

Rationale for Reorganization of SEPS Departments

1. New accreditation expectations nationally and at the state level

Nationally, NCATE has become CAEP with new and more demanding standards.¹ At the state level, CSDE and the State Board of Education are moving toward more stringent enforcement of state standards to make decisions about approval of specific teacher preparation programs.² At both levels, there is an emphasis on integrating extensive field experiences and developing more meaningful partnerships with K-12 schools.

For example, the committee currently developing recommendations on state teacher education standards (EPAC) has indicated that they will propose new requirements for at least 4 semesters of carefully designed field experiences developed and assessed in collaboration with K-12 partner schools and teachers. Developing new partnerships with K-12 will be essential to even make the required number of additional field placements. Because the generalist focus of elementary and early childhood teacher preparation is inherently different than the content-specific focus of secondary and K-12 content area teacher preparation, productive elementary and secondary/K-12 partnerships and related patterns of field experience and student teaching placements are also significantly different.

The CAEP partnership standards require us to document extensive, meaningful collaboration in the design of field experiences, the ongoing collaborative assessment of teacher candidates, and the development of articulated learning experiences for both preservice and inservice teachers in partnership schools. Focusing a department on the secondary level will facilitate collaboration with CCSU content area faculty and K-12 partners to develop secondary partnerships that address the specific needs of each content area and improve learning for all participants. Focusing a single department on elementary, early childhood, and literacy will support the development of elementary partnerships that improve the quality of preservice teacher preparation and simultaneously improve learning opportunities in CT elementary schools. Each department should also be better positioned to agilely redesign programs, form partnerships, recruit students, and reverse the current trend of decreasing enrollments.³

¹ See CAEP 2013 *Standards for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation* at <http://caepnet.org/standards/standards/>, CAEP *Standards for Advanced Programs* at http://caepnet.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/caep_standards_for_advanced_programs1.pdf and *InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards* (used to document CAEP Standard 1) at http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/InTASC_Model_Core_Teaching_Standards_and_Learning_Progressions_for_Teachers_10.html

² As part of the ongoing EPAC discussions, CSDE has indicated that working within the framework of the CAEP standards, the department will be making independent program review decisions based on their analysis of specific sets of quantitative and qualitative data. See [Presentation slides for meeting on February 25, 2014](#) linked at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2760&Q=334636> See also *SCSU Education School Placed On Probation For Three Years* at http://articles.courant.com/2014-09-03/education/hc-scsu-teacher-prep-program-problems-0904-20140903_1_teacher-education-review-committee-bergeron and *State Board Of Education Takes Action on Multiple Items* at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/state_board_of_education_takes_action_on_multiple_items.pdf

³ See appended Table 1

2. Market changes for our teacher education graduates

The continuing decrease in the population of school age children in CT ⁴ and the northeastern United States has reduced hiring in many schools. This means increased competition for teaching jobs, especially at the elementary level. A nation-wide oversupply of elementary teachers means hundreds of applicants for every job.⁵ Some outside groups have suggested that universities stop or limit the number of elementary teachers they prepare. The BOR, President Miller, and the CCSU faculty would prefer to retain those enrollments. Since local schools report 300 – 500 applicants for every elementary teaching position, our graduates need to be exceptionally well prepared to compete effectively for teaching positions.

Connecticut, like other states, also has some areas of persistent teacher shortage. Sciences, mathematics, and world languages are areas of persistent secondary teacher shortages in our state and areas where we should increase our enrollments in undergraduate teacher preparation. Focusing a department solely on secondary education should facilitate collaboration with the content areas to redesign our undergraduate secondary education programs to better meet current expectations and increase our enrollment, especially in areas of persistent teacher shortage.

In addition to the issues of teacher supply, there are new expectations at both the national and state levels that beginning teachers be *learner ready*.⁶ Feedback from local employers familiar with our teacher candidates clearly indicates that we can improve our teacher preparation in a number of areas essential to being a learner ready beginning teacher. We have an ethical obligation to ensure that our teacher education graduates are well prepared to teach today's children in today's schools.

3. Better preparation in literacy critical in elementary and early childhood education

Better preparing all early childhood and elementary teachers to teach children to read is critical and it is challenging. To succeed or even survive in today's society, every child must become fully literate. The population in CT schools includes increasing numbers of low-income students, students who speak English as a second language, and students with identified learning issues. Every one of those children needs to become a successful reader and that is not currently happening. Every stakeholder group recognizes the importance of children learning to read and many groups have taken action based on that conviction. In CT the legislature has written any number of requirements related to preparing teachers to teach reading.⁷ CSDE has developed guidelines and required assessments that focus on literacy and has also required that current state teacher education reform initiatives like CEEDAR focus redesign efforts on reading. (In other states, CEEDAR allows a range of foci.) Accreditation will require that we document that our students and our graduates are able to effectively teach reading. Feedback from beginning

⁴ See appended Table 2

⁵ See *Colleges Overproducing Elementary Teachers, Data Find* at <http://www.oakland.edu/upload/docs/Clips/2013/130125%20-%20teachers.pdf>

⁶ See CT's January 2014 definition of a "learner ready" teacher at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/epac/ct_definition_learner_ready_1-8-2014_draft.pdf

⁷ See appended *Examples of Literacy-Related Legislative Efforts in CT*

teachers nationwide and from local employers documents that we need to better prepare our graduates to teach literacy. Pulling together the CCSU literacy faculty, a department that has had a primary focus on graduate education, and the CCSU elementary faculty, a group that has had a primary focus on undergraduate education, provides an organizational opportunity to make literacy a core focus of our elementary and early childhood programs.

4. Expectations that all students will access the general curriculum

There are new expectations from the public, employers, and accreditors that every beginning teacher will be equipped to help all learners access the general curriculum. This is especially challenging at the secondary level where content area teachers are expected (under SRBI) to provide additional learning opportunities in their classrooms for students who are not initially successful, to utilize varying strategies to address IEP requirements and the needs of second language learners, and to personalize academic and social learning. While they may collaborate with a special educator when there are serious problems, secondary teachers are typically expected to meet these demands independently. Conversely, special education teachers are expected to collaborate with secondary content area teachers to ensure that students with special needs can fully access the general curriculum. This may mean co-teaching content area classes, adapting assignments or assessments, or delivering individualized (Tier 3) learning supports in the content areas. These requirements mean that beginning secondary teachers need a much stronger preparation in the strategies that will help them address the needs of students with varied learning needs and special education teachers need a much better grasp of the general curriculum.

Pulling together our newly proposed masters level preparation in special education with our master's program for secondary shortage areas (which is currently on hiatus pending revisions to meet new requirements) in an MAT program that integrates significant parts of its coursework will strengthen the preparation of both groups of prospective teachers, efficiently use faculty time devoted to teaching and program administration, enhance the development of K-12 partnerships, and facilitate the immediate redesign of both programs to align them with new and evolving state requirements for masters degrees.

An integrated master's level program for "late deciders" focused on enhancing special educators' ability to help students access the general curriculum and secondary educators' ability to effectively teach all learners will address several needs. First, it will provide career changers and late decider students with content area degrees from CCSU and other institutions an opportunity to enter teaching in areas of persistent teacher shortage including special education, sciences, math, and world languages. It will better prepare special educators to collaborate with content area teachers to help all learners access the general curriculum. Finally, the program's secondary graduates in areas that are not shortage areas, like English and History, will leave the program with very marketable expertise in addressing the needs of struggling learners. We anticipate that this unique program, which will be available for full-time and part-time students, will significantly increase our graduate enrollments.

Table 1. Number of CCSU Student Teachers from 2009-2010 through 2014-2015

Number of student teachers	Academic year					
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
	346	294	292	297	263	244

Table 2: Connecticut Child Population 2005 to 2013 by Age Group

Location	Age group	Data Type	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
Connecticut	0 to 4	Number	211,315	207,326	203,201	197,747	191,937
	5 to 11	Number	327,240	320,777	317,743	313,122	305,064
	12 to 14	Number	152,167	148,888	146,826	144,606	142,272
	15 to 17	Number	153,312	156,493	153,069	149,634	146,293
	less than 18	Number	844,034	833,484	820,839	805,109	785,566

DEFINITIONS & SOURCES

Definitions: Child population by age group.

Data presented for 2010 through 2012 are Vintage 2012 population estimates. Each year the U.S. Census Bureau revises their post-2010 estimates. Therefore, data presented here may differ from previously published estimates. Figures for 1990, 2000, and 2010 represent revised population estimates for July 1, 1990, July 1, 2000, and July 1, 2010 - not actual Census counts from April 1, 1990, April 1, 2000, and April 1, 2010.

Data Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau.

Footnotes: Updated July 2014.

Downloaded from Kids Count Data Center <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/> in September 2014.

Examples of Literacy-Related Legislative Efforts in CT

1. Adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (2013-2014 school year)

The CCSS have a strong literacy focus throughout. The ELA standards focus on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. One significant change is that these standards view literacy as the responsibility of all teachers, not just those who teach reading and writing. As a result, the focus on literacy skills has been spread throughout the subject areas, and is evident in the math standard's focus on vocabulary and the students' abilities to explain their thinking in both written and oral formats.

2. Public Act 12-116 (Effective date July 1, 2012)

This educational reform act made changes to educational laws in multiple areas, including several that specifically target literacy at the early childhood and elementary levels. First, it extended a previous Early Literacy Pilot, whose goal was to conduct a pilot study of best practices in early literacy with the goal of closing the achievement gap. Next, it charged the SDE with the task of approving or developing reading assessments to identify students in grades K-3 who are reading below proficient levels. All K-3 teachers are required to take a practice version of the new reading test and districts must report results to the SDE. Finally, the act requires the Commissioner of Education to design a professional development program in reading research and instruction for teachers and principals.

3. Public Act 12-120 (Effective date July 1, 2012)

This educational reform act also made changes to education statutes in many areas. In the area of literacy, the act required the SDE to administer Even Start grants to support family literacy programs to provide literacy services for children and parents. The SDE has the Family Learning Initiative in place to support literacy learning of this type.

These additional pieces of legislation are older:

- [2006: An Act Implementing the Provisions of the Budget Concerning Education \(Public Act 06-135\)](#) - Requires priority school districts to use Early Reading Success grant dollars more effectively by relying on research-based teacher instruction.
- [2004: An Act Concerning Teacher Education Programs at Institutions of Higher Education \(Public Act 04-75\)](#) - Requires teacher-training institutions to include instruction on literacy skills.
- [1999: An Act Concerning a State-Wide Early Reading Success Institute \(Public Act 99-227\)](#) - Among other things, created the Early Reading Success Panel and charged it with determining what skills and knowledge teachers need to teach reading effectively.
- [1999: An Act Concerning Education Accountability \(Public Act 99-288\)](#) - Requires schools to explain why children are promoted if they have not reached grade-level expectations.
- [1998: An Act Concerning Early Reading Success \(Public Act 98-243\)](#) - Provided an additional \$20 million to urban and priority school districts for early reading intervention.
- [1997: An Act Concerning School Readiness \(Public Act 97-259\)](#) - Created a comprehensive preschool initiative for children aged 3 and 4. For an overview, [download this Commission summary](#), updated in 2005.