



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents

FROM: Sarah J. Barzee, Ph.D., Chief Talent Officer
Talent Office

DATE: January 29, 2014

SUBJECT: Update on Educator Evaluation and Support

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the mid-year mark, I hope implementation of the educator evaluation and support program is going well in your district. This month's newsletter offers you several updates to assist your district in budgeting and planning as you look ahead to the 2014-15 academic year. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is committed to continuous improvement; therefore, we are making adjustments where appropriate and feasible. In an effort to provide the most current information in an organized manner, we are preparing a comprehensive set of guidance documents that will assist you in making decisions about your 2014-15 district evaluation and support plan. We will be releasing these resources and guidance documents, along with details about the requirements for annual submission of district evaluation and support plans, in an upcoming newsletter.

Updates featured in this newsletter include:

- *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching*
- Professional Development and Evaluation Committees
- New Guidelines for Professional Learning
- Making the Best Use of BloomBoard's Marketplace
- Budget Guidance for 2014-15

CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching

As we strive to improve the process of educator evaluation and support, the CSDE has convened a Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric Validation Committee comprised of multiple stakeholders.

Our goal is to ensure that the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* focuses mainly on the essential, observable components of a lesson and provides useful feedback to teachers, while simultaneously reducing the burden on evaluators in collecting evidence from a large number of indicators. While no final decisions have been made, the committee is recommending revisions that would simplify the rubric, reduce the number of indicators, remove redundancies, clarify language, prioritize Common Core-aligned instructional practices, and focus on the most essential attributes of a lesson. Among their recommendations, the committee endorses the belief that only two domains are observable during a classroom observation: *Domain 2 – Classroom Environment* and *Domain 4 – Instruction*. They also assert that evaluators should not be expected to collect evidence for every indicator during any single

observation. Furthermore, the committee acknowledges that for indicators where an educator has demonstrated proficiency, an evaluator should not be required to collect evidence for those indicators. For example, if an educator has demonstrated proficiency in managing routines and transitions, then the evaluator would not need to collect evidence for that indicator unless there was a substantial change in the teacher's performance. This would allow an evaluator to focus on the instruction and provide the teacher with relevant feedback that prioritizes student learning.

As the committee moves forward with their work, they plan to develop evidence guides that will include specific examples of what a teacher's performance looks like at the various levels of performance for different grades and content areas. The evidence guides are intended to assist observers in conducting meaningful classroom observations and reviews of practice. During January 2014, focus groups selected from districts that are using the *CCT Rubric for Effective Teaching* have been invited to review proposed revisions to the rubric and are providing feedback on these changes. Additionally, educators from these districts who are not selected to participate in a focus group are being invited to complete an independent review of the revised rubric. Once the committee has finalized the document, it will be released to the field as part of a comprehensive set of guidance documents to assist districts in planning for the 2014-15 school year.

Professional Development and Evaluation Committees

Connecticut General Statutes section 10-151b, as amended by Public Act 13-245, requires each local and regional board of education to establish a *Professional Development and Evaluation Committee* whose "duties shall include, but not be limited to, participation in the development or adoption of a teacher evaluation and support program for the district" that is consistent with the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation adopted by the State Board of Education (June 2012), "and the development, evaluation and annual updating of a comprehensive local professional development plan for certified employees of the district." Members of the committee shall include "certified employees and such other school personnel as the board deems appropriate, including representatives selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for such employees chosen."

The *Professional Development and Evaluation Committee* is urged to develop, through mutual agreement with the local or regional board of education, an educator evaluation and support plan for both teachers and administrators. If, however, mutual agreement cannot be achieved, then pursuant to section 10-151b of the General Statutes, as amended by Public Act 13-245 section 1(b), "such board of education shall adopt and implement a teacher evaluation and support program" developed by the board of education that is consistent with the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012).

Pursuant to section 10-151b, as amended by Public Act No. 13-245 section 2(b), districts are expected to work with their *Professional Development and Evaluation Committee* to establish a comprehensive professional development plan based on the individual or group of individuals' needs that are identified through the evaluation process that shall: (1) be directly related to the educational goals prepared by the local or regional board of education; (2) be developed with full consideration of the priorities and needs related to student outcomes as determined by the State Board of Education; and (3) provide for the ongoing and systematic assessment and improvement of both teacher evaluation and professional development of the professional staff members of each such board, including personnel management and evaluation training or experience for administrators, shall be related to regular and special student needs, and may include provisions concerning career incentives and parent involvement.

As districts may be in the process of planning for the next school year and contemplating possible revisions to their district educator evaluation and support plans, please be advised that any changes to an

evaluation and support plan must be made in accordance with state law and the Connecticut Guidelines for Educator Evaluation (June 2012). In particular, all changes should be made through mutual agreement between the local/regional board of education and the *Professional Development and Evaluation Committee* for the school district. However, if mutual agreement cannot be reached, the local/regional board of education has the authority to adopt and implement an educator evaluation and support plan as described in Section 10-151b as amended by Public Act No. 13-245 section 1(b).

New Guidelines for Professional Learning

As you are aware, Public Act 12-116 eliminated the Continuing Educator Unit (CEU) requirement and outlined a new vision for professional learning that occurs predominately in small groups or on an individual basis, and is a collaborative process focused on helping educators develop and apply the knowledge and skills necessary to improve student learning. Each local and regional board of education is now required to provide, at no cost to its certified employees, a minimum of 18 hours of professional development that is a job-embedded process of improving educator effectiveness. Educators are encouraged to partner with colleagues and administrators to target their own needs for professional learning.

The CSDE has developed a set of *Guidelines for Professional Learning* which is currently being vetted through the six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) Curriculum Councils. The Guidelines will identify the key attributes of an effective professional learning system. They are intended to serve as a resource for the district *Professional Development and Evaluation Committee* as they make decisions about the organization, implementation and evaluation of a district professional learning plan that aligns with district goals, and is a means for developing new knowledge, skills and practices of educators that will help students to achieve at higher levels. The *Guidelines for Professional Learning* will be released as part of a comprehensive set of guidance documents to assist districts in planning for the 2014-15 school year.

Making the Best Use of BloomBoard's Marketplace

In order to best align with the aforementioned *Guidelines for Professional Learning*, the CSDE is offering the following recommendations for using the BloomBoard Marketplace or any provider of professional development resources.

Without thoughtful integration of the BloomBoard Marketplace to support professional learning, the opportunities it provides may be lost, and professional learning will be no different than the professional development “single-shot,” “one-size-fits-all” workshops of the past. While the technology of the BloomBoard Marketplace has the capability to improve access to learning, ensure coherence in vision and goals, and reduces time and money spent on professional learning, access alone is not sufficient.

For any professional learning to be truly effective, educators should not pursue it as a stand-alone activity. Learning is rarely a solo experience. How districts conceptualize and structure professional learning experiences will greatly influence the results.

We encourage districts to work with their *Professional Development and Evaluation Committee* to develop a comprehensive professional learning plan that is ongoing, relevant, connected to practice and focused on improving student outcomes.

The following are suggested methods to enhance the learning opportunities and engage learners in constructing and applying knowledge:

- provide multiple pathways to address individual educator needs;
- develop a system for assessing accountability (*educators should be accountable for more than just attendance or access of professional learning activities*);
- plan how to evaluate professional growth activities and how that information will be used to inform further professional growth needs;
- establish a time and space for frequent teacher collaboration;
- encourage the demonstration of learning through product development, application to practice and evidence of results;
- integrate ongoing reflection, analysis, critique, evaluation and synthesis of information, ideas, principles, concepts, practices, etc.;
- define explicit expectations for learning and the application of the learning; and
- integrate self-analysis and reflection as a part of the learning process.

Budget Guidance for 2014-15

While districts are well underway in planning for their 2014-15 budgets, the following information may be helpful to you as you finalize your plans for next year.

Data Management and Professional Learning—The CSDE has funded perpetual licenses for all Connecticut districts that choose to opt into the BloomBoard data management system. In 2013-14, the CSDE provided all districts that opted in with an allocation of pre-purchased professional learning credits to be used within the BloomBoard Marketplace. The professional learning credits issued in 2013-14 will not expire and may be used as the district's needs require. While funding support of BloomBoard for 2014-15 has yet to be finalized, only those districts who use the full platform will continue to receive support by way of additional professional learning credits or other additional services that BloomBoard might offer.

SJB:cps