

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)  
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes  
September 16, 2015  
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Sarah Barzee, Shannon Marimón, Jan Hochadel, David Cicarella, Bruce Douglas, Sheila Cohen, Everett Lyons, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff, Joseph Cirusuolo, Miguel Cardona, Robert Rader, Catherine O’Callaghan, Gary Maynard, Paula Colen

**ABSENT:** Mark Waxenberg, Randy Collins

**FACILATATOR:** Mary Broderick

*Welcome/Introductions*

Mary Broderick reviewed the meeting objectives (see agenda) and asked for any clarification or changes. None were made. Introductions followed. New members Jan Hochadel and David Cicarella were welcomed. Everyone was provided with an updated membership list. Mary Broderick next reminded everyone of the norms previously established and displayed on a poster in the front of the room and asked for any comments. No comments were made.

*Review and approval of meeting minutes from June meeting:*

Mary Broderick reminded everyone that they had received the minutes via email on June 29, 2015, and asked if there were any revisions or discussion needed. No comments were made. Minutes from the June 10, 2015, meeting were accepted.

*Ad Hoc Subcommittee Discussion:*

Mary reviewed the three ad hoc subcommittees, their role/charge and timeline for reporting back to PEAC and asked for input.

1. **Recommendations for Partial-Year Employment/Unique Roles & Functions-** develop recommendations, business rules and present final report at the December 9, 2015, PEAC meeting.
2. **Ongoing Training, Proficiency & Calibration of Evaluators-** review current trainings, make recommendations for expanded offerings; present status reports at the December 9, 2015 and March 9, 2016, PEAC meetings.
3. **Performance Designators/Tested Grades & Subjects-** recommendation and best practices, propose revised language to the Guidelines, (keeping in mind the shifting national landscape); present status reports at the December 9, 2015 and March 9, 2016, PEAC meetings.

Shannon Marimón asked that names of representatives for each of the three subcommittees be sent to her by Friday, September 18, 2015 so the subcommittees have time to meet and prepare reports for the December 9, 2015, PEAC meeting. Each group is permitted to appoint one representative to each of the committees. Joseph Cirusuolo asked about the implementation of the matrix and whether one of the committees will address that topic. Shannon Marimón responded that it will be included in the work of the Performance Designators/Tested Grades & Subjects subcommittee.

### *Educator Evaluation and Support Training Presentation*

Shannon Marimón introduced the evaluator training presentation, stating that there have been some questions posed as to the training provided and how it is meeting the needs of practitioners in the field. She then provided a brief overview of the Educator Evaluation & Support Development Team process for developing and revising trainings and introduced Scott Nierendorf.

Scott explained that the Development Team meets monthly and focuses on educator growth and development and student learning. This focus, along with data and feedback, drives the design, development, and refinement of trainings and support provided to the field. Scott further explained that the offerings have been scaffolded to meet the needs of the various audiences. There are foundational trainings for those who are new to evaluation as well as more advanced trainings that build on the foundational knowledge and skills development. Scott distributed the 2015-16 Professional Learning Opportunities for Educator Evaluation and Support brochure and reviewed some of the offerings and the rationale for their development.

- *Foundational Skills for Evaluators of Teachers*- the name was changed from the *5-day Training for Evaluators of Teachers* to more accurately reflect the goals of the training. Revisions were made based on data and feedback from the trainings previously offered.
- Data collected since 2012-13 also indicated a need for additional offerings and follow-up trainings for administrators. Additionally, the methods of delivery were analyzed and now the offerings include blended learning options, as well as online trainings.
- A new series on providing high-quality feedback was added to help build evaluator practice in collecting evidence and identifying feedback that leads to enhanced educator practice and student learning.
- Additional sessions were developed with a focus on the new *CT Leader Evaluation and Support Rubric 2015*, as well as dedicated support for SESS educators and local and regional Professional Development Evaluation Committees (PDECs).

Scott announced that the CSDE, in partnership with the RESC Alliance and CAS, will be hosting another statewide conference on building coherence on February 25, 2016, at the Cromwell

Crowne Plaza. He expressed that these conferences “offer many around the state to share/celebrate the good things that they are doing.” Shannon added, “Last year, the conference was sold out. This year we are looking forward to build off that, but also provide something new. We plan to offer additional mini ‘un-conferences’ regionally.” Shannon recognized Tim Nee in the audience for his involvement in the early stages of Evaluation and Support Development Team work.

Everett Lyons, as another representative of the Development Team, provided an additional update on the ongoing supports for evaluators offered through CAS, with a focus on calibration. He said while CAS has shared in all of the training work as members of the Development Team, they have mainly focused on the administrator side to ensure that they can effectively evaluate and support teachers, and that they are being evaluated fairly by their own administrators. Training on the newly-revised *CT Leader Evaluation and Support Rubric 2015* has received high praise. Ev briefly explained the process of how the new rubric was developed, which included reviewing many rubrics from across the country. The primary reaction from the field is, “This rubric really captures what I do as an administrator!” In addition to the face-face trainings, Ev said there are also several online modules to assist administrators in the evaluation of teachers.

Sarah Barzee reiterated that “both *Scott Nierendorf and Everett Lyons* indicated that we seek robust feedback from the field. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we are always revising. There is never a final product, because we are always improving. It is all about professional learning.” Joseph Cirusuolo said, “You are establishing a good process. It is a good balance of resources.”

Everett Lyons introduced Amy Tepper from ReVision Learning, as well as Frank Purcaro, and Deborah Osvald, who have participated in the Collegial Calibrations offering made available through CSDE support, in their district, Wolcott Public Schools.

Amy provided a detailed overview of the process and emphasized that Collegial Calibrations is a “move away from an inspection model of evaluation toward a growth model focused on feedback.” She emphasized that the process is collaborative and encourages building a climate for change and providing feedback to improve practice and calibrate administrators. Having the feedback conversation with educators has been an area of challenge, and this the training is helping evaluators be more successful in this process.

Mary Broderick asked if there were any questions at this point: Sheila Cohen made an observation that the use of the words *calibration* and *collaboration* suggests that “there isn’t a gauntlet that people are having to go through to get to a number.” Frank Purcaro replied that it is the conversation that has been the richest part of the process and what the administrators most enjoy. Shannon Marimón shared her experience observing a district engaged in Collegial Calibrations, saying, “It is amazing how in the course of a two hour period you can see the change people go through.” Joseph Cirusuolo conveyed, “What I am hearing in some places is

administrators do not have time to do this.” Frank Purcaro responded, “It is more about the feedback and pushing teachers forward and it has taken off and given administrators permission to get up in the classroom and move around. It is not all about the paperwork, but more about the conversation.”

Mary Broderick asked Joseph Cirusuolo, “Are you asking about an ease on the burden?” He responded, yes, and asked, “Have you seen that administrators in Wolcott are spending less time on the paperwork and more time having the conversations?” Deborah Osvald said, “Through the calibration work, I bring a new understanding to the teachers, and I can let go of that need to collect it all and focus on what is going on in the classroom.” Frank Purcaro cautioned that “it didn’t happen overnight, gradually they became more focused and developed more of a purpose to evaluation.”

Amy Tepper said, “Time always comes up in the first meeting. We encourage them to use other strategies such as learning the rubric by heart, which really reduces the time spent.”

Commissioner Wentzell stated that, “the purpose of the evidence is to back up your evaluation, but the rest is all about the conversation.”

David Cicarella said that capacity building is time consuming. “Sometimes students say they learned nothing, or students were not interested or engaged- we need to look at that.”

Amy Tepper responded, “We focus on the interaction between the teacher and students- how many, what level, what is the product the student is producing?”

Discussion of the Collegial Calibration process continued and focused around understanding the rubric to easily align evidence, the need for administrators to move around in the classroom to see what students are learning, as well as the need to practice the process with other administrators and teachers.

Frank Purcaro shared his experiences in the first year and expressed his excitement over how the district is seeing improved practice as administrators’ conversations deepen their understanding about good instruction.

Catherine O’Callaghan asked, “Is the process moving down to the teacher level?” Deborah Osvald replied, “Working with teachers, my goals was to get them comfortable with me and the process. They are seeing me more as someone who is here to help and it is more casual.” Frank Purcaro added, “Teachers are less concerned about the rating and more about what does proficiency mean and we are seeing the rubric the same way.”

Karissa Neihoff asked about the need to recalibrate. Frank Purcaro said the process is ongoing.

Sarah Barzee asked, “Are you able to see where there are strengths and areas of need so you can connect the dots and provide professional learning?” Frank Purcaro responded, “Yes, we have a general sense of where the strengths and weaknesses are. We are implementing focus on

professional learning because we discovered there is a need to develop teacher skills on differentiated learning.”

*Additional Items for Discussion:*

*ESEA Flexibility Waiver-* Sarah Barzee reported that Connecticut was approved for a three year continued flexibility waiver in August 2015, which allows an additional year (2015-16) to decouple state test data from evaluation. Additionally, she said that some of the unique educational settings - Pre-K, USD #1 and #2 and Private Special Education Facilities- have been given an additional year to fully implement. In December 2015, we will provide an overview of the plan for monitoring using a three tiered approach. Principal 3 remains largely unchanged.

*Professional Learning Update-* Shannon Marimón reported that Kimberly Audet continues working with stakeholders and is engaging new stakeholders. A second Connecticut Academy for Professional Learning, facilitated by Learning Forward, will be offered this year starting in January 2016. We were applauded for having the largest representation of stakeholders ever to convene as part of a statewide academy. Teacher Educator and Mentoring (TEAM) field staff will be a part of the Academy so they can align TEAM trainings and the professional learning with the standards. Shannon stressed that we would like to hear from PEAC members on what they would like to hear more about as it relates to professional learning in order to plan future agendas.

The Professional Learning Advisory Council (PLAC) has three meetings scheduled throughout the year. Patrice McCarthy and Gary Maynard from PEAC are also on the PLAC. Additional subcommittees have also been identified and include: *Building Guidance around Cultural Competence*, *Standards at-A-Glance Committee* who will develop documents with rationales for standards, and an *Innovation Committee* that will focus on identifying districts who are implementing creative professional learning systems.

The CSDE is offering development grants at the district level to provide support for building out innovative and sustainable professional learning systems. Shannon said she would send a link to the RFP out to the PEAC membership for their reference.

*Educator Evaluation and Support Plan Submission Process-* Shannon Marimón shared that the “process was incredibly smooth this year compared to last year” and proposed using the same time line for 2016-17- a submission window from March 15- May 16, 2015. She said that more details will be provided at the December 9, 2015, PEAC meeting. There will also be opportunity to discuss the requirement for an **annual** submission process.

Shannon also explained that districts who received waivers have been asked to submit a report to the CSDE by February 2016 on how the waivers are going. The reports are intended to help us learn about good and innovative practices.

David Cicarella raised a concern about the use of state test data in evaluation. Commissioner Wentzell responded “State law requires the use of state test data. We requested the [ESEA] waiver, because we need another year to see what predictable growth is so we can support the use of it in evaluation.”

*Planned topics for next meeting:*

- Subcommittees Reports:
  - Partial Employment
  - Training
- Monitoring Protocol with CTAC

Mary Broderick asked if the process of having presentations and discussion is working.

Karissa Niehoff felt that hearing from practitioners is beneficial since we have been implementing for several year now. Paula Colen asked if information about any future presentations could be shared ahead of time, so they would be more prepared to ask questions. She expressed her concern that these meeting will become a time to share information rather than discuss policies. Miguel Cardona concurred with her and pointed out that there are struggling districts who we should hear from, as well, so that PEAC can review systems and develop guidance to support those districts. He said, “There is a desperate need for evaluators to understand what good evaluation is.” Joseph Cirusuolo agreed that we need to hear from practitioners, but the main purpose of PEAC is to advise on policy. He suggested that the district presentations relate to informing policy recommendations. Others agreed.

Patrice McCarthy asked that district waiver reports be added to the March 2016 agenda.

Commissioner Wentzell stated, “This is parallel to other areas where we are looking for other areas of innovation. This group can be helpful. It will be an in-process year.”

Sheila Cohen reminded the group that regardless of what we plan, a lot will depend on what happens in Washington, D.C.

Karissa Niehoff asked, “To what degree are we in touch with the Governor’s office and the legislature. Will we be offering information to them?” Mary Broderick posed the question, “How is PEAC’s process being shared with the legislature?”

Commissioner Wentzell ensured the group that the CSDE will keep the group informed of anything that comes out of our own legislative session or in Washington. She assured everyone that “we will be in touch and propose a change to the agenda, or we may have to add a meeting.”

Paula Colen suggested the time should be driven by the agenda.

Mary Broderick thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.