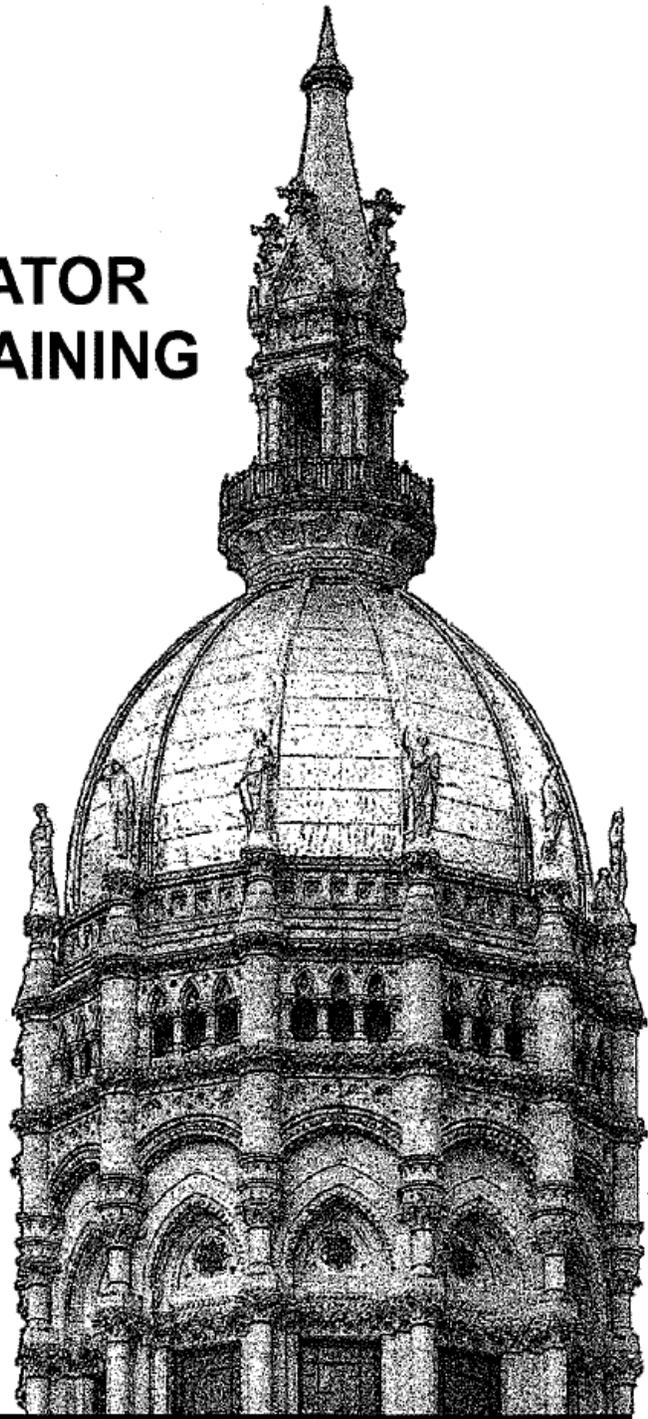


BEGINNING EDUCATOR SUPPORT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

DECEMBER 2007



**Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee**

Connecticut General Assembly

**CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee is a joint, bipartisan, statutory committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. It was established in 1972 to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and statutory compliance of selected state agencies and programs, recommending remedies where needed. In 1975, the General Assembly expanded the committee's function to include investigations, and during the 1977 session added responsibility for "sunset" (automatic program termination) performance reviews. The committee was given authority to raise and report bills in 1985.

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Bonnine T. Labbadia, Executive Secretary

Project Staff

Brian Beisel
Janelle Sagness

STATE CAPITOL ROOM 506

HARTFORD, CT 06106

(860) 240-0300

e-mail: pri@cga.ct.gov

www.cga.ct.gov/pri/index.htm

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW
& INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

**Beginning Educator Support
and Training Program**

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Executive Summary

Beginning Educator Support and Training Program

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study of Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program in April 2007. The study focused on the effectiveness of BEST in achieving its intended objectives of supporting beginning teachers in Connecticut and assessing their overall skills and qualifications. The program's overall purpose is to ensure public school students in Connecticut are taught by teachers who have been determined competent in accordance with the teaching standards approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE). For this reason, the BEST program is most appropriately viewed as one component of Connecticut's educator continuum structured to ensure teacher effectiveness. Findings and recommendations accordingly were made in several areas, including proposals to ensure the state's teacher preparation programs instruct future teachers in how to teach according to the state standards and BEST, to improve support provided to beginning teachers, and to make the assessment more effective.

The program review committee believes that if the state expects its teachers to teach according to the principles contained in Connecticut's teaching standards and measured through the BEST assessment, three critical components must be coordinated. First, prospective teachers in Connecticut need to be instructed in the state's teaching standards and the BEST program starting during their teacher preparation. Second, the BEST program – in both its support and assessment components – must ensure teachers learn and use effective teaching practices as embedded in the state standards. Third, teachers must be held to those same standards for the rest of their careers in Connecticut. Although entire the educator continuum was not part of the original focus of this study, there is agreement among State Department of Education (SDE) personnel, program staff, administrators, and teachers' union representatives that more than just the BEST program must be strengthened if Connecticut expects its teachers to fully learn and consistently implement the state's teaching standards.

Background and Resources

The Beginning Educator Support and Training program was developed as the state's teacher induction program during the late 1980s by the State Department of Education in conjunction with input from educators throughout the state. Changes to the program's support and assessment components have been made over the past two decades, although the program's goals have remained the same. Most notably, the BEST assessment method changed to the current portfolio¹ in the late 1990s, concurrently with the adoption of new state teaching standards that emphasized the importance of student learning. For the 2006-07 school year, a total of 42,843 certified teachers provided instruction in Connecticut public schools with just over 4,900 beginning teachers participating in the BEST program in some capacity.

¹ Under BEST, a portfolio is a structured document developed by a beginning teacher around a unit of classroom instruction. The portfolio includes a written part and a video component of the teacher in the classroom. Both components are interrelated and are based on specific questions (i.e., prompts) developed by SDE.

The financial resources available to BEST declined sharply in the early 1990s. The program's budget currently is about \$4 million. BEST is administered by SDE with contracted assistance from the six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) around the state and a firm specializing in occupational assessments. Overall, the committee found SDE has focused mainly on the assessment component of BEST, to the detriment of the support component.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Future teachers in Connecticut receive their first instruction in how to teach (i.e., pedagogy), as well as their first teaching experiences, during their teacher preparation. The state's 20 teacher preparation programs are required by regulation to teach their teacher candidates according to BEST and the state's teaching standards. The committee found, however, it is unclear to what extent the programs' curricula are aligned with BEST or the standards. Further, an analysis of BEST assessment data revealed few significant differences among the rates at which teacher preparation programs graduates fail the BEST assessment.

Support

All educators new to teaching in Connecticut must receive BEST support. Support is given mainly by designated mentors, with a range of supplemental support provided by other teachers and administrators at beginning teachers' schools and districts, SDE, and the RESCs.

The committee found the area of BEST in most need of attention is the level and quality of support for beginning teachers. A key goal of the support component of BEST is to familiarize beginning teachers with Connecticut's teaching standards, which are the foundation of the BEST assessment and describe how all the state's teachers are supposed to be teaching. For a large portion of beginning teachers in Connecticut who responded to the committee staff's survey, however, this level of meaningful support is not reached.

The committee recommended changes be made to ensure beginning teachers receive proper support through BEST during their initial years of teaching in the state. The goal of the recommendations is to ensure all beginning teachers receive substantive mentoring from trained mentors with relevant expertise. Improved support will better prepare beginning teachers for the BEST assessment and for teaching according to the state's teaching standards. In addition, national research indicates strengthened support may lead to other positive results, including lower costs to school districts due to reduced teacher turnover and positive gains in student achievement resulting from more effective teaching. With the committee's recommendations, the BEST support component should provide beginning teachers with more consistent and substantive support that builds up to the BEST assessment.

Assessment

By the end of their second year, approximately 90 percent of beginning teachers must complete the BEST assessment, which currently is a portfolio.² The committee study determined

² Beginning teachers in elementary education, music, physical education, language arts, science, math, social studies, special education, visual arts, and world languages must submit a BEST portfolio. Beginning teachers in

the portfolio – as an assessment method – is a valid and reliable instrument. The portfolio assessment generally meets the program’s key goal of ensuring all beginning teachers are at or above the minimum level of competency as measured against the state’s standards within the Common Core of Teaching. There is a low percentage – usually ten percent annually – of beginning teachers who do not pass their portfolio assessments on the first attempt, and only one to two percent ultimately fail after three attempts. It stands to reason that the higher the pass rate, the stronger the indication that teachers meet at least the minimum standards for effective teaching established in Connecticut.

At the same time, the committee determined several changes to the BEST portfolio assessment would make it a more meaningful process from which beginning teachers will learn. Generally, the recommendations focus on making the portfolio process less arduous for beginning teachers, while maintaining the state’s goal of making sure beginning teachers meet specific teaching standards.

Changes to the BEST assessment – in conjunction with those made in the teacher preparation and BEST support areas – are designed to make the current BEST process a more useful and relevant experience that fully captures what beginning teachers have learned about effective teaching in their teacher preparation, through classroom experiences, and from their mentors during the initial years of teaching in Connecticut. Taken together, the committee’s recommendations have the ability to positively impact and advance the knowledge and skills of Connecticut’s beginning teachers.

Recommendations

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee adopted the following recommendations.

- 1. The State Department of Education should undertake a comprehensive review of the alignment of all the accredited teacher preparation programs with the state’s teaching standards as contained in the Common Core of Teaching. The review should also examine how the program approval process can be used by the department of education to ensure teacher preparation programs fully align with the state’s teaching standards.**
- 2. The State Department of Education should require teacher preparation programs to use a standards-based student teaching rubric. The department should require each program to either adopt the rubric already developed, adding on to it if desired as currently is permitted, or to submit its own rubric for approval or rejection. If a program’s own rubric is rejected by the department of education, the program should be required to use the standards-based rubric until a sufficient rubric is submitted and approved.**

other content areas, such as technical education and home economics, are not required to submit a portfolio because the requirements have not yet been developed for those areas.

- 3. The State Department of Education shall examine why disparities exist in support for beginning teachers in school districts within District Reference Group I (as designated by the education department) compared to other school districts throughout the state and report its recommendations for addressing the disparities to the legislature's committee(s) of cognizance by February 1, 2009.**
- 4. The State Department of Education should develop a data collection and evaluation system for accurately monitoring the mentoring component of BEST. As part of the data collection system, the department should require the name(s) not only of the mentor, as is currently expected, but also, when assigned, of mentor team members to be submitted by the district as part of the beginning teacher's staff file within SDE. The data collected should be used to improve the quality and relevance of mentoring required under BEST.**
- 5. The State Department of Education should keep its mentoring monitoring efforts separate from any surveys or documents relating to assessment submitted by the beginning teachers to their mentors and/or to the department.**
- 6. The State Department of Education should create and implement a collection of sequenced support modules based on the state standards contained in the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching, effective teaching methods, and beginning teachers' needs, through which mentors will guide their assigned new teachers. Starting no later than the 2009-2010 school year, the department should require mentors and beginning teachers to use the module system and to submit proof of its completion to their appropriate building-level administrators. Each school district should submit annual statements to the department certifying the progress of its beginning teachers in successfully completing the mentoring requirements.**
- 7. C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to require a reduced classroom teaching workload for BEST mentors as determined by the school district. Those mentors who simultaneously teach part-time must have a substantially lower caseload. The workload reduction shall be structured to coincide with a beginning teacher's daily preparation time. Districts may choose to provide full-time mentors instead of, or in combination with, mentors who have a reduced classroom teaching workload. Districts shall be required not to exceed a caseload of 15 beginning teachers per full-time mentor.**
- 8. The state shall provide funds to districts to reduce their costs of: 1) hiring additional personnel to fill classes for mentors who are currently employed as teachers; and/or 2) the salary or hourly wages for those educators hired solely to be mentors. Mentors who are employed simultaneously in another capacity shall receive their same salary.**
- 9. C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to allow not only current teachers, but also retired teachers, retired administrators, teachers on leave, and education faculty from the state's various colleges and universities to become mentors.**

- 10. The State Department of Education should work collaboratively with local school districts, Regional Educational Service Centers, and other constituencies associated with BEST to identify, recruit, and train an expanded pool of mentors.**
- 11. The State Department of Education should standardize the frequency with which beginning teachers and their mentors/mentor teams are required to meet. The standard should take into consideration the frequency necessary to enable mentors and beginning teachers to successfully complete the mentoring module system recommended above.**
- 12. C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to require beginning teachers to receive formal mentoring during their first two years in the BEST program upon receipt of their state initial teacher certification.**
- 13. The State Department of Education should develop guidelines requiring any potential mentor to first be approved by: 1) his or her current district, for those who are employed, certified teachers; 2) his or her last school district, for those who are retired certified administrators or retired certified teachers; or 3) his or her current supervisor, for those who are employed as university professors specializing in education, or his or her former supervisor, for retired university professors specializing in education.**
- 14. The State Department of Education should require the beginning teacher's building-level administrator to assign mentors and, where necessary, mentor team members.**
- 15. The State Department of Education should adopt the following mentor training requirements: 1) mentors who received initial or update mentor training up to three years ago must complete an update training; 2) mentors who received initial or update training more than three years ago must complete an initial mentor training; 3) all mentors should be required to complete a mentor update training every third year since their last initial or update training; 4) all mentor trainings, initial or update, should be provided by the State Department of Education in conjunction with the Regional Educational Service Centers, and should be focused on instructing mentors in how to work through the new mentor module system (as recommended above); and 5) anyone who fails to complete these training requirements no longer will be considered eligible for assignment to a beginning teacher, until another initial mentor training is completed.**
- 16. C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to require each beginning teacher to be supported by a mentor or mentor team member who has recent experience or expertise in either: 1) the same, precise content area as the beginning teacher, for a new teacher not in elementary education; or 2) the same, precise grade level as the beginning teacher, for a new teacher who teaches elementary education. If such a match is not feasible, the beginning teacher shall be supported by a mentor who has recent experience or expertise in: 1) a similar content area, for a new teacher not in elementary education; or 2) a similar grade level, for a new teacher who teaches elementary education.**

- 17. The State Department of Education should offer district facilitators training to enable them to understand and carry out their full scope of BEST duties. The department should work with the Regional Educational Service Centers in developing and offering the training.**
- 18. C.G.S. Sec. 10-145b(l)(1) shall be amended to require administrators acting in an administrative or supervisory capacity at least 50 percent of their assigned time to complete a certain number of hours of training, as determined by the State Department of Education, in new teacher induction during each five-year certification period.**
- 19. The State Department of Education should review the current Common Core of Teaching standards to determine if changes or modifications are necessary. Such review and update of the standards should be completed by July 1, 2009, and every seven years thereafter.**
- 20. The State Department of Education shall conduct a review of possible, practical alternatives to assessing beginning teachers' knowledge and application of the state's teaching standards specified in the Common Core of Teaching. At a minimum, the review shall identify the potential costs and overall logistics associated with transitioning to another assessment model. A report summarizing the department's findings should be submitted to the legislature's committee(s) of cognizance by February 1, 2009.**
- 21. C.G.S. Sec. 10-145f(d) shall be amended to allow teachers to complete the professional knowledge clinical assessment required for state teacher certification purposes no later than their third year of teaching in a public school in Connecticut. The provision whereby teachers, after not fulfilling the requirements of the assessment within the designated time, may petition the department to approve a plan of intervening study and experience shall be eliminated.**
- 22. The State Department of Education should modify the BEST program to provide beginning teachers the option of when to submit their BEST portfolios. Teachers will have a choice to submit the required portfolios either in their first, second, or third years in the BEST program. Teachers will only be permitted to submit one additional portfolio upon not achieving a passing score on their first portfolio.**
- 23. The department of education should continue to make a concerted effort to fully examine portfolio requirements across all content areas with an emphasis on identifying areas of redundancy and streamlining overall requirements. Included in such review for the 2008-09 school year should be a determination whether: 1) elementary education teachers should have a choice between submitting only a literacy- or a numeracy-based portfolio; and 2) the requirement for separate writing and literature lesson plans within the English language arts portfolio requirements is necessary or if the two components should be combined within the English language arts portfolio requirements.**

- 24. The education department should supply prompt and sufficient notice to all teachers, mentors, administrators, district facilitators, and Regional Educational Service Centers indicating the department’s approval for teachers to use DVD technology for the video portion of their portfolios beginning with portfolios submitted in May 2008. The department should also devise ways to ensure beginning teachers in the poorest urban school districts have access to equipment to fulfill their portfolio requirements. At minimum, all teachers should be informed that equipment is available for loan at each Regional Educational Service Center.**
- 25. The State Department of Education should replace the video component of the BEST portfolio assessment with on-site classroom observations, with the state reimbursing school districts for any resulting additional costs.**
- 26. The State Department of Education should implement a revised scoring scale for BEST portfolios based on the final ratings of: “competent” and “not competent.”**
- 27. The education department should adopt ways to include feedback language that is as detailed as possible with portfolio results to provide beginning teachers with a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as shown by their portfolios. This includes incorporating the full scoring rubric indicating where on the performance continuum the teacher scored for each performance indicator contained in the rubric as part of the formal portfolio feedback teachers receive. The department also should consider differentiating the feedback provided to teachers who fail the portfolios to include more substantive language indicating teachers’ strengths and weaknesses than is currently contained in the scoring rubrics, on which the feedback is based.**

Introduction

Over the years, Connecticut has modified its teacher certification requirements 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 teacher 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 teacher induction program providing support and assessment.

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 program provides a combination of support for and assessment of teachers who are at the start of their teaching careers in Connecticut.³ In the first year, beginning teachers in BEST receive support, centered on mentoring. In the second year, they complete a formal skills assessment, in a portfolio format, to ensure they meet specific standards regarding effective teaching practices, which are set by the State Board of Education. Those teachers who fail the portfolio are allowed to re-submit at least one additional portfolio in their third year.

Although changes to the program's support and assessment components have been made over the past two decades, the overall purpose of BEST has remained the same since its origination: to ensure public school students in Connecticut are taught by teachers who have been determined competent in accordance with the teaching standards approved by the State Board of Education (SBOE). At the same time, the department has promoted the BEST program as a process from which beginning teachers learn about effective teaching practices contained in the state standards and strengthen their overall teaching skills, with the goal of having teachers teach according to the state standards throughout their careers. Consistent with this approach, the BEST program is most appropriately viewed as one component of Connecticut's educator continuum structured to ensure teacher effectiveness. Although the program is supposed to familiarize new teachers with and assess them on their knowledge and application of the state's teaching standards, BEST should be neither the teachers' first introduction to those standards nor their last experience with them, as recognized by SDE.

³ 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.

Study Focus

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 district capacity to meet those objectives, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee decided in April 2007 to examine teacher certification in two phases. This study was approved by the committee as Phase One of a two-part review of the state's teacher certification system. Phase Two of the study, as determined in more detail by the committee, is intended to 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.

Answering the question of whether the BEST process – in particular the portfolio, because it is intended to be a culmination of what is learned through teacher preparation and support provided through the program – is effective, is difficult and depends on which measures are used for evaluation. For example, do the standards continue to be appropriate for beginning teachers? Second, are teachers receiving a consistent level of quality support? Third, is the assessment method to evaluate beginning teachers based on the state standards appropriate and reliable? Fourth, even if the assessment method is appropriate and reliable, is it necessarily the most effective way to assess beginning teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies? And fifth, is there a more effective way to assess beginning teachers that would improve their understanding of the state's teaching standards and ability to implement them? The committee addresses these questions in this report. A key question that remains, however, is whether the state is prepared to adopt the necessary policies and devote adequate resources to ensure the state's teacher induction program receives the support needed to fulfill its goals.

Advocates of BEST believe it is properly designed for supporting and assessing beginning teachers. Through the program, beginning teachers are provided support at the local school district level and via state efforts. At the same time, the teachers are properly evaluated through an assessment proven valid and reliable to ensure they meet minimum competency standards set by the state. Opponents, however, maintain the assessment process is overly onerous for teachers generally beginning their careers. They also question the overall efficacy of the evaluation instrument used in Connecticut to assess beginning teachers. Despite disagreement over the assessment, most advocates and critics concur that BEST gives insufficient support at varying levels to beginning teachers.

During the course of this study, including testimony received as part of the committee's public hearing on this topic, numerous, and often conflicting, ideas were offered about how to improve BEST. The committee gave careful consideration to the comments, concerns, and ideas

expressed through interviews, surveys, and testimony received as this set of findings and recommendations was developed. The committee's recommendations attempt to balance the state's efforts to ensure beginning teachers meet a specific level of standards for teaching by addressing areas of the current support and assessment processes in need of improvement.

Methodology

A variety of information sources was used for this report. Extensive interviews of various constituencies associated with the BEST program were conducted, including staff from the State Department of Education, representatives from the state's two teachers' unions, BEST representatives from each of the six Regional Educational Service Centers in the state, education faculty from the University of Connecticut, representatives from the Department of Higher Education's Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) program, and staff from the association representing boards of education in the state. Committee staff also attended multiple BEST training sessions and seminars for mentors, assessment scorers, administrators, and beginning teachers, at which conversations with members of each of these groups were held. An extensive literature search was conducted, and information about induction and assessment programs in other states was collected.

Key sources of information for this report were the results of three surveys conducted by the committee. All teachers who completed their first year of teaching in Connecticut during the 2006-07 school year were surveyed to receive their input regarding the support they received as part of BEST. Surveys also were sent to all teachers who completed their second year of teaching in the state during the 2006-07 school year and submitted BEST portfolios in May 2007 in order to receive their feedback regarding the portfolio process. In the final analysis, the responses for both surveys had very similar distributions of teachers according to District Reference Groups⁴ (DRGs), and for the Year Two teacher survey, portfolio scores to the overall populations of teachers. All BEST district facilitators were surveyed electronically to collect information about local school district practices and policies regarding beginning teachers. A full description of the survey methodologies and copies of the surveys sent to teachers are included in Appendix A.

Report Content

This report is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides background on the origins and components of BEST. Chapter Two describes the program's organization and resources. Chapter Three gives an overview of BEST in relation to teacher preparation programs in Connecticut and provides recommendations to ensure the programs are aligned with BEST and the state teaching standards. Chapter Four discusses the support component of the BEST program and gives recommendations to improve the quality of support. Chapter Five details the program's assessment component and provides recommendations for improving the assessment process to make it more effective. The appendices are: A) Surveys of Beginning Teachers and District Facilitators, B) Common Core of Teaching Foundational Standards, C) Additional Certification Description, D) BEST Advisory Committee Recommendations, E) Regional

⁴ District Reference Groups is a classification system developed and used by the State Department of Education that measures certain characteristics of families with children attending public schools. Districts that have students with similar socioeconomic status and need are grouped together.

Educational Service Centers Map, F) Mentor Stipends, G) District Reference Groups, H) Social Studies Portfolio Rubric, I) Portfolio Scoring Reliability, J) Licensure Assessments in Other States, K) SDE Response to Public Hearing, L) Sample Portfolio Feedback Report for a Failing Portfolio, and M) Regression Analysis Methodology.

It is the policy of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee to provide agencies subject to a study with an opportunity to review and comment on the recommendations prior to publication of the final report. Appendix N contains the response from the State Department of Education.

Chapter One: Background

Rationale for Teacher Induction Programs

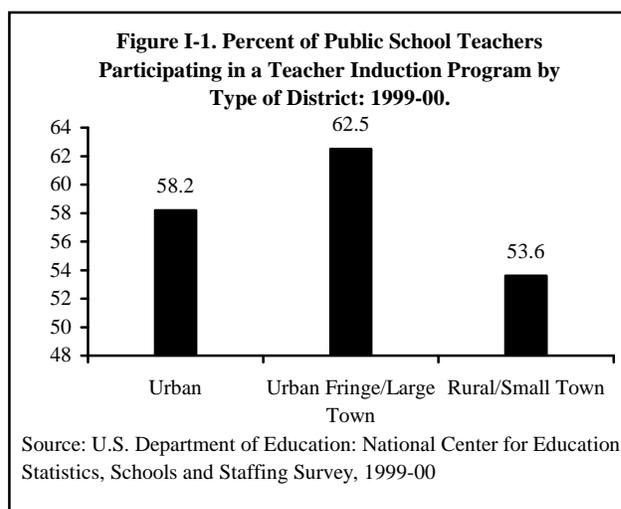
As with the start of any type of professional career, beginning teachers are faced with numerous demands. Novice teachers are concerned not only with the classes and students they will teach, but also with understanding the culture of their new schools and school districts. Learning the basic logistics of their schools 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).⁵ As highlighted in Figure I-1, the percent of teachers participating in teacher induction programs varies by district geographical location. The figure shows 58 percent of teachers in “urban” districts participated in teacher induction programs, as did 63 percent of teachers in “urban

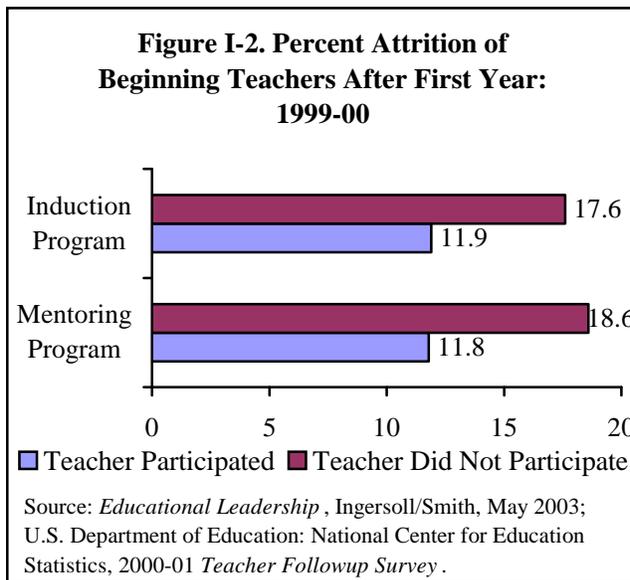


⁵ U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-00.

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 through 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 and promising.⁶ 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 teacher instructional practices, and teacher retention.⁷



Teacher Induction in Connecticut

A statewide induction program for new teachers, BEST, has been in place in Connecticut since 1989. 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

⁶ 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. See also Chapter Four of this report.

⁷ 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>.

those, 4,913 (11 percent) participated in the BEST program, which accounted for approximately 90 percent of all new teachers in the state.

BEST comprises two components: *support* and *assessment*. As detailed more in Chapter Four, support of beginning teachers required through BEST augments district 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 district programs are formally tracked at the state level.

The assessment component of BEST, as discussed in Chapter Five, was developed as the vehicle to ensure beginning teachers meet minimum competency standards approved by the State Board of Education. 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 teacher 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 of the program could a beginning teacher attain the proper state certification to continue teaching in the state's public schools. Before BEST, there was no state evaluation of beginning teachers for certification purposes.

Support. BEST was implemented in 1989, and originally was 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 trained mentors. Mentors were experienced teachers within school districts recognized for their ability in the classroom. Groups of 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.⁸

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. Mentor duties and responsibilities were extensive, but mainly included:⁹

- 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 the beginning teacher's skills, including instructional planning, classroom management, and instruction and assessment of student learning;
- assisting the beginning teacher 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 in Chapter Four, currently 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 received their compensation only 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, mentor accountability is now a function of local school districts.

⁸ C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a (2) (in effect July 1, 1989)

⁹ Regs. Conn. State Agencies Sec. 10-220a-6 (in effect July 1, 1989)

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.

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.¹⁰ 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 took place at various intervals throughout the first year and were scored by the assessors. A teacher needed to achieve a minimum score from the assessments on a rolling basis 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 required teachers to complete an assessment information form prior to each classroom observation. The form sought general descriptive information about the teacher’s 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 with cursory questions (e.g., did anything unusual happen during the class).

Following each classroom observation, the beginning teacher would receive a feedback report from the assessor outlining the teacher’s strengths and areas needing attention. A composite report showing the combined, rolling 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

¹⁰ C.G.S. Sec. 10-145f(d)

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 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 cost and 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 pedagogy¹¹ 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

¹¹ Pedagogy generally refers to the art and/or science of being a teacher, and to the strategies of instruction or a style of instruction.

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 for both novice and experienced teachers.¹²

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 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 and implement this type of assessment 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,¹³ 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 written document and video 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.¹⁴

The BEST program's new assessment process based on a content-specific portfolio format was implemented incrementally from 1999 to 2005, as indicated in Table I-1.¹⁵ Beginning teachers in the English language arts, mathematics, and science content areas were the

¹² "Final Report to the BEST Blue Ribbon Panel – BEST Program: A New Performance Standard Continuum," Connecticut State Department of Education, June 1993.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ State Department of Education, "BEST Portfolio Performance Results: Five Year Report 1999-2004, August 2005 Draft Report," p.7.

¹⁵ Department of Education, "BEST Portfolio Performance Results: Five Year Report 1999-2004, August 2005 Draft Report," p.7, and *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007*, p. 2. The 10 content areas include: language arts, history/social studies, mathematics, science, music, physical education, special education, visual arts, and world languages.

first to complete and submit portfolios as their formal assessments under BEST for the 1999-00 school year. Over the next four 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.

Table I-1. Implementation of BEST Portfolio Assessment Method by Content Area: Areas Added Each School Year				
<i>1999-00</i>	<i>2000-01</i>	<i>2001-02</i>	<i>2003-04</i>	<i>2004-05</i>
<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 replacing the previous CTC discussed earlier. 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 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 B 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.

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 also serves as the foundation for the: 1) state’s definition of effective teaching; and 2) guidelines for teacher evaluation, professional development, and the issuance of continuing education units.

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

Table I-2. State Teaching Certificates (Issued After July 1, 1989)		
<i>Type of Certificate</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Requirements Summary*</i>
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 and at least ten classroom observations of or demonstrations for the teacher. Holders of a DSAP must complete coursework requirements necessary to receive full certification.
<p>* See R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-145d-409-426 for full certification requirements. Source: SDE website and PRI 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; 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 from either 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		
<i>BEST Phase</i>	<i>Types of Support</i>	<i>Assessment</i>
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 resubmit a portfolio due to a previous failure or first portfolio due to an approved deferral.)

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

<i>Category 1 Support and Portfolio Assessment</i>	<i>Category 2 Support Only</i>	<i>Category 3 Certification Areas NOT Participating in BEST</i>
<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 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 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 various topics, including the BEST program. The state's two teachers' unions also 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 D 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 advisory committee's final report, some members voiced their concerns in writing. Specifically, objections were made to the recommendation to develop 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

During the 2006-07 school year:

- 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 program data, including support and assessment data, are provided later in the report.

Chapter Two: 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.

Funding for state and regional activities of BEST comes from two specific line item appropriations within the state's General Fund. As discussed in this chapter, 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 E.)

Program Organization

Generally, SDE provides broad program oversight and handles the assessment component of the BEST program. Regional Educational Service Centers serve the lead role in offering support to district- and school-level personnel, with the EastConn RESC functioning as the central administrative RESC for the program. 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 department staff for BEST, and their roles, include:

- *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

- *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 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 TIRs are chosen each school year.

EastConn enters into a contract with a TIR’s school district, which releases the teacher for three or four days a week to work within the BEST program. The fifth day generally is spent within the district in various capacities. TIRs remain school district employees while on loan to work for BEST. Districts, in turn, are reimbursed \$40,000 per school year by EastConn, approximately the salary of a beginning teacher, to find a replacement for the TIR. While working for BEST, a few TIRs serve as the project leaders for the program’s 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.¹⁶

Table II-1. SDE BEST Staff Positions: FTEs in 1999 and 2007		
<i>Position</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2007</i>
Program administration	5	2.8
Data manager	2	1
Assessment consultant	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		

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

¹⁶ This calculation excludes support staff because PRI staff received no information on that group’s time allocation to BEST.

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, totaling between 1.0 and 1.7 FTE positions, to assessment and support activities, according to the current field staff. With the staffing decline, RESCs were no longer responsible for as much assessment work and shifted their focus to 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 the state education department through monthly meetings of a policy team. The policy team members are the SDE Education Manager who oversees BEST; the SDE BEST Program Coordinator; the EastConn Executive Director; and the 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.

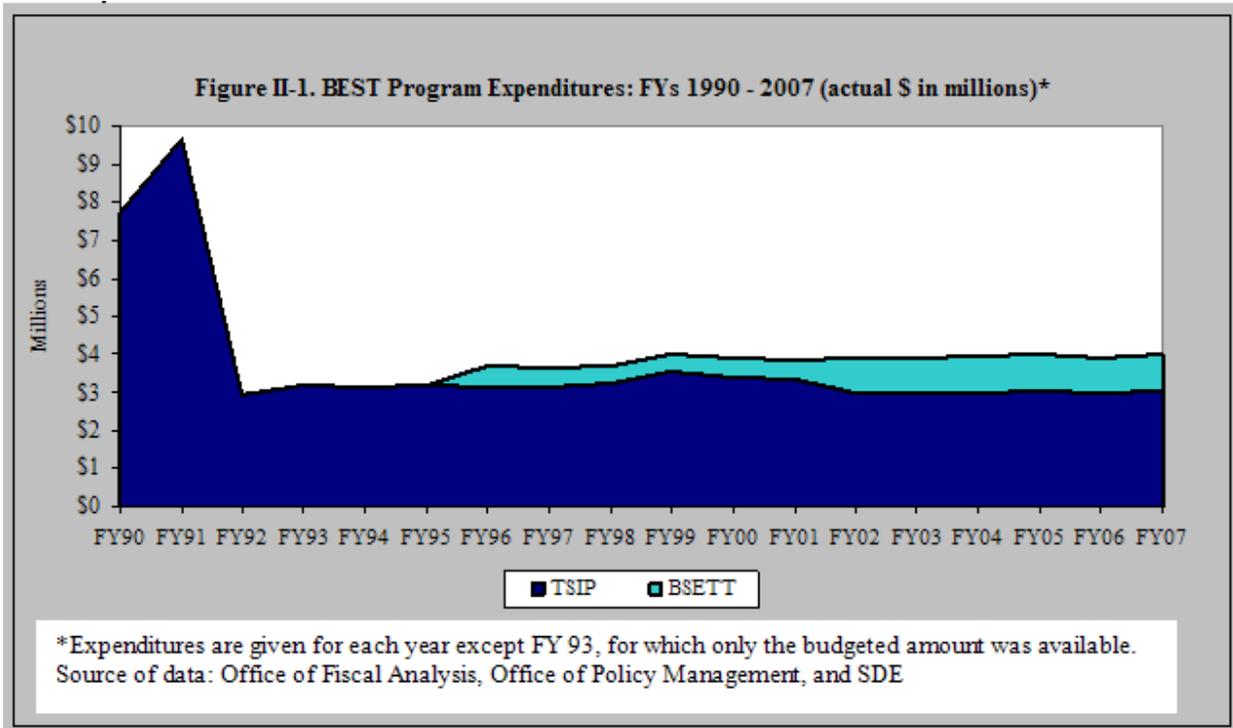
Local school districts. The state law governing BEST requires local school districts to provide mentoring and other support to beginning teachers participating in the BEST program. As described more fully in Chapter Four, each district is to designate a coordinator, called a district facilitator, to 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 (aside from support trainings, which are funded by SDE). Some, however, choose to offer compensation from district monies to program facilitators, mentors, and scorers as highlighted in Chapters Four and Five.

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.¹⁷ BEST funding from both sources between FYs 1990 and 2007, unadjusted for inflation, is depicted in Figure II-1 below.

¹⁷ 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.

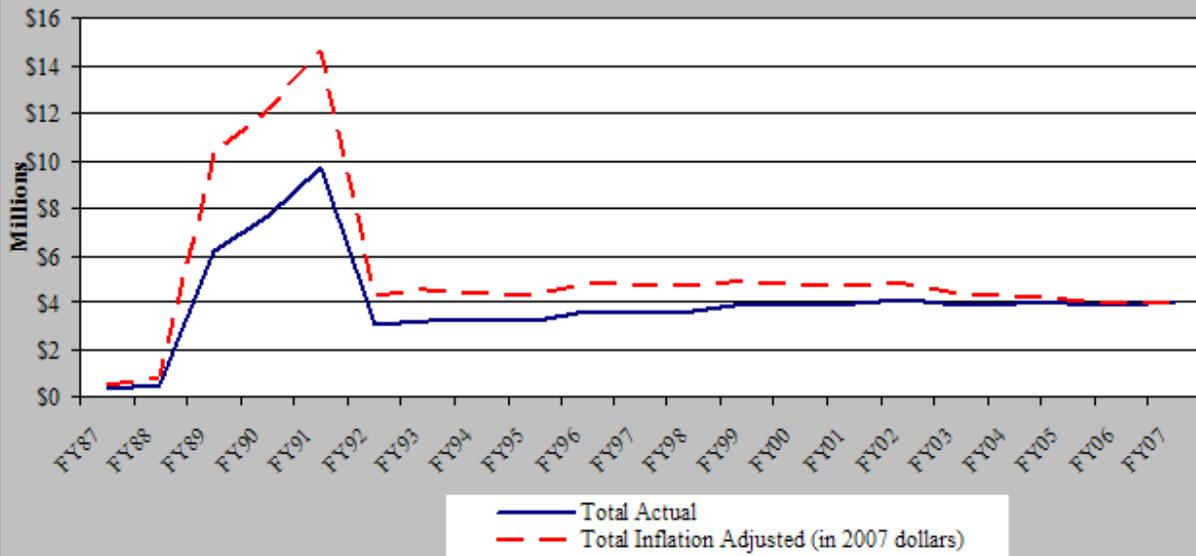


During the program’s early years, funding increased until it peaked in FY 1991 at about \$9.7 million. Funding was cut by more than two-thirds in the following fiscal year, which SDE attributes to poor state fiscal conditions. BEST program expenditures have remained at about the same level since then,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

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 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.

**Figure II-2. Total BEST Program Expenditures, Actual and Inflation Adjusted
(in 2007 dollars): FYs 1987-2007 (\$ in millions)**



*BEST received funding from the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment category and other categories that drew from the Educational Excellence Fund, before FY 90.

Source of data: Office of Fiscal Analysis, Office of Policy Management, SDE, and PRI staff analysis

Chapter Three: Teacher Preparation

The educator continuum begins with teacher preparation programs. The key purpose of the programs is to train prospective teachers and instruct them in how to become effective educators. In Connecticut, there are 20 teacher preparation programs. Sixteen of the programs are part of higher education institutions, while four are Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) programs. However, each category of programs contains variation. Higher education programs include: traditional programs that offer an education concentration during an undergraduate course of study; programs that require participants to attend an extra fifth year of study, often culminating in a master's degree in education; and programs that consist of a two-year master's degree in education. ARC programs are run by several different types of organizations: the state, a higher education institution, a Regional Educational Service Center, and Teach for America.¹⁸

All Connecticut teacher preparation programs must meet the following regulatory requirements:¹⁹

- admit only students who have a cumulative grade point average of at least a B minus, and have met or exceeded the state's minimum Praxis I basic skills test²⁰ score;
- require participants, called teacher candidates, to successfully complete at least 10 weeks of full-day student teaching;
- instruct teacher candidates in: how to teach both about and how to avoid the effects of drugs and acquired immune deficiency syndrome; computer and information technology; literacy skills and second language learning; and
- require all teacher candidates to study special education for at least 36 hours, and require candidates in certain fields to take particular courses (e.g., each elementary school candidate must complete a survey course in United States history).

The programs are to demonstrate candidates know the state teaching and learning standards and can demonstrate the competencies contained therein. In addition, teacher candidates who have completed their course of study must meet or exceed the state's minimum Praxis II²¹ score to demonstrate content area competency. Beyond these requirements, the programs may design courses and other aspects as they wish. The requirements vary somewhat for the ARC programs, due to their condensed timeframe.

¹⁸ Teach for America is a nationwide program providing selected college graduates who generally did not complete a teacher preparation program with some training before placing them into urban schools.

¹⁹ ARC programs must meet these same broad requirements but are not held to the same duration aspects. For example, ARC participants may complete student teaching in one month.

²⁰ Praxis I is a test conducted by Educational Testing Service (ETS) designed to measure potential teacher candidates' reading, writing, and mathematics skills. Candidates whose SAT, ACT, or Graduate Record Examination scores meet certain benchmarks may apply to have the Praxis I requirement waived. ETS is a private, nonprofit organization located in Princeton, New Jersey devoted to educational measurement and research primarily through testing.

²¹ Praxis II, also conducted by ETS, is designed to measure teacher candidates' content- or subject-specific knowledge.

Upon successful completion of the requirements and acquisition of bachelor's degrees, the programs recommend the teacher candidates to SDE for the initial educator certificate. This certificate is the first tier of Connecticut's three-level certification system. The initial educator certificate allows the graduates to teach at any public school for up to three years. Upon receiving initial educator certificates and being hired to teach, beginning teachers must participate in BEST. Teachers may continue to the next certification tier only after successfully completing the BEST program, including passing a formal assessment, as discussed in Chapter One.

Accreditation

Only teacher preparation programs that have been accredited by the State Board of Education and the Department of Higher Education Board of Governors may recommend graduates for initial educator certification. In July 2003, the accreditation standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which is the professional accrediting body for teacher preparation programs, went into effect in Connecticut. Because of this step, Connecticut programs now may apply for either state-only accreditation or joint state-NCATE accreditation. NCATE accreditation involves an application fee and a more thorough review of the program, but is more prestigious than state accreditation. Five Connecticut programs currently hold joint state-NCATE accreditation: the University of Connecticut (UConn); Southern, Central, and Eastern Connecticut State Universities; and the University of Hartford.

Any new program must obtain accreditation before accepting any students. In addition, each existing program is evaluated every five years for continuing accreditation. Before the 2003 reforms, the continuing accreditation process occurred every seven years.

Integration of State Standards and BEST

Teacher preparation programs in Connecticut are where most of the state's new teachers are first instructed in the pedagogy of teaching, which is the art and/or science of being a teacher and the strategies or style of instruction. The programs also need to ensure their candidates have knowledge about the state standards as delineated in the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching and are starting to apply the teaching methods embedded in the CCT. As described earlier, the CCT outlines how teachers are expected to teach and the standards against which their performances will be judged when they complete the BEST assessment.

The State Board of Education recognized the importance of instructing teacher preparation participants in the state standards by requiring this through regulation.²² The preparation programs must demonstrate students know the CCT, the Connecticut Mastery Tests (CMTs), the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), and the codes of professional responsibility for teachers and administrators. The programs also must ensure participants demonstrate the current Connecticut licensure competencies as defined through regulation (currently the BEST program's requirements) and the CCT. These requirements were adopted simultaneously with the move to adopt the NCATE standards for state accreditation purposes in the late 1990s (although the standards did not go into effect until 2003). Together, these changes

²² R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-145d-11

signal the state's intention of linking the instruction of prospective teachers to state teaching standards.

Program compliance with the requirements to integrate the teaching standards and BEST program is checked during the program accreditation visits. A visiting team, which must include at least one representative each from higher education institutions, SDE, K-12 districts, the Department of Higher Education, and another state's education system, draws on the information provided by the institution and interviews to determine whether the program is aligned with Connecticut's standards. There is no particular way in which the program must demonstrate it is aligned. These visits, which occur every five years for each program, on a rolling basis across programs, are the only times at which programs are assessed regarding integration of the state standards.

There has never been a comprehensive, point-in-time review of all the Connecticut teacher preparation programs by SDE or any other organization to determine to what extent compliance with the regulation requiring alignment with the teaching standards (R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-145d-11) is occurring across the system. It is unclear how fully teacher preparation programs integrate the state teaching standards into their curricula.

SDE staff, mentors, and cooperating teachers believe the programs are beginning to more closely align their programs with the state standards. Whether the programs are shifting fundamentally to become aligned or simply complying with the regulation at a minimum level, to retain accreditation, is not known. For example, most, if not all, teacher preparation programs require their candidates to complete a portfolio of their student teaching. Some programs cite this as an example of integrating BEST into the curricula. However, the extent to which those portfolios require students to apply and document the use of the concepts of effective teaching, which are at the core of the BEST portfolio, may vary.

The committee recognizes teacher preparation programs value the characteristics that make them unique; state regulation, however, requires accredited programs to instruct candidates according to the state's teaching standards and competencies. The rationale for this requirement is logical: without instructing teacher candidates in how to teach according to the standards, it is unreasonable to expect beginning educators to teach according to the standards, let alone demonstrate how to do so in a formal, state-administered assessment centered on such standards, as required for certification purposes under BEST.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should undertake a comprehensive review of the alignment of all the accredited teacher preparation programs with the state's teaching standards as contained in the Common Core of Teaching. The review should also examine how the program approval process can be used by the department of education to ensure teacher preparation programs fully align with the state's teaching standards.

SDE attempted several years ago to assist teacher preparation programs in aligning with the teaching standards through organizing an effort to create a universal student teaching evaluation matrix (i.e., rubric) closely based on the CCT. This work was funded by a federal Teacher Quality Enhancement (Title II) grant. Most preparation programs participated in the

instrument's development and finalization, but only eight currently use the rubric to assess candidates during student teaching. Whether the remaining 12 teacher preparation programs evaluate their teacher candidates during student teaching using state standards as outlined in the student teaching evaluation rubric is not known.

Student teaching is a prospective teacher's closest experience to teaching in one's own classroom. During student teaching, each teacher candidate should be expected to demonstrate knowledge and initial application of the state standards in order to prepare for what will be expected of him or her, as a full-fledged teacher in Connecticut. The program review committee believes the developed student teaching rubric is a valuable tool in ensuring candidates are well-prepared to become teachers who meet Connecticut's state teaching standards.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should require teacher preparation programs to use a standards-based student teaching rubric. The department should require each program to either adopt the rubric already developed, adding on to it if desired as currently is permitted, or to submit its own rubric for approval or rejection. If a program's own rubric is rejected by the department of education, the program should be required to use the standards-based rubric until a sufficient rubric is submitted and approved.

Portfolio Performance of Graduates

Between two sets of recent, combined portfolio cycles – 2003 and 2004, and 2006 and 2007 – most teacher preparation programs saw the percent of their graduates failing the portfolio decline, as depicted in Table III-1. It is possible the declines are evidence the teacher preparation programs have begun to better align their curricula with the state standards and to improve their candidates' preparation for the BEST portfolio. Other reasons for the declines also are possible, such as better provision of support during graduates' initial years of teaching or simple chance, due to the short timeframe under examination.

In general, there are not statistically significant differences in the rates most program graduates fail the portfolio. The portfolio failure rates of different preparation programs vary, but only four programs had failure rates for the combined 2006 and 2007 cycles that were significantly different (either higher or lower) from the overall rates (see Table III-1). Sometimes programs with low failure rates across the portfolio categories – Quinnipiac University, St. Joseph College, and UConn – had too few portfolio submissions in particular categories to make these low rates statistically significant.

An examination of the performance of out-of-state program graduates reveals this group's failure rates also have dropped, falling below (although not significantly) the overall failure rates in two of the three portfolio categories. This is a change from previous years, and portfolio failure rates of Connecticut teacher preparation programs are no longer lower than those of out-of-state programs.

Table III-1. Percent of Portfolios Scored “1” (Failing) by Teacher Preparation Program: 2006 and 2007

<i>Teacher Preparation Program</i>	<i>Number of Portfolios Submitted</i>	<i>Percent of Portfolios Scored “1” in 2006 and 2007 (percentage point change from 2003 and 2004)</i>		
		<i>Elem. Literacy</i>	<i>Elem. Numeracy</i>	<i>Non-Elementary</i>
Central CT State Univ.	506	9.3% (-2.2)	11.1% (-6.4)	11.3% (-1.4)
Connecticut College	25	---	---	---
Eastern CT State Univ.	244	4.3% (-5.0)	13.2% (-3.8)	12.1% (-3.1)
Fairfield Univ.	78	---	---	5.3% (-5.3)
Mitchell College	4	---	---	---
Quinnipiac Univ.	168	4.8% (NA)	1.6% (NA) *	4.5% (NA)
Sacred Heart Univ.	549	8.4% (-1.9)	13.9% (-3.1)	9.9% (-1.3)
St. Joseph College	228	3.0% (-6.9)	6.2% (-3.8)	8.2% (+1.2)
Southern CT State Univ.	727	9.3% (-0.9)	9.5% (-8.4)	13.8% (+3.8) **
Univ. of Bridgeport	507	12.8% (+3.0) **	14.7% (+1.5)	7.1% (+0.4)
Univ. of Connecticut	304	0.0% (-9.1)	4.2% (-3.4)	4.8% (-0.7) *
Univ. of Hartford	132	14.0% (+1.8)	14.0% (-5.1)	6.5% (-2.5)
Univ. of New Haven	290	9.4% (-1.4)	14.5% (+1.2)	9.5% (-7.8)
Western CT State Univ.	153	6.1% (-7.9)	13.0% (-11.4)	8.6% (+8.6)
Yale Univ.	14	---	---	---
Total for “standard” CT programs ^a	3,929	8.2% (-1.9)	11.3% (-4.2)	10.0% (-0.2)
ARC programs	311	---	---	12.7% (+2.3)
Out-of-state programs	1,095	5.9% (-8.4)	12.3% (-3.6)	9.5% (-4.7)
Total for all programs	5,335	7.7% (NA)	11.5% (NA)	10.2% (NA)

Note on statistical significance: In general, statistical significance is determined by examining the probability value, denoted by “p-value.” The p-value indicates the chance that the observed finding (in this case, a program’s failure rate) would have been observed, if it had truly been no different from what was expected to be observed (in this case, the overall failure rate). A p-value equal to or smaller than a given number – usually 0.05 – means the difference between what was observed and what was expected, is statistically significant or meaningful. As the p-value becomes lower, i.e., approaches zero, the chance that the difference is due to chance grows ever smaller.

For example, the *chance* that the rate at which Quinnipiac University’s graduates failed the elementary numeracy portfolio (1.6%) is *not* actually different from the elementary numeracy portfolio failure rate of all the other programs combined, is equal to or less than 1% (p = or < 0.01; alternatively written, “statistically significant at the 0.01 level”). Because this p-value is very small, we can reasonably conclude that the difference between Quinnipiac graduates’ and the overall failure rates for this portfolio category is meaningful.

*The difference between this preparation program’s graduates’ portfolio failure rate and the average failure rate of all the other programs’ graduates was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, for this portfolio category.

**The difference between this preparation program’s graduates’ portfolio failure rate and the average failure rate of all the other programs’ graduates was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, for this portfolio category.

^a “Standard” CT programs” includes all non-ARC programs in Connecticut. The “standard” CT programs listed total 15 because no graduates of Albertus Magnus College, the 16th program, completed the portfolio in 2006 or 2007.

---Fewer than 20 portfolios were submitted.

(NA): Data for 2003-2004 was not available; therefore, the change between the series of years could not be calculated.

Source of data: SDE

Chapter Four: Support

Description

Graduates of teacher preparation programs who pass the Praxis II exam are recommended to SDE for initial certification. Those who obtain teaching positions in Connecticut are immediately entered into the BEST program, along with college graduates who have not yet completed a teacher preparation program but are teaching under Durational Shortage Area Permits (DSAPs).

Once in the BEST program, participants are to receive mentoring support from their local school districts for one year, along with support provided at the state level. ARC graduates and teachers working under DSAPs receive two years of mentoring and other support. The State Department of Education is responsible for overseeing the support component of BEST. Providing BEST support for beginning teachers is a statutory requirement that aims to integrate them into the profession as high-quality teachers and prepare them for the BEST assessment.

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, printed handbooks describing 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 IV-1. More detailed descriptions of the support provided at the district level and through state sources are highlighted below. The committee's findings and recommendations on support follow.

District Level Support

Mentors

State law requires 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.²³ Beyond that, districts have the discretion whether to provide beginning teachers with additional mentor support.

²³ 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 IV-1. Summary of BEST Support		
<i>Type by Group</i>	<i>Provider</i>	<i>Support Purpose</i>
<i>For Beginning Teachers</i>		
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
<i>For Mentors</i>		
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
<i>For District Facilitators</i>		
Position manual	SDE	Role
Group meetings	RESCs	Role
Computer resources	SDE leads; also RESCs	Role
Personal help with role	RESCs	Role
<i>For Master Mentors</i>		
Training	RESCs	Role
Personal help with role	RESCs or district facilitator	Role
<i>For Administrators</i>		
Training	RESCs	Role and administrating
Desk reference guide	RESCs	Role
Personal help with role	RESCs	Role
<i>For Other Teachers</i>		
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: PRI 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 IV-2. The committee 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 include district-based induction programs or processes.²⁴

Table IV-2. Formal Requirements for Mentoring		
Source	Contact Frequency	Formal Release Time for School Year
State BEST regulations	Weekly	Four days for mentors and beginning teachers for planning, observations, and feedback, for at least eight meetings or observations ^a
<i>BEST Program Policy and Procedures Manual</i>	Biweekly, ^b totaling 30 hours of significant contacts per year	Eight half-days for mentors and beginning teachers, for observations or professional development ^a
<i>A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007</i>	Biweekly, ^b totaling 30 hours of significant contacts per year, including staff meetings and professional development	Eight and a half days for mentors and beginning teachers, for observations or professional development ^{a,c}
<i>District Facilitator Manual, 2006-2007</i>	Weekly for 30 minutes plus eight occasions of 1.5 hour observations/meetings, totaling 30 hours per year ^a	No specific amount given
<i>SDE: A Statement of Understanding [for mentors]</i>	Biweekly ^b	Not mentioned
^a 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. ^b “Biweekly” can mean either once every two weeks or twice each week. ^c SDE indicated the <i>Guide</i> should read “eight half-days,” not “eight and a half days.” Source: PRI staff		

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

²⁴ SDE, *District Facilitator Manual: A Supplement to the Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers, 2006-2007*, 2006, p. 23.

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.

Other 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 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. (SDE has subsequently indicated the *Guide* was in error and was corrected in the 2007-08 version to read "eight half days.")

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 chapter, 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, 2006-2007* 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.²⁵

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.²⁶ 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.²⁷ The district committee is to recommend its nominees to the local board of education, which makes the final decision. After educators register for training to become mentors, EastConn checks with the districts to ensure formal approval was given for the teachers to attend the training.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-2

²⁷ 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.

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 Connecticut provisional or professional educator certificate;
- 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 are eligible to go through mentor training and become mentors. Most mentors are current teachers with full-time teaching duties. According to SDE, 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, although the BEST regulations do not permit educators who are not currently teaching to mentor.

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 by school district and a school's staff turnover rates and experience levels.

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 teachers²⁸ 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 single-day “Mentor Training for Portfolio Scorers,” 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 mentors and portfolio scorers may be trained for both roles simultaneously through the one-week Science Leadership Academy, which is described in Chapter Five.

²⁸ Cooperating teachers supervise and work with student teachers, who are teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher preparation program gaining experience in a classroom setting.

Table IV-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.

Table IV-3. New Mentors Trained: SY 2006-07		
<i>Type of Training</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
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 motivate 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 (approximately 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 beyond 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 name of this 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.²⁹

²⁹ 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 volume 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; however, the district is not required to keep 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 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, starting in fall 2007, a guide for mentors is 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 provided 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 eliminated direct mentor stipends and provided districts a limited payment of \$200 per beginning teacher for professional development purposes. This funding could be spent in any way that would assist the beginning teacher, including providing stipends for mentors. Some districts did use these funds for stipends, either alone or in conjunction with district monies, with different degrees of mentor accountability. This funding was eliminated in the early 2000s, yet federal law expanded the use of Title II funds to include paying stipends to mentors. SDE began encouraging districts to use any available federal Title II funds in this way.

Committee staff analyzed collective bargaining agreements and the district facilitator surveys to determine the frequency and amounts of mentor stipends, as well as other types of mentor benefits. Today, at least 99 local and regional school districts, including two public academies, offer mentor stipends.³⁰ 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 IV-4 shows basic information on stipends and other contracted benefits for mentors, such as reduced duties or release time.³¹ Some districts may provide mentors benefits that are not stipulated in the collective bargaining agreements; these districts' information is not included in this report. (Appendix F provides more information on mentor stipends and other benefits by district.) From committee 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.

³⁰ "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.

³¹ Release time via contract 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.

Table IV-4. Contract Provisions for Mentors: 2006-07		
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent of All School Districts*</i>
<i>School Districts</i>	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%
<i>Stipend Amounts</i>		
Median for Year One mentoring	\$500	---
Range for Year One mentoring	\$100-\$1500	---
Range for Years One and Two mentoring, combined	\$100-\$3500	---
<i>Other Provisions</i>		
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.³² 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, although some districts use retirees or individuals on contract with the districts as district facilitators. 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;
- 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.

³² R.C.S.A. Sec. 10-220a-2

Duties and responsibilities. The overall responsibility of district facilitators 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 main BEST support responsibility of district facilitators 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, 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 by SDE. According to the department’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 are

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

Table IV-5. All Districts Offering District Facilitator Stipends in Contracts: 2006-07*	
<i>School District</i>	<i>Amount</i>
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 who have other, non-BEST duties with stipends. As discussed earlier, committee 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 IV-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 earlier, in response to two needs. First, beginning teachers wanted portfolio assistance but many mentors were not fully familiar with the assessment. Second, according to SDE, the program 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.

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 master 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 goals.

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 IV-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 IV-6. Master Mentor Stipend Contract Provisions Where Master Mentors' Stipends Exceed Regular Mentor Stipends: 2006-07		
<i>School District</i>	<i>Master Mentor Amount</i>	<i>Ratio (Master Mentor Amount: Regular Mentor Amount)</i>
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 have already 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.³³ 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, depending on each district's policies.

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.

³³ 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.

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

State Department of Education

SDE offers a range of assistance to beginning teachers and other educators involved in BEST. Formal trainings, web-based information, and BEST resource materials all are 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 IV-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 (according to data provided by EastConn and SDE, 141 of 2,402 teachers registered as Year One BEST participants attended an SDE orientation.)

Table IV-7. Current State-Level BEST Support Trainings and Seminars				
<i>Participants</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Season(s) Held</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Year Began</i>
<i>Beginning Teachers</i>				
Year One teachers	BEST Orientation (optional)	Late Fall	One 2-hour evening	1987
Year One teachers	Content Area Seminar (one)	Spring	One 2.5-hour evening	1995 ^a
Year Two teachers	Content Area Seminars (two)	Fall	Two 2.5-hour evenings	1995
<i>Mentors</i>				
New: open to science teachers only	Science Leadership Academy ^b	Summer	Five full days	2000 ^c
<i>Teachers and/or Administrators</i>				
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, six sessions of each type were offered, with every session having multiple groups of seminar leaders and attendees. 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 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 Chapter Five). 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 content 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 September 2005. This program is run by two experienced BEST staff with expertise in elementary and special education, and by a Connecticut State University system 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 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.³⁴ The web-based materials currently include:

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

³⁴ SDE, Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2607&Q=319186&sdePNavCtr=#45440>

- 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;³⁵ 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 on 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.³⁶

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 or RESC field staff, sometimes based on feedback received from training participants. Responsibility for producing the training materials and disseminating them to the field staff is

³⁵ 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.

³⁶ The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires each school to offer safety awareness training and designate a safety officer.

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 the field staff are summarized in Table IV-8 and described below.

Table IV-8. Current RESC-Led BEST Support Trainings					
<i>Participants</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Season(s) Held</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>SY Began</i>	<i>2006-07 SY Attendance</i>
<i>Mentors</i>					
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
Previously trained	Portfolio Support Training (PST) (update) ^a	Fall	One full day	Mid-1990s	706 ^b
Previously trained	Coaching for Instructional Excellence	Winter	One full day	2007-08	--
<i>Master Mentors</i>					
New	Master Mentor Training	Begins in fall	Three full days in year	2002-03	12
<i>Administrators</i>					
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
<i>Teachers and Administrators</i>					
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.³⁷ Over the past few school years, about ten percent of the Portfolio Support Training registrants were non-mentors.

³⁷ 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 receive 0.6 CEUs per session attended.

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.

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.³⁸ 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 IV-9 shows all in-district BEST trainings recently held by RESC field staff.

Table IV-9. In-District BEST Trainings: 2006-07			
<i>Type of Training</i>	<i>Number of Districts</i>	<i>Percent of All Districts*</i>	<i>Number of Participants</i>
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
*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 also part of regional districts, the RESC districts, charter or other independent schools, or special schools or districts such as that run by the Departments of Correction and Children and Families. Source of data: RESC BEST 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.

³⁸ 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.

In addition to trainings, every fall the RESC field staff volunteers to present on BEST and how managers can support beginning teachers at district monthly administrator meetings. A few districts accept this offer each year, according to the 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 IV-10 below, the website's usage has grown tremendously: by 2006-07, more than 17,800 people had registered for BEST Connections.

Table IV-10. BEST Website Registration Over Time			
<i>Role</i>	<i>Number Registered in 2003-04 (First Year)</i>	<i>Number Registered in 2006-07</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
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%
Note: A subscriber may register on the website as having unlimited multiple roles in order to receive those roles' periodic e-mails. Source of data: RESC BEST field staff and data manager.			

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.

Findings and Recommendations

Rationale for Strong Support Programs

Recent research has shown strong support programs confer benefits on beginning teachers to the extent that net cost savings result. The savings are the product of two program effects: 1) beginning teachers' lower attrition due to a higher satisfaction level, and 2) their improved effectiveness from the induction assistance they receive. There also is some initial evidence that a strong induction program can positively impact student achievement.³⁹ This seems logical, since a strong support program should improve teacher quality, and research shows higher teacher quality is associated with higher student achievement.

The Alliance for Excellent Education defines a strong induction program as having substantive mentoring, ongoing professional development, common planning time with colleagues, access to a peer network outside the new teacher's school, and standards-based assessment.⁴⁰ Using these criteria and based on survey data, program data, and interviews, the committee finds *Connecticut's induction program, BEST, currently is not a strong induction program.* A standards-based assessment is the only high-quality induction program component experienced by all BEST participants; the other components are not offered to or meaningfully experienced by most beginning teachers in Connecticut.

New teachers leave the profession at a steep financial cost to districts. Generally, experts estimate the cost of replacing a beginning teacher who leaves at about 30 percent of salary plus benefits, as well as termination, vacancy, hiring, and training costs. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) estimated in 2007 that in Hartford, the district's

³⁹ "Is Mentoring Worth the Money? A Benefit-Cost Analysis and Five-Year Rate of Return of a Comprehensive Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers," Anthony Villar and Michael Strong, *ERS Spectrum: Journal of Research and Information* 25(3): 1-17, Educational Research Service, Summer 2007.

⁴⁰ *Tapping the Potential; Retaining and Developing High-Quality New Teachers*, Alliance for Excellent Education, June 2004.

annual cost of new teacher turnover was \$4,462,500.⁴¹ In a study of several of the state's districts, the Connecticut Center for School Change calculated the average district loses at least \$14,862 for each beginning teacher who leaves.⁴²

The amount spent on replacing teachers can be cut by reducing teacher turnover through well-developed induction programs. A noted study on attrition and induction⁴³ found that nationally, after one year of teaching, 20 percent of new teachers left the profession and 21 percent switched districts, for a total attrition rate of 41 percent. A strong induction program, however, decreased the combined attrition rate to 27 percent. The strongest type of program resulted in an overall rate of 18 percent. In contrast, a weak induction program, with only mentoring (of unspecified quality) and some supportive communication from an administrator, resulted in no significant attrition change. The study demonstrated the importance of offering a strong system of support that combines induction components. Offering solely one or two types of support did not reduce attrition.

Additional research further indicates strong induction programs produce large, significant, positive effects on retention. California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs incorporate most of the elements of a strong induction program. As such, its participating schools showed an attrition rate of 9 percent over five years – about one-fourth the rate of those who did not participate in a similar program.⁴⁴ School districts in two large cities – Seattle and Rochester, New York – saw their teacher attrition rates drop by more than half when they adopted strong programs modeled after one long used by the Toledo district, which focuses on providing assistance through full-time mentors.⁴⁵

Another recent study found that a strong induction program both saved money and improved student achievement.⁴⁶ In the only cost-benefit analysis of induction programs to date, researchers found the program of a California district returned \$1.66 for each \$1 invested in the two-year program, over five years. Most of the benefit was due to the higher effectiveness of participating new teachers, as demonstrated by student achievement test gains; savings through higher teacher retention composed the remainder of the benefit. Nearly all states and districts, including Connecticut, lack the ability to connect student achievement test scores to individual teachers for the most part. This makes it impossible to judge the effects of most induction programs on student achievement. Connecticut is progressing toward such a system, however.

⁴¹ *Policy Brief; The High Cost of Teacher Turnover*, Thomas Carroll, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, June 2007.

⁴² *In Search of Quality: Recruiting, Hiring, and Supporting Teachers*, Robert Reichardt and Michael Arnold with Kelly Hupfeld, Connecticut Center for School Change, 2006.

⁴³ "What are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?" Thomas Smith and Richard Ingersoll, *American Educational Research Journal* 41(3): 681-714, Fall 2004.

⁴⁴ *Qualified Teachers for All California Students: Current Issues in Recruitment, Retention, Preparation, and Professional Development*, Chloe Ballard, California Research Bureau, August 1998.

⁴⁵ *Issue Brief: Mentoring and Supporting New Teachers*, Bridget Curran, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, January 2002.

⁴⁶ "Is Mentoring Worth the Money? A Benefit-Cost Analysis and Five-Year Rate of Return of a Comprehensive Mentoring Program for Beginning Teachers," Anthony Villar and Michael Strong, *ERS Spectrum: Journal of Research and Information* 25(3): 1-17, Educational Research Service, Summer 2007.

Studies in Tennessee, Boston, and Dallas also indicate the quality of teaching impacts student achievement. For example, the Tennessee study⁴⁷ found that, despite beginning at the same percentile, children with the least effective teachers for three years in a row had achievement test scores more than 50 percentile points lower than their peers who had the most effective teachers during the same period. The study also found that the effect of teaching quality is cumulative over time but not compensatory. In other words, one low-quality teacher can impact a student's achievement for many years, regardless of the quality of subsequent teachers.

The National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Governors Association, The Education Trust, and the Alliance for Excellent Education all agree: teacher quality is one of the most important factors impacting student achievement. *Strong induction that moves beyond emotional support for beginning teachers to help improve the quality of teaching has the potential to positively impact student achievement.*

Determining the effectiveness of induction program support components, as a whole, is difficult, because the programs vary substantially. States, districts, and universities have developed a wide range of supports for new teachers since the movement gained momentum in the 1980s. As research was published showing the benefits of strong programs, more programs – albeit of varying quality – were developed and offered. In 1984, eight states reported having a support program. By 1992, 34 states had one, with half mandating participation in a statewide program.⁴⁸ Currently, about 30 states have required programs; it is unclear how many provide funding for implementation of support.⁴⁹ (Connecticut discontinued directly funding mentor support in the early 1990s.) The programs vary in components, duration, intensity, purpose, oversight, and lead organization. Therefore, they cannot be lumped together for one definitive statement or study on the degree to which induction programs are effective.⁵⁰

Generally, research consistently finds that strong, multi-year support programs for beginning teachers produce positive results. There is little, if any, sound research showing positive results of basic induction programs with short-term or infrequent support. The best published, quantitative studies of particular programs, which found positive results, uniformly involved only strong, intensive initiatives.

Support models. Despite variations in induction program components, most have mentoring as their central focus. There are three mentoring models, although the details of the mentoring – for example, how frequently mentors and beginning teachers are expected to meet, and topics they are supposed to explore together – vary somewhat within any particular model.

⁴⁷ *Research Progress Report: Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement*, William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers, University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, November 1996.

⁴⁸ “Beginning Teachers Programs: Analysis of State Actions During the Reform Era,” Carol Furtwengler, *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 3(3), February 1995.

⁴⁹ “Teacher Induction Programs: Trends and Opportunities,” Alene Russell, *Policy Matters* 3(10), American Association of State Colleges and Universities, October 2006.

⁵⁰ *The Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Retention: What the Research Says*, Richard Ingersoll and Jeffrey Kralik, Education Commission of the States: Research Review, Teaching Quality, February 2004. See also: *A Review of Literature on Beginning Teacher Induction*, Elizabeth Whisnant, Kim Elliott, and Susan Pynchon, Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession, July 2005.

The first is Connecticut's model. Mentors most often are teachers with full-time classroom teaching duties who work with beginning teachers whenever they can. Some programs, including Connecticut's as required by state regulation, also include a provision for release time a few times each year from classroom duties to facilitate mentoring.

The second model is being disseminated by the New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This model involves releasing teachers from their classroom duties for at least two years to devote all their full-time hours to mentoring a caseload of beginning teachers. The model is used in New York City and Alaska (in close cooperation with the New Teacher Center); Seattle; Rochester, New York; and Toledo, which pioneered the concept in 1981.

The third model is defined by granting mentors part-time release from their classroom duties so they may devote the remainder of their time to mentoring. This model is followed in Syracuse.

Overview of BEST Support Provided

The primary goal of the BEST support component is to provide all beginning teachers with substantive assistance that integrates them into the profession and prepares them for the BEST standards-based assessment, as ways of improving teacher quality. Like most other induction programs, the BEST program support component is centered on mentoring (i.e., assistance from colleagues), as previously described. Mentoring currently is required only in the beginning teacher's first year under SDE's established policies; except for ARC graduates and those teaching under DSAPs, the duration of mentoring is not mentioned in statute or state regulations, but is considered a State Board of Education policy.

Inequities in support have been cited frequently by multiple constituencies and acknowledged by SDE. These assertions have never been fully quantified by a party that is not connected to stakeholders in the BEST program, and could not be substantiated because *there is no statewide systematic data collection and analysis system for mentoring*. Consequently, the program review committee independently surveyed *all* beginning teachers who had just completed their first or second years of teaching in Connecticut to acquire information on support they received. District facilitators also were surveyed to better understand the range of support offered at the district level. (See Appendix A for more detailed information on the surveys.)

The surveys conducted by the committee confirmed BEST support and satisfaction with it varies across the state, with beginning teachers working in the poorest urban districts (as represented by the District Reference Group (DRG) designation of "I") reporting the lowest level of satisfaction with support.⁵¹ (Appendix G lists districts within each DRG.) Sixty-nine percent of all Year One respondents were "satisfied" with the overall level of support they received, but less than half (48 percent) of those who taught in DRG I districts were "satisfied." Indeed, in almost every aspect covered by the survey, teachers in the poorest urban districts reported receiving significantly less support than their peers in wealthier districts, as shown in Table IV-11. District facilitators who responded to the survey confirmed the diversity in support

⁵¹ The DRG I districts are Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury and Windham.

and oversight of mentoring given at the district level, but not necessarily according to the district's DRG.

Table IV-11. Key Indicators of BEST Support for Beginning Teachers			
<i>Support Indicator</i>	<i>A-H Districts</i>	<i>I Districts</i>	<i>All Districts</i>
<i>Year One Teachers</i>			
Had an assigned mentor***	97%	91%	95%
Satisfied with overall support***	77%	48%	69%
Satisfied with mentor support***	74%	57%	69%
Met with mentor within first two months of starting to teach***	91%	82%	88%
Satisfied with principal support***	75%	52%	69%
Satisfied with state-level support	71%	65%	70%
<i>Year Two Teachers</i>			
Had an assigned mentor***	89%	61%	83%
Satisfied with mentor support***	70%	53%	65%
Satisfied with principal support***	61%	46%	58%
Satisfied with state-level support	78%	68%	75%
Indicates the difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.001 level, using Kendall's tau-b correlation statistic, for this support indicator. Differences between the A-H and I districts were not statistically significant for those support indicators not followed by "."			
Notes: The numbers of responses (i.e., sample sizes) vary both across columns and within columns (across individual response items). In addition, the percents in the "All Districts" column reflect all responses received, including the responses of those who did not indicate their district and therefore could not be grouped by DRG.			
Source: PRI staff analysis of teacher surveys			

Mentoring, which is the focus of BEST support, is not given in a meaningful way to most beginning teachers. Although a majority of new teachers indicated they were satisfied with their mentors, further examination of survey results showed the majority received little or no substantive support. Substantive support is specific assistance that teachers can use throughout their careers to become better teachers and/or to perform well on the BEST portfolio. Examples of key types of specific support, which were included in the survey, are: 1) help plan lessons; 2) understand the BEST portfolio; 3) refine or learn teaching techniques; 4) make aware of program resources; and 5) understand the state's teaching standards. Fifty-nine percent of all Year One teachers who responded – and 80 percent of those in the poorest urban districts – received either one type of or no substantive assistance from their mentors, as shown in Table IV-12 below. This analysis shows the BEST support component is not meeting its basic goal of providing substantive support to all beginning teachers, particularly in DRG I districts.

Teachers might have indicated they were satisfied with their mentors, despite not receiving substantive assistance, because emotional support or help in becoming familiar with the school or district was provided. Although beginning teachers may value this non-substantive assistance, that type of guidance may not impact either their teaching quality or performance on the BEST assessment.

Table IV-12. Substantive Support Provided to Year One Teachers in BEST			
<i>Substantive Support</i>	<i>A-H Districts</i> n=498	<i>I Districts</i> n=167	<i>All Districts</i> n=717
Had no assigned mentor*	3%	9%	5%
Of those assigned a mentor:			
Received no substantive support***	26%	42%	31%
Received only one type of substantive support	21%	29%	23%
Total percent received no or one type of substantive support***	47%	71%	54%
Total percent of Year One teachers received no or one type of substantive support***	50%	80%	59%
*Indicates the difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, using Kendall's tau-b correlation statistic.			
***Indicates the difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.001 level, using Kendall's tau-b correlation statistic.			
Notes: Differences between the A-H and I districts were not statistically significant for the type of substantive support not followed by at least one "*." The numbers of responses (i.e. sample sizes) for columns "A-H Districts" and "I Districts" do not sum to the number of responses for "All Districts" because "All Districts" includes the responses of those who did not indicate their district and therefore could not be grouped by DRG.			
Source: PRI staff analysis of teacher survey			

The above analysis shows discrepancies in the overall level and quality of support provided to beginning teachers within DRG I districts in comparison with beginning teachers in other DRGs. The committee believes the reasons for such discrepancies should be examined in more detail by SDE and recommendations should be made to strengthen the overall support beginning teachers in DRG I districts receive.

The State Department of Education shall examine why disparities exist in support for beginning teachers in school districts within District Reference Group I (as designated by the education department) compared to other school districts throughout the state and report its recommendations for addressing the disparities to the legislature's committee(s) of cognizance by February 1, 2009.

SDE has emphasized BEST's assessment element to the detriment of overseeing the support component. Since state funding cuts in the early 1990s, which caused the elimination of the state-funded mentor stipend, SDE has had little role in the mentoring structure. Implementation and tracking of the support component, to the extent it occurs, largely has devolved to the EastConn RESC, which holds a contract for implementing parts of BEST. The education department's focus on the assessment component for licensing purposes is somewhat understandable because the state has a larger, more direct, role in that aspect of BEST. The state organizes and oversees the assessment, while support is given mostly by local mentors.

SDE's focus on the assessment, however, has filtered down to the local level, leaving the support component to be perceived by many as less critical. The interviews and surveys

conducted during this study revealed that, to many beginning teachers and their administrators, “BEST” is synonymous with “the portfolio,” not with an induction program encompassing both support and assessment. Further, the level at which BEST support is provided to beginning teachers varies across and within districts. Many educators attribute the variations in support to differing levels of administrator commitment at the district and individual school levels.

Although SDE has attempted to measure whether the assessment affects a broad range of indicators, *the BEST program has not systematically measured whether Connecticut’s support initiative, as one component of the program, has produced any positive results, including cost savings through reduced teacher attrition or higher teacher effectiveness measured by improved student performance.* The program review committee believes that, given the varied implementation of support to beginning teachers, such a study would not find the current support component reaps consistent, meaningful, and lasting benefits for beginning teachers or their students.

Key changes, as discussed below, could strengthen the BEST support component into a more effective tool in providing beginning teachers with more consistent, meaningful mentoring over a longer period of time than is currently required. As the national research indicates, greater and more effective support to beginning teachers would result in cost savings and increased student achievement. Furthermore, if Connecticut is going to continue to have a formal state assessment tied to licensure of beginning teachers, a state-supported, consistently high-quality support component must be in place to assist new teachers in learning and practicing the skills they need for the assessment and their careers. The support component must also be measured at the state level to ensure it is achieving the desired results.

Oversight of Mentoring

Neither the quality nor the substance of mentoring is effectively monitored by SDE. The education department lacks a formal, systematic tracking system that would allow an analysis of whether the program is meeting established performance indicators, which also are not in place. EastConn, which keeps some SDE data on mentor matches, is required only to provide BEST trainings; full oversight of mentoring is not part of its contract.

SDE has made two efforts to collect information on mentoring. First, all beginning teachers submitting portfolios are required to turn in completed surveys regarding the quality of support and teacher preparation, as well as the usefulness of the portfolio. Because the teachers must write their Social Security numbers on the survey and submit it as part of their portfolios prior to scoring, the committee questions the overall candor and validity of the resulting data. In addition, the department does not use the portfolio survey information in any substantive manner on a regular basis. Second, SDE contracted with UConn in 2005-06 to conduct and analyze the results of a one-time survey in spring 2005 of all types of educators involved in BEST, including beginning teachers. SDE does not systematically gather or analyze information on BEST mentoring in any other way.

It is unclear to what extent mentoring is tracked or analyzed by most district-level BEST personnel. Three-quarters of the district personnel in charge of BEST at the district level, called BEST district facilitators, who responded to the committee’s survey systematically check

whether mentoring is occurring. This may seem a high percentage, but as the only direct link between SDE and the districts, the facilitators have the primary responsibility of ensuring mentoring is occurring at the school district level. If mentoring is not systematically checked and reported by all facilitators, then SDE cannot be fully assured mentoring is occurring.

Further, some district facilitator respondents reported contacting both beginning teachers and their mentors, while others responded they contact only one group. The committee believes this inconsistent oversight is insufficient, due to the fact about one in three committee survey respondents were not satisfied with their mentors (31 percent of Year One teachers and 35 percent of Year Two teachers). In addition, a small group of beginning teachers (about 5 percent) reported they did not receive required mentoring support at all.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should develop a data collection and evaluation system for accurately monitoring the mentoring component of BEST. As part of the data collection system, the department should require the name(s) not only of the mentor, as is currently expected, but also, when assigned, of mentor team members to be submitted by the district as part of the beginning teacher's staff file within SDE. The data collected should be used to improve the quality and relevance of mentoring required under BEST.

The committee recommends the State Department of Education should keep its mentoring monitoring efforts separate from any surveys or documents relating to assessment submitted by the beginning teachers to their mentors and/or to the department.

Currently, only the name of the beginning teacher's individual or primary mentor – called the “mentor of record” – must be submitted as part of the teacher's staff file, as previously mentioned. Requiring the mentor team members to also be listed will facilitate two goals. First, the role of the mentor team members will be formalized and, therefore, perceived as important by all involved parties. Second, SDE will better understand and be able to fully analyze the types of mentoring beginning teachers are receiving. This will aid the goals of improving mentor matches and understanding what types of support are provided.

The committee supports SDE's efforts to seek input from Year Two teachers on their BEST experiences through an annual survey but believes SDE needs to make sure the information acquired from the survey results is valid and therefore useful. This goal can be reached through keeping a survey separate from the BEST assessment. The department might consider periodically collecting information from Year One teachers, as well, to better understand the support they receive and how it could be improved.

Substance of Mentoring

Lack of oversight has contributed to varying levels of mentoring across districts. The majority of Year One teachers does not receive comprehensive, substantive support from their mentors. As mentioned previously, a majority of beginning teachers (59 percent) and a larger portion of teachers in the poorest urban districts (80 percent) received either little or no substantive assistance from mentors in the following key areas mentors currently are trained to cover with their new teachers: 1) help plan lessons; 2) understand the BEST portfolio; 3) refine

or learn teaching techniques; 4) made aware of program resources; and 5) understand the state’s teaching standards.

No single type of substantive support was given to an overwhelming majority of Year One beginning teachers who responded to the committee’s survey, as shown in Table IV-13. Most notably, only 16 percent of beginning teachers in all districts and only 8 percent of those in DRG I had mentors who helped them understand the state’s teaching standards, which are the foundation of the BEST portfolio’s components. The table also shows new teachers in the poorest urban districts were significantly less likely than their peers in other districts to receive each type of substantive mentoring assistance.

Table IV-13. Types of Substantive Mentoring Assistance Given to Year One Teachers in BEST			
<i>Type of Assistance</i>	<i>A-H Districts</i> n=497	<i>I Districts</i> n=166	<i>All Districts</i> n=715
BEST resources (e.g., websites)*	35%	20%	31%
Connecticut’s Common Core of Teaching (state standards)*	19%	8%	16%
Lesson planning*	43%	27%	39%
Portfolio assessment*	33%	16%	29%
Teaching techniques*	56%	16%	52%
*Indicates the difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.001 level, using Kendall’s tau-b correlation statistic. Note: The numbers of responses (i.e., sample sizes) for columns “A-H Districts” and “I Districts” do not sum to the number of responses for “All Districts” because “All Districts” includes the responses of those who did not indicate their district and therefore could not be grouped by DRG. Source: PRI staff analysis of teacher survey			

Year One teachers want more information that is relevant to their teaching duties. More than a third of those who responded to these survey items agreed that more relevant information in both the school or district’s orientation and in the BEST orientation would have improved the support they received. About 40 percent believed support would have improved if they had received higher quality mentoring.

The committee’s survey results on beginning teachers’ satisfaction with the quality of mentoring are corroborated by the 2005 UConn survey, which found 23 percent of Year One and 35 percent of Year Two respondents were not satisfied with their mentors. In addition, the UConn survey analysis indicated Year One teachers who wanted guidance in particular topics often did not receive pertinent assistance. This finding was especially pronounced regarding the use of student assessment information to modify instruction – which is one of the key state standards and a BEST portfolio component – and the preparation of the portfolio. For example, 66 percent of new teachers reported wanting support on the use of student assessments to modify

instruction, but less than two-thirds (62 percent) of those who wanted this sort of help, received it.⁵²

SDE has made some efforts to improve mentoring. Through EastConn, mentor trainings are reviewed and updated at least once each year, as described previously. The RESC field staff recently made available a guide for mentors, which the field staff continues to refine. The committee believes this document is a productive step toward guiding mentors. However, it is insufficient given the scope of the problem. A more structured mentoring system, based on the key elements of the state's teaching standards, would better ensure beginning teachers receive the substantive, instructional support they need. Such structured mentoring also should enhance new teachers' abilities and understanding of the BEST portfolio requirement.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should create and implement a collection of sequenced support modules, based on the state standards contained in the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching, effective teaching methods, and beginning teachers' needs, through which mentors will guide their assigned new teachers. Starting no later than the 2009-2010 school year, the department should require mentors and beginning teachers to use the module system and to submit proof of its completion to their appropriate building-level administrators. Each school district should submit annual statements to the department certifying the progress of its beginning teachers in successfully completing the mentoring requirements.

A module system of mentoring based on the state standards, addressing student learning and beginning teachers' needs, will ensure mentors understand the types of instruction and assistance they need to provide their assigned new teachers. The system simultaneously will ensure beginning teachers understand what they must learn during their initial years of teaching in Connecticut as the foundation for their careers and assist them in preparing for the state's certification assessment.

There is some national precedent for a structured mentoring program. The Pathwise system, developed by ETS, is used in several states, including Ohio, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Vermont. (California also has its own recommended structured mentoring curriculum.) From a review of the Pathwise materials, that system is not based on Connecticut's teaching standards and the amount of paperwork it requires seems unnecessary. The concept of structured mentoring, however, must be implemented in a way suited to this state, in order to substantially improve mentoring across and within districts.

In developing the modules, SDE is encouraged to work with the RESC field staff, along with other constituencies as determined by the department. Each module should be focused on one topic (e.g., "Planning a Unit") and include key concepts and practices the beginning teacher must learn. With the conclusion of each module, beginning teachers should produce some evidence of their learning for review by the mentor and building administrator. Examples of evidence could include: a short reflection paper; a brief write-up of lessons learned at a relevant professional development workshop or other seminar, and how the teacher will apply those

⁵² *BEST Program Impact Survey Results: Results from Spring 2005*, A Collaborative Project of the Connecticut State Department of Education and the University of Connecticut Teachers for a New Era Project, Draft, December 2006.

lessons; a research paper; or any other activity as determined by SDE. This evidence of learning should show the new teacher has received instruction, has reflected on it, and understands how to apply the acquired knowledge to his or her own teaching.

The purpose of the building-level administrator review of the evidence's completion, authenticity, and content is three-fold. First, the review will ensure the beginning teacher appropriately and thoughtfully completed the mentoring modules. Second, the review will require administrators to take an active role in overseeing support to beginning teachers. Third, the information could be used within the beginning teacher's performance evaluation and professional development plan.

Time for Mentoring

There is general consensus among researchers and educators that high-quality mentoring requires a substantial time commitment by mentors. In studies, the programs that show the best results are those that reduce the classroom teaching duties of mentors in part or completely. Alaska's new support program and several districts – including, most recently, New York City – have these policies.

Anecdotal information suggests some of the best mentor prospects in Connecticut decline to mentor due to time constraints caused by their teaching workload and other school-based activities. Many potential mentors are considered leaders in their schools, who typically serve on multiple committees, lead extra-curricular activities, and teach full-time. Reducing a mentor's classroom workload would give the mentor time to observe, meet with, and guide the beginning teacher. *Numerous constituencies in Connecticut agree, and written testimony corroborates the belief, that giving trained veteran teachers sufficient time to mentor would both increase the quality of mentoring and boost the supply of willing mentors.*

Currently, mentors are required only to receive periodic release time from classroom teaching duties. *Formal release time for mentors and beginning teachers is required by law, but it is neither uniformly described within SDE documents nor consistently applied among districts that have release time policies.* There is inconsistency among the state regulations, internal policies and procedures, and BEST program publications regarding the amount of release time from classroom duties mentors should receive and the activities for which release time may be used, as noted earlier. All sources are consistent, however, in that the total release time for mentors and beginning teachers, combined, must equal four days and be used, at least in part, for observations.

Information from interviews conducted during this study indicates some mentors do not or cannot take advantage of the mandated release time. Mentors generally are hesitant to take advantage of the required release time to work with beginning teachers, in part because they do not want their students to lose learning time, as many believe happens when substitute teachers fill in. In some areas, mentors are not offered release time due to a shortage of either substitute teachers or district funding to pay for them.

Data from the committee's survey of Year One teachers shows a need to give mentors time to facilitate interactions with beginning teachers. Over half (52 percent) of Year One

respondents never were observed by their mentors, an activity that is required by the state regulations. On a more basic level, more than one-quarter (26 percent) of Year One respondents who had co-curricular duties were unable to find common time to meet with their mentors.⁵³

The committee's survey of district facilitators shows the inconsistency of release time policies across school districts. A strong majority (86 percent) of facilitators reported their districts allow mentors and beginning teachers to observe each other; less (61 percent) stated their districts allow release time to be used for mentoring meetings. A small percentage (7 percent) reported their districts provide time for mentors to use productively as they wish. Although release time is allowed by nearly all (94 percent) districts of the respondents, less than half (46 percent) have a formal policy of granting BEST release time to either mentors or beginning teachers.

Reducing mentors' classroom teaching workloads would provide them with dedicated time to observe and work with beginning teachers on implementing the structured support modules recommended above. In addition, the need for release time, and the inconsistencies in applying release time across districts, would be eliminated.

Because mentoring is a formal function of the BEST program, the state should assist districts with a portion of the costs associated with mentoring. At the same time, districts should be expected to provide some funding since districts benefit from strong mentoring, due to improved retention and effectiveness of beginning teachers, as national research has found.

The program review committee recommends C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to require a reduced classroom teaching workload for BEST mentors as determined by the school district. Those mentors who simultaneously teach part-time must have a substantially lower caseload. The workload reduction shall be structured to coincide with a beginning teacher's daily preparation time. Districts may choose to provide full-time mentors instead of, or in combination with, mentors who have a reduced classroom teaching workload. Districts shall be required not to exceed a caseload of 15 beginning teachers per full-time mentor.

The state shall provide funds to districts to reduce their costs of: 1) hiring additional personnel to fill classes for mentors who are currently employed as teachers; and/or 2) the salary or hourly wages for those educators hired solely to be mentors. Mentors who are employed simultaneously in another capacity shall receive their same salary.

The committee recommends C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to allow not only current teachers, but also retired teachers, retired administrators, teachers on leave, and education faculty from the state's various colleges and universities to become mentors.

The committee recommends the State Department of Education should work collaboratively with local school districts, Regional Educational Service Centers, and other constituencies associated with BEST to identify, recruit, and train an expanded pool of mentors.

⁵³ Co-curricular duties include rotating responsibilities, such as monitoring lunch periods or study halls, as well as responsibility for student activities, for example leading clubs or coaching athletic teams.

SDE is encouraged to reach out to organizations, districts, and state(s) that have implemented or advocated for a reduced classroom teaching workload for mentors in order to formulate the details of the state's new policy. Their knowledge and experience can help SDE formulate a feasible and effective policy.

The program review committee believes a wide range of educators have the potential to become high-quality mentors. This belief was shared by the 2005-06 BEST Advisory Committee and by program staff and administrators in interviews. The proposed changes above will allow districts to draw on the expertise of approved current and retired educators, filling the need for mentors, and helping build a larger mentor pool.

The committee recognizes this policy change will require a fiscal commitment to mentoring that will need to be fully determined as the program is developed. Sharing the cost between the state and district levels will not reduce the overall amount of resources needed to implement a reduced classroom teaching workload for mentors. The committee believes the investment in a stronger mentoring system will result in more consistent benefits for beginning teachers, mentors, and students – with the goal of cost-savings through lower attrition and improved student achievement – than the current policy. A model of reduced or no classroom teaching duties for mentors will fully ensure mentors and beginning teachers have the time together needed to engage in substantive mentoring.

Release time. Under the new reduced classroom teaching mentor model discussed above, state-mandated release time for mentors no longer will be necessary. If the legislature decides not to implement and fund a policy of a reduced classroom workload for mentors, then release time policies should be changed so they are more consistent across the state, with accompanying state funding and monitoring.

Mentor release time is required by regulation, but is not uniformly offered by school districts, as described above. Ensuring release time is given and used would be critical to improving the quality and consistency of mentoring, in the absence of a new policy of reduced classroom teaching duties for mentors. A standardized amount of release time should be available to all mentors, in every district. In addition, mentors should receive a clear message that they are expected to use the release time to observe their new teachers, as required by law. With a policy of release time should come state funding to help districts offset costs associated with providing release time for BEST mentors.

Release time for beginning teachers to engage in induction-related activities is part of the overall release time requirement. The committee survey data, however, revealed 16 percent of Year One teachers received no release time, and an additional 16 percent received release time only once or twice. Beginning teachers specifically are required by law to observe their mentors or other teachers; over one-third (35 percent) of Year One teachers did not observe anyone, as determined by cross-referencing survey responses. Release time received for specific BEST activities is depicted in Table IV-14.

Table IV-14. Release Time Received by Year One Teachers for BEST Activities			
<i>Type of Release Time Received and Used</i>	<i>A-H Districts</i> n=489 to 492	<i>I Districts</i> n=165 to 166	<i>All Districts</i> n=707 to 710
Beginning teachers			
Observed mentor teaching*	37%	27%	35%
Observed other teachers teaching	58%	56%	58%
Worked with mentor**	21%	11%	19%
Attended professional development	63%	62%	63%
Mentors			
Received and used time to observe new teacher teaching	49%	42%	48%
<p>*Indicates the difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, using Kendall's tau-b correlation statistic. ** Indicates the difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, using Kendall's tau-b correlation statistic. Notes: Differences between the A-H and I districts were not statistically significant for those release time uses not followed by at least one "*." The numbers of responses (i.e. sample sizes) for columns "A-H Districts" and "I Districts" do not sum to the number of responses for "All Districts" because "All Districts" includes the responses of those who did not indicate their district and therefore could not be grouped by DRG. In addition, as noted, the numbers of responses (i.e., sample sizes) vary both across columns and within columns (across individual response items). Source: PRI staff analysis of teacher survey</p>			

Similarly to release time for mentors, release time for new teachers should be available to all, across all districts. This will ensure beginning teachers have equal opportunity to learn from their mentors and colleagues.

Frequency of Mentoring

The guidelines regarding how frequently mentoring should occur differ across state resources and school districts. State regulations require weekly meetings, which are also recommended in the manual for BEST district-level personnel. Several other program publications recommend biweekly meetings, as described earlier in this chapter. This inconsistency has led to confusion at the district level, reflected in district facilitator survey results portrayed in Table IV-15. Mentoring support cannot be fully implemented across and within districts without consistent guidelines.

Table IV-15. Mentoring Frequency: According to District Facilitator Survey Respondents	
<i>Mentoring Frequency</i>	<i>Percent of Respondents</i>
As-needed	12%
Monthly	0%
Once every two weeks	37%
Weekly	36%
Multiple times per week	10%
Not yet asked by BEST participants/does not know	5%
n=74	
Source: PRI staff analysis of BEST district facilitator survey	

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should standardize the frequency with which beginning teachers and their mentors/mentor teams are required to meet. The standard should take into consideration the frequency necessary to enable mentors and beginning teachers to successfully complete the mentoring module system recommended above.

Length of Mentoring

The duration of mentoring also varies at the district level. *Many school districts already provide two years of mentoring, although there is not consistency statewide.* Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the district facilitator survey respondents indicated second-year mentoring currently was required in their districts; an additional 16 percent noted such support was strongly recommended. These results were corroborated by the committee's beginning teacher survey responses: 83 percent of all Year Two teachers – but only 61 percent of those in the poorest urban districts – received mentoring in their second years. Beginning teachers without the benefit of a second year of formal mentoring, particularly in the DRG I districts, may be at a disadvantage in building their skills.

Mentoring support in the second year is strongly desired by beginning teachers and district facilitators. Eighty-nine and 93 percent of first and second year teachers who responded to the survey, respectively, believe mentoring should last at least two years. Nearly all (96 percent) district facilitators surveyed agree.

Initial national research indicates beginning teachers and their students greatly benefit from more than one year of substantive mentoring. The cost-benefit study cited earlier, which found substantial benefits to intensive support, was based on a two-year mentoring program. Another study, which examined three districts with varying levels of Year Two mentoring, found that the students of teachers who had more intensive Year Two mentoring had higher achievement test gains over the course of that second year.⁵⁴

The program review committee recommends C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to require beginning teachers to receive formal mentoring during their first two years in the BEST program upon receipt of their state initial teacher certification.

This recommendation recognizes and codifies the current policies and practices of the vast majority of school districts, and will help ensure basic consistency in mentoring support across the state. Further, in accordance with this recommendation, the mentoring module system recommended earlier should cover two years of teaching. There also is precedent for requiring two years of mentoring in Connecticut: it is mandated for both ARC graduates and those teaching under Durational Shortage Area Permits.

Selection and Supply of Mentors

The process and ease of selecting teachers to become mentors varies across districts. The process of selecting mentors is outlined in state regulations. A BEST district committee is

⁵⁴ *Does New Teacher Support Affect Student Achievement? Some Early Research Findings*, Michael Strong, New Teacher Center at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Research Brief Issues #06-01, January 2006.

to review and recommend mentor nominees, who are then approved by the local school board. Only 30 percent of the BEST facilitators who responded to the survey use district committees for this role. Instead, generally the district facilitators or their delegates are heavily involved in both recruiting and selecting mentors. About half of facilitators reported that principals also are involved in the process.

Recruiting quality mentors is difficult in some districts, although not for most. About one in four (24 percent) BEST facilitators reported they have trouble recruiting a sufficient number of mentors. Data provided by EastConn on the numbers of beginning teachers and recently trained mentors⁵⁵ in each district indicate about 18 percent of districts experienced mentor recruitment or matching difficulty last school year.⁵⁶

Another indicator of recruitment is the precision of a mentor-beginning teacher match. Twenty-eight percent of Year One teachers were assigned either no mentor or to a mentor in neither their school nor content area, according to EastConn's mentor match data. By this measure, too, some districts are experiencing difficulty in recruiting mentors. Drawing on a larger pool of mentors, as recommended above, while having an approval process to ensure quality, may alleviate mentor recruitment difficulty.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should develop guidelines requiring any potential mentor to first be approved by: 1) his or her current district, for those who are employed, certified teachers; 2) his or her last school district, for those who are retired certified administrators or retired certified teachers; or 3) his or her current supervisor, for those who are employed as university professors specializing in education, or his or her former supervisor, for retired university professors specializing in education.

The person who actually assigns mentors to beginning teachers varies across districts. About three-quarters of district facilitators reported principals played some role in mentor matching. Overall, one-third of matches were completed solely by principals. In 21 percent of respondents' districts, however, district facilitators alone matched mentors to beginning teachers. A few districts delegated the task to department chairs and deputy superintendents.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should require the beginning teacher's building-level administrator to assign mentors and, where necessary, mentor team members.

The building-level administrators, as the beginning teachers' ultimate supervisors, should have the best understanding of which mentors would be best for the new teachers. Furthermore, placing the responsibility of mentor matching on administrators will obligate them to become more involved in the BEST program. If mentors or mentor team members with content or grade

⁵⁵ Although having attended recent training is not a guarantee of quality, it may be a proxy for dedication to mentoring, and it inherently indicates an opportunity to acquire knowledge on mentoring, two factors that may reasonably be assumed to improve the quality of a mentor.

⁵⁶ Eighteen percent of districts have a beginning teacher/recently trained mentor ratio that is high. Ten percent of districts had a beginning teacher/mentor ratio of 0.9 or higher. (In other words, these districts had one recently trained mentor for every 0.9 or more beginning teachers). Another eight percent of districts had a ratio of 0.7 to 0.89.

level expertise cannot be located within the beginning teachers' buildings, the administrators should be responsible for working with personnel in other schools or at the district level to find appropriate mentor team members.

Training for Mentors

All educators selected to be mentors are required to complete a three-day initial mentor training in order to be assigned to beginning teachers. Currently, mentors only need to complete initial training once; additional training every four years is recommended but not required, as previously discussed.

EastConn, at its own initiative, analyzed the limited SDE mentor match data to which it had access, for this study. The data on mentors for the 2006-07 school year reveal that many lacked recent training. A majority of those who were still teaching and considered eligible mentors (59 percent) had not been trained within the last four years, as mentioned earlier. Over one-third (35 percent) of this group, which represented 20 percent of all eligible mentors, had not attended initial or update mentor training since 1997-1998, about ten years ago. In other words, one-fifth of all mentors had not been trained since before the portfolio was implemented and the state's current teaching standards were adopted.

There is general consensus that all beginning teachers should be mentored by recently trained mentors. Beginning teachers should not be mentored by teachers who are unfamiliar with the state's teaching standards, or with the current BEST support or assessment methods.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should adopt the following mentor training requirements: 1) mentors who received initial or update mentor training up to three years ago must complete an update training; 2) mentors who received initial or update training more than three years ago must complete an initial mentor training; 3) all mentors should be required to complete a mentor update training every third year since their last initial or update training; 4) all mentor trainings, initial or update, should be provided by the State Department of Education in conjunction with the Regional Educational Service Centers, and should be focused on instructing mentors in how to work through the new mentor module system (as recommended above); and 5) anyone who fails to complete these training requirements no longer will be considered eligible for assignment to a beginning teacher, until another initial mentor training is completed.

The program review committee believes full implementation of the mentor module system will require all mentors to receive substantial instruction in the system. At the same time, the training should not be so lengthy as to become a burden to either mentors or trainers. SDE is encouraged to offer training in a series over multiple days, if necessary.

In developing the new update and initial mentor trainings, the department and the RESCs are encouraged to work closely together to ensure the trainings are based on developing mentors' coaching skills. The trainings also should instruct mentors in how to sufficiently work through the mentor module system.

Mentor-Beginning Teacher Matches

The overall quality of mentor-beginning teacher matches varies among and within districts. As previously described, some districts and content areas have an insufficient supply of trained mentors to work with beginning teachers. Due to this shortage, mentors are assigned to beginning teachers in different content areas or buildings, which may not be the most beneficial or effective matches. There are differences, however, at the district level regarding which characteristic takes precedence when a mentor of the same content area and building is not available, according to the results of the district facilitator survey. State law does not clearly define whether mentor assignments must be based on a new teacher's content area, grade level, or building.

Based on available mentor data from EastConn, presented in Table IV-16, half of beginning teachers who were assigned mentors had mentors in the same content area and building. When a content match was not available within the school, beginning teachers most often were assigned to a mentor from a different content area, in the same building.

Table IV-16. Beginning Teacher-Mentor Matches: 2006-2007	
<i>Match Characteristics</i>	<i>Percent of Beginning Teacher-Mentor Matches</i>
Content area	
Same	55%
Closely related*	18%
Building	
Same	91%
Different, in-district	9%
Different district	<1%
Overall match	
Same content and building	50%
Same content, different building	4%
Same building, different content	40%
Neither content nor building	5%
n=2,538 (beginning teacher-mentor matches for Year One teachers) *An example of a closely related match is a pair composed of a beginning teacher who is certified in elementary education and a mentor who is certified in kindergarten education. Source of data: EastConn	

The committee's beginning teacher survey results further confirmed the variation in mentor matches and district personnel's preference for a same-building match. The survey results also indicated mentor teams did not give new teachers better total matches. The percent of new teachers whose teams contained at least one member of the same content area, grade, and building, was about the same as the percent of new teachers with an individual mentor who matched on all three characteristics.

The program review committee recommends C.G.S. Sec. 10-220a shall be amended to require each beginning teacher to be supported by a mentor or mentor team member who has recent experience or expertise in either: 1) the same, precise content area as the beginning teacher, for a new teacher not in elementary education; or 2) the same, precise

grade level as the beginning teacher, for a new teacher who teaches elementary education. If such a match is not feasible, the beginning teacher shall be supported by a mentor who has recent experience or expertise in: 1) a similar content area, for a new teacher not in elementary education; or 2) a similar grade level, for a new teacher who teaches elementary education.

The committee believes a strong mentor understands how to coach a beginning teacher in applying the foundational skills of effective teaching outlined in the state standards: planning, instructing, assessing, and reflecting. At the same time, the committee recognizes that how these skills are implemented is different between, for example, a middle school science class and a high school civics class. Similarly, instructional techniques can vary within a general content area, depending on the precise subject and grade. This is especially true for elementary education, where a first grade teacher will use different teaching techniques from a fifth grade educator. The recommendation proposed above will enable beginning teachers to get support from both well-trained mentors in similar content areas, and colleagues in the more precise areas. As a result, beginning teachers will experience more beneficial mentoring and mentor matching will be facilitated.

District Facilitators

District facilitators are in charge of implementing the BEST program at the local level. About half (57 percent) of survey respondents are district-level administrators, mostly focused on curriculum; the remainder is nearly evenly split between teachers (16 percent) and principals (20 percent). Few facilitators (5 percent) only have BEST facilitator duties. Using survey questions regarding median hours worked on BEST and other duties, facilitators spend about 6 percent of their overall working time on the program.

The BEST duties performed by veteran district facilitators are not uniform across districts, with some facilitators taking very active roles and others not.⁵⁷ Nearly all district facilitators perform basic, required duties, including organizing a BEST orientation for new teachers and making sure each Year One teacher has an assigned mentor. However, beyond these duties, there is wide variation in tasks, as shown by Table IV-17. It is possible the size of districts and numbers of beginning teachers may impact the BEST activity levels of district facilitators.

On average, district facilitators performed 9.5 BEST-related duties, of the 14 common duties listed on the survey. The number of activities ranged from three to 15 (an option was provided to fill in other duties), with one-quarter of facilitators completing seven or fewer. Those who completed relatively few BEST activities may have been fulfilling the primary requirements of the facilitator position. Essentially these requirements are to ensure beginning teachers have mentors, check that mentoring is occurring, and organize a BEST orientation.

The variation in facilitator activities contributes to de facto differences in the support resources beginning teachers may access. It also likely contributes to differences in how helpful beginning teachers believe the facilitators are. Beginning teachers in a district whose facilitator

⁵⁷ This statement and the percents shown in Table IV-17 rely on what those district facilitators who held their same BEST position last year, report that they actually did last year.

checks to ensure mentoring is being provided and organizes beginning teacher meetings have more opportunities for support than those in a district whose facilitator perceives the primary duty as assigning a mentor to a beginning teacher. About half of all beginning teachers (48 and 56 percent for Years One and Two teachers, respectively) were satisfied with their facilitators.

Table IV-17 Percent of BEST District Facilitator Respondents Accomplishing BEST Activities^a	
<i>Activity</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Made sure each new teacher was assigned a mentor	96%
Held/organized BEST orientation	94%
Met with Year One beginning teachers	79%
Met with Year Two beginning teachers	71%
Held portfolio workshops for Year Two teachers	24%
Was primarily responsible for coordinating video equipment for BEST portfolio requirement	7%
Met with groups of mentors	52%
Met with or called individual mentors	78%
Systematically checked to see whether mentoring was occurring ^b	68%
Recruited mentors	86%
Recruited master mentors ^c	26%
Recruited portfolio scorers	70%
Arranged in-district BEST trainings	56%
Arranged for RESC field staff member to speak at administrative meeting	25%
^a Includes only facilitators who both were facilitators in 2006-07 and had beginning teachers in their districts.	
^b This item is a cross-referenced combination of two separate survey items: checking with mentors to see whether mentoring was occurring, and checking with beginning teachers for the same purpose.	
^c Master mentors are experienced mentors who are trained to take an active role at the district or school levels in working with mentors, and sometimes with beginning teachers. Most districts do not have master mentors.	
n=65	
Source: PRI staff analysis of BEST district facilitator survey	

The differences in district facilitator performance are partially caused and perpetuated by a lack of clear guidance from SDE. There is no organized training to familiarize facilitators with their duties. The vast majority of the facilitators (84 percent) who responded to the survey believe training would be beneficial. District facilitators receive three types of guidance currently, as previously mentioned. First, they meet as a group, twice a year, but it is unclear to what extent those meetings provide specific guidance on what activities they should be performing. Second, they receive a manual for the position, which is a good resource, but does not sufficiently stand in for initial training. Third, starting this year, RESC field staff is contacting all facilitators to better understand each district's induction activities and to provide additional guidance. The committee believes training will provide guidance that better enables BEST facilitators to understand their duties so beginning teachers in their districts receive sufficient assistance.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should offer district facilitators training to enable them to understand and carry out their full scope of BEST duties. The department should work with the Regional Educational Service Centers in developing and offering the training.

Administrators

There is general consensus among constituencies interviewed during this study and testimony received by the committee that the quality of mentoring and overall level of support given to beginning teachers depends in large part on administrators. District and building administrators have great influence in determining the extent support is facilitated through crafting beginning teacher and mentor schedules, deciding whether to positively recognize mentors, and shaping school culture. Administrators also decide whether to personally support beginning teachers through meeting with them, making them feel comfortable in approaching with questions, offering an orientation, and facilitating attendance at workshops.

The importance of administrators to induction is corroborated by survey results. All BEST district facilitators who responded to the committee's survey agree administrators have a "strong" (74 percent) or "moderate" (26 percent) impact on the level of support provided to beginning teachers; none believed administrators do not affect overall support.

National research has confirmed administrators play a large role in teacher satisfaction levels and employment decisions. Dissatisfied teachers cite poor administrative support as their top complaint, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.⁵⁸ Similarly, teachers who change schools reported administrator support as one of their key reasons for leaving, second only to receiving a better teaching assignment.

SDE began to recognize the important role administrators play in induction and teacher satisfaction in the early 2000s. In response, the department developed and launched specific trainings a few years ago. The "Administrator Institute" and "New Teacher Induction: A Principal's Role" workshops have had at least 541 total attendees, respectively, over the years. For context, there are about 3,500 administrators in Connecticut.⁵⁹ In addition to offering trainings, the RESC staff wrote and disseminated a guide for administrators that summarized key points of the trainings, described earlier in this chapter.

Although administrator support for new teacher induction has risen, not all administrators are providing or facilitating sufficient support. RESC field staff, administrators, and mentors generally agree that attention some administrators give to induction is not at expected levels.

These impressions are confirmed by the committee's survey data, which provide information on beginning teachers' satisfaction with their principals and district-level recognition

⁵⁸ *Policy Brief; The High Cost of Teacher Turnover*, Thomas Carroll, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, June 2007.

⁵⁹ 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> .

of mentors. A significant portion of beginning teachers was either “dissatisfied” with or received “no support” from their principals. Year Two respondents were about equally dissatisfied with (18 percent) and more frequently received no support from (23 percent) their principals, compared to Year One respondents (21 and 11 percent, respectively). Principals were not generally a source of support for Year Two teachers who lacked mentors; they gave assistance to only 12 percent of those teachers. In comparison, 29 percent of Year Two teachers without mentors reported receiving support from the BEST district facilitator. It is unclear why Year Two respondents were less satisfied with principal support. For new teachers at both stages, however, principal support varied by DRG, with those in wealthier districts receiving more support. Interestingly, those beginning teachers who were satisfied (or not) with their principals were also satisfied (or not) with their mentors and other teacher colleagues, a result which could support the hypothesis that principals can influence the overall level of support.

The support district-level administrators choose to give mentors through recognition also varies. A portion of districts gives financial compensation to mentors, outside the collective bargaining agreements, as previously mentioned. Approximately half the districts that do not give stipends to mentors recognize mentors in other ways, such as giving them a reception or formally recognizing them at a local board of education meeting. About 13 percent of districts do not formally recognize mentors in any way, according to the district facilitator survey results.

Department and RESC staff, administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers noted in discussions with committee staff that some administrators continue to be unaware of the importance of supporting new teacher induction or of how to provide support. *Administrators are not obligated to complete training in how to support new teacher induction.* There is precedent for requiring administrators to complete a certain type of training. Like teachers, administrators must earn a certain number of professional development credits every five years to retain certification. At least 15 of the required 90 hours must be in teacher evaluation, yet there is no requirement for any type of training in how to support new teachers.

The program review committee recommends C.G.S. Sec. 10-145b(1)(1) shall be amended to require administrators acting in an administrative or supervisory capacity at least 50 percent of their assigned time to complete a certain number of hours of training, as determined by the State Department of Education, in new teacher induction during each five-year certification period.

This requirement will compel all administrators to recognize the importance of new teacher induction and the trainings will instruct them in concrete ways to support beginning teachers. Building administrator review and approval of the mentor modules also will improve administrators’ understanding of and involvement in support.

Chapter Five: Assessment

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. The portfolio is specific to 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. The committee's findings and recommendations regarding the BEST assessment are provided in this chapter.

Description

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 V-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.

The unit of instruction used in the portfolio is typically five to eight hours of classroom time. The full written portion of the portfolio generally is 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.

Table V-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

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 content 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 teachers meet 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, although the total hours of instruction documented is roughly the same as portfolios for other content areas. 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. To do so, formal application is required, which must be reviewed and approved by the district facilitator and the teacher's principal before being submitted to SDE for review and approval.

Different dates apply to teachers submitting a second or third portfolio, as discussed later in this chapter. 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 it 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 he or she is not required to submit a math portfolio until after the second year of teaching of teaching that subject (which is actually their third year of participation in BEST). This is only one example of when a deferral is allowed; 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.

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 administrators, project leaders, 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 all 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 districts. 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. All portfolio scorers 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 V-2 shows the training requirements for all portfolio scorers.

Table V-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 PRI 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 chapter).

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 choose 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 have mixed characteristics in terms of passing and non-passing performance. Scorers typically had difficulty deciding whether the portfolio should pass, resulting in multiple reads of the portfolio. 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.⁶⁰ 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 the final step in 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. For proficiency testing, experienced scorers are not permitted to score a benchmark portfolio that they actually were involved in scoring.

Prospective scorers are required to individually review the benchmark 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; interaction 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

⁶⁰ Connecticut State Department of Education, *Beginning Educator Support and Training, Portfolio Scoring Processes and Forms*, June 2007.

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

The only exception to the standard portfolio scorer training process 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. Scorers in the science content area have always been trained 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 also 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.

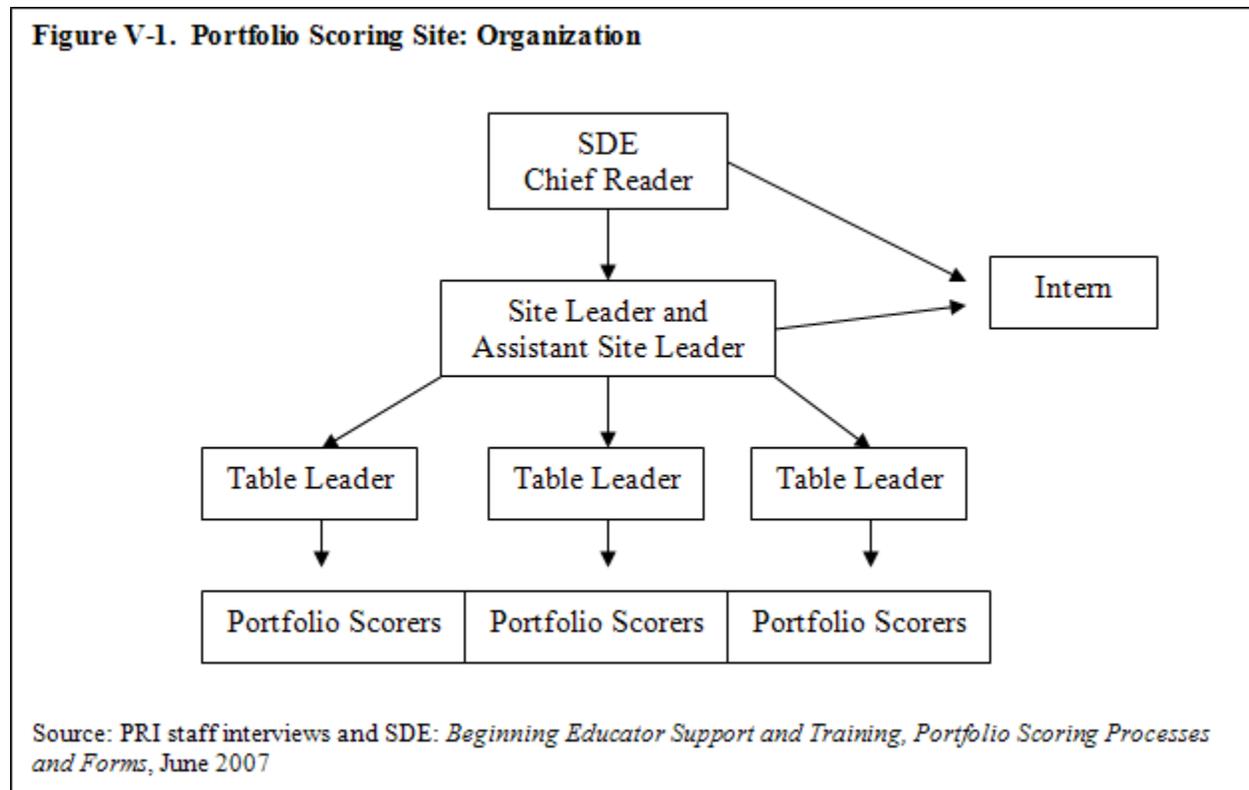
All teachers submit their portfolios to EastConn by mail or in-person. EastConn serves as the BEST program's central repository and clearinghouse for portfolios. It is responsible for cataloguing and numbering all the portfolios it receives based on the content area of the portfolio and the date submitted. 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 generally are 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 according to SDE guidelines. Figure V-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 for the content area, often a Teacher-in-Residence, oversees site operations. The consultant serves 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 scoring 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 agree on 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 documentation 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 scorers 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 V-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 at least two and potentially 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 who receive a zero score 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.

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.
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.

Table V-3. BEST Portfolio Scoring Levels		
<i>Performance Standard</i>	<i>Performance Level Descriptions</i>	<i>Result</i>
ACCEPTABLE	4- <u>Advanced</u> performance in meeting the standards	Eligibility for the Provisional Educator Certificate, provided all other certification requirements are met.
	3- <u>Proficient</u> performance in meeting the standards	
	2- <u>Competent</u> performance in meeting the standards	
NOT ACCEPTABLE	1- <u>Conditional</u> performance in meeting the standards	If in Year 2 of BEST: Eligibility for a 3 rd 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>)
	Not Scorable – incomplete or inadequate portfolio documentation that interferes with the accurate and fair scoring of the portfolio.	If in Year 2 of BEST: Eligibility for a 3 rd 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>)
	0- Evidence of conduct in violation of the Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (R.C.S.A. Sec. 145d-400a.)	If in Year 2 of BEST: Eligibility for a 3 rd 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.
Source: SDE		

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.

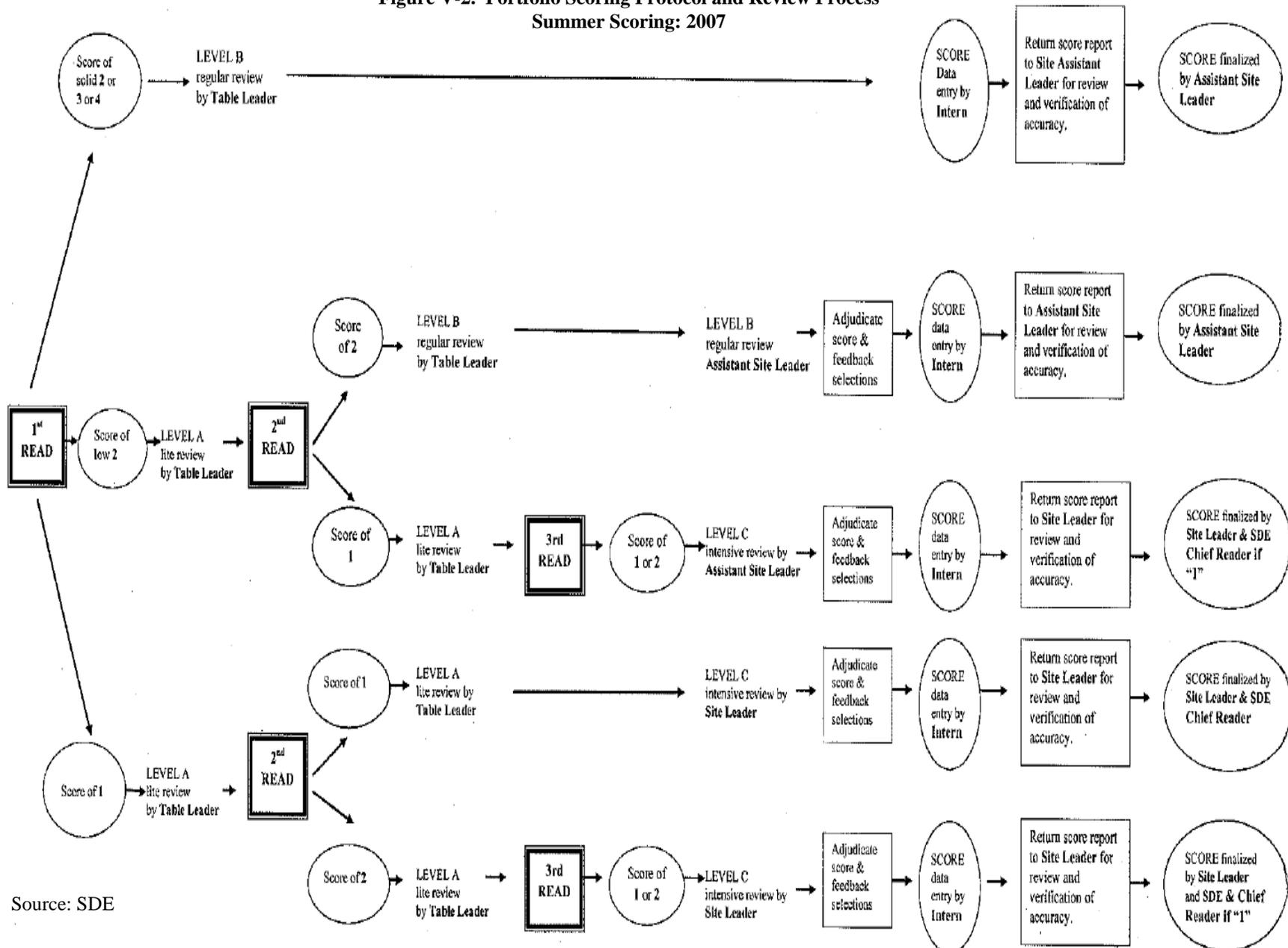
The analysis, evaluation, and scoring of the portfolio is based on a rubric format. The rubric is a table that identifies a set of 13 specific performance indicators that form the framework for the scorer's analysis and evaluation. The performance indicators are aligned with the Connecticut Common Core 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 H.

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, scorers 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 assessment.

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 a scorer spends with the initial review of one portfolio generally is 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 V-2 outlines the portfolio scoring protocol and review process – called “back reading” – used by SDE for the 2007 summer scoring session.

Figure V-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 both 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 V-4. (Note: Table V-4 is a more detailed description of the process identified in Figure V-2.)

Table V-4. Levels of Back-Read Review for BEST Portfolios				
<i>Review Level</i>	<i>Time Devoted</i>	<i>Components Included</i>	<i>Applied to Scores:</i>	<i>Done by</i>
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 a little over three 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 teacher scores. Teachers may view their results on line using the BEST Connections website, in addition to receiving the results by mail.

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 May 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 is no longer 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. For this to occur, 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 meeting 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. The state education department 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, and there are handbooks, training, and resource personnel at the district and state levels.

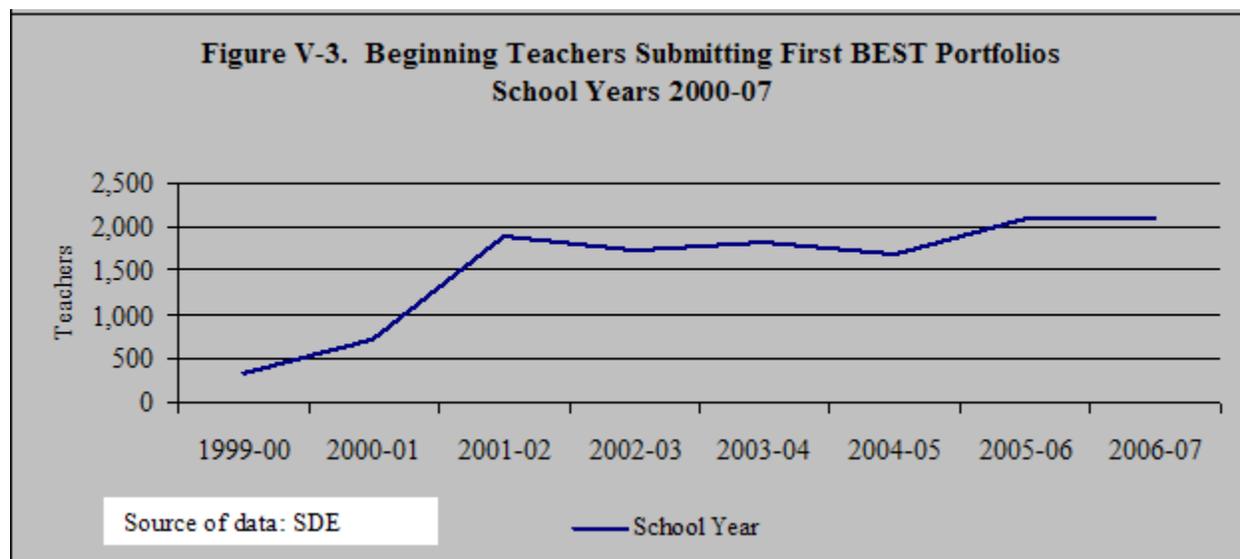
Beginning teachers and table leaders also have access to examples of portfolios that are considered outstanding by SDE (i.e., received a score of “4”). These portfolios, called “exemplars,” are available online and hard copies are available for review at each RESC. School districts also have the option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

Portfolio Data

BEST portfolio data were collected from SDE, and highlighted below. This includes statistics on portfolio submissions, exemptions, and outcomes. Information was collected about beginning teachers who submit portfolios, portfolio scores, and teacher contract provisions regarding release time for beginning teachers to complete portfolios, and stipends for portfolio scorers.

Beginning Teachers Submitting First Portfolios

Figure V-3 shows the changes in the number of teachers submitting first portfolios from 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 V-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 conveys 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 arts. 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 V-5. Selected Demographic Data for Beginning Teachers Submitting First Portfolios: School Years 2004-05 through and 2006-07						
<i>Total BEST Portfolios (1st Submissions)</i>	<i>2004-05</i>		<i>2005-06</i>		<i>2006-07</i>	
	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						
Female	1,316	75.2%	1,496	73.9%	1,450	73.8%
Male	431	24.6%	527	26.0%	502	25.3%
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-approved 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 Exemptions

Table V-6 shows full and partial BEST portfolio exemption information for 2006-07 (see exemption explanation on page 78.) 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.

<i>Type of Exemption</i>	<i>Granted</i>	<i>Denied</i>
Teachers submitting portfolios (n=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 portfolio scores for May 2007 is shown in Table V-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).

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>Portfolio Score</i>				<i>Totals</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	
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
Social Studies	33	89	52	9	183
Special Education	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 to 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 V-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 scorers are 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 V-8. New and Experienced BEST Portfolio Scorers
School Years 2003-04 Through 2006-07**

<i>Content Area</i>	<i>2004</i>			<i>2005</i>			<i>2006</i>			<i>2007</i>		
	<i>New</i>	<i>Exp</i>	<i>Tot</i>									
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).

Findings and Recommendations

Overview of BEST Assessment

Connecticut's standards and licensure requirements for public school teachers are intended to protect the public from non-qualified personnel entering or continuing in the teaching profession. The public interest is served, theoretically, because the state licensing structure and standards for teachers are designed in a way to ensure only those teachers having specific knowledge, skills, and competencies may become and remain licensed teachers in Connecticut. If the underlying premise is accepted that a state teacher licensure system based on specific standards serves the public interest, it also should be accepted that some form of assessment of teachers is necessary to ensure they meet those standards. Otherwise, the standards are rendered meaningless.

During this study, there was wide consensus among various constituencies, including teachers, the education department, the state teachers' unions, academics, and administrators, that teaching standards – and measuring teachers' ability to apply those standards in the classroom – are necessary in Connecticut. As such, a key purpose of the BEST program is to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and competencies of teachers beginning their careers in Connecticut to ensure they meet the state's teaching standards.

Much of the discussion by stakeholders during this study has focused on the method used within the BEST program to assess beginning teachers. Since the 1999-00 school year, the state has used a multi-part portfolio assessment to gauge a teacher's understanding and application of the state's teaching standards specified in the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching. The standards serve as the foundation against which over 90 percent of teachers beginning their teaching careers in the state are evaluated for licensure purposes through the BEST assessment.

Embedded within the Common Core of Teaching standards is what the State Board of Education has identified as the central elements of effective teaching for teachers in pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12: 1) planning; 2) instructing; 3) assessing students; and 4) self-assessing and adjusting teacher performance based on student learning. Measuring these elements is the key concept on which the BEST portfolio is based. The CCT also contains standards specific to 10 individual content areas, which beginning teachers must meet in their particular area in order to pass their BEST portfolios. The overall goal of assessing beginning teachers through the BEST portfolio process is to ensure they meet a minimum level of competency at the start of their teaching careers in the state with respect to their knowledge and application of the state's teaching standards.

Based on academic research and practical application, the portfolio is the method chosen by the state to measure teacher competencies regarding foundational and content-specific standards within the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching. Accordingly, the portfolio's four parts closely follow the central elements of effective teaching described in the standards.

By requiring teachers to successfully complete a standards-based assessment in order to retain their certification, the state has determined it is of significant importance that beginning teachers demonstrate their knowledge and application of effective teaching practices in the

classroom. The Common Core of Teaching standards that serve as the basis for assessing teachers, however, have not been reviewed formally for their continued appropriateness since their adoption in 1999. More current research completed in the intervening years may indicate additional and/or modified teaching practices that further increase student learning. Thorough, periodic review and refinement of the standards within the Common Core of Teaching would ensure the standards are based on contemporary national research and modern-day thinking, as well as the experiences of Connecticut's educators, in relation to the state's current educational goals. Since the standards serve as the fundamental base of Connecticut's education continuum for effective teachers, it is important that they be reviewed for their suitability and current relevancy.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should review the current Common Core of Teaching standards to determine if changes or modifications are necessary. Such review and update of the standards should be completed by July 1, 2009, and every seven years thereafter.

Assessment Effectiveness

Connecticut's process of assessing beginning teachers through the BEST portfolio is predicated on teachers receiving adequate preparation and support prior to their assessments. As indicated earlier in the report, the level of support beginning teachers receive through the BEST program is not consistent across and within school districts. As such, a key principle upon which the BEST program is built – beginning teachers will have adequate support to assist them in preparing for their portfolios – is flawed.

An outcome of BEST, as the state's teacher induction program, is to assist beginning teachers in improving their teaching abilities through the portfolio process, with the ultimate goal of increasing student learning,⁶¹ yet the program has succeeded only partly in fulfilling this goal. Oversight of the BEST support component seems neglected, in part, because of the emphasis placed by the state on the BEST portfolio assessment, and by the inconsistent quality of support for beginning teachers. At the same time, generally less than two percent of beginning teachers ultimately fail their portfolios, indicating most teachers at least minimally meet the state's teaching standards.

The portfolio is considered a high-stakes assessment because a teacher's continued certification in Connecticut rests with passing the portfolio.⁶² The department promotes BEST as a way for beginning teachers to strengthen their teaching skills, as previously mentioned. Until the program is designed in such a way, however, that a consistent level of quality support is provided to beginning teachers and beginning teachers consider the assessment an experience to strengthen their teaching abilities, many teachers may continue to view the portfolio as nothing more than a state test to pass in order to retain their teaching certificates. The committee believes changes to both the support and the assessment components of BEST can make the licensure assessment a more effective learning experience for teachers.

⁶¹ *A Guide to the BEST Program for Beginning Teachers 2007-2008*, Department of Education.

⁶² State law does not require a formal assessment of teachers under certain circumstances, including those who have completed at least three years within the past 10 years of successful teaching in a public school or a state-approved nonpublic school during the ten years immediately preceding the date of application.

The fact that some teachers look at the portfolio as simply a test, as confirmed by the committee’s survey results, interviews, and testimony submitted by educators, does not fully support the notion that beginning teachers are learning and using effective teaching practices based on completing the portfolio process. While there are new teachers who benefit from the portfolio process, *80 percent of Year Two teachers responding to the committee’s survey indicated the current portfolio is not the most effective way to measure a teacher’s application of the state’s teaching standards, and another 14 percent were unsure.* Moreover, when asked how useful the BEST portfolio process was in improving their ability to perform the key teaching practices required by the Common Core of Teaching standards, a relatively high percentage of Year Two teachers replied “not useful,” as shown in Table V-9. This indicates many teachers do not view the portfolio experience as something that necessarily enhances their professional competence based on the CCT standards.

Table V-9. Usefulness of Portfolio to Improve Teaching Abilities According to Year Two Teachers				
	<i>Very Useful</i>	<i>Useful</i>	<i>Somewhat Useful</i>	<i>Not Useful</i>
Plan a series of connected lessons	14%	23%	29%	35%
Deliver effective instruction	9%	21%	28%	43%
Use student assessment to adjust instruction	9%	26%	30%	35%
Reflect on and improve teaching	14%	26%	31%	28%
Use various effective teaching techniques	9%	21%	31%	40%
n=690 Source: PRI staff analysis of teacher survey				

There is agreement among the various constituencies involved with BEST, including beginning teachers, on two important principles: there are certain content knowledge and fundamental pedagogical characteristics necessary to be an effective teacher; and teachers should be held accountable in meeting the standards established for state licensing purposes. The issue for the state to consider is whether the current BEST portfolio is the most effective way to measure whether beginning teachers are knowledgeable about the state teaching standards and using effective teaching practices. Inherent in this question is another: do alternative assessment models offer a more pragmatic way to measure those standards and would they be more useful for beginning teachers in strengthening their overall teaching practices? Regardless of the assessment method, all agree the instrument used for state licensing decisions must be valid, reliable, and legally defensible.

Portfolio Validity and Reliability

Connecticut has a history of implementing licensing standards for its public school teachers, beginning with the Connecticut Teaching Competencies (CTC) in the 1980s, to the more recent Common Core of Teaching standards, which focus on how teachers affect and promote student learning. Determining the most effective and efficient way of assessing beginning teachers against the teaching standards is a difficult task. This is evident given the

BEST program has used two main methods with several variations over the past two decades to assess novice teacher skills and abilities.

Apart from the type of assessment used, it is important for licensure purposes that the assessment be properly vetted by professionals in the field and pilot-tested in order to be deemed *valid* (i.e., measures what it is intended to measure) and *reliable* (i.e., standards are applied consistently by assessors throughout the evaluation process). *The BEST portfolio instrument is based on academic research and was developed using the assessment guidelines and standards of several national associations. The portfolio was further developed and validated with the input and assistance of committees consisting of hundreds of professional educators throughout Connecticut, including classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, education administrators, higher education faculty, and other experienced educators.*

Specifically, the portfolio instrument was created in the mid-1990s in accordance with assessment standards for educational and psychological testing developed by national professional organizations specializing in such testing, detailed in Chapter One. The standards of these organizations require the assessment be both valid and reliable. The portfolio also was systematically tested and refined by SDE over a five-year cycle of formative evaluation beginning in the mid-1990s for its validity and reliability as a formal measurement tool of beginning teachers before it was used, including review and consultation from Professional Evaluation Services and Educational Testing Service.⁶³

To augment the research base used to develop the portfolio, the education department validated the portfolio instrument in multiple ways. Initially, the department sought to determine whether the CCT standards were the correct standards upon which to base the overall assessment. SDE conducted two separate “job analysis” surveys to gain feedback from teachers, administrators, and university faculty regarding whether the CCT standards were considered appropriate and useful. The first survey examined the foundational standards within the CCT, and the second examined the content-specific standards based on feedback from public school educators with that specific content background.

The results of the first survey regarding the foundational standards showed a high percentage (over 90 percent) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the CCT standards were appropriate and useful. Results of the second survey showed an average of 85 percent of respondents indicated the content-specific standards were either important or very important for beginning and experienced teachers. An average of 88 percent supported the importance of the standards to student learning and achievement. The department found the results from both surveys supported the validity of the CCT standards as the foundation for the BEST portfolio in promoting teaching and student learning.

After validating the CCT standards as the basis for the portfolio, additional efforts by the department to ensure the portfolio instrument measures what is intended to be measured, included: 1) conducting studies of the internal consistency and alignment of the standards and the portfolio tasks with the tasks and scoring procedures for each content area; 2) developing the assessment system based on national testing guidelines, including using specific benchmark and

⁶³ State Department of Education, *Validity Report: BEST Portfolio Assessment Program, Draft 2005*.

standard-setting procedures; 3) reviewing the portfolio sections to ensure they were fair and free of bias; and 4) having educators previously uninvolved with BEST determine which parts of the portfolio were most useful for assessment and why. Results from these efforts were positive and were incorporated into developing the portfolio assessment, increasing its overall validity.

In addition to establishing the overall validity of the portfolio assessment method, the assessment's scoring process must be deemed reliable. *Recent SDE statistical analyses show the portfolio scoring system produces highly reliable scores, particularly on the overall pass/fail decision.*⁶⁴ The department's analysis of the internal consistency of the scoring system further indicates high correlations between scores on the four portfolio elements and the final portfolio score. Moreover, the committee is aware of only one legal challenge to the current portfolio occurring since its inception. That challenge was not pursued, further strengthening the overall credibility of the assessment instrument. A more complete analysis of the reliability of the BEST portfolio process is provided in Appendix I.

Despite the high level of rigor in the development and application of the BEST portfolio, the committee believes the portfolio process can be improved upon in several areas, as discussed in more detail below. To enhance the overall effectiveness of the BEST program, improvements to the portfolio process should not be made in isolation from other parts of the state's continuum of effective teaching – namely, the support component within the BEST program and the state's teacher preparation programs, as described earlier.

Alternative Assessment Models

Qualitative information collected during this study through interviews, the public hearing testimony received by the committee, and even feedback received from the online video developed by a state education association using selective segments of the committee's hearing,⁶⁵ underscore the different opinions that exist among various constituencies as to whether the portfolio is the most appropriate mechanism for assessing a beginning teacher's knowledge and application of state's teaching standards. Differences aside, there is strong agreement among those same constituencies that an increased use of on-site classroom observation of beginning teachers would provide the state a more thorough and realistic understanding of beginning teacher classroom abilities and application of the CCT standards than the current BEST portfolio process. The constituencies also agreed the observation would need to be based on specific components of effective teaching standards and provide timely, constructive feedback. However, *until an alternative to the portfolio assessment method is fully researched, developed, and deemed valid and reliable by the state and resources are committed to implement such a system, the current assessment method under BEST should remain. At the same time, there are some specific changes necessary to the current portfolio process to increase its overall effectiveness.*

Connecticut is one of two states that assesses its beginning teachers using a portfolio-based assessment model. Indiana is the other. Its portfolio is modeled after Connecticut's and was developed in consultation with this state's education department. Alone, the fact that only

⁶⁴ State Department of Education, *Reliability and Internal Consistency of the BEST Portfolio-based Teacher Assessment Program*, 2007.

⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bguz4garGH8>

two states have adopted the BEST-type portfolio assessment model is not a reason for eliminating the instrument. Yet it begs the question of whether a feasible alternative should be explored. (Additional information about the types of assessments used in other states for certifying beginning teachers is summarized in Appendix J.)

The state's recent advisory committee established to examine BEST, which consisted of a wide range of educators and education professionals from across Connecticut, recommended in its 2006 draft report that the education department "identify, develop, and pilot alternatives to the portfolio assessment."⁶⁶ The group, however, was not unanimous on this recommendation, as mentioned in Chapter One. This fact, coupled with the time and resources necessary to develop, validate, and implement an appropriate alternative to the portfolio, should serve as a caution to requiring an immediate replacement of the BEST portfolio without proper research and planning. At the same time, *the education department should be encouraged to research whether a different assessment method – particularly one incorporating classroom observations – is necessary and feasible from a methodological and resource perspective, and whether such an assessment would have the potential to more effectively evaluate a beginning teacher's skills and abilities based on the CCT standards.*

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education shall conduct a review of possible, practical alternatives to assessing beginning teachers' knowledge and application of the state's teaching standards specified in the Common Core of Teaching. At a minimum, the review should identify the potential costs and overall logistics associated with transitioning to another assessment model. A report summarizing the department's findings shall be submitted to the legislature's committee(s) of cognizance by February 1, 2009.

There is agreement among the relevant constituencies within the state that the ideal model of assessing beginning teachers is for trained assessors to conduct multiple, sequential on-site observations of the teachers in their classrooms. This includes assessors having full knowledge of the lessons planned by the teacher, observing actual classroom instruction and interaction with students, and understanding the teacher's evaluation of student learning and self-reflection of teaching practices. A key component of the model is providing feedback to the teacher that is timely and constructive. Legitimate concerns with such a process, however, are the complexity of the overall design and the resources likely needed for its implementation.

For roughly the first decade of the BEST program, a classroom observation model to assess beginning teachers was used – albeit not within the exact parameters outlined above. Due to various reasons, the process was discontinued and the transition to a portfolio-based system occurred. The reasons included a sharp decrease in program funding, difficulties with the scheduling logistics of assessors, issues with assessors who were teachers frequently having to leave their own classrooms to conduct on-site observations, and Connecticut's work at the national level to develop a portfolio-based assessment model.

Given the committee is recommending SDE research whether there *may* be a more practical and effective way of assessing the competencies of beginning teachers, including the

⁶⁶ Teacher Induction Sub-Committee: BEST Advisory Committee Recommendations, June 2006.

possible use of onsite classroom observations, an understanding of other assessment models would be beneficial. Several examples of commonly-discussed options for assessing Connecticut's beginning teachers are summarized below. The results of the committee's survey question about what alternatives Year Two teachers would prefer to the BEST portfolio also are presented.

Praxis III. A widely-discussed substitute to the BEST portfolio is the Praxis III assessment model. Developed by ETS, Praxis III includes an on-site classroom observation structure as its primary assessment component. The assessment combines elements of direct observation of classroom practice, a review and analysis of written documentation prepared by the teacher, and interviews with the teacher before and after the observed lesson. After observing a lesson taught by the beginning teacher, a trained Praxis III assessor evaluates the teacher's performance using 19 teaching criteria, as summarized in Table V-10. The criteria are structured into four components: 1) organizing content knowledge for student learning; 2) creating an environment for student learning; 3) teaching for student learning; and 4) teacher professionalism.

The Praxis III assessment, which occurs over a single observation, generally takes up to three hours to complete but the length varies depending upon the teacher's grade level. Pre- and post-assessment interviews between the assessor and teacher are part of the process. Upon completion of the assessment, the assessor sends a score report to ETS, which then issues the result to the teacher. Teachers generally are notified of their results within 10 to 12 weeks.

The education department believes an onsite classroom observation assessment method has merit, yet the Praxis III model may be an insufficient substitute to the portfolio. (SDE believes the assessment model may be most appropriate for use a tool to evaluate student teachers.) The department cites only two states (Arkansas and Ohio) that have adopted the system, even though it has been available for roughly a decade. The department also considers the system costly, estimating Ohio spends roughly \$4.7 million on Praxis III annually, or \$900 per beginning teacher assessment. Expenses for the portfolio component of BEST in Connecticut total approximately \$1.1 million per year, or \$550 per teacher. Using Ohio's per-assessment figure, Praxis III would cost approximately \$1.8 million if used in Connecticut.

The committee believes the Praxis III model should not be fully discounted as a feasible assessment method simply because of the limited number of states using it. Only two states use a portfolio-type assessment. If the Praxis III model were used in Connecticut, it would have to be tailored to assess beginning teachers based on Connecticut's specific teaching standards and effective teaching practices with an emphasis on student learning at least comparable to the portfolio. Use of this or any model would have to be fully evaluated prior to implementation, as recommended above.

Table V-10. Praxis III Assessment Criteria

<i>Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning</i>	<i>Creating an Environment for Student Learning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming familiar with relevant aspects of students' background knowledge and experiences • Articulating clear learning goals for the lesson that are appropriate for the students • Demonstrating an understanding of the connections between the content that was learned previously, the current content, and the content that remains to be learned in the future • Creating or selecting teaching methods, learning activities, and instructional materials or other resources that are appropriate for the students and that are aligned with the goals of the lesson • Creating or selecting evaluation strategies that are appropriate for the students and that are aligned with the goals of the lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a climate that promotes fairness • Establishing and maintaining rapport with students • Communicating challenging learning expectations to each student • Establishing and maintaining consistent standards of classroom behavior • Making the physical environment as safe and conducive to learning as possible
<i>Teaching for Student Learning</i>	<i>Teacher Professionalism</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making learning goals and instructional procedures clear to students • Making content comprehensible to students • Encouraging students to extend their thinking • Monitoring students' understanding of content through a variety of means, providing feedback to students to assist learning, and adjusting learning activities as the situation demands • Using instructional time effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on the extent to which the learning goals were met • Demonstrating a sense of efficacy • Building professional relationships with colleagues to share teaching insights and to coordinate learning activities for students • Communicating with parents or guardians about student learning
<p>Sources: Educational Testing Service; College of Wooster: Department of Education</p>	

Incorporating local evaluations. Another oft-cited method to assess beginning teachers is to incorporate performance evaluations done by a teacher's supervisor within the BEST assessment process. In testimony received by the committee and through interviews conducted during this study, *beginning teachers generally seem perplexed their local performance evaluations are not considered in the licensure assessment.* The question frequently asked is: who better to evaluate teachers' skills and competencies than the local building administrators who have contact with beginning teachers and directly observe them in their classroom settings? Moreover, assessments conducted by local administrators could have a broader, positive impact on schools' overall evaluations of teachers for professional development and goal-setting purposes. Administrators would become closely involved with the BEST assessment, which is based on specific teaching standards and effective practices.

The use of local evaluations for state licensing purposes presents several hurdles. First, local evaluations are used by school districts to make employment decisions (e.g., promotions). This is a separate and distinct function from using the same evaluations for state licensure decisions. There are potential legal implications with having the same person conduct performance evaluations for the cross-purposes of employment *and* state licensure decisions. In fact, ETS specifically states the use of Praxis III is solely for licensure purposes and not for employment decisions.

Second, use of district-level performance evaluations of beginning teachers within the BEST assessment process and separate from employment purposes would require the development of a standardized and reliable system for conducting such evaluations based on the CCT standards. This is not an insurmountable task, but it would take resources and careful planning. Incorporating local teacher evaluations within the state licensure assessment process would necessitate systematically training administrators in the use of a standardized evaluation method. The process also would have to account in some way for administrators potentially conducting evaluations of beginning teachers and not having experience in the teacher's content area. Some believe this already occurs, most frequently in secondary schools.

Third, requiring local administrators to conduct evaluations of their beginning teachers for dual purposes would disproportionately impact those administrators who supervise numerous beginning teachers. This issue likely would be more prevalent within larger, urban districts that experience more frequent turnover of beginning teachers, as well as of administrators, than other districts.

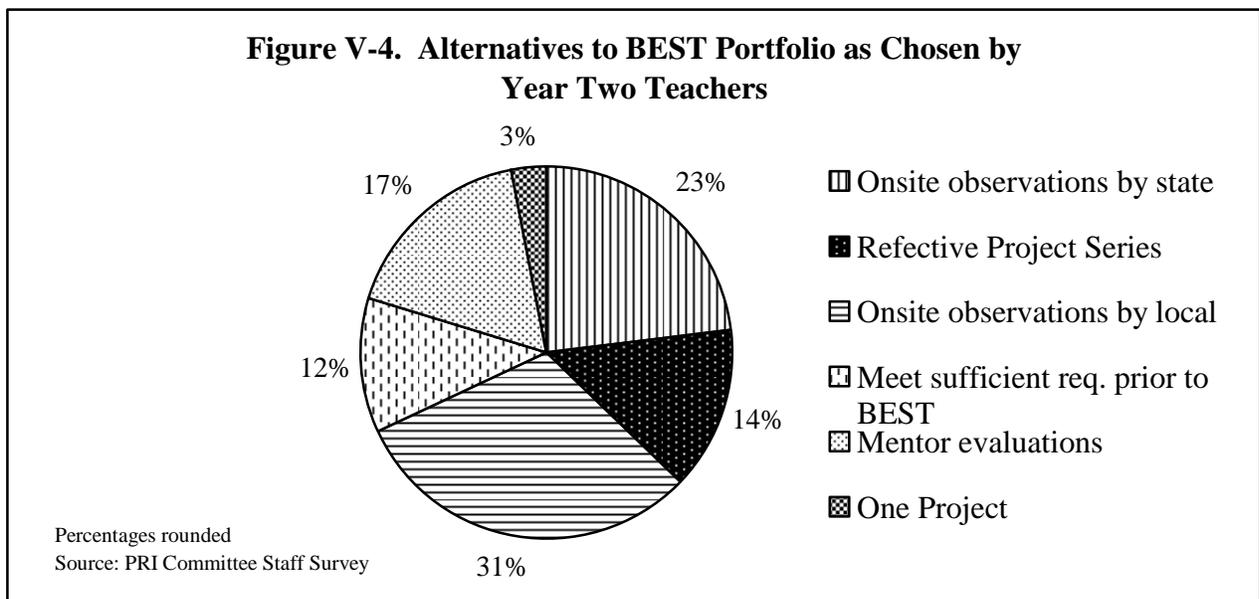
Despite the challenges, the committee believes the use of local performance evaluations may have a legitimate role in the state's assessment of beginning teachers for licensing purposes. Moreover, the challenges that using local evaluations for licensing purposes present should not prevent SDE from researching its use as a viable option within the BEST assessment process. Using local teacher evaluations within BEST has the potential for providing the department with a practical way of assimilating an on-site classroom observation model by state-trained personnel (i.e., local administrators) into the assessment process without experiencing the logistical problems of the CCI assessment model. This option also has the potential of providing beginning teachers with more timely and constructive feedback than the current process. It also could lessen the overall amount of work required to prepare the portfolio, including elimination of the video component.

Alternatives identified by survey. Year Two teachers were asked to select among various alternatives to the portfolio if they believed the BEST portfolio was not the most effective way to measure a teacher’s application of the CCT teaching standards. Although the survey technically asked teachers to select one alternative only if they responded “no” to the question of whether the portfolio is the most effective way to assess teachers’ application of the CCT standards, this direction was not always followed. As such, the responses were analyzed in the aggregate rather than invalidating the responses that did not follow the direction of the question.

Survey recipients were provided the following alternatives to the current BEST portfolio from which to choose:

- a series of in-person classroom evaluations by state-trained evaluators;
- a series of smaller reflective projects done throughout a school year;
- a series of in-person observations by a principal or district official;
- nothing, new teachers meet sufficient state standards for certification when first licensed by the state prior to BEST;
- formative evaluations by mentors; and
- a project examining and reflecting on one aspect of my teaching.

The committee acknowledges this is not an exhaustive list of alternatives. Yet, the list accounts for the options most discussed during this study and in the literature search. Figure V-4 shows the distribution of the various alternatives Year Two teachers preferred to the current portfolio assessment.



The option most chosen by Year Two teachers as their choice for replacing the portfolio was “a series of in-person observations by a principal or district official” (31 percent). Another 23 percent chose replacing the portfolio with “a series of in-person classroom evaluations by state-trained evaluators.” Moreover, an additional 17 percent of teachers chose “formative evaluations by mentors,” which also could include some form of onsite classroom observation assessment. *In total, 71 percent of the responses to the question indicated an assessment using some form of onsite classroom observation was preferred to the current portfolio-type assessment as the most effective way of measuring a beginning teacher’s application of the state’s teaching standards.*

Another interesting survey result for this question is that only 12 percent of the selections made indicated new teachers meet sufficient state standards for certification prior to BEST. This reinforces the notion that *the vast majority of beginning teachers believe some type of formal assessment beyond the current minimum requirements of student teaching and passage of the Praxis I and Praxis II exams for initial certification is necessary to ensure teachers meet the CCT standards.*

An alternative method of assessment not identified in the survey, but discussed during interviews, is a summative, high-stakes assessment conducted by mentors. This would involve a beginning teacher’s mentor/mentor team being responsible for both supporting and assessing the beginning teacher. Such a process does not seem feasible now, given the current inconsistency in support experienced by beginning teachers. Under the committee’s recommendations of reduced classroom duties for mentors and the mentor module system, however, this type of assessment model may be feasible.

The committee fully recognizes completing the BEST portfolio – or any type of formal assessment upon which state certification is based – is a difficult experience for many teachers. A strong contributing factor to this difficulty may be the inconsistent level and quality of mentoring available for beginning teachers and the daily time demands placed on teachers, as addressed in the recommendations presented earlier. Until the policy decisions are made, however, that: 1) an alternative assessment structure is necessary; 2) resources be committed to such a transition; and 3) a more effective assessment alternative is developed to ensure beginning teachers fully meet the state’s teaching standards – or until the standards are eliminated as a matter of state policy – then the current system of assessing beginning teachers remains a valid and reliable method for evaluating teachers’ knowledge, skills, and competencies as measured against Connecticut’s teaching standards.

Finally, *continuing the current portfolio process until an alternative is duly researched, vetted, tested, deemed valid and reliable, and ultimately accepted as policy, should not be viewed as full endorsement of the BEST portfolio process. Modifications to the current portfolio structure are warranted, as discussed below.*

Portfolio Requirements

The BEST portfolio is a valid and reliable assessment method. Additional concerns have been raised, however, regarding selected parts of the portfolio process pertaining to time,

content, the video portion, portfolio scoring scale, and feedback. These issues are addressed below.

It is difficult to fully quantify the rationale underlying some of the recommended changes to the BEST portfolio process. When applicable, the committee relied on qualitative information collected from its extensive interviews of a cross-section of constituencies, oral and written testimony presented to the committee, including a formal response to the committee's public hearing from SDE, and the previous work of two advisory groups examining the BEST program. The proposed changes to the portfolio process, combined with the earlier recommendations to strengthen the overall support beginning teachers receive, should help lessen the burden many beginning teachers experience in fulfilling the BEST assessment requirements. At the same time, the state's objective of ensuring effective teaching practices among its beginning teachers based on specific state standards is met.

Timing of Portfolio

The portfolio has been required by the teacher's second year in BEST since it was adopted as the program's assessment method. This timing originated in SDE's final report to the 1993 BEST Blue Ribbon Panel, which summarized the panel's ideas for revamping the BEST program. The report indicated beginning teachers' development of content pedagogical knowledge along with their skill to transfer content into specific subject matter knowledge for teaching, often does not occur until the second or third year in the classroom.⁶⁷ The report specified BEST induction should span at least the first two years of when a teacher starts his or her teaching career in Connecticut. This indicates thought was given as to what year the assessment is most appropriately placed.

Presently, as indicated in Appendix K, the State Department of Education endorses a more flexible timeframe for when teachers would submit their BEST portfolio. Public hearing testimony further supports this option.

Extending the BEST portfolio beyond the current second year requirement to a third year has several advantages. First, it would provide beginning teachers who did not attend a teacher preparation program in Connecticut adequate time to understand and incorporate Connecticut's teaching standards into their daily teaching practices. SDE data for 2006 and 2007 show 21 percent of the portfolios submitted for those years were from teachers who attended teacher preparation programs in other states. This figure is consistent with the survey results: 21 percent of Year Two respondents attended a teacher preparation program outside of Connecticut. That means, of the approximately 4,200 teachers submitting portfolios for those two years, just under 900 completed their teacher preparation and training outside of Connecticut. Although current failing portfolio scores show teachers from out of state performing about evenly with teachers trained in Connecticut, this has not always been the case and may not be indicative of future score distributions.

Second, providing beginning teachers an additional year to submit their portfolios would assist all new teachers in strengthening their overall teaching skills, which is an underlying goal

⁶⁷ *Final Report to the BEST Blue Ribbon Panel – BEST Program: A New Performance Standard Continuum*, Connecticut State Department of Education, June 1993.

upon which the BEST program is structured. Although teachers are required to submit their portfolios in May of Year Two in BEST, many may begin preparing them shortly after beginning their second year. *Those teachers without previous teaching experience – 83 percent of Year Two survey respondents – realistically have little more than a year in the classroom upon which to gain the knowledge and professional experience needed to fulfill the portfolio requirements.* To many, additional time and experience in the classroom would sharpen their overall knowledge, skills, and abilities while further strengthening their teaching pedagogy.

Third, allowing beginning teachers the option of when to submit their portfolios would not affect those who want to fulfill the requirement either in their first or second year; it simply provides teachers more time to gain experience and complete the portfolio requirements. This includes additional opportunity for teachers to become familiar with their districts' curricula before completing BEST portfolios. With the two years of formal mentoring support recommended earlier, beginning teachers should have an appropriate amount of time to fully grasp and understand the state's teaching standards and how to apply that knowledge within the BEST portfolio.

The program review committee recommends C.G.S. Sec. 10-145f(d) shall be amended to allow teachers to complete the professional knowledge clinical assessment required for state teacher certification purposes no later than their third year of teaching in a public school in Connecticut. The provision whereby teachers, after not fulfilling the requirements of the assessment within the designated time, may petition the department to approve a plan of intervening study and experience shall be eliminated.

The committee also recommends the State Department of Education should modify the BEST program to provide beginning teachers the option of when to submit their BEST portfolios. Teachers will have a choice to submit the required portfolios either in their first, second, or third years in the BEST program. Teachers will only be permitted to submit one additional portfolio upon not achieving a passing score on their first portfolio.

The committee's earlier proposal to extend formal mentoring through a teacher's first two years in the BEST program, together with the above option of completing the portfolio requirement by the end of a teacher's third year in the program, allows sufficient resources and time for teachers to: 1) work with experienced mentors in strengthening pedagogy; 2) understand the portfolio requirements; and 3) prove their competency as teachers according to Connecticut's standards. As such, the above recommendation calls for eliminating a teacher's opportunity to regain state certification upon additional coursework and experience.

The current provision allowing someone to regain his or her state teaching certification upon additional study and experience after submitting three portfolios, affects a very small percentage of teachers in relation to the overall number submitting portfolios. Of the thousands of portfolios submitted since 2000, the department reports a total of only 24 applications for additional study and experience have been approved since that time. (SDE notes applications are rarely denied once submitted.) Of these, 17 beginning teachers successfully completed the process and had their initial certifications re-issued; the remaining seven either have not completed or are still in progress. Table V-11 shows the data for the last two years.

Table V-11. Number of Teachers Submitting Portfolios by Year of Submission and Requests/Approvals for Intervening Study and Experience: 2006-2007		
	<i>May 2006</i>	<i>May 2007</i>
Teachers submitting portfolios	2,832	2,851
Teachers submitting third portfolios	22	22
Teachers failing third portfolios	5	3
Intervening study and experience: Requests	1	2*
Intervening study and experience: Approvals	1	2
* One additional application in progress.		
Source of data: SDE		

The very low number of teachers who submit and ultimately fail three portfolios, along with the even lower number who request and are approved for intervening study and experience, indicates very few teachers would be negatively impacted by the above recommendation. A more structured mentoring process in a teacher's beginning years, focused on state standards, and extending the timeframe for submitting first portfolios should benefit beginning teachers more than the ability to prolong the process of becoming a certified teacher through additional study and experience after failing the portfolio requirements multiple times. Candidates who ultimately fail the portfolio two times would retain the option of gaining experience in alternative settings to public schools to regain their state certification, as currently allowed under state law.

There are potential implications to allowing teachers to submit their portfolios during their third year in BEST. In particular, coordination of the process with the current state law regarding teacher tenure would be required, assuming the tenure law remains unchanged. Tenure for new teachers begins after 40 school months of full-time, continuous employment for the same school district, provided the teacher is offered a contract for the following year. SDE, therefore, will have to determine the most appropriate time when beginning teachers should submit a second portfolio to avoid any implications with tenure.

Moving the portfolio process to a participant's third year in the BEST program also raises the issue of whether this prolongs the employment of teachers who have already developed poor teaching habits. The recommended extra year of required structured mentoring for teachers should counter this concern. Under the proposal, teachers will receive formal mentoring based on specific modules of effective teaching practices over a longer period of time than is currently required, which should help teachers strengthen pedagogy. Local school districts also would retain their authority to discontinue employment of poorly performing teachers. Thus, increased attention by local administrators during the local evaluation process would help minimize the continuation of poor teaching habits and/or teachers.

Content

SDE has established an internal group of BEST staff and certification unit staff that annually reviews whether changes to portfolio content are necessary. The purpose of the reviews is to clarify language, streamline tasks, and increase uniformity across subject areas. Given the implementation of the portfolio assessment has been an evolving process with some content area portfolios (e.g., world languages) implemented only a few years ago, this type of review is

necessary. Substantive changes to the portfolio requirements made by the group in recent years include reducing the number of commentaries required from teachers and limiting the overall number of pages required for teacher commentaries in an effort to reduce the overall level of work required of teachers. The process indicates *the department is proactive in ensuring the portfolio requirements are as minimal as possible, while maintaining the validity of the portfolio, yet changes to specific areas may be worthwhile.*

Two issues that surfaced during this study regarding the content of portfolios are: 1) SDE requires elementary education teachers to submit two portfolios – one for literacy and one for numeracy, as described earlier; and 2) English language arts teachers at the secondary school level are required to include separate lesson plans for writing and literature in their portfolios. Although the requirements increase the workload for these two groups in comparison with other content areas, the committee understands the rationale behind these two requirements.

The program review committee recommends the department of education should continue to make a concerted effort to fully examine portfolio requirements across all content areas with an emphasis on identifying areas of redundancy and streamlining overall requirements. Included in such review for the 2008-09 school year should be a determination whether: 1) elementary education teachers should have a choice between submitting only a literacy- or a numeracy-based portfolio; and 2) the requirement for separate writing and literature lesson plans within the English language arts portfolio requirements is necessary or if the two components should be combined within the English language arts portfolio requirements.

Video

There is much debate over the functionality and value of the video component of the BEST portfolio. Under the original BEST program, the observation portion consisted of at least six on-site classroom observations of beginning teachers over a school year. A decrease in program funding, the logistics of supporting an on-site observation model, and a policy shift to an assessment focused more on student learning, helped generate the move to the current BEST portfolio model. As part of the portfolio, a 15- to 20-minute video has become the vehicle for assessors to observe teachers in their classrooms and corroborate the teachers' written commentaries.

Functionality. The use of the video as a means to observe beginning teachers in their classrooms has been under scrutiny since its inception. The committee's survey results confirm, to a degree, beginning teachers have experienced problems with the video portion of the BEST assessment.

Table V-12 shows the percentage of the teachers who experienced problems with either access to videotape equipment or assistance with actual videotaping, based on the survey of Year Two teachers. In total, 40 percent of teachers experienced problems with "access to videotape equipment" and 45 percent experienced problems with "assistance with the actual videotaping." When analyzed by DRG, the survey revealed a statistically significant difference between teachers in DRGs A-H and DRG I experiencing video problems. Results show teachers in the

poorest urban districts experienced more problems with the video portion of the portfolio than those in other districts.

Table V-12. Video-Related Problems for Year Two Teachers: 2007			
	<i>All Districts</i>	<i>DRGs A-H</i>	<i>DRG I</i>
Problems with accessing videotape equipment (n=512)	40%	37%	49%
Problems with actual videotaping (n=515)	45%	40%	58%
Note: The difference between the A-H and I districts was statistically significant at the 0.05 level for both video-related problems.			
Source: PRI staff analysis of teacher survey			

SDE acknowledges there are issues with the way the current video part of the portfolio is implemented. The department has attempted to address the problems in several ways, including making video equipment available at each RESC for loan to beginning teachers. However, nowhere in the instructions in the content portfolio handbooks, or in any other resource available to beginning teachers, is it mentioned the video equipment is available at the RESCs.

Another issue encountered by teachers in completing their portfolios is the state's slow transition to DVD technology for submitting the video portion of the portfolio. Presently, the portfolio video must be done using the relatively outdated VHS technology. The department recently announced at its district facilitators' meetings, however, teachers will be permitted to choose between using a DVD or VHS format for their video part of the portfolio. The department said the change will occur with portfolios submitted in May 2008. Although the department sent a letter in December explaining the change to all teachers through the BEST website, a review of the portfolio directions in the 2007-08 handbooks and information contained on the BEST website shows the materials do not yet indicate the change was made, leading to potential confusion among teachers completing their portfolios.

The education department should supply prompt and sufficient notice to all teachers, mentors, administrators, district facilitators, and Regional Educational Service Centers indicating the department's approval for teachers to use DVD technology for the video portion of their portfolios beginning with portfolios submitted in May 2008. The department should also devise ways to ensure beginning teachers in the poorest urban school districts have access to equipment to fulfill their portfolio requirements. At minimum, all teachers should be informed that equipment is available for loan at each Regional Educational Service Center.

Value. State law outlining the requirements of a support and training program for beginning teachers requires the assessment of beginning teachers be based upon, but not limited to, data obtained from observations conducted by assessors using an assessment instrument. Some have construed this to mean the current assessment should include classroom observations, since the law seems to be tailored according to the state's prior assessment model under the Connecticut Competency Instrument used in the late-1980s. The current video requirement

under BEST, however, is interpreted by SDE to fulfill the statutory requirement of observation for assessment purposes.

The committee believes the use of on-site observations of beginning teachers in their classrooms is preferred to the use of videos within the BEST assessment process. The committee also agrees any additional costs associated with implementing on-site classroom observations to replace the video portion of the BEST portfolio process should be borne by the state and not school districts.

The State Department of Education should replace the video component of the BEST portfolio assessment with on-site classroom observations, with the state reimbursing school districts for any resulting additional costs.

Scoring Scale

Part of the rationale behind differentiating portfolio scores using a 1-4 scoring scale is to give beginning teachers a better sense of where on the “performance continuum” their portfolios scored. This, in addition to the feedback received from SDE with the portfolio score (discussed below), is intended to provide beginning teachers an opportunity to see where their strengths and weaknesses are and to focus on improving/maintaining their craft in those areas.

Methodologists within SDE have differing opinions on exactly what the portfolio scoring scale should be. As noted in Appendix K, the department endorses a revised scoring scale, yet does not indicate a specific scale. There are some constituencies – including the recent BEST Advisory Committee – that believe a pass/fail scoring system is sufficient, while others support a scale that recognizes those teachers whose portfolios are exemplary by adding another level (e.g., pass with distinction).

Regardless of the scale used, there is wide agreement among the various constituencies interviewed during this study that the current four-point scale is more pertinent for analyzing and scoring the individual performance indicators for portfolios than as the final score a teacher receives. Based on feedback the committee received during the study, many teachers simply want to know whether they are competent or not when measured against the state’s teaching standards. Moreover, the results from SDE’s analysis of this summer’s scoring session, as summarized in Appendix I, indicate that if the portfolio scoring system was based on a pass/fail scoring scale, the reliability of portfolio scores would greatly increase, compared to scoring based on a 1-4 scale.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education should implement a revised scoring scale for BEST portfolios based on the final ratings of: “competent” and “not competent.”

Moving to essentially a “pass/fail” scoring scale for portfolios would not change the way portfolios currently are scored. Scorers would continue using the evaluation rubrics for each content area to score portfolios based on the individual performance indicators identified in the rubrics. The only change required by this recommendation would be the final score provided to the beginning teacher simply would indicate whether or not the teacher met the state’s required competency requirements. As discussed below, more descriptive feedback should be provided to

beginning teachers with their portfolio scores. Such feedback should show where a teacher's individual portfolio scored for each performance indicator along the rating continuum based on the current evaluation rubrics.

Timeliness of Results

Some teachers are dissatisfied with the amount of time it takes SDE to deliver portfolio scores. The process generally takes three to four months to complete following the portfolio submission deadline in mid-May. Results are sent to teachers at the end of August or in early September each year.

In order to have portfolios scored by current practitioners, SDE has arranged its portfolio scoring process around the schedules of the various educators and administrators who score portfolios. This means the training and scoring sessions occur mostly during the summer months to avoid conflicts with the school schedules for teachers and administrators. EastConn, as the central repository for portfolios, also needs sufficient time to receive, organize, code, and deliver portfolios to the various scoring sites throughout the state. The May submission date for portfolios avoids the typical year-end commotion teachers and students generally experience at the conclusion of each school year in June.

As such, the committee does not believe the time it takes to distribute portfolio scores is unreasonable given the logistics involved in organizing the portfolios, training assessors, scoring portfolios, and distributing the results. Moreover, scoring largely is a manual process, which inherently takes longer to complete than a computer-driven testing and scoring process like the Praxis exams or the state's bar examination for attorneys, which is a combination of computer and manual scoring and takes three months to complete. The department, however, should regularly examine whether there are ways to streamline the length of time for reporting portfolio results.

Feedback

Teachers commit a great deal of time to fulfilling their portfolio requirements. Available analysis shows the amount of time necessary for secondary science teachers to complete their portfolios averages between 51 and 75 hours.⁶⁸ Although this information is limited to a specific group of teachers, the committee believes it is comparable to the time teachers, in general, spend on developing their portfolios, based on interview information collected during the study.

The portfolio feedback received by teachers includes a cover letter indicating whether the teacher's portfolio was successful. There is also a listing of the four portfolio components with a brief description of the teacher's performance within each component. The descriptions are based on the rubric language corresponding to the four-point rating scale where a "1" equals fail

⁶⁸ *Morale of Non-Tenured, Connecticut Secondary Science Teachers Participating in a Beginning Educator Support and Training Program*, Claire Norman-Gloria, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bridgeport, 2007.

and a “4” equals exemplary. A sample portfolio feedback report and accompanying documents sent for a failing portfolio is found in Appendix L.

Survey results show a full 78 percent of beginning teachers were either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” (47 percent were “very dissatisfied”) with the feedback received with their portfolio scores. SDE acknowledges the level of feedback is not desirable, yet its current level of human and financial resources is insufficient to correct the problem, as highlighted in Appendix K.

A perceived lack of feedback can be especially frustrating for teachers who do not pass their portfolios. The committee reviewed the rubric language within several content areas and believes a dichotomy exists since the same language is used for scoring purposes and feedback purposes. *The feedback provided to beginning teachers with their portfolio scores is the same as the language used within the scoring rubrics and is not sufficient for most teachers – especially those failing their portfolios.* Survey results indicate more detailed feedback is necessary for beginning teachers to gain a full understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as identified by their portfolios, as indicated by the survey results.

Although the department offers resources to assist teachers who fail their portfolios, the resources may be perceived as generic by teachers who fail their portfolios. For example, teachers may set up individual Portfolio Assessment Conferences (mentioned earlier) with portfolio scorers to examine the portfolio results in general terms. The conferences are limited to one hour, and the scorers who conduct the conferences are trained by SDE not to discuss the specifics of the portfolios, but to keep the conversation(s) focused on general themes. Moreover, the scorers used in the conferences are not permitted to have scored the teacher’s actual portfolio, although they are supposed to thoroughly review the portfolio of the teacher with whom they will meet in order to focus on the themes that were misunderstood or missing in the failing portfolio.

The perception of portfolio scoring feedback as “generic” or “canned” diminishes the benefits teachers could get from the portfolio process. Limited feedback also may be interpreted by beginning teachers that their portfolios were not given full attention during the scoring process or scored by credible professionals, despite information to the contrary contained in the various outreach sources used by the BEST program.

The committee understands the program’s resource constraints. At the same time, the department should continue to search for ways to make portfolio score feedback as beneficial as possible for beginning teachers. More substantive feedback based on the portfolio results could help teachers develop more effective teaching practices.

The program review committee recommends the education department should adopt ways to include feedback language that is as detailed as possible with portfolio results to provide beginning teachers with a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses as shown by their portfolios. This includes incorporating the full scoring rubric indicating where on the performance continuum the teacher scored for each performance indicator contained in the rubric as part of the formal portfolio feedback teachers receive. The department also should consider differentiating the feedback

provided to teachers who fail the portfolios to include more substantive language indicating teachers' strengths and weaknesses than is currently contained in the scoring rubrics, on which the feedback is based.

Administrative Appeal Process

The BEST portfolio process does not allow for an appeal of failing portfolio scores, which is similar to other assessment processes upon which licensure/certification based (e.g., Connecticut Bar Examination). Although SDE has outlined the basic mechanics of a possible administrative appeals process, as contained in Appendix K, the department also maintains the structure of the current scoring process, including the level of review for portfolios with failing scores, coupled with the opportunity for teachers to confer with portfolio scorers after receiving their scores, is sufficient. SDE further cites the overall validity and reliability of the scoring process as support for not implementing a formal appeals process to date: if the scoring process is a valid and reliable process, there is no need for appeals after portfolios have been scored.

There is also an appeal process available within the broader certification regulations that may be accessed if applicable. The committee believes the existing process provides beginning teachers sufficient recourse regarding certification issues. Moreover, the recommendations proposed above to strengthen the support beginning teachers would receive and the enhancements made to the portfolio process, should improve teachers' understanding of the fundamental teaching concepts tested through the portfolio, leading to better performance by teachers on their portfolios.

Residual Effects

Reports of unintended consequences of the portfolio process were made during the course of this study, including misrepresentation by some teachers in writing their portfolios, videos being "staged," and other ways for teachers to manipulate the portfolio process, as well as school districts using portfolio scores for hiring decisions (i.e., a district not hiring a beginning teacher who scored below a certain score.) Although such claims are difficult to quantify, teachers and administrators must abide by the state's codes of professional responsibility for teachers and administrators, which includes the development and review of BEST portfolios.

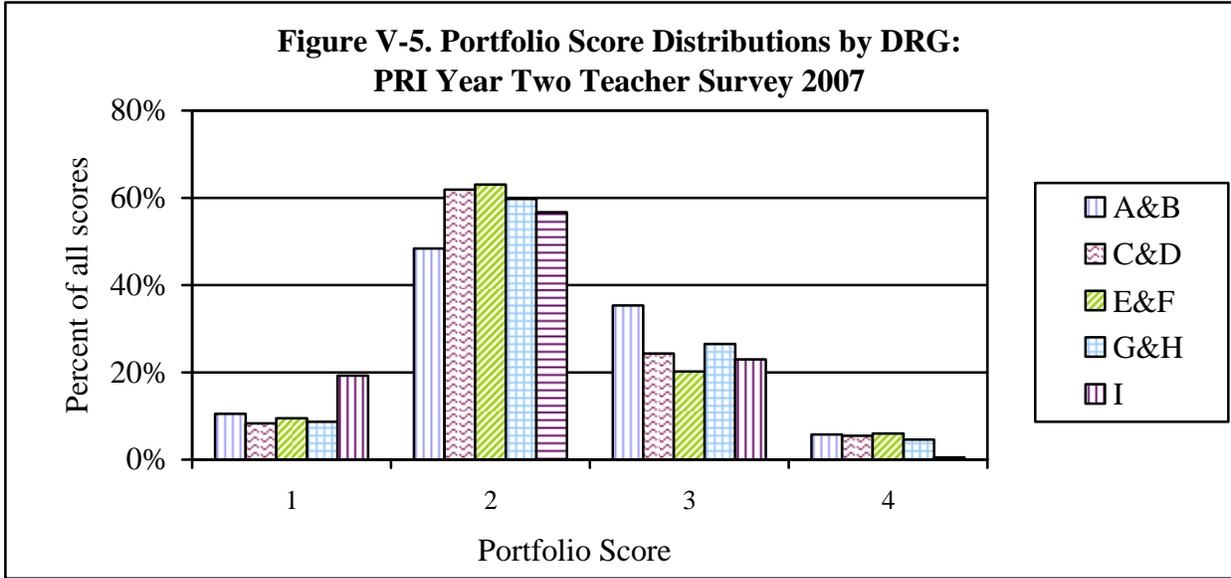
Additional Portfolio Analysis

Some maintain the effectiveness of the BEST portfolio assessment should be determined by a direct correlation with student achievement, as measured by a corresponding rise or fall in standardized test scores including the Connecticut Mastery Test or the Connecticut Academic Performance Test. The committee cautions against making any direct correlation between the BEST program and student achievement because it is documented that student achievement is dependent upon multiple factors, not a single factor. In addition, none of the relevant data have been collected to date. As such, the committee did not determine whether any direct correlation exists between the BEST portfolio assessment and student achievement in Connecticut.

Analysis was conducted, however, to determine whether certain independent factors have a direct, statistically significant impact on beginning teachers' portfolio scores. The effects of different characteristics and experiences on whether Year Two teachers passed the BEST portfolio (i.e., received scores of 2 through 4) were analyzed. Each portfolio category – elementary literacy, elementary numeracy, and non-elementary portfolios – was analyzed independently. Appendix M details the full methodology used for this analysis. In summary, the analysis found:

- Few of the characteristics and experiences measured in the survey had a statistically significant impact on whether a beginning teacher passed the portfolio.
- There was no single variable that was considered a significant factor across the portfolio categories. DRG was significant for the elementary education portfolios, but not for the non-elementary portfolios.
- The variables that were significant for the elementary literacy and non-elementary portfolios did not (individually or together) have much impact on whether the beginning teacher passed.
- Previously teaching in a private school is associated with not passing the literacy portfolio. The reason(s) for this correlation is unclear.
- No aspect of mentoring – a beginning teacher's satisfaction with the mentor, quality of the mentor match, or whether the mentor provided help with the portfolio – was a significant variable for any portfolio category. This supports the hypotheses that not much quality mentoring is being given, and that beginning teachers may be satisfied with less-than-quality (i.e., non-substantive) mentoring.
- A few non-mentoring support variables – whether portfolio help by a school or district was accessed by a beginning teacher, a beginning teacher's satisfaction with state support, and support from other teachers – did impact portfolio performance for certain portfolio types. The fact that these variables were not uniformly significant across portfolio types means improvement in these particular resource areas targeted to beginning teachers in certain portfolio categories may boost portfolio performance.
- Receiving help from a portfolio scorer was not significantly associated with receiving a passing score in any portfolio type.

Portfolio scores by DRG. The overall distribution of portfolio scores by DRG using the results from the Year Two teacher survey were analyzed. Although the finding above indicates DRG was a statistically significant predictor only for passing the elementary education portfolio, it is useful to understand the overall distribution of portfolios scores across DRGs. Figure V-5 illustrates the results.



The figure shows that for beginning teachers who submitted their portfolios in May 2007 and responded to the survey, a greater portion of those who failed their portfolios were from DRG I school districts. There also was a lower percentage of teachers in DRG I schools who scored a “4” on their portfolios in relation to the other DRG categories. As mentioned, however, DRG was a statistically significant predictor of passing only for the elementary education portfolios, although this content area includes the most teachers submitting portfolios.

Surveys of Beginning Teachers and District Facilitators

Survey Methodologies

Beginning teachers. To gather information from the BEST program's main participants, the committee surveyed all beginning teachers who had completed their first or second years in the program in spring 2007. The survey of Year One teachers focused mainly on the support they had received, while the survey of Year Two teachers concentrated on portfolio-related support and experiences. These groups were determined most critical to survey, as the core constituencies of the BEST program. Input from additional large groups, such as mentors or veteran teachers who had completed the BEST program, was gained through numerous interviews and informal conversations.

The beginning teacher surveys were mailed out to the new teachers' homes initially in late September with additional mailings to those teachers whose surveys were returned unopened with forwarding addresses through early October. Responses were accepted until mid November. Addresses were acquired from SDE, which keeps the teachers' addresses in a staff file for certification purposes. The survey was accompanied by an explanatory cover letter from the PRI director, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the survey's return. There were no identifying marks on the surveys or return envelopes; the surveys were completely anonymous. No pre-mailing notice or post-mailing follow-up reminder was sent.

The response rates for the Years One and Two surveys, 26 percent and 35 percent, respectively,⁶⁹ exceed the 25 percent benchmark that is generally considered a good response rate to base results and analysis for a survey of this type. This response rate threshold was independently offered by several academics at the University of Connecticut and professionals within SDE. Analysis indicates the distribution of survey respondents is very similar to the actual distribution of beginning teachers for both district reference groups (Years One and Two) and portfolio scores (Year Two).

The survey respondents' distribution across DRGs nearly mirrors the actual distribution of beginning teachers for both cohorts, as shown in Table A-1. A correct distribution is important because many constituencies predicted and analyses revealed DRG to be a significant factor in many support and portfolio-related experiences. Further, there was no need to weight the survey data to acquire more accurate results because the composition of the beginning teacher samples was already representative.

⁶⁹ For the Year One survey, 717 teachers responded. There were 2,869 included in the original mailing, which was to all teachers (including those receiving only support in BEST) in their first year of the program, but 92 of those were returned without a forwarding or new address. For the Year Two survey, 690 teachers responded. There were 2,099 included in the original mailing, which was to only teachers who were required to complete a portfolio, but 156 were either returned without a forwarding address or were returned by respondents who were exempted from the portfolio.

**Table A-1. DRG Distribution of Survey Respondents
Compared to the Distribution of All Teachers, for Years One and Two**

D R G	Percent of Yr. 1 Respondents	Percent of All Yr. 1 Teachers	Yr. 1 Difference (% points)	Percent of Yr. 2 Respondents	Percent of All Yr. 2 Teachers	Yr. 2 Difference (% points)
A	5.3%	6.0%	-0.7	6.5%	6.4%	+0.1
B	14.7%	13.7%	+1.0	13.5%	15.0%	-1.5
C	5.2%	5.7%	-0.5	5.2%	6.1%	-0.9
D	13.2%	12.9%	+0.3	14.3%	13.4%	+1.0
E	4.2%	3.7%	+0.5	3.8%	3.6%	+0.2
F	4.2%	5.5%	-1.3	6.4%	6.0%	+0.4
G	10.2%	10.7%	-0.5	10.9%	11.1%	-0.2
H	12.7%	11.7%	+1.0	11.7%	11.7%	0
I	23.3%	21.3%	+2.0	19.1%	20.1%	-1.0

Note: The percent columns do not sum to 100% because some teachers in BEST, such as those who teach at state-approved private schools, do not teach in a school system with a DRG designation. A positive difference in the percentage points columns means the responses were somewhat overrepresented for those DRGs, while a negative difference means the responses were somewhat underrepresented for those DRGs. The differences in either direction were minimal in relation to the overall distribution of the responses.

Source: SDE data and PRI staff calculations from the beginning teacher surveys

Distribution of Year Two survey respondents' portfolio scores also nearly matches the actual distribution of portfolio scores for all Year Two teachers, as depicted in Table A-2. This factor was important because scores may have been associated with either the actual or perceived quality of experiences. For example, teachers who received "1's" may have received worse support, or retrospectively, knowing they failed the portfolio, they may have been dissatisfied with their support, despite being satisfied with it last year. The representative distribution of respondents' portfolio scores means the total results for all beginning teachers were not overly influenced by a disproportionately large group whose experiences or perceptions might have been atypical. At the same time, the committee understands the timing of the survey may have some influence on the responses. Due to the timeframe the study was conducted, the only feasible time to develop and distribute the survey for Year Two teachers was a few weeks after they received their portfolio scores in September. It is unclear whether this affected the responses to any questions related to their portfolio experience.

Table A-2. Portfolio Score Distribution of Survey Respondents Compared to the Distribution of All Year Two Teachers			
Portfolio Score	Percent of Yr. 2 Respondents	Percent of All Yr. 2 Teachers	Difference (% points)
1	11.4%	10.8%	+0.6
2	57.4%	58.5%	-1.1
3	26.5%	27.1%	-0.6
4	4.3%	3.3%	+1.0
Note: A positive difference in the percentage points column means the responses were somewhat overrepresented, while a negative difference means the responses were somewhat underrepresented. The differences in either direction were minimal in relation to the overall distribution of the responses. Sources: SDE data and PRI staff calculations from the beginning teacher surveys			

Although the committee believes the survey results appropriate for drawing conclusions for this report, caution is necessary when interpreting the survey results for two reasons. First, it is possible survey respondents were different in some way (e.g. quality of BEST experience) from the total population of beginning teachers. The response rates mitigate, but cannot eliminate, this concern. Second, some teachers withheld the names of their districts or portfolio scores, out of privacy or other concerns, and therefore could not be included in the distribution calculations. If these respondents were more likely to teach in a certain district or have another characteristic in common, the representativeness of the data is lessened. From examination of survey item responses of those who identified DRG and those who did not, no such connection was perceived, yet it may be present on a small scale. Despite these caveats, the committee believes the survey responses generally are a good way to broadly understand beginning teachers' BEST experiences.

District facilitators. The committee also surveyed district facilitators to understand how BEST is implemented and monitored at the district level. District facilitators serve as the liaisons between the BEST program and local school districts.

The online survey was sent to all facilitators for whom SDE had e-mail addresses; respondents could complete the survey only by using a dedicated link in the e-mail they received. The online survey limited district facilitators to one survey response. The response rate from facilitators in "standard" districts was high: 46 percent.⁷⁰ Facilitators in non-standard districts, such as charter schools which are considered their own districts under the BEST program, responded at a lower rate of 33 percent. Only the results of facilitators in standard districts are presented in this report for two reasons. First, the non-standard facilitator group results are substantially different, owing to their unique positions. Second, the low number of respondents for the group makes the data relatively unreliable.

The district facilitator responses generally followed the distribution of all teachers by DRG. A few DRGs – B, C, and E – were somewhat over-represented but not highly so. The two DRGs with the lowest percentage of responses, however, had proportional representation, as shown in Table A-3. The committee believes the generally accurate distribution of district

⁷⁰ For the district facilitator survey, 74 responded out of 161 who received the survey invitation via e-mail. Standard districts include the state's 166 local and regional school districts.

facilitators across DRGs provides a good base for broadly understanding facilitators' actions and beliefs. At the same time, when examining the district facilitator survey results, it is important to keep in mind that district facilitators have different impacts, depending on how many beginning teachers are in their purview. For example, although the group E districts have 20 percent of the state's district facilitators, they have only 4 percent of the state's Year One teachers. In addition, it is possible that facilitators who shared some characteristic that impacted their survey responses, were more or less likely to respond, which makes the results less reliable.

Table A-3. DRG Distribution of Survey Respondents Compared to the Distribution of All BEST District Facilitators

DRG	Percent of Respondents	Percent of All District Facilitators	Difference (% points)
A	1%	5%	-4%
B	20%	13%	+7%
C	23%	18%	+5%
D	15%	14%	+1%
E	11%	20%	-9%
F	14%	10%	+4%
G	7%	9%	-2%
H	4%	5%	-1%
I	5%	4%	+1%

Note: A positive difference in the percentage points columns means the responses were somewhat overrepresented for those DRGs, while a negative difference means the responses were somewhat underrepresented for those DRGs. The differences in either direction were mostly minimal in relation to the overall distribution of the responses.
Sources: SDE data and PRI staff calculations from the beginning teacher surveys

Surveys

The beginning teacher surveys are on the following pages. When printed in proper formatting, each survey was one double-sided page in 11-point font. The district facilitator survey is not included in this appendix due to its length.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE: SURVEY OF BEGINNING TEACHERS (ABOUT YEAR 1)

GENERAL

1. Which school district did you work in last year (2006-07)? _____
2. What was your primary teaching assignment last year? a. Grade level _____ b. Content area _____
3. Are you an Alternate Route to Certification graduate? a. Yes b. No
4. Will you have to complete or have you already completed a BEST portfolio? a. Yes b. No c. I don't know

MENTORING

5. What type of mentor arrangement did you have last year?
 - a. Individual mentor
 - b. Mentor team
 - c. I did not have an assigned mentor (*If "c," skip to Q.11*)
6. What best describes your mentor/mentor team arrangement last year? (circle all that apply)

Individual Mentor in my <u>same</u> :	a. Content area	b. Grade level	c. Building
Mentor Team with at least one member in my <u>same</u> :	a. Content area	b. Grade level	c. Building

7. How did your mentor arrangement (as answered in Q. 6) impact the level of support you received last year?
 - a. Positively impacted
 - b. Not impacted
 - c. Negatively impacted
8. When did you first meet with your mentor/mentor team last year?
 - a. When I started teaching
 - b. Within 2 months after I started teaching
 - c. More than 2 months after I started teaching
 - d. Never
9. In what ways did your mentor/mentor team help you last year? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Familiarized me with my school and/or district
 - b. Helped me with lesson planning
 - c. Helped me understand the BEST portfolio
 - d. Helped me with techniques to improve my teaching
 - e. Made me aware of BEST resources
 - f. Helped me understand the CT Common Core of Teaching standards
 - g. Other: _____
 - h. No help was provided
10. If you were assigned extra or co-curricular duties last year, did you still find common time with your mentor/mentor team to meet?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I had no extra or co-curricular duties
11. Did the district you worked for last year provide mentor support for second-year teachers?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know
12. Please indicate the frequency of the following occurrences for last year: (circle one response for each line)

	Number of Times During 2006-07 School Yr.			
	0	1-2	3-4	5+
a. My mentor/mentor team observed my teaching:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
b. I observed my mentor/mentor team's teaching:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
c. I observed other teachers:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
d. I received release time to work with my mentor/mentor team:	0	1-2	3-4	5+
e. I received release time for professional development:	0	1-2	3-4	5+

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE: SURVEY OF BEGINNING TEACHERS (ABOUT YEAR 2)

GENERAL

14. Which school district did you work in last year (2006-07)? _____
15. Which district did you work in the prior year (2005-06)? _____
16. What was your primary teaching assignment last year? a. Grade level ____ b. Content area _____
17. What is your highest level of education?
 a. Bachelor's degree b. Master's degree c. Beyond Master's degree (including 6th Year)
18. What was your previous level of work experience prior to becoming a teacher in Connecticut?
 a. No prior teaching or professional experience c. Previously a private school or higher ed. teacher
 b. Taught in another state d. Professional experience in a non-teaching field
19. Are you an Alternate Route to Certification graduate? a. Yes b. No
20. Where did you attend a teacher preparation program? a. Conn. (which one: _____) b. Another state

SUPPORT

8. What type of mentor arrangement did you have during: (circle one response per year)

Your first year of teaching (2005-2006)	a. Individual mentor	b. Mentor team	c. Neither
Your second year of teaching (2006-2007)	a. Individual mentor	b. Mentor team	c. Neither

9. If you were mentored last year, what best describes your mentor/mentee arrangement: (circle all that apply)

Individual Mentor in my <u>same</u> :	a. Content area	b. Grade level	c. Building
Mentor Team with at least one member in my <u>same</u> :	a. Content area	b. Grade level	c. Building

10. If you were not formally mentored in your 2nd year, who provided assistance to you? (circle all that apply)
 a. Other teacher(s) c. Master mentor (if available) e. BEST district facilitator g. No one
 b. Mentor from first year d. Building principal f. Other _____
11. To be an effective teacher, how many years of mentoring do you think a beginning teacher should receive:
 a. None b. 1 year c. 2 years d. More than 2 years

12. How satisfied were you with the support you received last year from the following sources:

(circle one response per source)	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	No Support Provided
a. Mentor or mentor team	VS	S	D	VD	NSP
b. Other teachers	VS	S	D	VD	NSP
c. Master mentor	VS	S	D	VD	NSP
d. Building principal	VS	S	D	VD	NSP
e. BEST district facilitator	VS	S	D	VD	NSP
f. Department chair	VS	S	D	VD	NSP
g. State level (e.g. BEST website, printed materials, seminars, other)	VS	S	D	VD	NSP

ASSESSMENT

13. How useful were your formal evaluations by your supervisor(s) in making you a more effective teacher?
 a. Very useful b. Useful c. Somewhat useful d. Not useful
14. How would you rate your understanding of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching standards when you began teaching in Connecticut? a. Full understanding b. Some understanding c. No understanding

15. Following completion of the BEST portfolio, how would you rate your understanding of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching standards? a. Full understanding b. Some understanding c. No understanding

16. How useful was the portfolio process in improving your ability to: (circle one response per question)

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful
a. Plan a series of connected lessons?	VU	U	SU	NU
b. Deliver effective instruction?	VU	U	SU	NU
c. Use student assessment to adjust instruction?	VU	U	SU	NU
d. Reflect on and improve teaching?	VU	U	SU	NU
e. Use various effective teaching techniques?	VU	U	SU	NU

17. What types of portfolio help did you access? (circle all that apply)

- a. BEST district facilitator
- b. Mentor/mentor team
- c. Colleague who had already completed portfolio
- d. Exemplar portfolios
- e. Web information
- f. Connecticut Common Core of Teaching
- g. A portfolio scorer
- h. Outside consultant not affiliated with district or BEST
- i. Other help provided by my school or district
- j. Other help provided by the State Department of Education

18. In completing your portfolio, did you personally experience any problems regarding: (circle all that apply)

- a. Access to videotape equipment
- b. Assistance with the actual videotaping
- c. Information from mentor, scorer, BEST district facilitator, or State Department of Education staff
- f. Directions in the portfolio handbook
- g. Teaching performance
- h. Other _____

19. How satisfied were you with the written feedback you received from SDE with your portfolio score?

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Dissatisfied
- d. Very dissatisfied

20. What score(s) did you receive on the portfolio? _____ (Elem. Ed. Literacy ___) (Elem. Ed. Numeracy ___)

21. If you received a "1" score, will you attend a Portfolio Assessment Conference? a. Yes b. No

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. Is the current portfolio process the most effective way to measure a beginning teacher's application of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching standards? a. Yes b. No c. Unsure

23. If yes to Q. 22, should the portfolio be moved to a different time?

- a. Yes, to the 1st year of teaching
- b. Yes, to the 3rd year of teaching
- c. No, it should remain as is

24. If no to Q. 22, should the portfolio be replaced with: (circle *one* response only)

- a. A series of in-person classroom evaluations by state-trained evaluators
- b. A series of smaller reflective projects done throughout a school year
- c. A series of in-person observations by a principal or district official
- d. Nothing, new teachers meet sufficient state standards for certification
- e. Formative evaluations by mentors
- f. A project examining and reflecting on one aspect of my teaching
- g. Other _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING AND RETURNING THIS SURVEY BY OCTOBER 19TH
 Please call 860-240-0300 if you have any questions regarding the survey or study.

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.

⁷A "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).

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.

Additional Certification Description

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 sub-section, 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 C-1 provides a breakdown of DSAPs by year of issuance in the 2006-2007 school year.

Table C-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		



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:

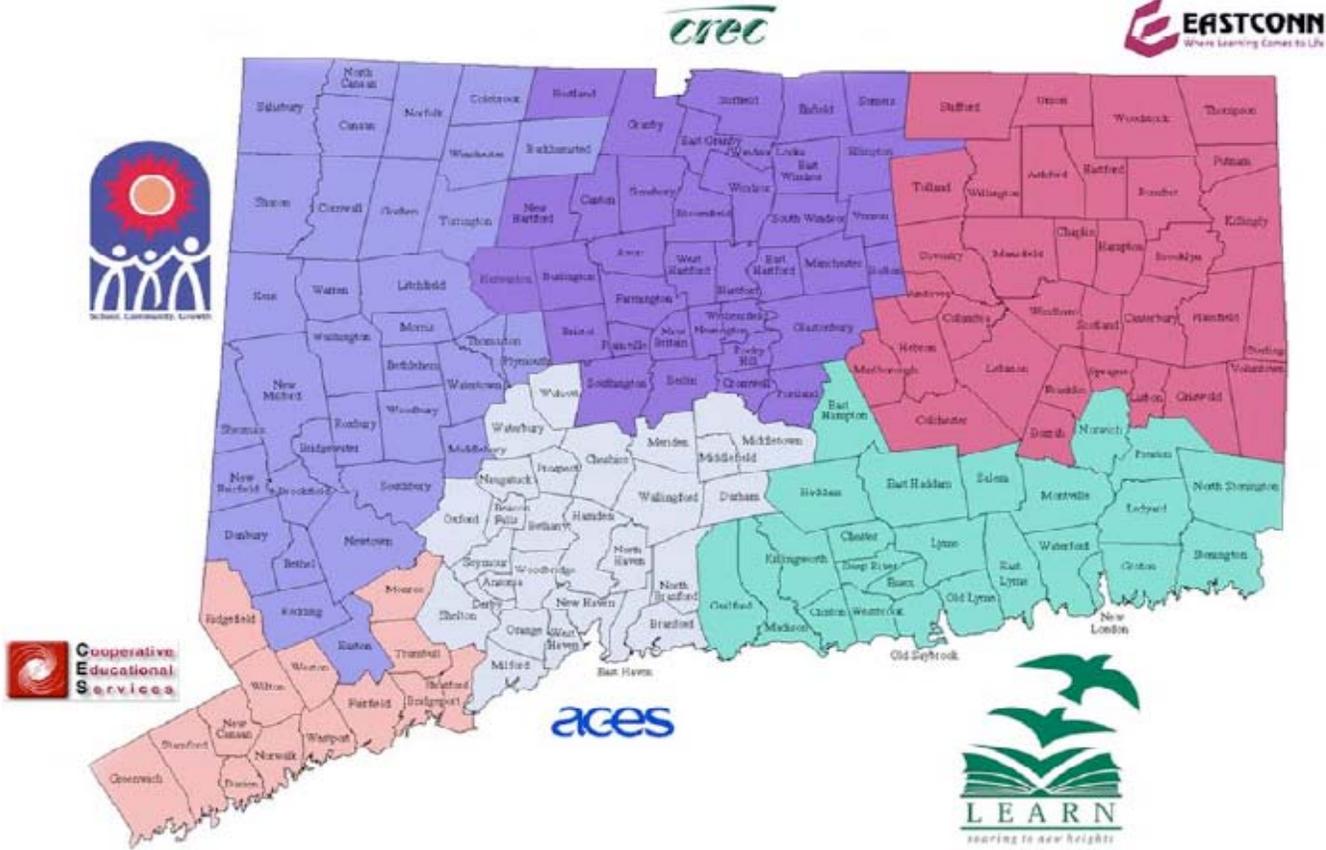
Eliminate the video component of the BEST Portfolio and replace it with principal/supervisor observation of the lesson and principal sign-off

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.

Appendix E

RESC Map



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

Appendix F

Table F. 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 F. 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 F. 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 ^e	---	---	---
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

Appendix G

District Reference Groups (DRGs)

DRG A: Darien, Easton, New Canaan, Redding, Regional District 9, Ridgefield, Weston, Westport, Wilton

DRG B: Avon, Brookfield, Cheshire, Fairfield, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Greenwich, Guilford, Madison, Monroe, New Fairfield, Newtown, Orange, Regional District 5, Regional District 15, Simsbury, South Windsor, Trumbull, West Hartford, Woodbridge

DRG C: Andover, Barkhamsted, Bethany, Bolton, Canton, Columbia, Cornwall, Ellington, Essex, Hebron, Mansfield, Marlborough, New Hartford, Oxford, Pomfret, Regional District 4, Regional District 7, Regional District 8, Regional District 10, Regional District 12, Regional District 13, Regional District 14, Regional District 17, Regional District 18, Regional District 19, Salem, Sherman, Somers, Suffield, Tolland

DRG D: Berlin, Bethel, Branford, Clinton, Colchester, Cromwell, East Granby, East Hampton, East Lyme, Ledyard, Milford, Newington, New Milford, North Haven, Old Saybrook, Rocky Hill, Shelton, Southington, Stonington, Wallingford, Waterford, Watertown, Wethersfield, Windsor

DRG E: Ashford, Bozrah, Brooklyn, Canaan, Chaplin, Chester, Colebrook, Coventry, Deep River, Eastford, East Haddam, Franklin, Hampton, Hartland, Kent, Lebanon, Lisbon, Litchfield, Norfolk, North Branford, North Stonington, Portland, Preston, Regional District 1, Regional District 6, Regional District 16, Salisbury, Scotland, Sharon, Thomaston, Union, Westbrook, Willington, Woodstock, Woodstock Academy

DRG F: Canterbury, East Windsor, Enfield, Griswold, Montville, North Canaan, Plainville, Plymouth, Regional District 11, Seymour, Sprague, Stafford, Sterling, Thompson, Voluntown, Windsor Locks, Wolcott

DRG G: Bloomfield, Bristol, East Haven, Gilbert Academy, Groton, Hamden, Killingly, Manchester, Middletown, Naugatuck, Norwich Free Academy, Plainfield, Putnam, Stratford, Torrington, Vernon, Winchester

DRG H: Ansonia, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Meriden, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, West Haven

DRG I: Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Waterbury, Windham

Source: "Connecticut's District Reference Groups (DRGs), 2005-06 to Date," Connecticut State Department of Education, <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/edfacts/drgs.htm>

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

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.	
II.2 Student inquiry	<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		
III.1 Daily monitoring	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 the unit's main concepts.	The teacher monitored students' progress towards understanding the unit's main concepts.
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 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.
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.
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.
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.

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

Source: SDE

Portfolio Scoring Reliability

Scoring System

Portfolios are scored by a wide range of educators from throughout the state, including current and retired teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists, and university faculty. Prospective scorers are chosen by their school districts and have at least five years of teaching experience in public schools and/or state-approved private schools. Scorers who submitted portfolios as part of their own certification requirements typically scored within the top ranges of the portfolio scoring scale. These factors enhance the overall credibility of the scoring system, although some question whether scorers should have taught for more than five years.

BEST portfolios are scored using a “guided expert judgment” model.⁷¹ Simply, that means scorers make the scoring decisions by following a standardized process when reviewing portfolios. First, detailed data are collected from the portfolios using specific data collection documents that are common across content areas. Second, based upon their professional experience, proficiency as trained scorers, and professional judgment, scorers analyze the portfolio data collected to determine the final portfolio scores. In more detail, the scoring process is structured around four steps:

- 1) review of the entire portfolio and collection of relevant evidence using structured note-taking tables;
- 2) analysis of the collected evidence and identification of performance patterns;
- 3) integration of the performance indicators and identification of the CCT-based category performance pattern; and
- 4) integration of the category performances into an overall score.

The committee believes the standardized portfolio scoring structure helps ensure the overall reliability of the portfolio assessment process. Moreover, scorers do not work in isolation. There is assistance available, and at times required, during the entire process from more experienced scorers, including table leaders, site leaders, and SDE project leaders. Every stage of the scoring process is designed to produce tangible products making the process transparent for more experienced scorers to review the accuracy and reliability of each initial scorer’s decision.

Although SDE has implemented a uniform portfolio scoring process, there is some potential for ambiguity, based upon committee staff’s observations of three sites during the summer scoring session. For example, for portfolios initially scored as “passing” (i.e., receiving scores of 2, 3, or 4), the degree to which formal review occurs beyond the initial review seemed somewhat vague when it was conveyed to committee staff. As summarized in the committee’s

⁷¹ *Validity Report: BEST Portfolio Assessment Program, Draft 2005*, Connecticut State Department of Education.

September briefing report, although each portfolio is officially reviewed at least three times, the level of review and the amount of time spent reviewing the portfolios beyond the initial review may not be as extensive as the original review. This depends on many factors, including the initial score (lower scores receive more in-depth reviews) and the overall thoroughness of the initial scorer's data collection and review as determined by the more experienced scorers within the scoring hierarchy.

The seemingly limited amount of time spent reviewing portfolios after the initial review – except for those originally scored low – is somewhat offset by the experience levels of the additional reviewers, which increases with each layer of reviewer (e.g., table leader, assistant site leader, site leader). The need for an entire “full” review of a passing portfolio lessens since the subsequent scorers generally have more professional experience and scorer experience than those who initially score the portfolio. Coupled with the standardization of the scoring process, this may account for the varying amounts of time and levels of review dedicated to portfolios initially scored as “passing,” as indicated in committee's September briefing report. The committee believes, however, its recommendation proposing a competent/not-competent scoring scale would minimize this issue as it relates to scorers determining final portfolio scores. Under the recommendation, scorers will not be making finite distinctions within a four-point scoring scale when determining final scores, but will assign final portfolio scores using a broader scale, lessening the need for such finite review for portfolios with passing scores (portfolios deemed failing or borderline between passing and failing will still need thorough reviews.)

Another area for potential ambiguity is the level of specific subject knowledge scorers should possess to adequately score portfolios. Although an analysis of the actual credentials of portfolio scorers was not conducted as part of this study, it is unclear as to how often portfolios are scored by scorers who have specific knowledge regarding the subject or topic of the portfolio. For example, portfolios in the area of social studies may include several different subject areas, such as economics, government, geography, or world cultures. This also holds true in other content areas, including special education given the various types of disabilities among students.

During committee staff's observations of the portfolio scoring sites during the summer, SDE staff was asked to what degree scorers are matched with the specific topic of each portfolio. The department is cognizant there should be as direct a connection as possible between scorers' content knowledge and the level of specificity of portfolio topics. To the extent feasible, scorers are matched in accordance with grade level and sub-content area. Moreover, scorers are recruited, in part, based upon the projected needs within the various content areas to help minimize potential discrepancies between scorers' overall content knowledge and the content depth of portfolio topics.

Training

Portfolio scorers receive specific initial training from SDE prior to officially scoring portfolios. After initial training, which is approximately 50 hours over multiple sessions, scorers undergo “calibration” training using benchmark portfolios. This occurs each year a scorer wants to score portfolios. Scorers, whether new or experienced, also must be deemed proficient through a process of successfully scoring a previously scored benchmark portfolio. Proficiency

testing is a diagnostic process to ensure reliability among scorers. The testing occurs during the summer right before the live scoring session starts.

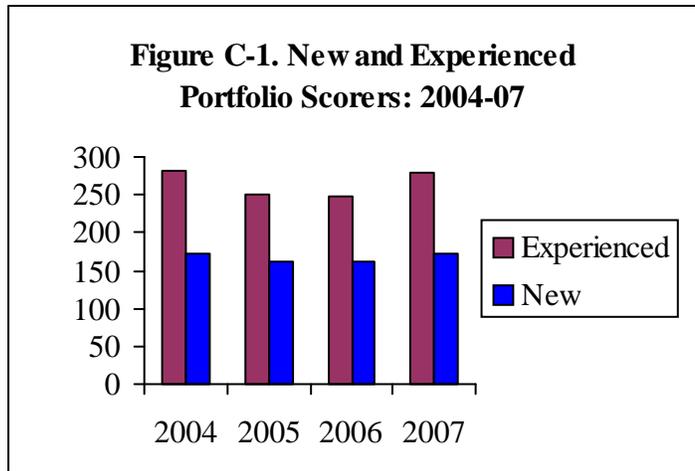
Upon completion of the proficiency testing, prospective scorers are graded as: 1) *proficient* – scorer is permitted to begin scoring portfolios with ongoing review from a more experienced scorer; 2) *proficient with review* – scorer works with an experienced scorer to identify and correct deficiencies, and a formal review of the new scorer’s first two portfolios is made by an experienced scorer; or 3) *non-proficient* – prospective scorer does not satisfactorily meet the SDE proficiency standards and must score another proficiency benchmark portfolio. A prospective scorer graded as nonproficient may repeat this process until proficiency standards are met.

Between 2000-2005, data collected by SDE show about 85 percent of all trained scorers pass the proficiency testing requirement upon their first try. The remaining scorers attained proficiency generally upon a second proficiency test.⁷² Table I-1 shows the overall proficiency rates for the 2007 summer scoring session mirror the 2000-05 results.

Table I-1. Portfolio Proficiency Test Results: May 2007 Scoring Session				
Content Area	Scorers Taking Proficiency	Proficient Upon First Attempt	Proficient Upon Second Attempt	Not Proficient (Did Not Retake/Left)
Elementary Educ.	169	157 (93%)	6 (4%)	6 (4%)
English Lang. Arts	45	42 (93%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)
Math	31	21 (68%)	10 (32%)	0
Music	24	18 (75%)	5 (21%)	1 (4%)
Physical Ed.	30	25 (83%)	4 (13%)	1 (3%)
Science	38	27 (71%)	10 (26%)	1 (3%)
Social Studies	42	41 (98%)	1 (2%)	0
Special Education	52	47 (90%)	5 (10%)	0
Visual Arts	17	16 (94%)	0	1 (6%)
World Languages	31	27 (87%)	2 (6%)	2 (6%)
Totals	479	421 (88%)	44 (9%)	14 (3%)
Source of data: SDE				

⁷² *Validity Report: BEST Portfolio Assessment Program, Draft 2005*, Connecticut State Department of Education.

Another indicator of the strength of the scoring system is the percentage of scorers who return to score portfolios. Scorers who return for additional years are considered more experienced scorers, since they have scored portfolios through at least one cycle. Between 2004 and 2007, a total of 1,726 portfolio scorers went through proficiency training. Of those, 61 percent were considered experienced scorers, while 39 percent were new to the process. Figure C-1 shows the ratio of new scorers to experienced scorers has remained relatively constant over the past four years. Although there is no formal context through which to gauge the strength or weakness of this ratio, in broad terms it is better for the process to have more experienced scorers than new scorers, and to have a relatively consistent supply of experienced scorers over a period of time, which is occurring within BEST.



It is program policy that portfolio scorers who do not score for one year after receiving the initial training and passing the proficiency test, must complete recalibration training and pass the proficiency test again the year they want to score portfolios, as do all returning scorers. Scorers who do not score for two or more years after being initially trained, must attend the full initial training and recalibration training, and pass the proficiency test prior to scoring portfolios.

One criticism of the BEST portfolio scorer training process gleaned from the written testimony to the committee is that Connecticut's training for portfolio scorers does not meet the rigor of that used by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) to train its portfolio scorers. NBPTS scorers are required to pass multiple proficiency tests prior to scoring.

It is correct that Connecticut's level of scorer training does not meet the NBPTS standards, even though the BEST portfolio assessment model is partially based on the NBPTS evaluation. At the same time, NBPTS certification is a national process used to certify outstanding teachers using the most rigorous standards and criteria, since it is a prestigious national process. Teachers who are nationally certified through the NBPTS may teach in nearly any state in the country without having to undergo each state's particular certification requirements and they often receive additional compensation. The committee believes Connecticut's process is tailored to Connecticut's standards, and it should not be perceived as a direct duplicate of the national board process, which has its own standards for its own purpose.

Inter-rater Reliability

As discussed above, a key determinant of the overall reliability of the BEST portfolio scoring process is the consistency of portfolio scores among scorers (i.e., inter-rater reliability). In other words, the final scores assigned to a portfolio must have a high degree of similarity

among all the scorers who scored the portfolio for the scores produced to be reliable. There also should be a high degree of correlation between the overall portfolio pass/fail rates.

The education department analyzed the consistency among portfolio scores for the 2007 summer scoring session.⁷³ A random sample of portfolios within each of the 10 content areas was scored by two independent scorers at each site. In total, 210 portfolios (7 percent) were analyzed. The scorers were not aware their portfolios were sampled for the analysis and there was no further review by more experienced scorers after the initial review for the analysis process, adding to the rigor of the test.

The portfolio scores were analyzed in several different ways to determine the levels of reliability and consistency of the portfolio assessment process. First, statistical analyses were conducted of the overall level of agreement of the portfolios based on the scores assigned to the portfolios using the 1-4 scoring scale. Second, additional analyses were run on the the level of reliability based on the overall pass/fail decision, where a score of “1” represented portfolios that failed and scores of “2-4” represented portfolios that passed. Additional, more finite analyses included: correlations between the instructional design, instructional implementation, assessment of learning, and analysis and reflection components of the portfolio; whether there was exact agreement, adjacent agreement, or no agreement among scorers; and the internal consistency of the scoring systems for each of the different content areas based on the independent scoring documents produced for the portfolios.

For purposes of this report, the committee focused on the results of two specific reliability measures: 1) the overall level of inter-rater reliability using the 1-4 portfolio scoring scale; and 2) the overall level of inter-rater reliability regarding the pass/fail status of portfolios. The results, presented in Table I-2, show relatively high inter-rater reliability levels for both measures. For example, in 71 percent of the portfolios, there was complete agreement among scorers on the final score when using the 1-4 rating scale. The level of agreement among scorers increased to 94 percent when scores were analyzed based on a pass/fail rating.

The department’s analysis correctly puts its results in the context within which they should be viewed, based on the types of statistical analyses used. In other words, according to testing norms for performance assessments like the BEST portfolio, standards for the agreement levels indicated in Table I-2 are appropriate in relation to the overall purpose of the portfolio. When fully considered, the department notes its analysis shows that when the current portfolio scoring system is applied by highly trained and proficient scorers, highly reliable portfolio scores are produced.

Table I-2. Selected Inter-rater Reliability Measures: 2007 Summer Session Portfolio Scores		
Sample Size	Percent Agreement 1-4 Scores	Percent Agreement Pass/Fail Scores
210 Portfolios	71%	94%
Source: State Department of Education		

⁷³ *Reliability and Internal Consistency of the BEST Portfolio-based Teacher Assessment Program, 2007*, Connecticut State Department of Education.

Appendix J

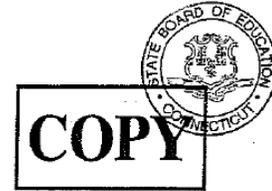
Licensure Assessments in Other States

Table J. Assessments Required for Teacher Licensure in U.S. States

Assessment Type (Number of States)	States		
Standardized, Non-performance-based Assessment Only			
<u>Praxis II (27)</u>	Alabama Delaware Hawaii Idaho Kansas Kentucky Louisiana Maine Maryland	Minnesota Missouri Mississippi New Hampshire Nevada New Jersey North Carolina North Dakota Pennsylvania	Rhode Island South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee Texas Utah Vermont Washington West Virginia
<u>NES (8)</u>	Arizona Florida Georgia	Massachusetts Michigan Oregon	New Mexico Oklahoma
<u>Praxis II and/or NES (2)</u>	Colorado Virginia		
Combination of Standardized and Performance-based Assessments			
<u>Praxis II and III (2)</u>	Arkansas Ohio		
<u>Combination of Praxis II and Unique Performance Assessment (5)</u>	Alaska California	Connecticut Indiana	New York
<p>--“Praxis II” is ETS’s content knowledge test. There are other types of Praxis II tests (including pedagogy) that some states require, but inclusion in the categories above means a state requires the Praxis II content test.</p> <p>--“NES” stands for National Evaluation Systems, Inc. NES works with states to devise state-specific tests of teacher candidates’ basic and content knowledge. Inclusion in the NES category means a state requires the NES content knowledge test.</p> <p>--“Praxis II and/or NES”: Colorado requires candidates to take either the NES content assessment or Praxis II. Virginia requires its candidates to take the NES assessment of communication and literacy skills, as well as Praxis II.</p> <p>--“Combination of Praxis II and Performance Assessment” includes a wide range of performance assessments. Alaska and New York require new teachers to submit videos of their teaching; Alaska requires substantial supporting documentation. California, Connecticut, and Indiana require a portfolio or portfolio-type exercise; California requires this during teacher preparation, in addition to a required formative assessment during the first few years of teaching.</p> <p>--Several states’ policies were unclear, and so were not included in this table: Illinois, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.</p> <p>Sources: Education Commission of the States and PRI staff original research</p>			



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



November 6, 2007

The Honorable Edward Meyer, Co-Chair
Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee
State Capitol Building, Room 506
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Meyer:

I am pleased to enclose the response of the Connecticut State Department of Education to the issues raised at the September 27, 2007, public hearings in connection with the review of the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program.

We have carefully reviewed both the oral and written testimony presented at these hearings. This report will outline the efforts of the Department to be responsive to the many constituents affected by this program over the two decades that this program has been in effect. In addition, we have acknowledged our support for some of the recommendations made to improve the program, as well as provided the rationale for reconsideration of or modifications to some of those suggestions.

We thank you and the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee for providing us with this opportunity to clarify and respond to your committee's questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Coleman".

George A. Coleman
Deputy Commissioner of Education

GAC:cne

Enclosure

**Response to Issues Presented at September 27, 2007,
Legislative Program Review Committee Hearing on the
Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program**

ISSUES RELATING TO THE SUPPORT COMPONENT OF THE BEST PROGRAM

Elimination of state financial support for mentoring activities leading to inequities in support to beginning teachers

The Connecticut State Department of Education (Department) acknowledges the presence of inequities in the quality and level of support provided to beginning teachers at the district level, with the problems most severe in the state's high need districts. These problems include: (1) mentors and beginning teachers not always matched in the same content area/grade level; (2) beginning teachers being assigned to mentors whose training has not been recently updated; (3) lack of release time for beginning teachers and their mentors to observe each other's classes; (4) differentials in (or lack of) stipends for mentors serving in the role; and (5) mentor support that does not extend for all teachers into their second year of teaching—the year in which beginning teachers prepare their BEST portfolios.

Over the last several years, the Department and State Board of Education (Board) have sought to address these inequities in the following ways:

- (1) legislative proposal for the creation of a corps of retired educators to be assigned to supplement school-based mentors for teachers in the state's largest urban areas, with the goal of ensuring that beginning teachers are supported by trained, experienced educators in the same approximate grade level/subject areas as the beginning teachers (budget option requests in 2004 and 2006);
- (2) requests to increase BEST Program funding to provide stipends for mentors for first and second year beginning teachers and to enhance training for mentors and beginning teachers (budget option requests in 1996, 2000 and 2006);
- (3) offering of state-sponsored professional development and resources to supplement school-based mentoring beginning in 1998 (e.g., three regional content-specific seminars for first and second year teachers, on-line teaching resources such as learning units and portfolio exemplars, and availability of BEST teachers-in-residence in each content to provide content-specific assistance and resources to beginning teachers);
- (4) targeted technical assistance to beginning teachers in the urban and priority districts, including delivery of content-specific seminars on-site, training of master mentors and "portfolio coaches"; and
- (5) expansion of availability of regional and in-district training, as well as development of more training options for mentors and administrators to increase district capacity to support beginning teachers (e.g., master mentor training, mentor coaching seminars, training of "content colleagues" who are part of a "mentoring team").

Need for mentoring support beyond the first year of teaching

The Department endorses expanding the requirement for school-based mentor support beyond the first year of teaching. A second year of mentor support is currently required for teachers who are graduates of Alternate Route to Certification (ARC) programs and holders of Durational Shortage Area Permits (DSAP). As noted earlier, some districts extend formalized mentoring support to beginning teachers in the second year of teaching; however, this practice is neither universal nor mandated by the state.

School administrators need to be partners in the BEST Support Structure

The BEST Program was originally designed to promote a “triad” support model in the school—that is, the mentor, principal and beginning teacher would work together as a team in the induction process. In reality, however, the evaluative role of the principal was often in conflict with the supportive role that mentors were to assume and the confidentiality provisions that were needed to foster trust between the mentor and beginning teacher.

The Department supports a more vigorous role for principals in the induction process. To this end, a series of administrator workshops and resources have been developed in the last three years to promote more direct principal involvement in supporting mentors and beginning teachers. This includes modifying school schedules to provide time for mentors and beginning teachers to meet regularly, providing release time for mentors and beginning teachers to observe one another’s classrooms, providing time and resources to support the beginning teacher in the portfolio preparation process, and incorporating the beginning teacher’s BEST portfolio into the school-based professional growth plan of the beginning teacher.

ISSUES RELATING TO THE ASSESSMENT COMPONENT OF THE BEST PROGRAM

The stressful nature of the portfolio assessment

The Department acknowledges that completion of a BEST portfolio produces stress for beginning teachers because it is a high-stakes assessment linked to eligibility for continued certification. Any type of teacher assessment would produce some degree of anxiety, whether through a written test, a portfolio or classroom observation. In fact, beginning teachers frequently complained of the pressure and stress of the BEST Program classroom observation-based assessment in place during the late 1980s through mid-1990s, when three to six observations were conducted by state assessors during the first year of teaching.

The Department has responded to this issue as follows:

- (1) *Alignment of portfolio tasks to what teachers should be doing daily in their classrooms:*
The BEST portfolio generally asks teachers to document five to eight hours of instruction with one class of students. This usually can be accomplished within a two week timeframe. The portfolio is designed to document actual teaching practices—developing a lesson and unit plan, delivering instruction over several days and assessing student learning at the conclusion of the unit.
-

- (2) *Annual "reduction in portfolio" review:* Each year, we review the portfolio handbooks and portfolios to eliminate and streamline requirements in order to make the process easier for the teacher, while ensuring there is enough information submitted in the portfolio to make a valid judgment of the teaching performance. This has included reducing the number and length of teacher commentaries and eliminating any redundancies in information submitted in the portfolio. Portfolio documentation currently consists of one to two pages of daily lesson logs including the lesson plan (which teachers should already be preparing on a daily basis) and progress of the lesson. In addition, we ask for 8-10 pages of commentary on the unit design and learning expectations, progress of student learning and reflection on teaching and overall learning of the students—in total, no more than 25 written pages of written documentation. The Department plans a further review to determine whether portfolio tasks can be simplified or fewer days of instruction documented in the portfolio unit.
- (3) *Introduction of DVD submission option in lieu of VHS tapes:* Beginning with portfolios submitted in the spring of 2008, beginning teachers will have the option of submitting videotapes of their teaching on either a VHS tape or DVD format. Directions and technical assistance to beginning teachers in submitting their videotapes is available through the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs). Also, video cameras are made available for loan if beginning teachers cannot secure one through their schools/districts. The Department will review videotaping requirements in each portfolio area to reduce the need for editing.
- (4) *Administrative accommodations for hardship:* Since the inception of the BEST Program, the Department has implemented a series of administrative accommodations to ensure beginning teachers have every opportunity to successfully complete the BEST assessment. Examples include extending timeframes for completion of the assessment due to illness, extended absences during the school year, or significant changes in teaching assignment. To illustrate, during the 2006-07 school year, about 500 of 2,800 (or slightly over 10 percent) of beginning teachers received an extension of an additional year to complete the BEST portfolio.
- (5) *Exemptions from the BEST Portfolio requirement:* Subsection (d) of Section 10-145f of the Connecticut General Statutes authorizes the Department to exempt certain teachers from the BEST Program assessment if the circumstances of the teaching assignment are sufficiently unique to preclude a teacher from demonstrating the teaching standards. Examples of situations include a special education teacher whose students are so disabled that instruction consists of teaching life skills, or a teacher in an alternative education setting in which the student population is so transient that the teacher cannot document working with students for a sufficient period of time as required in the portfolio. Districts must submit documentation to support an exemption request, which is then submitted for approval to the BEST Review Committee, which includes school district personnel in addition to representatives from the Department. During the 2006-07 school year, 157 teachers were granted full or partial exemptions from the portfolio assessment.
- (6) *Encouraging administrator support to beginning teachers completing portfolios:* Some districts actively support beginning teachers in the portfolio process by providing a knowledgeable and trained mentor or portfolio scorer to support the new teacher, as well as securing release time for the teacher to plan and complete the portfolio. Beginning teachers who receive high levels of support often report that preparing the portfolio was not easy, but worthwhile in terms of improving their teaching. The Department will continue to offer workshops and other administrator resources to promote a greater role of the district in supporting new teachers through the portfolio process.

Classroom observation is a more valid assessment of performance than the BEST portfolio

As noted earlier in this report, the BEST Program assessment consisted of classroom observations from 1989 until the mid-1990s, when it was gradually phased out and replaced with the content-specific portfolio assessment. Factors leading to the replacement of the classroom observation assessment, the “Connecticut Competency Instrument” (CCI) with the portfolio assessment include the following:

- (1) *CCI was a limited “snapshot” of teaching:* The CCI was used to evaluate a teacher teaching a single lesson and only focused on teacher behaviors common to all teachers (e.g., classroom management, management of routines and transitions, student questioning, monitoring and adjustment of instruction). Although such teaching behaviors are important and requisite to effective teaching, the CCI assessment failed to capture evidence of student learning over time, the relationship of that single lesson to students’ prior learning or future learning expectations, and the relationship of the content of the lesson to important instructional outcomes as defined by the district’s curriculum goals or state standards for student learning. In contrast, the portfolio is content-specific and documents a series of lessons over time. It provides multiple sources of data, including teacher lesson plans, daily student work, assessments, videotapes of teaching, and commentaries on student learning and their teaching. In addition, teachers must justify the selection of the unit’s content and learning goals to school/district goals or state content/curricular frameworks.
- (2) *Significant resources and costs required to administer and staff the CCI:* “Live” classroom observations require that assessors who are classroom teachers be released from their schools to travel to other schools to conduct and document the assessment. This requires the state to reimburse the district for substitutes, as well as reimburse the assessor for travel and to compile the assessment documentation on their own time. In addition, in order to make a valid licensure decision using classroom observation, multiple assessments of the teacher are required—at a minimum, three—and up to six or more if the teacher is not successful. The administrative systems required to schedule these assessments were costly and resource intensive. In addition, by the mid-1990s, districts were increasingly reluctant to release teachers to conduct CCI assessments.
- (3) *Limited performance differentials in CCI assessment among candidates:* Within a couple of years, nearly 100 percent of teachers were meeting the CCI assessment requirement. In general, the high pass rate was attributed to the selection of “safe, showcased” lessons which had little relation to daily teaching practice and district curriculum or which provided very little evidence of student learning within the lesson taught.

In summary, the resources and costs to administer the CCI were high in comparison to the impact of the assessment and its capability to adequately measure teaching effectiveness.

It should be noted that two states (Ohio and Arkansas) have adopted PRAXIS III, a classroom observation-based system developed by Educational Testing Service which is very similar to the CCI. This assessment, which is administered during the first year of teaching and consists of only one classroom observation, produces first-time pass rates of 98 to 99 percent. Recent data from Ohio indicates that the cost to administer the PRAXIS III assessment program (excluding costs to support mentoring) is substantially higher than Connecticut’s BEST portfolio. For example, during 2005-06, Ohio spent approximately \$4.7 million to assess 5,238 teachers, or approximately \$897 per teacher. In contrast, annual scoring costs for the BEST Program

portfolio assessment program during 2005-2006 totaled approximately \$1.1 million to assess 2000 portfolios, or \$550 per portfolio.

Request for “alternatives” to the portfolio assessment from which beginning teachers can choose

Developing alternatives to the current portfolio assessment and allowing teachers to choose the method of assessment would have the following implications:

- (1) *Validity and fairness to candidates:* Because the BEST Program assessments are related to licensure decisions, the assessment structure must be fair, valid and reliable. If multiple assessments were available for use, the state would have to validate and conduct equating studies to ensure equivalence in performance standards and equity in outcomes for candidates choosing one assessment or the other.
- (2) *Resources to support multiple assessment options:* Significant amounts of additional state resources would be required to support multiple assessment administration, different trainings for scorers and mentors, and multiple scoring and reporting systems. As noted earlier in this paper, the costs for an observation-based assessment such as PRAXIS III or the CCI are substantially higher than the current BEST portfolio assessment. The costs would be even greater if both systems were to be administered concurrently.
- (3) *Development of alternatives to the current BEST Portfolio:* The development of new clinical teacher assessments would require several years of development and validation as well as significant additional state resources to ensure that the new assessment would meet Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing, which is required for the legal defensibility of a licensure-based assessment.

Modifications to the current portfolio assessment

The following are the Department’s responses to proposed modifications to the current BEST Portfolio assessment:

- (1) *Replacement of current score points (1-4) with pass/fail:* The Department endorses the recommendation to modify the existing four-point scale. An alternative to consider is to adopt a “pass”/“pass with distinction”/“fail” option, in order to recognize the exemplary performance of a small number of beginning teachers.
- (2) *Extended, flexible timeframe to meet BEST portfolio standards:* The Department supports the option of allowing beginning teachers to submit a portfolio in year one, year two or year three, with a fourth year in the program available to those teachers who do not pass the portfolio with their first submission.
- (3) *Appeals process for the portfolio:* The Department has developed a proposed appeals process, which is included as attachment A to this document. The implementation of this appeals process would require extending the timeframe to complete the BEST Program by one additional year.
- (4) *Modifications to current portfolio requirements for elementary teachers:* The Department has some concerns about giving elementary teachers the option of submitting either a literacy or numeracy portfolio, as mathematics and language arts are both critical subject areas in which elementary students are tested and schools held accountable for student outcomes.

- (5) *Modifications to current portfolio requirements for English teachers:* The Department supports the recommendation to consolidate the two components of the English portfolio (teaching literature and writing) into a single, shorter unit of instruction.
- (6) *Elimination of the BEST Video with administrative district evaluations to be included instead:* A critical element in evaluating teacher effectiveness is the interaction between the teacher and student. As noted earlier in this report, “live” classroom observations are costly and logistically difficult to implement. Therefore, the Department opposes the elimination of the video in the portfolio.

However, the Department supports the concept of integrating the principal’s or supervisor’s evaluations into the BEST Program assessment process. In order to ensure fairness and equity to candidates in this process, a common evaluation instrument would need to be developed and principals and supervisors trained to use this instrument.

- (7) *More comprehensive feedback for teachers:* The Department recognizes that the portfolio feedback rubrics are not nearly as meaningful as in-person conferences, such as the ones we provide to beginning teachers who score a “1” on their portfolio submission. Unfortunately, with a large scale assessment like the BEST portfolio in which more than 2,000 beginning teachers submit portfolios each year, the BEST Program currently does not have either the monetary nor human resources to provide that level of feedback (no matter how much we support the idea). As a more feasible, less costly alternative, the Department proposes offering feedback seminars to small groups of beginning teachers who “pass” the portfolio but want help in interpreting their results. Teachers would be invited to bring their portfolios and feedback rubric to the session, which would be conducted by an experienced BEST Program trainer who would help them understand the feedback report and identify areas for future growth. In addition, the Department agrees to develop modifications to the current portfolio feedback report to augment feedback on identified strengths and weaknesses.

ISSUES RELATED TO DEPARTMENT’S RESPONSE TO CEA CONCERNS

In response to the issues raised about the Department’s lack of responsiveness to the concerns of the Connecticut Education Association (CEA), we would offer the following comments:

- (1) *CEA representation on policy committees:* It is a longstanding practice of the Department to invite representatives of the two state teachers’ unions/associations to be part of its policy committees. Over the past two years, representatives of these organizations have had input on Connecticut’s educator policies through the Educator Continuum Steering Committee, the Subcommittee on Teacher Evaluation and Professional Development, the Subcommittee on Educational Leadership, the BEST Advisory Subcommittee, the “Special Education Stakeholder Group” certification committee, and the committee to develop pre-service competencies for general education committees. Many of the recommendations of these committees have not yet been finalized.
- (2) *Other constituent input on Department committees:* It should be noted that the Department also invites other constituency groups to have a voice at important Department policy making committees. Examples of these constituencies include representatives of the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Connecticut deans of education (AACTE-CT), representatives of business and industry,

parent organizations, as well as at-large teachers, administrators, and superintendents representing the diversity of Connecticut's school districts. Depending upon the issues to be discussed, legislators and representatives of organizations who may be affected by certain policies are also invited to have input into Department policies.

- (3) *CEA recommendations regarding the BEST Program:* The Department has taken seriously the input from the state's teachers unions, but must also consider other constituent input. The BEST Program is a complex program with school personnel having diverse perspectives about its operations and issues. The draft recommendations of the BEST Advisory Committee were not brought forth to the Board because the report acknowledged that consensus was not reached on certain recommendations (including the elimination of the video component of the BEST Program and replacement with principal/supervisor evaluation). In addition, eight of the committee members subsequently submitted written comments disagreeing with other recommendations in the report.

Proposal for BEST Program Administrative Appeals Process

Eligibility:

Individuals who have received a score of "1" on a portfolio submission during their third year of teaching (this could be a first or second submission, which is due on February 1, with results received by April 1).

Areas subject to review in the administrative appeals process:

- review of scoring documentation to verify appropriate scoring procedures followed and documentation supports score;
- teaching assignment or circumstances that would prevent the teacher from having a fair opportunity to demonstrate teaching competency as required by the portfolio assessment;
- lack of adequate mandated school- or district-based mentoring during year one (and year two for Alternate Route to Certification graduates); and/or
- extenuating circumstances (illness, extended absence during school year, etc.) that adversely affected the teacher's ability to document teaching.

Requirements in order to file appeal:

- (1) An appeals request must be made in writing within 30 days of receiving the BEST score report, along with supporting documentation as appropriate (e.g., medical certificate, description of unique teaching assignment, documentation of lack of mentoring support).
- (2) A superintendent sign-off must be included as confirmation of the circumstances meriting an appeal.

Appeals committee:

The appeals committee would consist of district personnel representative of the diversity of the teaching profession and including at least one principal, central office administrator and one higher education faculty member in addition to classroom teachers. The classroom teacher representatives would be in the same content area as the teacher initiating the appeal. Members of the committee cannot be current portfolio scorers and must complete a one-day training session in order to serve on the committee.

Consequences of upheld appeal:

- (1) inadequacy of documentation to support score of 1: Score overturned and eligibility for provisional educator certificate if all other requirements met;
- (2) determination that teaching assignment/circumstances precluded opportunity to document teaching as required in portfolio: retroactive exemption from assessment requirement;
- (3) lack of mandated school- or district-based mentoring support: invalidation of score and additional year in BEST with district required to provide mentoring; or
- (4) extenuating circumstances: invalidation of portfolio score and provision of additional year in BEST.

Consequences of denied appeal:

Opportunity for an additional portfolio submission during a fourth year in the BEST Program.

Deadline for filing of appeal: May 1 with a decision to be rendered by June 1.

Sample Portfolio Feedback Report for a Failing Portfolio



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program



From: Catherine Fisk Natale, Director of Educator Support and Assessment
Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification

Date: September 1, 2007

Subject: BEST Portfolio Performance Report

Portfolio Results

We are writing to inform you that you have not yet met the acceptable performance standard on the portfolio assessment, as your performance level was judged to be "1" or "conditional." A performance level of "2" or higher is required to meet the portfolio assessment standard.

Portfolio Performance Report

Attached to this letter is your portfolio performance report, which has two parts:

1. **Your portfolio performance level:** Levels of performance range from "1" (conditional) to "4" (advanced).
2. **Your portfolio performance summary:** This is a narrative description consisting of rubric feedback statements that reflect your portfolio performance. In order to help you interpret your performance, you may access the portfolio feedback rubric and a guide to interpreting your portfolio performance summary report at the BEST Connections website. Go to www.ctbest.org, click on "Resources," and scroll down to "BEST Portfolio Performance Feedback Rubrics."

Consequences of the Assessment and Notification to District

1. **Certification Status:** Beginning teachers who achieve the conditional performance level during the second year of teaching are not eligible for the Provisional Educator Certificate and must submit a new portfolio documenting new instruction with their students during year-three of participation in the BEST Program.
2. **Notification to District:** Your district will be notified of your performance on the portfolio assessment and the consequences. We do not provide the district with your portfolio performance summary narrative report; however, we encourage you to share it with your mentor, department chair, or other instructional personnel, who may be able to provide you with additional assistance in further improving your teaching.

Critical Information Regarding Submission of BEST Portfolios in Year Three

All year-three teachers must submit portfolios by **February 1, 2008**.

Portfolio Handbook Edition to be used

You must use the **2006-07 edition of the Handbook for the Development of a Teaching Portfolio** when you prepare your portfolio for submission by February 1, 2008. If you no longer have this handbook, you will find it online at www.ctbest.org, click on "Resources," or you may contact the BEST Program office at (860) 713-6820.

Sources for Assistance in Completing the BEST Portfolio Assessment Requirements

BEST Portfolio Conference: You are eligible for an in-person conference with a portfolio scorer/trainer who will provide you with more detailed information on your portfolio performance. To schedule a conference, please call the BEST Program office at (860) 713-6820. ***Conferences will take place during the last week in September and the first two weeks in October. Please call no later than September 14 to schedule your conference.***

BEST Program Seminars: We encourage you to access BEST Online Learning Units and attend In-person Regional Seminars.

Online Learning Units: The online learning unit seminar series is available through the BEST Connections website in each of the ten portfolio subject areas. Go to www.ctbest.org and click on "Online Learning Units." Then click on your own subject area.

In-Person Regional Seminars: We are also scheduling two regional "in-person" seminars in each portfolio subject area in the fall of 2007 for all teachers who will be submitting portfolios during the 2007-08 school year. Check the BEST Connections website at www.ctbest.org for those schedules.

District-based Support: We recommend that you seek assistance from district personnel with expertise in your content area, (e.g., a department chair or district curriculum coordinator) in those areas needing attention, as identified in your portfolio performance summary. You may want to contact your Regional Educational Service Center to determine what professional development is available regionally.

Critical Certification Information

The bureau's Certification Analysis Unit has been notified of your need to complete another year in the BEST Program for the purpose of successfully completing the portfolio assessment requirement. Please check the lapse date on your current Initial Educator Certificate to determine whether you need to apply for an extension. It is your responsibility to maintain a valid certificate for the 2007-08 school year. If you have any questions about your certification status, please call the Certification office at (860) 713-6969, or send an e-mail to teacher.cert@ct.gov.

Consequences of Not Meeting the BEST Requirement in Year Three

In order to be eligible for the Provisional Educator Certificate, you must meet the acceptable performance standard during your third year of BEST participation. Failure to do so will result in ineligibility for reissuance of your Initial Educator Certificate. In such cases, a beginning teacher may become eligible to apply for reissuance of the Initial Educator Certificate only after submission of evidence showing completion of a planned course of study and additional teaching experience, as pre-approved by the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification.

The majority of teachers who submit portfolios during their third year of participation in BEST are successful as they gain more experience in the classroom and seek out assistance to address those areas identified as needing attention. The BEST Program is committed to helping new teachers in this regard. If you have any questions, please contact the project leader or the teacher in-residence in your respective content area by calling the BEST Program Office at (860) 713-6820.

Attachments

**Connecticut State Department of Education
Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program
Portfolio Performance Report**

Subject Area: Social Studies

Your portfolio was evaluated by highly trained and experienced teachers in your content area. This document represents a summary of their comprehensive evaluation, based upon: (1) the foundational skills and competencies of Connecticut's Common Core of Teaching (CCT) related to teacher knowledge, planning, instruction, assessment and reflection; and (2) discipline-based professional teaching standards.

The performance report includes two parts:

1. Portfolio Performance Level
2. Portfolio Performance Summary

Your portfolio performance level was evaluated as:

Conditional (1)

Consequence:

You have not yet met the passing portfolio performance standard. You must meet the passing portfolio performance standard to be eligible for the Provisional Educator Certificate. Therefore, you must submit a new portfolio documenting new instruction with your students during your third year of participation in BEST, due **February 1, 2008**.

A profile of your portfolio performance is attached.

Assessor Notes Providing Contextual Information

Course and Grade Level(s):

Portfolio Topic:

Profile of Portfolio Performance

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?

The portfolio unit focused on learning related social studies events or topics. The teacher designed instruction to address students' general learning needs. The unit's resources and activities provided students with opportunities to actively learn the content.

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

Student work indicated there was little or no opportunity for students to develop or use essential social studies skills. In the featured activity, students responded to fact-based questions or summarized information about a topic. During class discourse the teacher engaged students in expressing opinions about unit-related content.

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

The teacher monitored students' progress towards developing an understanding of the lesson's content. Findings about student learning were rarely used to adjust instruction. The assessments provided information mainly about students' recall and summary of social studies information. The evaluation criteria for student work were unclear. Assessment feedback included a mix of general and specific comments about students' strengths and weaknesses.

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

The teacher's analysis of student learning focused mainly on students' learning of the content. The reflective commentary on teaching described limited connections between teaching practices and students' learning.

Regression Analysis Methodology

Committee staff analyzed the effects of different characteristics and experiences on whether Year Two teachers passed the BEST portfolio (i.e. whether they received scores of 2 through 4). Each portfolio category – elementary literacy, elementary numeracy, and non-elementary portfolios – was analyzed independently. The category of non-elementary portfolio scores encompassed eight content areas; the number of scores within each content area was insufficient to conduct meaningful analysis for the individual areas. A multi-step process of statistical analysis was used to determine which characteristics and experiences impact the likelihood of passing the portfolio.

First, individual cross-tabulations were run for each of the survey response items that potentially could have impacted portfolio score. This generally encompassed all items except for those relating to the respondents' beliefs about the appropriate way(s) to assess beginning teachers and to the effects of the portfolio on the beginning teachers' pedagogy. The level and significance of the statistical correlation between an item and whether the portfolio was passed was computed for each cross-tabulation. Kendall's tau-b was used because the items were categorical. The items that were statistically significant at $p=0.06$ were noted. This significance level, which is just above the more conventional level of significance ($p=0.05$), was used to avoid disregarding an item that potentially could be significant in regression analysis.

Second, significant items were included in regressions. For the regressions, the items were the independent variables (called covariants) and whether the result was a pass or a fail was the dependent variable. Binary logistic regressions were run because the independent variables were categorical (i.e., not continuous numbers) and the dependent variable was binary (i.e., one either passed the portfolio or did not). Each independent variable first was analyzed (i.e., regressed) individually to determine whether its significance was sufficient to justify inclusion in a larger regression. The variables that were significant at $p=0.06$ were then noted for use in multi-covariant analyses.

The multi-covariant analyses generally began with the variable that had the highest level of significance in the cross-tabulation calculations. Variables were added individually to the regression to determine which were significant when controlling for other variables (i.e., when other variables were included in the regression). Variables that were insignificant in the regression and/or that did not substantially alter the percent of variance in the dependent variable explained, which is measured by a statistic called the r-squared, were disregarded. In contrast, (independent) variables that *were* significant or *did* alter the percent of variance explained by the regression, were kept. This iterative process continued until the regression contained only the variables that were statistically significant and added explanatory power. These variables are described in Section III of the report.

This process of conducting regression analyses was used because it enables the user to determine which variables (i.e. characteristics, beliefs, or experiences) impact something when the influence of other variables is held constant. Regression analysis is especially important

when one factor may strongly influence other potential factors. For example, in this study, DRG often was associated the type or quality of support received. Analyzing only the type or quality of support received, without controlling for DRG, could lead one to conclude erroneously the support received – not DRG – partially accounted for whether a teacher passed the portfolio.

The regression analyses found the following factors impacted whether beginning teachers passed the portfolio at a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$), when controlling for other factors:

- Elementary literacy: Beginning teachers who taught in DRG I or who had previously taught in a private school were *less* likely to pass. Those who accessed portfolio-related help provided by their schools or districts (excluding mentoring, working with a portfolio scorer, or receiving assistance from a colleague who had recently completed the portfolio) were *more* likely to pass the portfolio.
- Elementary numeracy: Beginning teachers who taught in DRG I, who were less satisfied with support provided by the state, or who experienced problems with the accuracy or completeness of information from a mentor, scorer, BEST district facilitator, or SDE-affiliated person, were *less* likely to pass.
- Non-elementary: Beginning teachers who were less satisfied with overall support received from other teachers (excluding mentors) were *less* likely to pass. In addition, the volume of problems experienced completing the portfolio by beginning teacher (which was constructed using responses to individual portfolio problem items) impacted whether the teacher passed: a teacher who experienced *a few problems* was *less* likely to pass than one who experienced no problems, but *more* likely to pass than one who experienced many problems.

All factors involving satisfaction, as well as the variable on the volume of portfolio-related problems, were scaled. These factors can be interpreted in the following way, using satisfaction with support provided by the state (which was significant for the elementary numeracy portfolio outcome) as an example: Those teachers who were very satisfied were more likely to pass than those who were somewhat satisfied, and were much more likely to pass than those who were dissatisfied or received no support. Any beginning teacher who had more than one of these factors for their particular portfolio category was less likely to pass than a teacher who had only one factor.

It should be noted, the size of the committee's survey sample may limit the conclusions in two ways. First, some of the characteristics and experiences included in the survey may be found to be significant if a larger sample could be obtained. Second, only passing the portfolio – not the precise portfolio score – was used for a dependent variable. Consequently, these results do not convey whether certain variables would raise an already-passing score. As with all regressions, it is difficult to analyze all factors that could impact the outcome (passing the portfolio). This analysis was limited by the amount and quality of information that could be collected through the survey of Year Two teachers.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



February 8, 2008

The Honorable Edward Meyer, Co-Chair
The Honorable Julia B. Wasserman, Co-Chair
Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee
State Capitol Building, Room 506
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Meyer and Representative Wasserman:

The State Department of Education (SDE) concurs with key findings of this report:

- Connecticut's teacher preparation programs need to better align their programs with Connecticut's teaching standards;
- strong multiyear induction programs for beginning teachers to improve the quality of teaching, reduce teacher turnover and result in positive gains in student achievement; and
- the Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program portfolio is a valid and reliable assessment instrument based on Connecticut's teaching standards, but which can be strengthened and improved over time.

As the report notes, "A key question that remains. . . is whether the state is prepared to adopt the necessary policies and devote adequate resources to ensure the state's teacher induction program receives the support needed to fulfill its goal."

The SDE is concerned that securing the additional resources and funding associated with implementing all of the 27 recommendations will be unlikely, given the state's many other pressing educational issues. In addition, many of these recommendations address improvements to the current teacher induction program, the framework of which was developed 15 or 20 years ago.

As a result of these concerns, the Department, with the concurrence of the State Board of Education, requests that no legislative action be taken in this session that would commit the Department to programmatic changes, the costs of which could prove to be unsustainable over the long term. We are eager to make modifications, if not substantive changes to the program. However, we would like a full year to work with our constituents and the State Board's Policy Committee to define what our appropriate next steps should be. Stated differently, we hope to use the next ten months to fashion a response by February 2009 that will be consistent with the Board's *Five-year Comprehensive Plan*, as well as the Department's planned revision of Connecticut's certification regulations for teachers and administrators.

Box 2219 • Hartford, Connecticut 06145

An Equal Opportunity Employer

The Honorable Edward Meyer, Co-Chair
The Honorable Julia B. Wasserman, Co-Chair
February 8, 2008
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With this request, please note that we are prepared to implement short-term recommendations such as the following:

- reduce the length of required portfolio documentation in all content areas;
- investigate the appropriateness of a revised, one-subject portfolio (literacy or numeracy) by elementary teachers;
- allow for portfolio video submissions via VHS or DVD;
- report portfolio results as "competent/not competent"; and
- enhance the reporting of portfolio assessment feedback to beginning teachers and their districts.

If you have any further questions, please contact Nancy Pugliese at 860-713-6708 (email at nancy.pugliese@ct.gov) or Catherine Fisk Natale at 860-713-6806 (email at catherine.natale@ct.gov).

Sincerely,



Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education

MKM/cne
Attachment

cc: State Board of Education