

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes
April 21, 2016
CSDE, Room 307 A/B
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Sarah Barzee, Shannon Marimón, Eileen Howley, Sheila Cohen, Joseph Cirusuolo, Miguel Cardona, Robert Rader, Gary Maynard, Paula Colen, Mark Waxenberg, Catherine O’Callaghan, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff

ABSENT: Jan Hochadel, David Cicarella, Randy Collins, and Everett Lyons

FACILATATOR: Mary Broderick

GUEST PRESENTERS: Colleen Palmer, Eileen Howley, and Peter Cummings

I. Welcome

Commissioner Wentzell welcomed PEAC members and thanked them for their ongoing commitment to PEAC. “We will continue to improve at providing better guidance to the field through our work.”

II. Highlights of March 9, 2016/Acceptance of Minutes

Mary Broderick asked members to review the minutes from March 9, 2016. She asked if there were any revisions needed. None were suggested. The minutes were accepted.

Mary Broderick reviewed the meeting objectives, norms, and the role of PEAC. She provided an overview of the meeting agenda: an update on the PDEC Survey and a presentation from two local educational agencies (LEAs) that received a waiver for their educator evaluation and support plans. She noted that we might hear from additional LEAs that received waivers at a future meeting.

III. Update on the PDEC Survey

The process for distributing the PDEC survey was reviewed by Mary Broderick.

Mark Waxenberg summarized the CEA’s survey data. Every PDEC has a different process of reaching “mutual agreement,” he said. The CEA has prepared a document for PDECs with suggestions for reaching “mutual agreement,” but it is not ready to be released. He raised questions about how districts are approaching professional learning: “Are they using the PDEC, or do they have a separate committee? Are they still approaching PD in the same way they always did rather than using data to identify individual professional learning?”

Sarah Barzee responded that there are questions on the PDEC survey that address how PDECs are reaching agreement. She clarified that the process for PDEC decision-making is different from “mutual agreement.” Mutual agreement occurs between the PDEC and the local or regional board of education.

Joe Cirusuolo recalled that Sarah Barzee had said that there were no districts that did not reach mutual agreement. Yet, he pointed out, the CEA survey data indicates a different situation.

Sarah Barzee responded, “That is why we need to be clear about what “mutual agreement” means, and what the process is that districts are using to reach agreement.”

IV. District Perspectives

Mary Broderick introduced Colleen Palmer, Superintendent of Weston Public Schools. Shannon Marimón referred everyone to the overview of the waivers included in their folders.

Colleen Palmer presented an overview of Weston’s educator evaluation and support plan (see handouts). She distributed a copy of the district’s full evaluation plan.

Key points include the following:

- The plan is focused on providing educators with high-quality feedback to improve practice.
- It is important to build the capacity of administrators to do all that is required.
- The PDEC created their own performance rubrics.
- Teachers set a professional focus goal that drives professional learning.
- The plan embraces the work teachers do every day.
- Teachers on a remediation plan are provided with a mentor of their choosing and the district pays the mentor to ensure that there is adequate support for the teacher.
- The flexibility of the plan provides support for teachers who may have a rough year. This provides teachers with the opportunity to deal with circumstances that impact their practice at the time.
- Decision rules guide holistic ratings.
- Growth matrices are used to look at student outcome data for teachers and to make decisions about what is needed to address student growth at both the individual and system levels.
- Decisions are made based on a preponderance of evidence and multiple data sources.

Questions/Comments:

Mary Broderick followed up with questions:

Do you want to add anything to your comments on growth and development?

Colleen Palmer: Feedback from the teachers has been so positive. Feedback is promoting improved practice.

Mary Broderick: Successes or challenges you might identify?

Colleen Palmer: Teachers are concerned if they get a 3 or 4 rating. Assigning a single rating creates stress for them. They come to the final meeting with lots of documentation to support their goals. It may be a Weston issue because it does not seem as prevalent in other districts that Colleen has talked to.

Mary Broderick: What structures or professional learning would need to be in place to replicate this plan in another district?

Colleen Palmer: There needs to be a clear understanding of the rubrics and the plan. Stakeholder feedback is essential. We should share our best practices with other districts. They need to look at it, but they need to make it their own. "Every district has its own DNA, its own culture," she said.

Mary Broderick asked members if they had any other questions:

Joseph Cirusuolo questioned the role that Smarter Balanced Assessment plays within the rubric.

Colleen Palmer responded, "It is integrated into our work, and it is hard to separate it out – for example, in planning for success of the students, how you design the learning and establish the environment that makes the learning possible is important."

Small Group Discussion:

Mary Broderick instructed the table groups to fill out the feedback form and then discuss it at their tables, after which the whole group shared their responses, and she recorded them.

Responses include:

- Translating reality into practice
- Data informing instruction - holistic scoring
- Collaborative approach rather than a focus on process and product
- Final judgement evaluation includes a human element
- Student learning is the catalyst- it is valued by the district and underscores everything
- Management system is important because the [data management] system became the default hence a formulaic evaluation - you need to break away from the online system because the system drives that formulaic approach
- Too many instances across the state where the focus is on compliance and the computer system [BloomBoard, MyLearning Plan, etc.], therefore, the purpose of why we are doing it becomes lost
- The focus on the process and not on the product- there needs to be the right balance

Mary Broderick thanked Colleen Palmer and introduced Eileen Howley from LEARN.

Eileen Howley introduced Peter Cummings, also from LEARN.

Eileen Howley explained that their waiver focused on the administrator plan, and she provided a brief background that led to the work and the question - *how do we grow administrators?*

Based on extensive research, LEARN developed their plan and their Framework as the tool for observing administrators, including a version customized to central office administrators. To arrive at a summative rating for the 40%, they use a more holistic approach.

Questions/Comments:

Mary Broderick followed up with questions: *Do you want to add anything?*

Eileen Howley: The framework reflects the administrators' daily work and pushes their practice into areas where they want to go. Moving into this model relies on understanding the process and the need to be ready to move into this work.

Mary Broderick: Major successes or challenges you can identify?

Eileen Howley: It is early; LEARN is waiting to hear from the other districts and how deeply they went into this. Some superintendents left and the process was not implemented which points to the need to be ready to begin this work.

Mary Broderick: Other conditions that might need to be in place if another district wanted to adopt?

Eileen Howley: Relationships are key to the success. Administrators need to come to the table and do the work together - it is about engaging them in the process.

Mary Broderick: Can you talk about how the dialogue among school leaders was elevated around student achievement?

Eileen Howley: Professional learning is key- principals are sharing their work and coming together. They are sharing their experiences, helping each other in doing the work in professional learning communities. The goal is to help them to help their teachers. They reflect on what they need to do to meet their goals and challenges- to grow and become better at their job.

Mary Broderick opened it up to the group for other comments or questions.

Small Group Discussion:

Mary Broderick instructed the table groups to fill out the feedback form and then discuss it at their tables, after which the whole group shared their responses, and she recorded them.

Responses include:

- Concept of supporting principals and breaking down the isolation of principals- which is a common concern for many principals - PLCs for principals
- Elevated the role of principal to instructional leaders and building human capacity
- Appreciate a matrix over a rubric- it contributes to professional learning in a more realistic way
- Focus on capacity building versus accountability as a driver

IV. Implementation Timeline

At the next PEAC meeting, the PDEC surveys results should be ready to review along with other data. Mary Broderick posed to the members, "What do you think PEAC needs to be discussing until the next State Board of Education meeting in November?"

Robert Radar suggested that there is a list of things PEAC will need to look at and may ask that research be provided.

Commissioner Wentzell said the weighting and the matrix seems to present the most concern. "Maybe we should prioritize that."

Mark Waxenberg added, "The whole point is not to have districts need to request waivers. The quicker we can get to the weighting and how we can give flexibility, the better."

Joseph Cirusuolo proposed that PEAC look at the waivers previously granted and to better understand the advantages and challenges for the districts.

Commissioner Wentzell agreed that if the district had a positive outcome, PEAC should examine what can be learned from them.

Shannon Marimón explained that many of the waivers are very similar in that they are mostly about the holistic measure.

Eileen Howley suggested that each district must decide what is critical for them and let their context drive their decisions rather than use a predetermined process.

Joseph Cirusuolo pointed out that there must be something in the guidelines that made LEARN ask for the waiver; therefore, we need to look at the guidelines.

Paula Colen said that it is the weighting that is driving the need, and PEAC needs to get back to that discussion.

Mary Broderick asked, "Is anything else that PEAC needs to hear in order to make a decision?"

Commissioner Wentzell questioned how a holistic process would affect the consistency of administrators to make decisions on evaluations.

Sarah Barzee suggested that PEAC may consider developing design principles to make the decisions about what needs to be in a plan. She explained that as the Talent Office has reviewed plans, they have used the design principles to make decisions.

Commissioner Wentzell replied, "We might need to decide if the current design principles are what we still believe and then make changes where needed."

V. Planning for June 22, 2016 Meeting

Mary Broderick transitioned to the wrap-up and preparing for the next meeting. She referred to the list of future PEAC meeting dates provided in each member's folder.

Joseph Cirusuolo expressed concerned with waiting until June 22, 2016 to make decisions. Commissioner Wentzell agreed to look at the schedule and perhaps find an earlier date. The members agreed to check their calendars and try to find an earlier date.

Mary Broderick asked the group to identify what worked during the meeting and what could be done better:

- Valuable information
- Reaffirms the need for flexibility

Mary Broderick adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m.