



STUDENT AND EDUCATOR SUPPORT SPECIALISTS WORKING GROUP

June 18, 2012

Respectfully submitted – Deborah Richards, CREC Director of Student Services
and Anne Louise Thompson, Chief, Bureau of Special Education, SDE

The Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC) established by Connecticut General Statute 10-151(b) formed four working groups to advise them and the Connecticut State Board of Education on recommendations for guidelines for the new educator evaluation system. One of the working groups was referred to as the Pupil Services Working Group. Upon further examination by the working group and in response to the expanded membership represented by the group, a recommendation was made and accepted by the PEAC to use the new name of Student and Educator Support Specialists (SESS).

The working group consisted of membership from the Connecticut State Department of Education, the Capitol Region Education Council, the Connecticut Boards of Education, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the Connecticut Education Association, the Connecticut Federation of Teachers, the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists, the Connecticut Speech-Language-Hearing Association, the Connecticut School Counselor Association, the Connecticut Association of Social Workers, the Connecticut Association of School Librarians, the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education, the Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities, The Connecticut Physical Therapy Association, the Connecticut Occupational Therapy Association, The Connecticut Council of Career Development and Transition, the State Vocational Federation of Teachers, and the Connecticut Association of School Nurses. In addition, there were representatives for the disciplines of mathematics and literacy coaches and consultants, and special education teachers. The working group felt it was important to represent nursing, physical and occupational therapy even though they are not required by state statute to be included in the educator evaluation system. They clearly make a strong contribution to school systems under the pupil services umbrella.

The working group represented many disciplines that are not directly responsible for the administration of the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test. Though representing many non-tested grades and subjects, the group did not represent the fields of art, music, world language or physical education. It is important to note that 69% of teachers are not in the grades or subjects where state testing applies (Goe, 2012)ⁱ which includes all of the disciplines represented on the SESS. This creates a challenge as we look to identify multiple indicators of student academic growth and development (IAGDs) as a significant component of the new educator evaluation system, the use of observation as a method of evaluation, and the use of parent, peer and student feedback. The intent of the SESS working group was not to create an additional evaluation system for these professionals, but to make recommendations for how the recommendations from the Teacher Evaluation Working Group could be customized to make them relevant to this vastly different group of professionals.

The working group gathered information on how to approach the customization from national experts and publications from other states (Massachusetts, Kansas, Delaware, District of Columbia), state and national standards for each of the professional organizations and from stakeholder forums with the organizations represented. The working group has catalogued all of the information collected by the respective disciplines on a Googledoc site. The intent is to share this information with the State Department of Education for placement on their website as a resource for districts.

In an effort to define the unique characteristics and challenges presented by the disciplines in the working group, there are two schemas currently in use throughout the country. The first is the concept of “Caseload Educators” (Goe, 2012)ⁱⁱ. Caseload educators are those individuals that have multiple groups of students or adults with whom they are responsible for working. Their caseload may consist of all the students in the school (e.g. library media specialist), a select group of students in the school (e.g. school psychologist), the adults in the school (e.g. literacy coach) or with families (e.g. school social worker). They often do not have their own classroom and may be assigned to more than one building in the district.

The second characteristic that makes these disciplines unique is often they are not directly responsible for content instruction. These professionals have an indirect impact on student learning. “Indirect impact on student learning would apply to those educators who provide supports, services, conditions that maximize students’ opportunities to successfully learn subject matter content” (Goe, 2012)ⁱⁱ. Some of the professionals represented by the working group may have both direct and indirect impact on content instruction. For example, there was some debate as to whether special education teachers should be represented in the teacher working group or the SESS working group. In an effort to make sure the unique characteristics of special educators were not overlooked, they were included in the SESS. In reality, as with many of the disciplines represented by the group, much of how special education teachers are evaluated will depend on their job description and role in a school. For example, a special education teacher could have primary content instruction responsibility for a group of students who spend the majority of the day in his/her classroom or as part of team taught classroom all day. On the other hand, another special educator could have a variety of roles such as resource room one period, team teaching another, delivery of early intervention services and then conducting diagnostic evaluations. This person would then be best described as a caseload educator. What is most important is that as part of setting the stage for an individual’s evaluation, it is critically important that the educator and his/her administrator have a clear job description and understanding of their role to guide their conversation about the appropriate measures and methods to gather information that will inform the evaluation process and develop opportunities for professional development and growth.

There are some unique characteristics that were identified by the working group that are important to consider as the state moves forward with a new system of evaluation and support. They include:

- **Itinerant services:** Many of the SESS representatives are assigned to more than one school, and in smaller districts they may serve the entire district. This will create a challenge when trying to determine what IAGDs they contribute to given the scope of their work. Some of the disciplines represented by this group are not employees of the school district but contracted through a RESC or private therapy firm.

- **Mentorship support:** Many of the disciplines represented by this group do not have an induction or mentoring support system such as the state’s induction program for teachers, TEAM, as new professionals enter the field. This lack of support was identified by the group as a critical void in acclimating new staff to the field of education. Unfortunately, there typically are few representatives in a school or district for any of the disciplines represented here to draw on for support or for new or struggling professionals.
- **Shortage areas:** The membership of this group almost mirrors the state educator shortage area list. This creates significant challenges since some staff are required to work with caseloads that far exceed what is considered appropriate due to the inability of the district to fill additional positions.
- **Common Core versus Discipline-Specific State and National Standards:** As the state moves forward with the Common Core of Teaching as a foundation to the observation of teachers, many of the disciplines represented by the group have state or national standards to guide their practice and in some cases allow them to maintain licensing or certification. Some of the disciplines in this group are both licensed by the Connecticut State Department of Health as well as certified by the State Department of Education (e.g. speech pathologists).
- **Administrator content expertise:** It would be impossible for any administrator to have content expertise in the range of disciplines represented by the SESS. This creates a challenge if an administrator does have an understanding of best practice in the field as a basis for evaluation. This also creates a dilemma when an administrator needs to find support or supervision for a professional who is struggling with their performance and does not personally have that expertise.
- **Clinical supervision versus administrative evaluation:** The Connecticut Guidelines for the Practice of School Psychology, (2004)ⁱⁱⁱ offers definitions acceptable to members of the SESS that capture the difference between clinical supervision and administrative supervision.
 - Clinical supervision of school psychologists requires discipline-specific training and expertise and experience in the practice of school psychology (Connecticut State Board of Education, 1999)^{iv}. Supervision should be offered on an individual basis for all new staff members, interns and veteran professionals. For interns and first-year school psychologists, face-to-face supervision should be provided for at least two hours weekly. Peer/group supervision is a viable source for staff supervision and development.
 - Administrative supervision may be provided by appropriately credentialed individuals who are knowledgeable about school psychology, such as a building or district administrator (CSBE, 2001)^v. Administrative supervision includes such activities as adherence to school policy and state and federal regulations and the day-to-day nonclinical duties performed by the school psychologist.

Many of the disciplines represented by the working group have similar definitions and need for clinical supervisor of their practice in addition to administrative supervision.

Applying the Connecticut Teacher Evaluation Framework to Student and Educator Support Specialists

In order to apply the established framework to the SESS, some flexibility will be required. It is essential that the SESS and the evaluator have a clear understanding of the professionals' roles and responsibilities in the school to be evaluated against. When possible, it is helpful to have an administrator with expertise in the discipline of the person evaluated. When this is not possible, it would be helpful to have a peer evaluator as part of the team. Either way, what is most important is the conferencing between the evaluator and evaluatee from the start.

Establishing Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGDs)

This is one of the most challenging areas given that many of the disciplines do not have standardized assessments that are used with their population. That being said, there are times when including measures of CMT and CAPT for a specific population of the school, or the whole school population is entirely appropriate. When CMT or CAPT do not apply, there are often other standardized measures that are administered to specific populations of students, or assessments and surveys used to measure growth. As with other educators student projects, portfolios, performances, or products may be more appropriate. Many of the disciplines represented here could be measured by progress on student's Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The PEAC Student Learning Indicator Subcommittee (2012) has identified the following steps to developing student learning indicators. The educator and evaluator should agree on the students or caseloads that the educator is responsible for and his/her role. The educator and evaluator should determine if the indicator will apply to the individual teacher, a team of teachers, a grade level or the whole school. The educator and evaluator should identify the unique characteristics of the population of student which would impact student growth (i.e. high absenteeism, highly mobile population in school). They should identify the learning standard to measure, the assessment, data or product for measuring growth, the timeline for instruction and measurement, how baseline will be established, how targets will be set so they are realistic yet rigorous, the strategies that will be used, and the professional development the educator needs to improve their learning to support the areas targeted.

Examples of Indicators of Academic Growth and Development (IAGDs):

School Nurse: A 5% increase in immunization compliance as measured by a review of the school health records.

School Social Worker: A 10% decrease in office referrals for behavior as measured by the SWIS data base.

Conducting Observations

Given that the members in this group often do not have a classroom and many are not involved in direct instruction of students, the educator and evaluator should determine appropriate venues for observations. These could take place observing staff working with small groups of children, working with adults, providing professional development, working with families, participation in team meetings or Planning and Placement Team meetings.

Observation

One of the challenges to observation will be how to measure the SESS against the state or national standards that guide their practice. The SESS is waiting for the Teacher Evaluation committee to form the rubric for observation. Once that is done, the SESS will review to determine if it can be applied more generically to these disciplines, or needs some customization based on individual disciplines.

Student, Parent and Peer Feedback

The SESS Working Group is waiting for recommendations from the PEAC to determine how these may be applied to SESS. In many instances the same measures that are applied to the rest of the staff may be appropriate. Depending on their role and identified IAGDs, it may be necessary at times to develop short feedback mechanisms from parents, students or peers specific to particular role or project from a SESS.

Recommendations:

The Student and Educator Support Specialists working group makes the following recommendations to the PEAC for the development of state evaluation guidelines:

- 1) Every individual being evaluated needs to have a clear job description and delineation of their role in the school to guide the setting of IAGDs, feedback and observation.
- 2) The educator and evaluator need to discuss the unique characteristics of the educators' role including the population served, characteristics of the population and determine the appropriate application of standardized measures of student growth to this professional.
- 3) The educator and evaluator need to determine the appropriate venue for observation and the rubric by which the observation will be conducted.
- 4) Once the teacher observation rubric is completed, the SESS working group will review to customize or make recommendations for application to each discipline.
- 5) The SESS recommends the development of a short (2 pages), standardized in format, white paper for each discipline. The white paper will identify the array of roles a specific discipline may play in a school, provide examples of IAGD, provide examples of methods of observations, offer guidance on the application of the teacher rubric or offer a customized

rubric for the profession, provide resources for state and national organizations standards and guidelines for evaluation. These should be drafted for the fall 2012.

- 6) The SESS recommends that the State Department of Education consider an induction mentoring program for all professionals working in schools, similar to the TEAM program for teachers.
- 7) The SESS recommends that the SDE establish formal regional networks of professionals within these disciplines who can assist with individual or group supervision, support and evaluation.
- 8) The SESS recommends reconvening in fall 2012 to review the individual discipline white papers and to meet throughout the 2012-13 years to review information from SESS who are involved in the Pilot Districts.
- 9) The SESS recommends reviewing feedback from the Pilot Districts to make final recommendations to PEAC in spring, 2013.

Committee Members:

Ron	Benner	CT Associate of School Psychologists
Tony	Bivona	CT Association of School Superintendents
Linette	Branham	Connecticut Education Association
Teresa	Cherry-Cruz	CT Speech-Language-Hearing Assoc.
* Carol	Clifford	American Federation of Teachers - CT
Dr. Nicole	DeRonck	CT School Counselor Association
Julie	Goldstein	CT Assoc. of Social Workers
*Ann	Gruenberg	CT Assoc. of Boards of Education
Janis	Hochadel	American Federation of Teachers - CT
Maureen	Honan	Special Education Teacher
Debbie	Kohan	Div. of Career Dev. & Trans., CT Council for Exceptional Children Chapter
Marlene	Loviano	Mathematics Coord./Coach
Marilyn	Mathes	CT Education Association
Sharon	McCloskey	CT OT Association
Sheila	McKay	CT Assoc. of Boards of Education
Teri	Merisotis	American Federation of Teachers - CT
Mary Ellen	Minichiello	CT Assoc. of School Librarians
Richard	Murray	CT Assoc. of Boards of Education
Dr. Philip	O'Reilly	CT Assoc. of Public School Superintendents
Cheryl	Prevost	Connecticut Education Association
Michael	Regan	CT Council of Administrators of Special Education
William	Rice	Mathematics Coordinator/Coach
Pam	Roberts	CT Physical Therapy Assoc.
Cindy	Sarnowski	CT Assoc. of Private Special Education
Sharron	Solomon-McCarthy	American Federation of Teachers - CT
Joe	Stefan	Language Arts Coordinator
Dr. Nancy	Testa	World Languages, ELL/Bilingual, Gifted & Talented
Trisha	Vayda	CT Association of School Nurses
Deborah	Richards	Director of Student Services, Capitol Region Education Council
Anne Louise	Thompson	Chief, Bureau of Special Education, CT State Dept. of Education

* Alternate

References:

ⁱ Goe, L. (2012). Evaluating teacher effectiveness with multiple measures. Presentation conducted at the CT PEAC Teacher Evaluation Working Group. Hartford, CT

ⁱⁱ Goe, L. (2012). Evaluating the “Caseload” Educators. Webinar conducted at CT Pupil Services Working Group. Hartford, CT

ⁱⁱⁱ Guidelines for the Practice of School Psychology

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/PsychSocial/GuidelinesSchoolPsychology.pdf>

^{iv} Developing Quality Programs for Pupil Services: A Self-Evaluative Guide (CT State Dept. of Education 1999)

^v CT State Board of Education – Position Statement on Student Support Services, Adopted May 2, 2001