

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes
June 22, 2016

CSDE, Room 307 A/B

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Sarah Barzee, Shannon Marimón, Joseph Cirsuolo, Miguel Cardona, Robert Rader, Gary Maynard, Paula Colen, Mark Waxenberg, David Cicarella, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff, and Everett Lyons

ABSENT: Catherine O’Callaghan, Sheila Cohen, Randy Collins, Jan Hochadel, and Eileen Howley

FACILITATOR: Mary Broderick

PRESENTERS: Jennifer Benevento, Susan Domanico, Kate Field, and Ed Leavy

I. Welcome

Commissioner Wentzell opened the meeting by welcoming the members and thanking them for their continued commitment to the work.

II. Introduction/Acceptance of Minutes

Mary Broderick reviewed the contents of the folders provided to each member, which included the results of the PDEC surveys (CSDE, CEA, and AFT) as well as the agenda, the PowerPoint, minutes from the April 21, 2016, meeting, and a flyer for PDEC supports. She explained that the focus of this meeting would be on the results of the PDEC surveys and general PDEC supports. She pointed out that written comments from the PDEC Survey were also included in their folders.

She asked members to review the minutes from the April 21, 2016, meeting and solicited discussion, revisions, or comments. None were made, and the minutes were accepted.

Mary Broderick reviewed the meeting objectives. She asked members to consider what is working and what needs refinement as they listened to the review of the survey data. A notetaking tool was provided on each table.

She reviewed the PEAC meeting norms.

III. Review of Professional Development & Evaluation Committee (PDEC) Surveys

Mary Broderick introduced Mark Waxenberg (CEA) and David Cicarella/Ed Leavy (AFT) to present the results of the CEA and AFT PDEC surveys.

Mark Waxenberg explained that because of identifiable information contained in the responses, the CEA report did not include the open comments from their survey. He introduced six recommendations for PDEC operating procedures based on the results of the

survey.

Ed Leavy (presented on behalf of Jan Hochadel) expressed a concern that the data indicated that people were not sure when mutual agreement actually happened during the process.

Mark Waxenberg reviewed each of CEA and AFT proposed recommendations, which, he reiterated, are intended to assist PDECs in establishing good practices.

Mark Waxenberg presented the first recommendation- that an administrator and a teacher co-chair the PDEC to ensure a shared voice. Discussion followed:

- Robert Rader questioned the origin of this suggestion, as it didn't seem to correspond with any of the questions on the survey.
- Mark Waxenberg assured members that the recommendation was based on the survey results and comments from the survey. He stated that the goal was to identify the places where it is working well.
- Robert Rader asked how many PDECs are actually conducted this way.
- Mark Waxenberg responded that it seems to be a majority of the PDECs with which they work.
- Joseph Cirusuolo asked who appoints the co-chairs.
- David Cicarella explained that in New Haven, the administration appoints a co-chair and the teachers appoint a co-chair. The appointment is then agreed upon by both parties.
- The discussion focused on the use of the word "shall" in the recommendations because it appeared to be a mandate rather than a recommendation. The members agreed that the word "shall" would be changed.

Mark Waxenberg continued with the review of the recommendations. He said that data revealed that teachers do not always know what is happening with the PDECs; therefore, CEA/AFT recommended that minutes from PDEC meetings be shared with the entire staff.

The data also revealed that many districts have one committee for evaluation and a separate committee for professional learning. As a result, the CEA/AFT recommended bringing the separate committees together. The law (CGS § 10-220a(b)) is clear; it must be a single committee.

- Karissa Niehoff asked, "Have you examined how well the professional learning part is going?"
- Shannon Marimón responded that the CSDE/PEAC survey captured the qualitative part of how well PDECs are working, which would be shared following CEA/AFT's presentation.

- Joseph Cirusuolo voiced his understanding that the intent of the law was that professional learning be based on the results of the evaluation.
- Mark Waxenberg responded that districts should look at the systemic professional development needs of their staff.
- Sarah Barzee said that there are examples of where it is working well. The narrative comments in the CSDE/PEAC survey show how well it is being done in some districts.
- Mark Waxenberg replied that some are doing it well, but others are not.

CEA/AFT then recommended that the PDEC membership be comprised of mostly teachers and administrators, not central office staff.

- Sarah Barzee asked for clarification on who they are identifying as administrators; are they principals, superintendents, department heads? These are all administrators.
- Mark Waxenberg said that it should be principals, department heads, and vice principals.
- Commissioner Wentzell clarified, “You are looking for a balance of perspective from teachers, building administrators, and central office administrators.”
- David Cicarella added, “In our [New Haven] minds, we thought we had the appropriate people, but they were not part of the bargaining unit. The membership needs to be those who represent the bargaining unit. The superintendent may sit in, but the majority of the PDEC should represent the members who are covered by the plan.”
- Joseph Cirusuolo asked for clarification, “You are really talking about building level administrators. Central office would not count as an administrator for the building?”
- Mark Waxenberg recalled the Commissioner’s earlier comment regarding the balance of PDEC membership, and stated, “The goal is to ensure a balance of ideas and perspectives.”
- Ed Leavy asked, “Are you saying that in most districts, central office people are administrators? In the CT Technical High School System (CTHSS) that is not the case. The consultants in central office are never considered administrators.”
- Commissioner Wentzell explained that there is a different structure in the CTHSS. Central office administrators in districts are considered administrators, but that is not the case in CTHSS. The central office staff of the CTHSS are consultants, not administrators.
- Paula Colen shared that small districts may have different situations, as well.

There may be a principal and a part-time superintendent, and in some instances, they may not be unionized.

- Mark Waxenberg agreed that the term “balance” is preferable. It is good practice to have a PDEC with a balance of members who represent those covered by the plan.

The final CEA/AFT recommendation was to require signatures from individuals representing the board of education, the administrators’ bargaining unit, and the teachers’ bargaining unit attesting to the fact that the plan or amendment to the plan had been mutually agreement upon by the bargaining units and the board of education.

- Sarah Barzee reminded members that mutual agreement is intended to be between the PDEC and the local or regional board of education. In addition, the PDEC needs to have a process for reaching agreement.
- Joseph Cirusuolo suggested that the board chair and the PDEC chair be required to sign off on the plan.
- Shannon Marimón explained that this process has been discussed and during the previous 2015-16 educator evaluation and support plan submission cycle, the superintendent was the individual expected to “attest” to what actually happened. “We trust that if the superintendent is attesting to the plan, that his/her signature indicates that this is what happened.”
- Mark Waxenberg stated, “When I go to a local district [PDEC] and ask if they agreed to it, I want to see the signatures that indicate that they were a partner and a participant.”

Mary Broderick interjected, “We have had opportunity to have good conversation and discussion. We still have a thorough presentation to get through. We can have more discussion following that.”

- Paula Colen asked, “So what happens to these recommendations now? Does PEAC need to vote on them?”
- Sarah Barzee said the CEA/AFT are making recommendations for PEAC to consider, but there is still additional survey data to review. Following this, PEAC can discuss next steps.
- Paula Colen agreed that PEAC should not take a vote until all of the information has been heard.

Mary Broderick introduced Joe Frey, from the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC), who presented the CSDE/ PEAC PDEC survey data.

Joe Frey explained that the data helps shed light on what is working well and where there may be needs or areas for improvement in terms of how PDECs function. He shared the following:

- There was a good return on the survey with 452 respondents, 52% of which included teachers/support specialists. 86 local educational agencies (LEAs) were represented. At the LEA level, the overall response rate was 41.7% (i.e., 86 out of 206).
- The survey was distributed to all members of PDECs across the state by way of a request to the superintendent or executive director.
- The first three questions reflected the effectiveness of PDECs. 90% of teachers and administrators affirmed there exists strong collaboration among PDEC members.
- Respondents strongly agreed that the PDEC is able to make modifications to the plan.

Joe Frey said the PEAC members should consider how to strengthen the *CT Guidelines for Educator Evaluation* so educators can do their job better.

- Mark Waxenberg pointed out that the data reflects the 86 LEAs who responded. He requested that Joe Frey share who represents the 42% of respondents. CEA can then match their data against this data to see how well they match. Joe Frey said he could provide that data.

Joe Frey said that 85% of respondents identified their PDEC as effective, with 74% saying they reach agreement through general consensus.

- Ed Leavy commented that it is odd that some administrators think there is consensus, but the teachers may not.
- Joe Frey replied that there was a difference between teacher and administrator responses even with respect to the question, "How often does your PDEC meet?"
- Joseph Cirusuolo added that the survey asked people to recall what happened during the year. They may not remember it accurately.
- Joe Frey pointed out that the majority of PDECs say they are reaching consensus.

The data shows that 44% of PDEC members say they volunteered to serve on their PDEC, while 30% were asked by a principal or superintendent.

Joe Frey said the data identifies that about 80% believe the PDEC is working. The open response comments also support this data. He summarized some of the positive comments from the 13 pages of comments (included as hard copy in member folders).

The survey demonstrated that there are several strengths, but there are also areas for improvement. Joe Frey highlighted the five areas of need: 1.) align professional learning and evaluation; 2.) use data in more meaningful ways to drive professional learning to

meet the needs of educators and improve student outcomes; 3.) use data to make refinements to plans; 4.) identify effective communication practices and assist PDECs that are struggling with communication; and 5.) promote team-building to ensure consistency and fairness.

As the CEA and AFT data showed, this survey also demonstrated the need to ensure the connection between educator evaluation and professional learning.

- Miguel Cardona expressed his concern that he is not sure how well his district [Meriden] is doing in this area. He said that the structures are there, but they have not been able to get there yet, even though there has been a lot of progress. “We are trying to make better use of the data to lead the professional learning. I see that the data is spot-on as we move to better understanding and implementation.”
- Sarah Barzee agreed with Miguel Cardona, “... that the structures are in place, and we are growing in our ability to implement a coherent system of evaluation and professional learning. Where people are now is appropriate for a complex change process.”

Mary Broderick thanked Joe Frey for making the data “digestible” and instructed members to take ten minutes to think about their observations after reviewing all of the survey data. She instructed them to discuss with their table members – What we are doing well? Where can we strengthen the PDECs? What can PEAC do to assist?

There was approximately ten minutes of table group discussion.

Mary Broderick asked the table groups to share their discussions, and she charted the responses:

Working Well

- Make-up of the PDEC
- Decision-making processes
- Agreement
- People volunteer

Further Guidance

- General lack of awareness of Guidelines/statute
- Need PD to help people develop a better understanding of the Guidelines/statute and professional learning standards
- Developing a “health assessment” for PDECs to use to evaluate how well they are doing
- Include more input from the district
- CEA/AFT operating procedure recommendations/best practices
- Teachers not on the PDEC do not know what is going on – there is a need for more communication
- Members need to be reminded that they represent the staff and should be the main

- conduit of sharing information
- More information on how to integrate the evaluation and professional learning plans – provide models or other supports
- Mid-year PDEC self-assessment
- Provide a simple process to request assistance

Additional Information Needed

- More information about where people are struggling and identification of trouble spots so that a group (perhaps some representation of the PEAC membership) can provide support
- Good models of integrated plans
- Create an easy process to access support- such as a link to a request for assistance form
- Self-assessment for effectiveness

IV. Ongoing PDEC Supports

Mary Broderick transitioned to the next agenda item- the overview of existing and ongoing PDEC supports provided by various stakeholders- and asked Shannon Marimón to introduce the guest presenters.

Shannon Marimón explained that the RESCs have been offering state-sponsored PDEC coaching during the 2015-16 academic year. The idea for PDEC coaching came out of the Development Team, which is a collaboration among the CSDE, the RESCs, and CAS. This team works together on a monthly basis to understand what assistance and supports districts need. “We realized that you cannot bring an entire PDEC to a training at a RESC. Therefore, the Development Team decided to bring the PDEC coaching to the districts.” She referred members to their folders where a copy of the application for PDEC coaching was provided. The coaching was offered as two half-day sessions. The goal was to help PDECs understand how to establish processes for establishing and maintaining a highly-functioning PDEC. The sessions were customized to the district’s specific needs. A total of 23 districts requested these coaching supports.

Shannon Marimón introduced Susan Domanico (Education Connection), Kate Field (CEA), and Jennifer Benevento (AFT) to share the work they have been doing with PDECs.

Susan Domanico, who served as a PDEC coach for seven districts, gave a brief overview of the coaching sessions.

- She said the PDECs were mostly interested in feedback on how their PDEC team was functioning. Coaching sessions were customized to the individual nature of each district. She summarized that while districts understand the need for the integration of evaluation and professional learning, they tended to focus on one or the other. They felt they needed to get the evaluation plan and process done first. Once they had that, then could move to professional learning, and finally to a point where they could integrate the two.

- Susan Domanico stated, “One of the first things PDECs need is to develop an understanding of the professional learning standards. The coaching offers assistance in unpacking and actualizing the standards. Most of the PDECs need assistance in understanding how to make the connection back to their data sources.”
- Cultural competence, one of the eight professional learning standards, is a relatively new concept for many districts. Understanding how it is relevant to everyone is new learning for them.
- One of the activities that really helped PDECs was developing a district vision for professional learning. To have the opportunity to articulate the vision, and then being able to communicate it to others, helped them deepen their understanding.
- The number one request from PDECs was for a template that they could use to develop their district plan. They also requested a list of considerations for developing a district plan that is complete and actionable.
- Moving into the next year, PDECs need to learn how to balance of roles of the membership, how to handle the distribution of authority, how to reconcile best practice with implementation barriers within the district, how to handle competing priorities for professional learning (e.g. district, school, and individual priorities and needs), and how to incorporate a reflective cycle.

Shannon Marimón shared that each RESC had one or more coaches who were available to provide assistance to districts. As a next step, the Development Team would consider demand and resources available for PDEC coaching support moving forward.

Shannon Marimón acknowledged Kimberly Audet (CSDE), who has organized the Professional Learning Advisory Committee (PLAC), the group that developed the CT Standards for Professional Learning and is working to develop tools to assist districts and specifically, PDECs.

Kate Field (CEA), who shared about her work with PDECs, said, “Frequently, PDECs don’t know there is a problem until the union is called in. To address some of the issues that have been brought to the unions, we are working with CSDE and the PLAC to create resources and tools, including podcasts on each of the eight standards to support the work of the PDECs. The professional learning standards are not clear to educators. They do not know what they are supposed to do with them. The podcasts are intended to explain the standards and help teachers understand how to manage their own professional learning. The podcasts take successful strategies from around the state to highlight and share good models.”

All three unions are standing together to promote professional learning that gives autonomy to educators over their own professional learning.

Jennifer Benevento (AFT) said, “If you don’t know what it looks like, then it is hard to know if you are doing it well.” She said that she has been impressed with the collaboration among the PLAC members. Standardization of the trainings, while still honoring each organization’s individuality, is important to ensure everyone is getting the same

information. “This is an opportunity to work together and develop resources that will help educators do this well.”

Patrice McCarthy, a member of the PLAC as well as PEAC, shared that she has been working with Kimberly Audet to plan a podcast and a webinar overview of the eight standards and PDEC roles specific to the audience of board of education members. Additional resources would be helpful (money and time).

Gary Maynard said, “The administrator on the PDEC needs to understand that he/she is a member, and that might mean that he/she does not necessarily need to be the leader of the PDEC.” Another important question that needs to be addressed is, “Where do you find time?” It is important to develop a culture of trust in order to make real changes. Having norms is important. The size of the committee is something to look at. Some of the smaller towns actually have bigger PDECs.

Mary Broderick asked if there were any questions. No one responded. She thanked the presenters for sharing their experiences.

V. Schedule Update for 2016-17 PEAC Meetings and Agenda Planning

Mary Broderick asked the members to review the schedule for upcoming meetings. She noted that the October meeting was moved from October 12 to October 25 to avoid a conflict with Yom Kippur.

“At the April meeting, we heard from waiver districts, and you said you were interested in hearing more. New Haven can come to present at a future meeting.”

Joseph Cirusuolo reminded the group that they have an obligation to make a report to the State Board of Education (SBE) for November 2016.

Commissioner Wentzell explained that the SBE will want to hear what PEAC has been discussing and to hear about how things are going.

Paula Colen asked, “What about the recommendations? Is there going to be a point when we get to make decisions, so we can make them available to PDECs early in the year?”

Shannon Marimón, said, “I think we are close. We may be able to pull it all together and synthesize the information so that we can get something out to everyone.”

Mark Waxenberg said that it was their intention to get something for consensus so that their districts would have something in their hands by September 2016. He reminded the members that the matrix is still a very important issue that needs to be addressed. “I am not trying to diminish the national perspective, but I propose we get to the PDEC recommendations and the matrix.”

Commissioner Wentzell agreed and recalled that there was a lot of conversation around the matrix at previous meetings. She explained that she has requested that the Talent Office staff gather information on how other states are doing this.

Miguel Cardona said, "I could endorse the first five recommendations at this point right now. We need to get this information out. We should share something. Links to PDEC support?" He offered to be available over the summer to help in any way. He said, "I don't want to see our great work tabled again."

VI. Adjournment/Closing

Mary Broderick asked the members to think about the PEAC meetings and what has gone well this year.

Joseph Cirusuolo said that he felt there was a lot of valuable information presented in a collaborative way this year.

Karissa Niehoff added that the work that has been accomplished, especially laying out the topics, has been very productive. She said, "If we could summarize our work, where we are going next, and share it as an end-of-year summary, that would be helpful."

Patrice McCarthy said that the meetings were a good balance between discussion and moving PEAC forward to accomplish the agendas.

Paula Colen stated she appreciated starting and ending on time.

Sarah Barzee said, "The strength of the work is in the collective impact we are having, and I feel that we are doing great work together."

Commissioner Wentzell commended the members for their commitment to the work and willingness to continue the work throughout the summer.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m.