

February 27, 2008

To: Program Review Investigation Committee and
Education Committee
Connecticut State Legislature

I have been involved with the BEST Program since 1987. I have served as BEST Field Staff at Cooperative Educational Services in Trumbull for all of this time. In my role, I have trained thousands of mentors, new teachers, and administrators. I have worked with District Facilitators in all of the C.E.S. districts. I have trained Master Mentors to provide leadership in their districts. I have trained qualified people to become trainers. I am a portfolio scorer. I have seen the BEST Program grow and evolve over time.

What has stood out for me over all these years is the transformation I have seen in the participants. Mentors leave their training sessions saying they feel "rejuvenated" and that they understand how their teaching relates to the state standards in the Common Core of Teaching. Many new teachers say that doing a portfolio helped them get better faster, even as they say that the process was quite challenging. The bottom line is that the program has helped educators see that their job is all about student learning. What could be more important than that?

In 2006, I represented the BEST Program as a speaker at the New Teacher Induction Conference in San Jose, California. The room was filled with people from all over the country wanting to know more about our BEST Program. Participants told us they had heard so much about our program that they wanted to come and learn more. In 2007, I represented the BEST Program at a national conference in Boston coordinated by Simmons College. Again, our session was filled. People in other states see our BEST Program as a national model. They see Connecticut as being on the cutting edge.

Could the BEST Program be better? Of course it could. I served on the statewide advisory committee on BEST in 2006. I know that our recommendations were detailed in the Program Review Committee's report and have been incorporated into bill 329.

When teachers come to mentor training, they often mention that their own mentors helped to shape who they are, and that the portfolio forced them to think more deeply about their teaching and how their students learn. What could be more positive?

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



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