

NEWS FROM THE CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Talent Office

Welcome from Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Talent Office Newsletter. The past two years have been marked by many changes to education in our state. Not because what we had before was broken, but because our students will need the skills and knowledge to succeed in a world that is more competitive than ever before. With the implementation of these comprehensive education reforms, we have the potential to close Connecticut's achievement gap, ensuring that all students graduate career, college and civic ready.

We know that as educators, you play a crucial role in the life of every child who enters your schools. Research confirms that teachers are the single most important school-based influence on how well students learn. Connecticut has extraordinary teachers who have the power to motivate and engage students in ways that change lives. Students in many schools across the state achieve at levels equal to the highest achieving nations in the world. Yet, we have many students who are falling further and further behind leading to one of the highest achievement gaps in the country. Teaching is demanding and requires skill that is perfected through years of practice.

Ensuring that all Connecticut students receive a first-rate education that prepares them for college, career and civic life is our shared responsibility. That is why our state

is embarking upon one of the largest transformations of teaching and learning in our history. This is an exciting, yet challenging time in education.

In order for students to do their best, teachers need the resources and support to enable their best. The CSDE Talent Office is committed to developing and promoting effective leaders and teachers through high-quality, job-embedded professional learning and ongoing support of continuous improvement for all educators.

This monthly newsletter is designed to keep all Connecticut educators informed about CSDE Talent Office information regarding all aspects of the talent managements and human capital development, including educator preparation, certification, induction, educator evaluation and support through professional learning and leadership. Each month the newsletter will include articles on current topics, resources, updates, reminders about upcoming events and deadlines, announcements of training and other professional development opportunities and FAQs. We will also highlight stories of promising practices and spotlight voices from the field, as well as feature successful models in schools and districts across the state. We hope that this newsletter will serve as a valuable resource regarding various CSDE Talent Office initiatives.

Sarah Barzee

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RESOURCES

The following resources are now available on the [SEED website](#):

SLO Handbook: Provides teachers guidance on the SLO process. The handbook walks teachers step-by-step through the process of developing their SLOs and IAGDs.

SLO Samples: Multiple samples SLOs in various grades and subject areas are now posted on the website. Additional samples will be posted throughout the year.

SESS Guidance: Student and Educator Support Specialists white papers and sample SLOs are now available on the website.

MEET THE TALENT OFFICE STAFF

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the members of the Talent Office. Our staff strives to provide outstanding support and customer service to all educators across the state of Connecticut.

– Sarah Barzee

Bureau of Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning

Shannon Marimón, Division Director
Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning

Teresa Boyd-Cowles, Consultant
Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning

Sharon Fuller, Consultant
Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning

Chris Poulos, Teacher-Leader-in-Residence,
CT Teacher of the Year Council President

Claudine Primack, Consultant
Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning

Kim Wachtelhausen, Consultant
Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning,
TEAM Program Manager

Gady Weiner, Data Manager
Educator Effectiveness and Professional Learning

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Donna Brent, Certification Consultant

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Julianne Frost, Certification Consultant

Jane Gionfrido, Consultant, TEAM Program

Dianne Gray, Certification Consultant

Charles Hart, Certification Consultant

Wendy Harwin, Certification Consultant

Larry Jacobson, Connecticut Administrator Test
Consultant

Katie Moirs, Program Approval Consultant

Arlene Morrissey, Certification Consultant

Georgette Nemr, Teacher Testing and Higher Education
Consultant

Maureen Richardson, Certification Consultant

Robert Szczepanski, Certification Consultant

Patricia Wilson, Certification Consultant

Share Your Promising Practices!

We would like to highlight emerging promising practices in order to support statewide implementation. Please consider sharing your promising practices. To submit your story, please send an e-mail to claudine.primack@ct.gov.

Publications

The Value of Student Learning Objectives to Measure Teacher Impact on Student Growth (http://qualityinstruction.org/blog/The_Fab_Formatives/post/Student_Learning_Objectives_in_K-12_Education/)

SLOs/Goals Samples

“All Call” to teachers, building and central office administrators and support specialists: We are building a robust library of sample SLOs/Goals from various content areas and grade levels. We invite you to submit your SLOs/Goals. All identifying information such as names of schools, teachers, and students will be redacted. To submit your sample SLOs/Goals, please e-mail claudine.primack@ct.gov.

IMPLEMENTATION SPOTLIGHT

Each month, this newsletter will feature promising practices and highlights from teachers and districts across the state.

MERIDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMIT TO SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

“In an era of increased accountability, we must remember that greater support will lead to sustained improvement.”

— *Dr. Miguel A. Cardona*
Performance and Evaluation Specialist

Miguel Cardona, Meriden’s Performance and Evaluation Specialist, is committed to implementing an educator evaluation system that is built on support and development leading to higher student achievement. Recognizing that Meriden educators were feeling a high level of stress, he began this year by setting the context for the new system and emphasizing the opportunities for sustained growth. To assure the educators that the real focus of the new evaluation system was support and development, he helped them connect the dots between the new requirements with what educators had been doing in Meriden all along: data driven decision making, curriculum based assessments, CCSS, professional development, partnerships with parents, goals, etc. He helped them understand that this system is really not new, but a more carefully aligned process that is more connected than ever before. Building on what educators were already doing helped establish a culture of shared responsibility. Everyone agreed that student achievement is the ultimate goal.

Dr. Cardona and the entire Meriden team see the educator evaluation and support system as a tool to encourage professional learning that will improve instructional practice and increase student learning. They understand that educators must feel they are a part of the solution and that evaluation is being done “with them” rather than “to them.”

To achieve that goal, Superintendent Mark Benigni made a strategic decision to implement the

evaluation system in one third of its schools this year to give them the opportunity to learn and make adjustments when they move to full implementation in 2014–15. In order to provide continuous teacher and leader support, the district decided that this initiative was critical; therefore, something had to go to make room for other things. It meant restructuring some priorities, resources and administrator responsibilities. As a result, Dr. Benigni and Assistant Superintendent Thomas Giard III restructured Central Office responsibilities in an effort to build support and evaluative capacity in district. In his role, Dr. Cardona helps support the focus of supporting teachers and leaders through the new evaluation plan as the priority.

One of the ways the district is building capacity is by encouraging a culture of collaboration and professional learning. Early in the year, seventeen Meriden teachers were identified to serve as a Meriden Teacher Sharing Success (MTSS) team and invited to serve as a resource for other teachers in the district throughout this school year. MTSS teachers are those who have excelled in multiple measures, including student growth and evaluation performance. Each MTSS teacher has agreed to open their classrooms to their colleagues who are welcome to visit throughout the year. Following a visit, the MTSS will participate in post-visit discussions to support teacher growth modeled after the National School Reform Faculty workshop they attended.

The consistent message is support not compliance. If educators feel they are being supported they are less likely to feel that the process is meaningless and more likely to seize the opportunity for sustained improvement.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

ABOUT CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS FOR TEACHERS

A new educator evaluation system is being implemented as part of Connecticut's comprehensive education reforms. Forty percent of a teacher's evaluation is now based on observation of teacher practice and performance. The following information addresses some common questions about this aspect of the system.

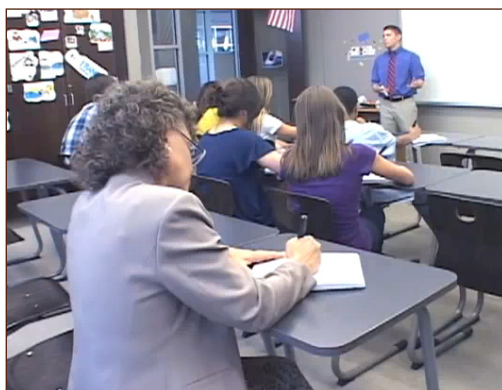
Q: Must an evaluator collect evidence for every indicator within each domain of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Effective Teaching during every observation?

A: No. A teacher and his or her evaluator may agree on a specific focus for each observation during a pre-observation meeting. **The Connecticut System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED)** model requires an evaluator to *collect evidence over the course of the entire year for each of the indicators*. Please note that not all of the domains or indicators are observable in classroom observations and may be gathered through non-classroom observations/reviews of practice. Additionally, an observer may not see evidence for every observable indicator during a single lesson. An observer may need to gather evidence for those indicators during a subsequent observation. In a pre-observation meeting, evaluators should discuss which indicators they may focus on in collecting evidence.

Q: Must an evaluator assign a rating for every observation?

A: No. Ratings are not required for each observation. The intent is not to rate each observation separately but to collect evidence that will contribute to the final summative rating. It might help to think of the observations as formative. An evaluator collects evidence to provide the teacher with feedback that will help the teacher reflect on his or her practice and make adjustments where necessary. At the end of the year, the evaluator will use all the information collected from observations and reviews of practice to determine a teacher's performance and practice rating, which composes 40 percent of a teacher's annual summative rating. During the Mid-Year Check-in Conference, an evaluator may provide the teacher with a rating based on the evidence collected to date. A midyear rating is not required but may guide the discussion between the evaluator and teacher in planning for professional learning support for the second half of the year.

Q: Once an evaluator has observed a teacher effectively managing a classroom, must the evaluator



continue to collect evidence for that indicator/domain during every subsequent observation?

A: Evaluators should make every effort to collect evidence where it is available and appropriate. Depending on what is outlined in a district's approved evaluation plan, the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee may discuss prioritization of indicators/domains. The SEED model requires an evaluator to collect

evidence over the course of the entire year for each of the indicators. Once an evaluator has observed a teacher who is proficient in an indicator/domain, it may not be necessary to document additional evidence. If, however, the evaluator observes a situation where the teacher's performance may not reflect previous findings, then he or she may want to document that evidence and revisit the indicator/domain in a subsequent observation to gather further evidence as needed. It is important to understand the ramifications of missing evidence: equity, fairness and validity.

Q: What should an evaluator do if there is no evidence for an indicator/domain by the end of the year?

A: Before the final observation of the academic year, an evaluator should discuss with the teacher the indicators/domains for which evidence has not yet been gathered. Together, the teacher and the evaluator can determine the best way for the evaluator to collect this evidence. The focus of the final observation may be on those indicators for which evidence has not been previously collected, or the teacher may be able to provide additional artifacts, such as student work samples, that will provide the evidence that is needed.

Q: Are teachers required to upload artifacts for every observation?

A: There is no requirement that they do so. Evaluators and teachers should discuss what artifacts are most useful to the evaluation process based on school or district policies. Teachers may upload lesson plans, pre- or post-observation forms or student work samples if they choose to do so.

NON-TESTED GRADES AND SUBJECT AREAS: FOCUS ON STUDENT AND EDUCATOR SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

Non-tested grades and subject areas compose approximately 69 percent of the educator workforce in a district (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2011). The CSDE will continue to provide guidance documents to educators who teach in non-tested grades and subject areas. Under this large umbrella are educators who do not administer the CMT/CAPT tests (Grades 3–8 and Grade 10) or will not administer the Smarter Balanced Assessment (Grades 3–8 and Grade 11). Student and Educator Support Specialists (SESS) are those individuals, who by the nature of their job description do not have traditional classrooms, but serve a “caseload” of students, staff and/or families. In addition, they often are not directly responsible for content instruction, nor do state standardized assessments directly measure their impact on students.

The CSDE has developed the first in an upcoming series of documents to guide the evaluation of SESS. These documents are designed to supplement the System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) state model, and inform district-developed models, to assist administrators in conducting evaluations for individuals from a variety of disciplines.

Please note: Although not certified by the CSDE, the CSDE recognizes the significant contribution of school nurses to student outcomes. As such, there are additional guidance documents meant to inform the evaluation of these profes-

sionals. However, they are not required to take part in the new evaluation and support system.

The CSDE, in partnership with SESS representatives, has developed an adapted version of *The Common Core of Teaching Rubric for Effective Teaching* for use with some of the SESS educators. Specifically, this adapted rubric would be appropriate for use with school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, comprehensive school counselors and school social workers. Educators within these disciplines have recommended that the CSDE consider using rubrics vetted and developed by their national organizations that adhere to national standards and align to the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching. In addition to the rubric, white papers have been written to provide additional guidance to this group of educators. The white papers and the rubric can be accessed on the SEED website (<http://www.connecticutseed.org>).

Important! The CSDE encourages educators to examine the guidance documents and use the adapted SESS/CCT rubric during the 2013–14 school year to inform revisions and contribute to a validation process. The CSDE will gather feedback from users, but the documents will remain in “draft” status until the process is completed.

The CSDE looks forward to ongoing work with educators in these disciplines to examine observation frameworks and tools for consideration as we engage in a continuous improvement process.

TEAM CONNECTIONS TO TEACHER EVALUATION AND SUPPORT



The Teacher Education and Mentoring Program (TEAM) is Connecticut’s induction program for beginning teachers. It is intended to provide beginning teachers with guided support as they develop their professional practice throughout their induction years. Teachers in the TEAM Program will also be evaluated in their districts. Although the results of a beginning teacher’s reflection paper cannot be used as evidence in teacher evaluation, the work beginning teachers and their mentors do as part of the TEAM Program can and should support professional practice and student growth and development, which are the key components of the teacher evaluation and support system.

Making connections among and across the various initiatives in play is critical to minimizing anxiety and maximizing understanding. In the TEAM Program, beginning teachers write a professional growth goal for an eight- to 10-week period that identifies an opportunity for professional growth identified through a self-assessment using module-specific *CCT Performance Profiles*. For each module, the teacher will engage in developing new learning around the selected CCT indicator, apply that new learning to his or her practice, and document the impact on student learning. As beginning teachers develop TEAM goals, it might be helpful to consider the focus area for performance and practice that was identified within that component of teacher evaluation (40 percent). For example, during the initial goal-setting conference with his or her evaluator, a beginning teacher might identify a focus on leading students to construct new learning by developing strategies for implementing cooperative learning groups. This focus area aligns with Module 3: Instruction for Learning and sits in the Instruction Domain in most observation frameworks. The work that the beginning teacher and mentor do to develop new learning about active learning strategies can be shared by the beginning teacher as part of pre- and/or post-observation conferences as newly-learned strategies may be observable.

BUREAU OF EDUCATOR STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION

The Talent Office's Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification is responsible for determining the eligibility of educators to obtain, advance and renew Connecticut educator certificates authorizing professional service in Connecticut's public schools, charter schools and approved private special education facilities.

Educators may apply for a new certification, to add a teaching endorsement to a valid teaching certificate, or to advance or renew an existing certificate at any time. If it is determined that educators are not yet eligible, applications and any fee are kept on file for up to two years.

The quickest and easiest way to apply is online via the Connecticut Educator Certification System (CECS) at <http://www.ct.gov/sde/cert>. The nonrefundable application review fee may then be paid online with a MasterCard or Visa. You will receive an email listing any outstanding documentation or requirements.

If you already hold a valid Connecticut educator certificate, the key is to always get an application (with original signature—faxes are not accepted) and the nonrefundable application review fee in to our office *before* the expiration date on the certificate. If anything else is required, it may be sent later.

Services and timelines:

- You may pick-up and drop off materials in person 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays.
- Applications are reviewed in the order they are received, generally within four to six weeks.
- You may submit questions in writing in person, by US mail, e-mail or fax. Response time is generally five to seven business days.
- You may speak to a consultant via the public phone line from noon to 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday to obtain general information or obtain the status of a pending request. (Specific questions must be submitted in writing.)
- New certificates are printed in large batches and must be proofed and folded with the appropriate attachments. Educators generally receive a new certificate by mail two to three weeks from the date it is issued.
- You may review your certification status, check the status of an application, print an unofficial copy of your certificate and view previous letters regarding status from your account on the CECS, 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

Please note: Since correspondence is generally by e-mail, please be sure to keep your e-mail address current in your profile on the CECS.

Services not available:

There are only 10 analysts to review and process 20,000 to 40,000 applications per year, as well as respond to all the emails, faxes, phone calls and letters regarding those applications and all other certification inquiries. For this reason, we are not able to provide:

- individual face-to-face consultations;
- individual evaluations without an application and fee on file;
- course approvals by telephone; and/or
- individual certificates printed the day payment is made or upon request.

To reach the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification:

Public phone line:

860-713-6969

- 24-hour automated access for status and fax back verification option
- Speak to a consultant, general questions only
- Noon to 4 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

Fax:

860-713-7017

(Do not fax signed documents or transcripts)

Web Site:

<http://www.ct.gov/sde/cert>

E-mail:

teacher.cert@ct.gov

Street Address:

165 Capitol Avenue, Room 243
Hartford, CT 06106

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 150471
Hartford, CT 06115-0471



WHEN SHOULD I APPLY?

Dear Nancy,

I checked the certification Web site, and I think I may be eligible to advance my certificate to the next level. But it does not expire for another year. Should I apply now or should I wait?

*Thanks,
Undecided in Windsor*

Dear Undecided,

Why wait? Over the years, I've heard all kinds of reasons. Some people think they get more for their money, but the truth is the fee is \$200 for initial, \$250 for provisional and \$375 for professional. It is the same \$825 whether you zip through the levels as fast as possible or wait until the last possible moment. There is currently no fee to renew a professional educator certificate. Others are afraid of the CEU requirement at the professional level, but CEUs are no longer required for certification. Professional development is required for all educators at the district level for those employed in Connecticut public schools.

In the end, it is a personal decision, but I encourage educators to apply as soon as they are eligible. Some districts award higher pay for advancing a certificate to a higher level. Why risk forgetting, or the possibility that revised regulations might change requirements? If you already hold the next level certificate, you are unlikely to be held to new requirements to attain that level. I suggest applying now, while you are thinking about it and you are eligible.

Sincerely,
Nancy

To submit a general certification question to Ask Nancy, please contact Wendy Harwin at wendy.harwin@ct.gov.

TO ADVANCE MOST ACADEMIC TEACHER CERTIFICATES:

Initial to Provisional:

- 10 months of experience; and
- successful completion of TEAM, if available.

OR

- 30 months appropriate experience in an accredited nonpublic or out-of-state school.

Provisional to Professional:

- 30 months of experience under the CT provisional; and
- 30 semester hours of credit beyond the bachelor's degree. *(As of July 1, 2016, a master's degree in a subject area related to your endorsement will be required.)*

Please check <http://www.ct.gov/sde/cert> for more information.
E-mail questions about advancing your certificate to teacher.cert@ct.gov.