

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)  
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes  
December 15, 2016  
State Office Building, 165 Capitol Avenue, Room 307 A/B  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** David Cicarella, Joe Cirsuolo, Ellen Cohn, Paula Colen, Jan Hochadel, Eileen Howley, V. Everett Lyons, Shannon Marimón, Gary Maynard, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff, Catherine O’Callaghan, Bob Rader, Mark Waxenberg, Dianna Wentzell

**ABSENT:** Sarah Barzee, Miguel Cardona, Sheila Cohen, Randy Collins

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Commissioner Wentzell convened the meeting. She welcomed all PEAC members and reminded everyone that this would be the last time the meeting would be held at 165 Capitol Avenue. The CSDE is relocating to 450 Columbus Boulevard in early 2017. Members will receive directions to the new building with details about parking.

Mary Broderick reviewed the meeting folder with members. The folder included the meeting agenda, minutes from the October 25, 2016, meeting, the use of state test data scenarios, a template to use during the small group conversations, and a list of upcoming meeting dates.

Joe Cirsuolo requested that PEAC members make a decision on the use of state test data after completing the review of the scenarios provided.

Paula Colen supported Joe and reiterated that a decision needs to be made at some point.

Commissioner Wentzell reminded members that Mark Waxenberg expressed the same concern last month. The Commissioner reminded members that PEAC’s decision-making process is by consensus, and if consensus cannot be reached, each organization is allowed one vote. She explained that at the October 2016 meeting, members expressed a need to further understand the positive and negative uses of state test data at the district level before making any final decision. Members were provided the opportunity to prepare scenarios to illustrate the use of state test data. In order to make an informed decision, PEAC members will review these scenarios and consider what is to be gained and what are the potential challenges of using state test data in evaluation. The Commissioner expressed her understanding about the urgency to make a decision on this topic since educator evaluation is in the fifth year of implementation.

**II. Acceptance of October 25, 2016, Meeting Minutes**

Mary Broderick asked members if there were any corrections to the minutes. There were no comments. The minutes were approved.

### III. Scenario Discussions on the Use of State Test Data

Mary Broderick reviewed the agenda and meeting norms, reminding PEAC members that at the October meeting, they prioritized discussion of the use of state test data in evaluation. Mary thanked everyone who created, identified, and submitted scenarios. An additional scenario came in after the packet was put together for the meeting. It was passed out to the members, making a total of five scenarios for review.

PEAC members broke into three small groups. Each group was asked to identify the strengths, challenges, and trends in the scenarios provided and write their responses on chart paper.

The small groups were:

- 1) Shannon Marimón, Patrice McCarthy, Mark Waxenberg, Eileen Howley, Catherine O'Callaghan;
- 2) David Cicarella, Paula Colen, Karissa Niehoff, Mary Broderick; and
- 3) Jan Hochadel, V. Everett Lyons, Gary Maynard, Robert Rader, Dianna Wentzell, Joe Cirsuolo.

Each small group reported out to the full group.

**Group 1:** Shannon Marimón presented for her group. The strengths of the scenarios they reviewed included the use of state test data when it is a complement to observation and is used to triangulate data to identify student needs and educator professional learning needs. The current use of state test data is working and provides flexibility for educator goals, promotes risk-taking, and supports a collaborative culture. The challenges included the arbitrary use of the data, the dictation of how state test data should be used, and instances where there is an absence of mutual agreement. The results of these challenges may produce a culture of minimal risk-taking and isolation. Another challenge of using state test data is how to approach those educators who teach in non-tested grades/subjects. The trends in the scenarios included the importance of replicating good practice and the implementation and operationalization of that practice to align and connect trust and collaboration in a school and/or district. The small group concluded that using state test data is useful because it provides a window into what is going on and allows for differentiation based on contextual considerations.

**Group 2:** Karissa Niehoff presented for her group. She explained that Group 1's findings were similar to Group 2's. Her group noted an additional strength is that the state test data provides a common metric relative to student growth and progress at the state level, which allows for comparisons across districts to identify gaps and also informs goal-setting at various levels of the system. The fact that all students do not participate in state testing presents a challenge. In addition, as noted by Group 1, not all educators teach tested grades and subjects. Questions about the validity of measuring the growth of students connected to teacher performance are still unresolved. Issues that continue to surround the use of the state test are the logistics of test administration and the timing of the release of the test results. Trends included the appropriate use of state test data year-over-year in order to inform curriculum decisions.

**Group 3:** Commissioner Wentzell described strengths similar to other groups. The strengths included a greater focus on learning and improved discussions among teachers and evaluators. Issues that posed both a strength and a challenge included the need for greater understanding of assessment and assessment literacy, increased use of data, and more reflection on practice. The inconsistency of implementation among districts, as well as the complexity of the system has also presented challenges. Districts need more time, staff, and professional learning resources. How the test is used may be a source of anxiety for educators. Professional learning is a trend, a strength, and a challenge. There needs to be more time and resources to support the professional learning ~~that is needed.~~

Mary Broderick asked PEAC members to review the strengths, challenges, and trends that each group recorded on the chart paper and place a sticker next to the statements that resonated most for them in the areas of challenges, strengths, and trends. The members placed dots on the chart paper. Mary then summarized the statements that received the majority of dots/votes on chart paper.

Overall, the strengths captured within the scenarios included the use of state test data as a complement to local assessments, an increased focus on teaching and learning, and improved discussions among educators. Challenges included an over-emphasis on testing which may lead to a compliance mentality, a lack of educator buy-in, problems of test administration and the timing of results, and the inconsistency of implementation across and among schools. Trends included the appropriate use of state test data to inform goal-setting at all levels, the quality and consistency of implementation as a key to success, and the opportunity for differentiation based on district contextual considerations.

Eileen Howley said that when implementation is done well it helps in all areas.

Karissa Niehoff shared that the successful implementation of evaluation is having conversations like the one PEAC is having about the use of state test data; it is about collaboration. She said, speaking for principals, the conversation around teaching and learning is elevated due to successful implementation of educator evaluation in districts. These conversations are focused on student learning and what growth looks like.

Mark Waxenberg expressed a desire to know more about what that collaboration and use of state test data looks like at the aggregate level across districts, schools, and classrooms. “Teachers want to be creative and take risks, but they need to know that the test scores will not adversely affect them.” He encouraged the members to cultivate what is good in evaluation. He said he senses that good things are happening when the data is used in the district, school, and classroom context. It takes time for people to get used to the idea of it and to get comfortable using the data. Collaboration is growing along the way.

Joe Cirasoulo clarified that he heard members say that the evaluation system has some things that are good, but now progress is impacted because of ongoing challenges. He suggested PEAC focus their discussions on the matrix. He restated that the positive outcomes at this point are collaboration and a focus on student learning, but then it all

comes down to a single metric. “We need to make sure that there are no impediments to a successful evaluation system.”

Commissioner Wentzell reiterated that the discussion has focused on educator trust and anxiety. Some of the mechanics of the system are making teachers feel uncomfortable. The stories that are negative can be attributed to lock-step implementation. Any improvements that are made need to put student learning at the center so everyone can get better.

Everett Lyons emphasized that trust is the key to successful implementation. The evaluation process has achieved the fundamental things that needed to happen. He noted that now the need is to build room for risk-taking and trust.

Mary Broderick asked if members were ready to move on to the conversation about the matrix.

Commissioner Wentzell asked the members if this was the most logical next step since some of the things people raised are related to discussions about the matrix.

Joe Cirasoulo said that PEAC must deal with how state test data is used. He asked, “If PEAC does not make any decisions on this topic, then what happens?”

Shannon Marimón reminded members that, absent further action, the required use of state test data would go into effect in fall 2017. The unknown is what this will look like in practice.

Commissioner Wentzell stated that it’s not clear what Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECS) will do to integrate this process into their local or regional educator evaluation and support plans.

Joe Cirasoulo said that every district will have to revise their plan at some point. The use of state test data will be argued at the district level and legislation could be introduced. He encouraged PEAC to discuss the issue of the use of state test data.

Mark Waxenberg shared that the positives regarding the use of state test data include the collaboration and trust. The weakness comes from the stringent nature of the 22.5% weighting. He encouraged the PEAC members to consider the good practices that are going on in districts. Once the use of state test data is tied to the 22.5%, it will create a different dialogue between educators. Educators will become more worried about their jobs than collaboration. The matrix is an important part of the discussion as well. Mark advocated for the expansion of the good things that are happening in evaluation. He said that he did not want to move towards a system that is not focused on collaboration, trust, teaching, and learning.

Paula Colen suggested that PEAC leave in place the current practice where it is the district's decision. PEAC could recommend to continue what is in place now in order to build a more trusting and collaborative system.

Joe Cirasuolo stated that PEAC has to recommend that the state not impose the requirement to use state test data in 2017-18.

Commissioner Wentzell summarized the discussion. The decision comes down to whether to allow versus prohibit the use of state test data. She confirmed that members were leaning towards allowing the use of state test data. She stated that PEAC needs to identify/recommend what is considered the appropriate use of the state test. Some of the scenarios that were reviewed did a nice job of articulating the appropriate use of state test data. At this point, PEAC seems to want to continue to allow the use of state test data but may not be ready to recommend the most appropriate use.

Mark Waxenberg agreed that PEAC should continue the flexibility to allow the current use of state test data.

Joe Cirasuolo stated that it is premature to require the use of state test data until the most appropriate use of state test data is determined.

Mark Waxenberg agreed that postponing a decision would allow PEAC to determine the appropriate use of state test data that would align with the strengths identified in the scenarios reviewed.

David Cicarella stated that if districts are required to use state test data, ~~then~~ that will undo the progress that has been made. Educators will be focused on the new change instead of on the strengths that have been identified. All of the good work will be undone. He further commented that the reason there are good things going on is because the state does not apply a heavy-handed approach. Districts have moved to a good place; requiring the use of state test data will cause people to retreat from any progress they have made.

Karissa Niehoff cautioned that it would be dangerous to require something that has not been defined. Every district has unique needs, and that conversation is so important. Karissa appreciated looking at examples from the field. She hopes the State Board of Education (SBE) can share in some of this conversation.

Mary Broderick asked if PEAC members were ready to make a motion.

Commissioner Wentzell clarified that PEAC is advisory to the SBE and must bring a resolution/recommendation to the SBE. She asked members if they wanted to go to the SBE on this single issue. She suggested that going to the SBE with revised guidelines would be more powerful instead of presenting recommendations individually; suggesting the option of putting together a package of recommendations instead of presenting a single item at a time.

Joe Cirusuolo supported bringing a package to the SBE. He recommended they get the issue of the use of state test data out of the way, so that PEAC has the time to give a recommendation on the matrix. He said that if PEAC does not deal with the use of state test data now, PEAC is going to give mixed signals to districts and PDECs.

Commissioner Wentzell suggested that PEAC provide greater clarity on the topic of using state test data, such as how they can use it for goal-setting and the discretionary use for others components of the evaluation. She asked PEAC members if they felt comfortable enough to identify a consistent message for the districts.

David Cicarella agreed with the Commissioner. He also recommended that when PEAC provides recommendations to the SBE, they need to explain why they are recommending it.

Mark Waxenberg explained that he believes the purpose of the state mastery test is to inform state policymakers in order to advance student achievement. He agreed with Joe Cirusuolo that the use of state test data is more complex; therefore, he would want to continue using state test data the same way as in 2016-17. It is important to clearly articulate the appropriate use of state test data, and its future use so we do not threaten the strengths. He suggested that the way the test data is currently being used is satisfactory and PEAC should continue to dialogue and then develop/clarify the use relative to the matrix.

Karissa Niehoff asked if the SBE knows that some PEAC members served on the Mastery Examination Committee. It was a learning process. She explained that their positions have shifted based on what they heard from the field.

Commissioner Wentzell stated that Karissa raised an important point about how the SBE makes decisions by creating committees to study the work and make recommendations. PEAC should also consider how to support the SBE to make the complex decision around the use of state test data and the matrix. The recommendations discussed at this meeting make a lot of sense to PEAC members because of their ongoing conversation around these topics. She recommended that PEAC invest the time to share more information and context with the SBE.

Joe Cirusuolo explained that he is comfortable proposing that in the 2017-18 academic year, the required use of state test data to inform evaluation be a decision that is made at the local level. Procedurally, it might be useful to convene a workshop of members of PEAC to discuss their ideas with the SBE.

Paula Colen added that some PEAC members could engage in a conversation with the SBE whether it is formally or in a workshop setting.

Commissioner Wentzell explained that it should be both. She mentioned that the Educator Preparation Advisory Council (EPAC) work took four years, and the CSDE

provided an SBE workshop to share a summary of EPAC recommendations with SBE members.

Joe Cirasoulo suggested that PEAC design language that meets any concerns related to its proposal to the SBE. He stated that PEAC has consensus that state test data should inform evaluation, but it might be implemented differently at the district level.

Mary Broderick clarified that PEAC wants to continue to use the state test data to inform the decision-making of educators.

Mark Waxenberg explained that it is still confusing. He said if districts use state test data, then it may cause the local level to engage in bad practice. The whole purpose of the state test data is to inform state policy as well as local decision-making. As it relates to evaluation, PEAC must address this in the design of the matrix. He suggested to continue the use of state test data as it is now. PEAC needs to explain the purpose of state test data and the flexibilities for the way it is currently being used in districts. The goal is to encourage the collaborative use of state test data.

Commissioner Wentzell suggested that PEAC include recommendations for the matrix as a package with the use of state test data to the SBE. It is harder to understand the role of state test data without the matrix. She recommended there be an SBE workshop before making a formal recommendation.

Joe Cirasoulo proposed that PEAC schedule a workshop with the SBE.

Commissioner Wentzell added that there was a lot of progress made in PEAC as well as in the Mastery Examination Committee. The SBE needs to be brought into the conversation.

Mark Waxenberg asked if it was possible to propose to the SBE that continuing the flexibilities of the use of mastery test be extended for a year with a resolution that the matrix will be discussed at a workshop with PEAC and the SBE. He also asked if it helps to have the SBE continue the approval of the optional use of state test data with the understanding that there will be further conversation about the matrix.

Commissioner Wentzell explained that bringing them into the conversation through a workshop style will help. When PEAC brought resolutions in April 2016, SBE members were adamant about requiring the use of state test data within a year's time. There is a sense that there is a timeline to implement the required use of state test data. If PEAC is bringing a different recommendation, then PEAC needs to bring the SBE into the conversation if we want the SBE to embrace the issue. A lot of work has gone into what feels like consensus within PEAC about the use of state test data.

Mary Broderick reiterated that based on the discussion, PEAC does not want to take action at this time, but will prepare a workshop for the SBE to inform them of PEAC's ongoing discussion regarding the use of state test data.

Joe Cirasoulo added that he thinks PEAC reached consensus to continue to allow the current flexibilities of the use of state test data. He added that PEAC will begin to work with the SBE.

Eileen Howley added that PEAC wants to continue to advance the effective data uses that are working now in districts.

Commissioner Wentzell summarized that PEAC wants to embrace the positive use of state test data. She also said that the meeting was spent mostly talking about educational advancement and growth. The Commissioner also shared that New Haven showed growth in ELA and math in a school that was one of the lowest performing. The teachers and administrators talked about the importance of collaboration and having social and professional learning supports in place. She restated that PEAC members had reached consensus that there are a lot of positive examples of the effective use of state test data, but PEAC wants to proceed with caution because there is a lot of progress that has been made and we do not want to diminish that. As a next step, the SBE will engage in a workshop focused on PEAC progress and the use of state test data.

Eileen Howley emphasized the importance of identifying critical trends in data and triangulating the data. This process will either contradict or verify what is going on in a school/district. The data informs instruction and curricular plans and improvements over time. She explained that the system needs to align in order to allow for this type of appropriate use of data.

Commissioner Wentzell added that it is about making the most of the positive momentum.

Patrice McCarthy posed the question, “How do we and the SBE perpetuate the good use of the data?”

#### **IV. Planning for February 22, 2017, Meeting**

Mary Broderick explained the next step is to look at February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Commissioner Wentzell suggested scheduling a time in January 2017 to convene the SBE.

Shannon Marimón said that the EPAC/SBE workshop was held in the evening.

Mark Waxenberg reiterated that the consensus of PEAC was to continue with the good work being done this year and meet with the SBE to determine and dialogue about possible actions and decisions.

Joe Cirasoulo requested that PEAC capture what Eileen mentioned and use it to inform the agenda for the SBE workshop and February PEAC meeting.



Mark Waxenberg reminded PEAC that they are looking at the system.

Commissioner Wentzell said PEAC members can bring the ideas/themes PEAC discussed to decision makers who do not follow the work closely.

Catherine O'Callaghan requested that PEAC share the scenarios more broadly to create further consensus.

## **V. Adjournment/Closing**

Mary Broderick announced that the meeting was over time. She thanked the members for their work and for the rich discussion.

Shannon Marimón said that Miguel Cardona sent his regrets for not attending. She shared that, based on the PDEC Guidance released in the early fall, Meriden's PDEC has developed a set of tools and resources they would be willing to share with PEAC and other districts.

Joe Cirasoulo thanked Mary Broderick for getting PEAC to a point that they didn't think they could reach.

The meeting was adjourned.