

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes
October 25, 2016
CSDE, Room 307 A/B
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Sarah Barzee, Miguel Cardona, David Cicarella, Joe Cirusuolo, Ellen Cohn, Sheila Cohen, Eileen Howley, Shannon Marimón, Gary Maynard, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff, Bob Rader, Dianna R. Wentzell, Mark Waxenberg

ABSENT: Paula Colen, Randy Collins, Jan Hochadel, V. Everett Lyons, Catherine O’Callaghan

FACILITATOR: Mary Broderick

I. Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Wentzell began the meeting and thanked members for their time and their continuous focus on the important topics discussed during each PEAC meeting. She reiterated that PEAC has important and significant work ahead. Commissioner Wentzell welcomed Mary Broderick back as the facilitator for the meeting.

Mary Broderick reviewed the materials in the folder with the members, which included the list of PEAC members, future meeting dates, agenda, minutes from the June 22, 2016 meeting, Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) guidance, PDEC Facilitation application, flyer for the March 9, 2017 *Moving from Compliance to Coherence Conference*, summary of research studies, state-scan document, and charts for members to use during the small group discussion. Mary asked the Council if there were any questions. There were none.

II. Acceptance of June 22, 2016 Meeting Minutes and Meeting Objectives

Mary Broderick asked members to review the June 22, 2016 minutes prior to approval. The members took several minutes to review the minutes. Mary reminded the group that they operate by consensus. She asked if there were any objections to the minutes. There were none, and the minutes were accepted.

Mary reviewed the meeting objectives. The two objectives for the meeting were to 1) provide and discuss research on the student growth component of the educator evaluation system; and 2) identify information about the appropriate use of state test data.

Joe Cirusuolo asked for clarification if PEAC was still obligated to give a report to the State Board of Education (SBE) and how the members of PEAC would provide input in the report. Mary Broderick confirmed that the SBE would receive a written report. Sarah Barzee explained further that the report would include the state scan results and a summary of recent PEAC meetings.

Commissioner Wentzell explained that the update to the SBE would be a written progress report since PEAC is not making any new recommendations at this point. If PEAC does make future recommendations, they would go on a future formal SBE agenda, but no sooner than the December meeting.

Mark Waxenberg asked whether the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) report to the SBE would include the research from today's meeting. He pointed out that one report is six years old and the other one is misinforming. Connecticut Education Association (CEA) has five volumes of research and practice. He expressed the need to give the SBE applicable and up-to-date research instead of snap shots.

Commissioner Wentzell explained that the CSDE had planned to give the SBOE what was presented at PEAC. This keeps the SBE up-to-date on critical issues that are discussed. She explained that mailings are sent to SBE members twice a week. The CSDE provides regular updates to the SBE on the PEAC process.

Mary Broderick reviewed the meeting norms. She asked if anyone had suggestions for additional norms. There were none.

III. Professional Development and Evaluation Committee Update

Shannon Marimón shared updates on the PDEC supports developed and implemented since last spring. She reminded the members that in the June meeting there was great conversation around the PDEC survey data collected by PEAC and CEA/American Federation of Teachers (AFT)-Connecticut. The survey asked a set of questions that informed the proposed PDEC operating procedures discussed at the June 22, 2016 meeting. The process to refine these operating procedures and incorporate feedback from PEAC members continued over the summer months. A copy was emailed to PEAC members in August for review. The final memo was sent to all superintendents in late August, along with the PDEC guidance document. The guidance document focuses around recommendations for membership and representation, meeting norms, processes, and protocols. There was positive feedback that PDECs have shared this with their members. Shannon hopes that PEAC will see improved PDEC practice. Any additional feedback is welcome on this document. She thanked Everett Lyons and Miguel Cardona for their help in finalizing the guidance.

Shannon also shared the PDEC in-district facilitation support, developed in partnership with the Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) and the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS). Fourteen districts have applied for this support for the 2016-17 academic year.

Commissioner Wentzell thanked PEAC members for addressing the difficult topic of PDEC guidance. There were different concerns raised around the operation of PDECs. The result is an example of how PEAC provides support and guidance to districts. The PDEC plays a critical role. She reminded the members that the guidance document has been released for several months, and she is not aware of any feedback at this point.

Shannon shared the 3rd annual *Moving From Compliance to Coherence Conference* flyer. The focus of the conference on March 9, 2017 is advancing student and educator growth through effective feedback. It is a conference for Connecticut educators with practitioner-led presentations. There is currently a call for proposals. She asked PEAC members to share any recommendations for presenters/presentation topics.

Lastly, Shannon shared that the Educator Professional Development Requirements Task Force was established this past legislative session to review certain areas of the statute that outline professional development requirements for educators. The membership of the task force is representative of several organizations, as well as Commissioner-designated appointments. The task force is doing a crosswalk of different statutes. It is very technical work. The group will put forward a report with recommendations to the General Assembly. The CSDE is appreciative of members from PEAC or their colleagues are serving on the task force.

IV. Research and Practice Discussion: Focus on Student Growth and Development

Mary Broderick explained that last spring there was a request to research the use of state test data. She explained that members will have time during this meeting to talk about the use of state test data and review the research in small groups.

Mark Waxenberg recalled that PEAC discussed the use of state test data for the past couple years and in the past legislative session. The purpose of reviewing the research is to determine whether a high stakes test should be used in evaluation and what its role should be. He agreed that evaluation should include a standardized measure of growth and offered to bring in a model that uses a standardized measure of growth. He reiterated that PEAC agrees that there should be a standardized measure in evaluation; the question is whether it should be the state test, specifically.

Commissioner Wentzell responded that the research overview provides a snap shot on the use of student test scores more generally, however the conversation is around the state test.

Mary Broderick stated that PEAC asked to dig deeper in these areas in previous meetings. The purpose is to review research/state trends in order to figure out what the right use is for state test data. She suggested to the group that it may be a question of whether or not they have framed the question right.

Mark Waxenberg offered to share with PEAC members the CEA's research on legacy tests. He agreed with the Commissioner that there needs to be a broader conversation on the use of test data.

Mary Broderick asked the members to share any additional feedback after the groups had a chance to review the research during the meeting.

Commissioner Wentzell stated that there is still a lot of conversation needed around the use of state test data. She shared that she has heard consistently about the component weighting; and the weights are defined by the measures. Commissioner Wentzell proposed that PEAC review the research at this meeting and then next time focus on the component-level weightings of the evaluation system.

Ellen Cohn asked a clarification on the term “legacy assessment.” She asked Mark Waxenberg if he was referring to the state assessment. Mark said that he was.

Mary Broderick gave the members 20 minutes to review the material. Members reviewed the research and discussed in small groups. She convened the groups at the end of the work session.

Shannon Marimón reported out for her small group. In general, the members in her group discussed that multiple measures are a good thing. They discussed whether there are too many measures and whether the model is too complicated with too many weightings. They also discussed that observation of practice and student growth are the meatiest in evaluation system.

Eileen Howley added that observation of practice and the goal-setting process are the most important.

Shannon continued by adding that it is the goal-setting by way of creating student learning objectives (SLOs) that is a good thing. Within the group, there were differing opinions regarding the state test. With regards to an index and accountability at the district level, there is a desire to see it flow down to principals and teachers. There is a question though about how representative/informative the data is and how it plays into the rating. The small group had questions about the timeline of evaluation and when test results are available. In addition, questions came up for those in non-tested grades.

She also shared that her group talked about the language in the *Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation* around state tests. It is specifically ambiguous because it is not prescriptive. It allows the teacher to identify goals *based* on the test data. It does not dictate the approach. The question is around the weighting of the test data and how it rolls up into a summative calculation.

Sarah Barzee shared her group’s discussion points. She explained that her group started with the belief statement that they believe that educators should be held accountable for student growth. Her group discussed the importance of determining how student growth is measured and how to hold educators accountable to that growth. They also focused on standardized assessments and how they are integrated into evaluation. They agreed on the research on multiple measures and the importance of balanced support. The group discussed the measures being used in evaluation. If a measure is not being used correctly, PEAC needs to provide the support needed for districts to do this correctly.

Sarah explained that her group also talked about the percentages of the evaluation system components. The small group held firm on the 45/5/10/40 percentages in the evaluation. They discussed whether or not it was important for everyone to do the same thing and whether there should be a local option. The group also discussed the possibility of the PDEC selecting the measures to use. The research base and evidence for the use of test data is limited. The research is unclear, and even if there is an opportunity to look at evidence, PEAC still needs more time. An important piece of this in evaluation is not to hang everything on student test data. If there is a grade-level team and a teacher where students are not doing well, the focus is then on how districts and evaluators can support that teacher.

Joe Cirasoulo added that districts are not required to use state test data results at this time. This needs to continue while PEAC identifies good practices instead of top-down policies. He recommended that the process needs allow for districts to decide the role of Smarter Balanced (SB) assessments in evaluation. Joe added that there are superintendents who do not want to use the data and others who do want to use it.

Mark Waxenberg disagreed and said that PEAC needs to make a decision for Connecticut. Either the purpose of the test is that it can be used for an individual teacher evaluation or not. He requested to know which superintendents are using the SB in evaluation. CEA is not objecting to using the data for program improvement, but it *is* objecting to the use of SB in teacher evaluation. He reiterated that SB results should be used for teachers to show student growth and achievement and should drive programmatic improvements and resource decisions at the classroom, school, and system levels. The test should not be used for high-stakes purposes.

Commissioner Wentzell shared that her group's agreement on the summary is that there is no clear direction on what to do. In terms of policy implications, their group felt that the purpose of the test needs to be clarified and PEAC members need to learn more about how assessments are being used by districts. The value-added model (VAM) is not an appropriate approach. Her group also reviewed the state scan and found that Connecticut, like most other states, is comfortable with student achievement in teacher and administrator evaluation. Another area of the small group's agreement was that PEAC needs to determine which measures to use for which purposes and what the percentages will be.

Sheila Cohen added that, as long as a high stakes test is attached to the evaluation, the data is flawed. Mark Waxenberg explained that PEAC has to come to a resolution of the purpose of the state test in relation to a teacher's evaluation. PEAC needs to make it clear to the legislative and executive branches what statewide tests are or are not to be used for in evaluation.

Commissioner Wentzell reminded the members that an essential stakeholder in this decision is the SBE. PEAC has influence but they must work with the SBE or an opportunity will be lost. She reiterated that the most important work ahead is to inform the SBE.

Karissa Niehoff stated that SB can validate and verify suspicions about student growth. It is the one assessment that can be used as a social justice lens in Connecticut. It will measure progress across buildings and can tell stories about student growth. It cannot devalue what certain populations of kids need, such as more resources. Test results connect to educator evaluation, because someone is responsible for the results. It needs to filter down through the superintendents, principals, and teachers.

Dave Cicarella stated that whatever PEAC decides, they need to be clear about it. Otherwise, someone else will make the decision, so any PEAC recommendations need to be clear, so that there is no miscommunication.

Sheila Cohen shared that she is not comfortable using SB as the state test. It reveals social injustice. She also wanted to clarify that the terms state test and SB are used synonymously.

Joe Cirusuolo said that PEAC either needs to recommend that the state test in evaluation has to be used, does not have to be used, or it is up to the district to decide. At some point, PEAC needs to make that decision.

Commissioner Wentzell reminded the members that this was discussed a lot last year. Most members fall somewhere in the middle on whether to prohibit or mandate the use of state test data. The state test is a great context setter. It can help teachers get to the zone for the purpose of setting and focusing goals, but it may not be the best way to show if teachers met those goals. She asked the group to consider what *could* be the best measure to identify the growth of a teacher.

Mark Waxenberg agreed with Commissioner Wentzell and Karissa Niehoff that the information from the state tests can create inquiry. He explained that the inquiry is when teachers gain the knowledge needed to set goals and address why, such as “Why aren’t these students progressing?” The role of the state test is to get to the why. Then the district can address any issue.

Joe Cirusuolo provided an example of the use of state tests in evaluation. The test informs the teacher and evaluator of what can be done better. Then the teacher was provided with the appropriate supports. The following year the data was revisited in order to see the growth of the teacher.

Eileen Howley stated that it is important to triangulate data of state assessments with local assessments. It supports teachers to think about why the results may be the way they are.

Miguel Cardona expressed his concern that decoupling the state assessment with the evaluation would create two systems where one is on paper and the other is how educators would be held accountable for student achievement. There may be unintended consequences if the state test no longer matters.

Mary Broderick transitioned the group to review the state scan document. The small groups had 15 minutes to review the research.

Shannon Marimón shared the overview of her small group's conversation. They first discussed whether or not it was important to know what other states are doing. Her group identified that they want to look at models for any patterns in high-growth, high-achieving states, as well as states that have not shown growth and achievement. They discussed the practices of any states that approach evaluation differently. The timeline and how states use test data is still problematic. The small group agreed that they want to follow the states that incorporate multiple measures into their evaluation. There was additional discussion about how to nest components within the rubric to support coherence among teacher, administrator, school, and district goals.

Commissioner Wentzell expressed the importance of doing a state scan after states have submitted their Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) consolidated plan and after the changes at the federal level are made.

Joe Cirusuolo shared that his group identified mixed results. There wasn't evidence tied to whether the use of test data is good or bad. He emphasized that the PEAC members need to discuss the state test results and not just standardized test scores. As a group, they need to discuss the specific component percentages and how the state test results would impact the final summative calculation. Joe added that the small group discussed that a state test is a good measure of achievement, but the district should determine whether it is a good indicator of teaching.

PEAC members continued to discuss whether or not the state test would be used in teacher evaluation, and, if yes, how. The state test data may be used as a measure of achievement and teacher effectiveness, but further information is needed. There was continued discussion about the timeline to make a decision on this topic. This question could be answered more appropriately when PEAC discusses operational changes/refinements to the evaluation model/system. Members suggested that the Council discuss more scenarios of best and worst-case examples of what could happen when high stakes test scores are tied to evaluation.

V. Planning for December 15, 2016, Meeting

Mary Broderick reminded PEAC members that the December meeting will be the last one held at the current location. All meetings after that will be at 450 Columbus Boulevard or another location to be determined. The proposed agenda topics for the December meeting were to discuss possibilities of systematizing a more holistic approach to weighting the evaluation system components and calculation of a final summative rating, as well as updates from the ad hoc workgroups.

Other suggestions for agenda topics included review and discussion of district scenarios relative to their use of state test data and a discussion of the matrix. Shannon Marimón clarified that the matrix would be part of the discussion around calculation of a final

summative rating. It was also suggested that the topics of summative rating calculations and the use of state test data be connected.

Miguel Cardona said that PEAC should not lose track of how PDECs are doing. He recommended that there be a follow-up to the survey and guidance document from the past spring and early fall. The PDEC will be the group that interprets the recommendations put forward by PEAC.

Mary Broderick asked PEAC to provide examples on what went well at the meeting.

Karissa Niehoff said that Mary did a great job, and it was good to have her back as the facilitator. She recommended that members look outside this group for the practical experiences of teacher evaluation in the state.

Commissioner Wentzell requested that each PEAC member reach out to his/her respective constituents to get scenarios of the appropriate use and inappropriate use of state test data in evaluation that are practice-based.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.