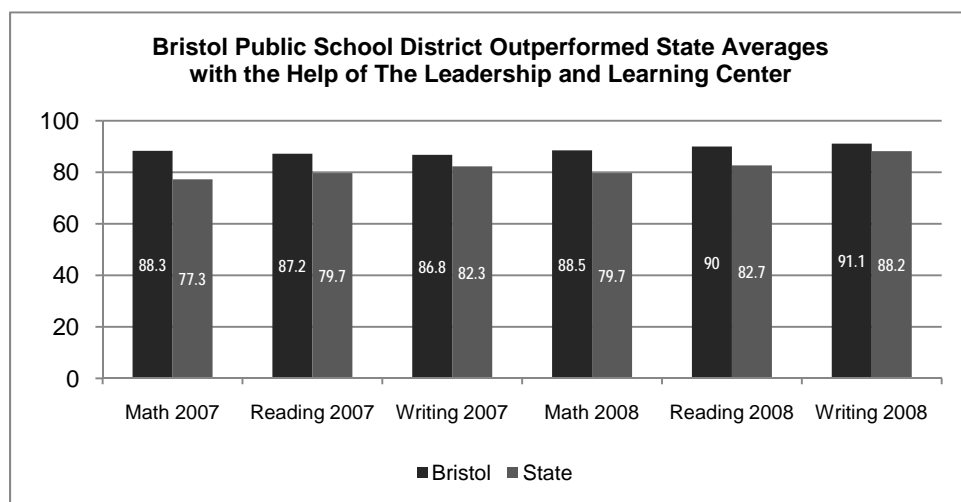


White Paper Series

Bristol Public Schools
Bristol, Connecticut

The
Leadership
and Learning
Center™

Bristol Public Schools was the only urban school district in Connecticut to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress goals in the 2006-2007 school year.



Issues

- Bristol educators needed to better align their classroom assessments with Connecticut state standards.
- Increased student diversity was leading to a widening achievement gap.
- Growth in the district necessitated the dissemination of a consistent message regarding goals and expectations.

Solutions Provided by The Leadership and Learning Center

- District leaders collaborated with The Leadership and Learning Center to develop and adopt a holistic accountability plan which outlined a system that would assess student performance and refine specific district- and school-based indicators for improvement.
- District leaders and Center professional development associates created an accountability system that focused not only on test scores, but also on the specific actions of teachers and school leaders.
- The district arranged for community-wide keynote engagements to introduce the new plan and central goals. Leadership and Learning Center consultants worked with district officials to ensure officials communicated a consistent message to school leaders and classroom educators throughout the district.

Contents

Executive Summary	2
The Needs of Bristol Public Schools	3
The Role of The Leadership and Learning Center	4
Bristol Public Schools' Results	6
Lessons Learned in Bristol Public Schools	8
Appendix One	9
Appendix Two	11
Appendix Three	13
Appendix Four	14
References	15

1.0 Executive Summary

Beginning in 2002, after partnering with The Leadership and Learning Center, Bristol Public Schools—a diverse and complex Connecticut school system—made significant gains across grade levels and within most student subgroups. Bristol’s student population, including the free and reduced lunch and minority student subgroups, showed improvement on the Connecticut Mastery Test, the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, and other Connecticut academic indicators. In 2006, Bristol Public Schools was the only urban school system in Connecticut to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. This improvement continues today.

Bristol employed several critical interventions closely associated with these gains. One factor contributing to Bristol’s success was systemic professional development and implementation that focused on standards, assessment, and data analysis, all administered by The Leadership and Learning Center.

2.0 The Needs of Bristol Public Schools

The mission of Bristol Public Schools reads, “To maintain a safe and secure learning environment that provides all students with the necessary knowledge and skills to successfully complete college or post-high school education and training.” Based on Bristol’s mission and other stated goals that emerged during extensive interviews, The Leadership and Learning Center’s quantitative needs assessment indicated the necessity for Bristol to better align their classroom assessments with Connecticut state standards.

Bristol Public Schools’ Superintendent Michael Wasta, Ph.D., and district leaders collaborated with The Leadership and Learning Center to develop and adopt a holistic accountability¹ plan to address the academic needs of all students, and to close the achievement gap. This holistic accountability plan included two types of indicators: Tier One² to assess whether Bristol achieved district-level expectations; and Tier Two³ to assess whether Bristol achieved school-level expectations. Additionally, the plan outlined a system that would assess student performance and refine specific district- and school-based indicators for improvement.

The holistic accountability plan stipulated that the Bristol Accountability Task Force would review data and adjust targets every year. Schools would report to the Bristol Board of Education on their progress in achieving Tier Two indicators, and make necessary changes to their school improvement plans based on their achievement results. Both the district and the schools would analyze state assessment data within their own levels, so they could each identify and monitor their own specific goals.

¹ Holistic Accountability: A system where student achievement data is associated with its antecedents: professional teaching practices, educational standards, curriculum, sorting strategies, leadership techniques, and resource allocation.

² Tier One Indicators: Measure performance at the district level and progress toward achieving district-level goals.

³ Tier Two Indicators: Measure performance at the school level and progress toward achieving school-level goals.

3.0 The Role of The Leadership and Learning Center

The holistic accountability plan created by Bristol Public Schools and The Leadership and Learning Center was the foundation for the work that took place in the district. The blueprint for this plan included community-wide engagement that brought together a variety of stakeholders, including the school board, Bristol's mayor, locally elected officials, union leaders, administrators, teacher leaders, and classroom educators. The resulting plan created a new accountability system that focused not only on test scores, but also on the specific *actions* of teachers and school leaders. To support educators, Bristol leaders invested in direct professional learning support for teachers and school leaders.

Bristol Public Schools used the training in The Leadership and Learning Center's *Making Standards Work* seminar (recently updated and now titled *Engaging Classroom Assessments*), as the strategic tool to achieve Bristol's stated goals and commissioned the following items:

Implementation of the Holistic Accountability Plan: Leadership and Learning Center consultants worked closely with Bristol leaders to ensure the district staff thoroughly implemented the comprehensive holistic accountability plan throughout all schools and administrative offices within the district. A cadre of community and district stakeholders jointly developed this plan and worked with Leadership and Learning Center consultants to include clear details and expectations for what educators would be accountable. In addition, this plan identified how district leaders would support school sites in these newly defined goals. To disseminate this information, the district arranged for community-wide keynote engagements to introduce the new plan and the central goals it outlined. Furthermore, Leadership and Learning Center consultants worked together to ensure they were communicating the same message to school leaders and classroom educators throughout the district. The district implemented the plan at school and administrative offices with a uniform message of using data to lead instruction and accountability for actions as well as results.

On-Site Professional Development: The Leadership and Learning Center believes teachers need strategies to inspire and improve student learning and worked with Bristol leaders to develop cohesive teaching strategies throughout the district. The *Making Standards Work* seminar gave Bristol educators the tools to create standards-based performance assessments, which in turn provided an effective means to improve student performance in the classroom and on high-stakes standardized tests. In August 2007, all Bristol teachers and administrators participated in professional development focused on effective teaching strategies. The *Effective Teaching Strategies* seminar provided participants with tools that aligned teaching practices with Tier Two indicators and provided strategies they could immediately implement in the classroom.

The Leadership and Learning Center also trained all appropriate district personnel in The Center's *Data Teams* seminar. The primary objective of the *Data Teams* seminar is to instruct educators in how to maximize effective instructional practice via constant monitoring of prescribed materials through school and district data teams that meet regularly to analyze assessment data. Bristol data teams gave educators measurable indicators that directly supported the Bristol school-level accountability system. In addition, Bristol formed instructional data teams at each school to function as grade- or department-level teams. These teams analyzed formative assessment data, discussed student strengths and needs, identified effective teaching strategies, and determined results indicators for student achievement.

School-Level and Leadership-Development Implementation: To ensure educators could effectively create performance assessments, employ effective teaching strategies, and apply data analysis in Bristol classrooms, the district arranged for many schools to receive additional coaching in the form of implementation days. Over three consecutive school years, The Leadership and Learning Center's professional development associates worked closely with Bristol school leaders and educators to focus specifically on stated goals and needs. Implementation days not only made a significant impact on the leaders at the district and school levels, but also directly impacted classroom teachers.

On-Site Certification Training: Bristol leaders invested in professional development sustainability by certifying teacher-leaders to guide professional development and to teach the seminars within their own districts. This training gave certified teachers a deeper understanding of the seminar content, as well as tools to support other educators who attended the seminars. All professional development goals remained directly aligned with the original holistic accountability plan and determined the content of follow-up engagements.

Keynote Presentations: In order to maintain the support of community members, as well as a wide variety of school-based stakeholders, Bristol leaders commissioned keynote presentations that were attended by school board members, elected officials, union leaders, school administrators, teacher-leaders, and classroom educators. Attendance by such a diverse audience provided a united show of support for, and engagement in, Bristol's focus on holistic accountability.

4.0 Bristol Public Schools' Results

Test results provide an indication of whether students are progressing toward mastery of state content standards. Results are critical because the state uses the metrics to identify strengths and areas that need improvement. The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) results show the level of proficiency in each of the subject areas tested.⁴ Tests are scored using five levels of achievement—Level One is the lowest, Level Five is the highest, Level Three and above is considered proficient. The state of Connecticut's goal is for all students to score at or above Level Four.

In the 2006-2007 school year, Bristol Public Schools was the only urban public school system in the state of Connecticut where ALL schools made AYP. Based on five years of CMT results, there has been an overall upward trend in achievement in Bristol, with many more students achieving a score of proficient and reaching the Connecticut goal levels for most No Child Left Behind recognized subgroups. Additionally, CMT data indicate that students who remained in Bristol for more than one year achieved considerable gains in performance over the previous year. Within a matched cohort, student performance improved in mathematics, reading, and writing—with the exception of grades 5 and 6 which experienced a slight decrease in writing performance between 2006 and 2007. In 2007, more than 65 percent of all Bristol students in grades 3 through 8 achieved at or above goal in mathematics, reading, and writing. Furthermore, in all metrics, Bristol students were more likely to score proficient or above proficient when compared to state averages (see Appendices One and Two).

The Bristol accountability plan also provided the district with monitoring systems to track other results outside of test scores, including measurable improvements in student health and discipline. One of the original goals on which the district focused was fitness. Scores on the Connecticut Fitness Test moved from 33.9 percent passing in 2000, which was below the state average, to 48.9 percent passing in 2006, which was more than 12 points above the state average.

⁴ Both the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test are standards-based tests that measure specific skills and standards defined for each grade. In the 2006-2007 school year, Connecticut used the CMT to test students in grades 3 through 8 in reading, writing, and math; and the CAPT to test students in grade 10 in reading, writing, math, and science.

Snapshots of Success (See complete list in Appendix Three.)

- Bristol is the only urban public school system in the state of Connecticut where ALL schools made AYP in 2007.
- Bristol averages exceeded state averages in the percentage proficient or above proficient in all four content areas.
- More than half of grade 10 students scored at or above goal, the state's benchmark for academic achievement in mathematics, reading, and writing.
- Demographic analysis for both the CMT and CAPT show that Bristol educators are closing the achievement gaps in the following subgroups: Economically Disadvantaged, Hispanic, Black, and Special Education students.

5.0 Lessons Learned in Bristol Public Schools

Throughout its work with The Leadership and Learning Center, Bristol Public Schools' educators have worked diligently to increase student achievement. There are specific lessons that Bristol leaders and The Leadership and Learning Center recognize as integral to Bristol's success:

- Bristol stakeholders, elected officials, schools board members, community members, parents, school leaders and educators, all took an active role in the design and implementation of their holistic accountability plan. By including such a diverse group of community stakeholders in the development of the holistic accountability plan, the district ensured maximum support and unity in the implementation.
- Bristol leaders set specific short- and long-term goals directly aligned to their accountability plan and included tier indicators to monitor results.
- Bristol leaders invested in direct professional learning support for teachers and school leaders, including an investment in resources to support professional development.
- Bristol ensured the plan would maintain a lasting impact by scheduling implementation visits at district schools. This process allowed classroom educators to have direct access to The Leadership and Learning Center's consultants in order to address specific challenges and receive feedback at the classroom level.
- Bristol leaders recognized student scores on standardized tests should not be the only measure of effectiveness. Educators should also use other tools to evaluate the effect of professional development, including teacher-developed assessments, student portfolios, and classroom grades. The ultimate worth of professional development for teachers and educational leaders is the essential role it plays in the improvement of student learning. This means educators must pay attention to the results of professional development in all areas related to student academic performance.

Together, Bristol Public Schools and The Leadership and Learning Center invested in a working partnership that provided all stakeholders with ongoing success in student achievement results (see Appendix Four).

Appendix One

State Profile of Students Who Scored Proficient and Above Proficient on 2007 CAPT*

	Mathematics					
	2006 State	2006 Bristol	2007 State	2007 Bristol	2008 State	2008 Bristol
Overall	77.2	88.1	77.3	88.3	79.7	88.5
Male	77.9	87.6	77.9	87.9	80.6	86.6
Female	76.5	88.6	76.6	88.7	78.7	90.3
Black	43.3	71.7	43.4	71.7	49.5	70.8
Hispanic	50.4	69.8	50.5	69.8	54.8	62.1
White	88.4	91.7	88.4	91.9	90.3	93.1
Free and Reduced Meals	48.8	67.6	48.8	68.4	53.4	76.5
Full Price	85.9	93.6	85.9	93.6	88.3	91.8
Special Education	39.0	50.8	39.1	52.4	43.5	50.8

	Science					
	2006 State	2006 Bristol	2007 State	2007 Bristol	2008 State	2008 Bristol
Overall	81.4	88.1	81.4	88.0	80.5	87.9
Male	80.8	86.8	80.8	86.8	80.5	86.1
Female	82.0	89.6	82.0	89.3	80.5	89.6
Black	52.1	77.4	52.1	77.4	52.9	79.2
Hispanic	55.8	70.8	55.9	70.8	53.6	58.3
White	91.6	91.3	91.6	91.1	91.2	92.1
Free and Reduced Meals	55.0	73.7	55.0	76.5	53.2	75.4
Full Price	89.5	92.0	89.5	91.8	89.5	91.4
Special Education	47.8	49.2	47.9	50.8	47.1	47.0

* Scores shown are for students in grade 10. The 2006 scores are from the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, Second Generation. In 2007, Connecticut began using the Connecticut Academic Performance Test, Third Generation.

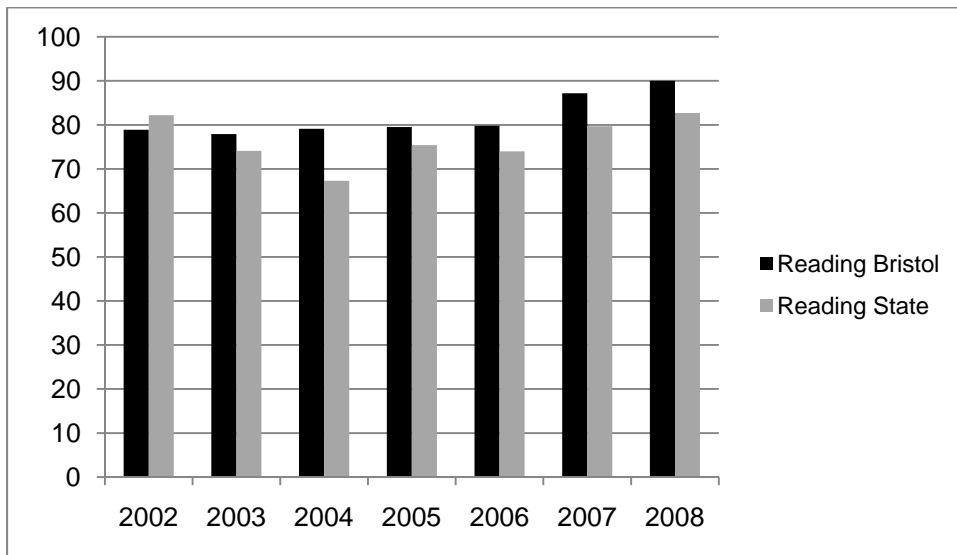
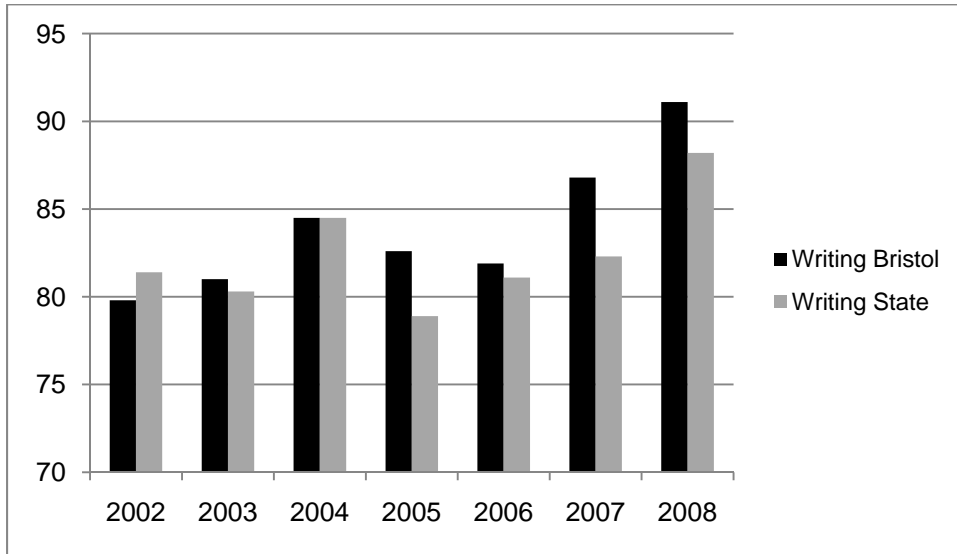
Appendix One (Continued)

	Reading Across the Disciplines					
	2006 State	2006 Bristol	2007 State	2007 Bristol	2008 State	2008 Bristol
Overall	87.2	79.7	79.7	87.2	82.7	90.0
Male	81.3	75.1	75.1	81.3	79.2	85.2
Female	94.0	84.4	84.4	94.0	86.2	94.3
Black	71.2	54.4	54.4	71.2	60.9	80.9
Hispanic	79.7	57.2	57.2	79.7	61.7	62.7
White	89.6	88.6	88.6	89.6	91.0	93.9
Free and Reduced Meals	74.5	54.8	54.9	74.5	60.4	78.0
Full Price	90.7	87.4	87.3	90.7	90.0	93.3
Special Education	38.7	40.4	40.4	38.7	47.3	37.5

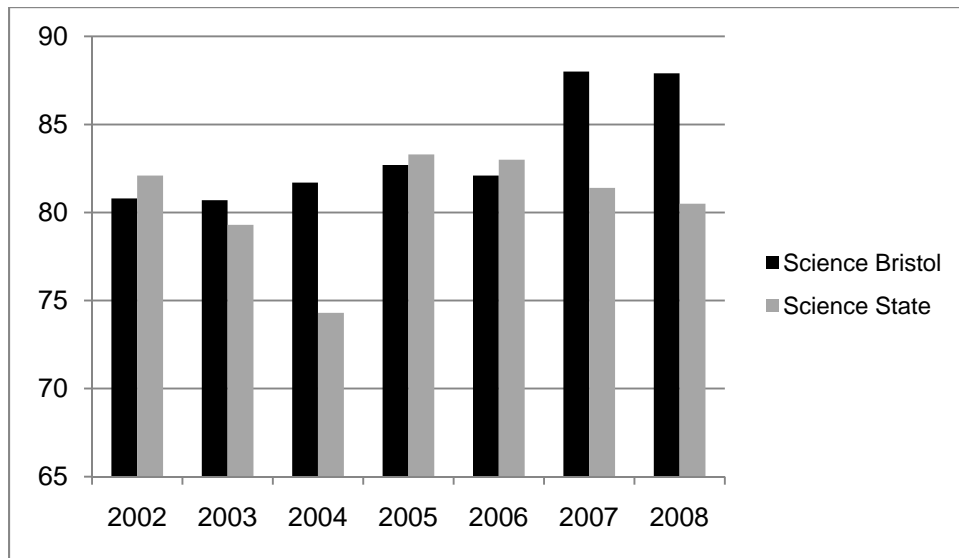
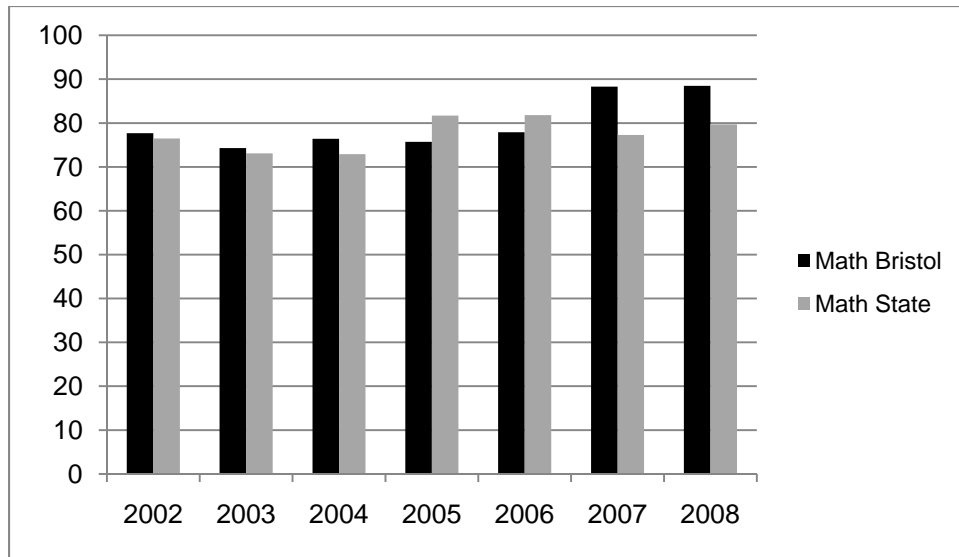
	Writing Across the Disciplines					
	2006 State	2006 Bristol	2007 State	2007 Bristol	2008 State	2008 Bristol
Overall	82.2	86.8	82.3	86.8	88.2	91.1
Male	76.8	81.7	76.8	81.7	84.2	84.7
Female	87.8	92.6	87.8	92.6	92.2	96.9
Black	63.0	71.2	63.1	71.2	75.0	85.1
Hispanic	61.8	73.0	61.8	73.0	72.4	73.7
White	89.4	89.7	89.4	89.8	93.8	93.5
Free and Reduced Meals	69.0	69.4	60.9	69.4	72.2	79.2
Full Price	88.6	91.4	88.7	91.5	93.4	94.3
Special Education	40.6	44.3	40.5	44.3	53.8	47.6

Appendix Two

Bristol and State CAPT Scores 2004–2008



Appendix Two (Continued)



Appendix Three

Snapshots of Success

- Demographic analysis for both the CMT and CAPT show that Bristol educators are closing the achievement gaps in the following subgroups: Economically Disadvantaged, Hispanic, Black, and Special Education students.
- All subgroups in all cohorts showed large gains in reading, with the exception of the Free-and-Reduced Lunch subgroup in the grade 4 to grade 5 cohort.
- Grade 3 to grade 4 cohort increased the percentage of students who were Proficient or Above Proficient in all test areas for the total group and Hispanic, Black, Free-and-Reduced Lunch subgroups.
- Grade 4 to grade 5 cohort increased the percentage of students who were proficient or above proficient in reading and writing for the total group and all subgroups.
- Grade 5 to grade 6 cohort increased the percentage of students who were Proficient or Above Proficient in math and reading for the Total group and Hispanic, Black, Free-and-Reduced Lunch subgroups.
- Grade 8 to grade 10 cohort remained the same or increased the percentage of students who were proficient or above proficient in math, reading, and writing for the total group and all subgroups.

Appendix Four

The Partnership Continues

Presently, Leadership and Learning Center consultants continue to work with schools throughout the Bristol Public Schools' district. Current implementation days include the following items:

- Additional time for guided practice of new processes and skills
- Additional time for guided collaboration on both horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment
- Small-group focus for teachers and teacher-leaders
- Long- and short-term comprehensive professional development plans at both the building and district levels
- Concentrated analysis of seminar content and additional strategies for implementation
- Education and support for parents and community members
- The primary focus of every educator in Bristol Public Schools is to improve instructional effectiveness. All teachers use The Leadership and Learning Center strategies to integrate effective teaching practices into instruction. Bristol educators collaborate regularly to share these instructional practices with colleagues.

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