

Educator Professional Development Requirements Task Force

Thursday, September 22, 2016

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Connecticut State Department of Education, Room 307A

Present: Jack Cross, Kate Field, Kathy Greider, Anne Littlefield, Everett Lyons, Shannon Marimón, Patrice McCarthy, Denise Seel, Chris Todd

Not Present: Kimberly Audet, Dan Hansen, Kristin Heckt, Gary Maynard, Steve McKeever

Meeting Minutes

Shannon Marimón welcomed the members of the Educator Professional Development Requirements Task Force. She also introduced Jack Cross of LEARN, a new member of the task force, representing the RESC Alliance, and a guest speaker for the meeting, Anne Littlefield, Partner at Shipman & Goodwin.

Members reviewed the minutes from the August 26, 2016, meeting. Patrice McCarthy made a motion to approve the minutes. Everett Lyons seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by the task force.

Shannon Marimón transitioned the task force to the discussion of an outline of possible recommendations based on input gathered so far. The recommendations fall along three main categories: process, implementation, and content. With respect to “process,” the task force discussed a possible recommendation that all proposed bills for required PD would go through a vetting committee. There could also be a system in place to track topics that come from other agencies in order to converge on all new requirements that may originate in other places. Kathy Greider suggested that the task force research how other states approach the process for considering new PD proposals and identify best practices. Patrice McCarthy and Anne Littlefield offered to put the question out to the national advocacy listserv for state boards of education. Anne suggested that the task force consider recommending proper, realistic timelines for implementation and the resources needed to do it well. The task force discussed identifying online/technical resources/solutions to make it easier for districts to implement trainings.

The task force considered ways to document the amount of time it takes to be in compliance with training requirements. Kate Field suggested starting with a blank chart, including the number of school days, number of PD days/hours, and amount of time that is taken up with required trainings. Kathy Greider added that there needs to be a component that identifies the cost in hours that educators spend completing and managing the trainings. Everett Lyons reiterated that a chart that displayed that type of information would bring an awareness of the amount of time, money, and the extent of all the mandated trainings. It would also be helpful to note where training requirements transcend or go above and beyond Connecticut statutory requirements. For instance, the blood borne pathogens training is an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulation.

Anne Littlefield shared that one way the task force can approach the recommendations is to cross-reference and find redundancy in other statutes. The task force discussed the possible implications of recommending 1) satisfying requirements under other statutes that require similar training would meet requirements of 10-220; 2) providing financial assistance in order to complete requirements; and 3) less specificity in regards to a timeline but enough to make the requirements more manageable.

Everett Lyons reminded the task force that at the last meeting they discussed that if the district does not complete trainings every year, it seems there is a liability issue. It appears to be more of a tracking issue than a training issue. The task force discussed recommending additional parameters and the concept of refresher trainings.

The task force discussed the restraint and seclusion training. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) needs to define how districts meet this requirement. Everyone is supposed to be trained by 2019. The current training is two days in length, and it is a challenge to find time to complete the training. There was further discussion that not everyone in a district should be trained in this area. It could cause more harm than good. Public Act 15-141 could identify a percentage of individuals in a district that need to complete the training instead of everyone. One proposal is that everyone can be trained on the de-escalation techniques and crisis intervention only. Then districts and schools could assign a trained team that receives more involved training. The task force discussed that even if 100% of the people are trained someone is still potentially going to be hurt. It could create more litigation for districts. Districts do not necessarily have the resources to address these requirements.

The members continued to discuss the need to provide the tools and resources to complete the requirements. In addition to this, the task force still needs to examine the total time it takes to complete all of these requirements. Jack Cross shared that he has looked at the duplicative statutes. It was suggested that the recommendations could include more specificity on the expected timeframe necessary to complete the trainings, though some members cautioned that districts may want the autonomy to decide the time needed, so it would not be helpful to be overly prescriptive. It may ultimately be easier for districts to administer trainings annually to assist with tracking.

Everett Lyons shared that the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference provides coaching training. The individual is then responsible for maintaining his or her permit. The task force discussed the implications if the requirements shifted to the teacher's responsibility to complete the trainings versus the employer to provide it. If modules were created based on the topics and requirements, then that could be helpful to districts. The members discussed the possibility of individuals "testing out" of requirements. For example, a teacher could receive certification or a "badge" to confirm that they went through the training. Other possibilities may be for individuals to take a proficiency test and limit annual requirement to those who fail the training or make the training a prerequisite for employment in the district.

The task force discussed the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Mandated Reporter Training as an example of how a training and timeline are implemented. The DCF training was mandated to be effective immediately, which made it difficult for every district to meet the requirements in a thoughtful manner. The departments or organizations supporting the development of new trainings should provide parameters for what needs to be covered and when to implement the training. The task force discussed proposing a process to examine if an additional training would be an add-on or replace a training that is already in existence.

Patrice McCarthy explained to the members that this is an opportunity to look at consolidating what is already in statute and identifying what is duplicative. The members discussed that recommending a process is very important. The task force would like to find other states that have a process in place. The recommendations should be as specific as possible, identify effective models, present a clear timeline, and build in resources to support implementation. The Regional Educational Support Centers (RESCs) or the CSDE may take on the multiyear requirements, while districts remain responsible for the annual requirements.

Everett Lyons proposed that the task force consider how the use of technology may help decrease the time educators spend completing the trainings. It may provide the shortest time possible. He requested models of districts doing this well. Shannon committed to looking into this to potentially bring to a future meeting for discussion.

Chris Todd asked if there was any research on the DCF model and its benefits and usefulness for districts. The task force discussed that unless the trainings are consolidated there will still be many more trainings to complete. The DCF model would make the trainings consistent, which would make it a little easier, but the modules would still not be the best use of an educator's time. Unless the trainings are supervised, there is no guarantee that people are really getting anything out of them; it becomes a pure act of compliance.

Kathy Greider reminded the task force that priority school districts have more trainings to complete in addition to the ones the task force is reviewing. The following discussion identified another method to reviewing all the required trainings. The task force requested a form that identified the trainings by topic. It would create a visual of what is required and would identify who, when, and the typical length of time to complete the training. Shannon Marimón suggested that this be a key activity for the task force at its next meeting.

The task force discussed different venues for housing the mandated trainings. The RESCs could develop the supports needed to complete required professional development. There is an online platform that provides trainings for districts, which is another resource to look into as a support for districts. There may be a cost burden to districts. Some districts may also need advance notice because they are under contract with another vendor. One suggestion was to put a list of vendors together and find a way to cover the cost. There may also be interest among the task force members in hearing from some vendors that specialize in online delivery of required PD consistent with statute.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

The task force's next meeting is on October 6th from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.