

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)  
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes  
March 28, 2016  
CSDE, Room 307 A/B  
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Sarah Barzee, Shannon Marimón, Eileen Howley, Sheila Cohen, Joseph Cirusuolo, Miguel Cardona, Robert Rader, Jan Hochadel, David Cicarella, Gary Maynard, Paula Colen, Mark Waxenberg, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff

**ABSENT:** Catherine O’Callaghan, Randy Collins, Everett Lyons

**FACILATATOR:** Mary Broderick

**I. Welcome**

Commissioner Wentzell welcomed PEAC members and expressed her appreciation for their dedication and the additional time given to review and revise recommendations to the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation. Joe Frey joined the meeting by phone.

Commissioner Wentzell recapped the last PEAC meeting and the two recommendations going before the State Board of Education (SBE) on Wednesday, April 6, 2016: 1.) Plan submission for 2016-17 and 2.) Flexibility on the use of state test data in 2016-17. She re-iterated that PEAC remains the body charged with reviewing the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation and making recommendations to the SBE; and 2.) PEAC has identified and prioritized the needs that must be addressed this year. Senate Bill 380, which will prohibit the use of the state mastery examination in the evaluation of teachers, has passed out of the Education Committee.

Mary Broderick reviewed the objectives for the meeting pointing out that the agenda includes an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) survey and continued discussion on the required performance designators, component weightings, and the final summative ratings. She stressed that the meeting would focus on an exploratory discussion of priority topics and the development of proposals; not decision-making. She called attention to the norms posted at front of the room.

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

Mary Broderick asked members to review the minutes from the March 9, 2016, meeting that were emailed to them on March 24, 2016. She asked if there were any revisions needed. None were suggested. The minutes were accepted.

Mary Broderick reviewed the role of PEAC, established by statute, which is to assist the SBE in the development and implementation of guidelines for educator evaluation, as well as a model evaluation and support system. PEAC is the appropriate vehicle through which stakeholders provide input.

### **III. Review of Survey for Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECs)**

Joe Frey, via phone, introduced the survey, which was requested by PEAC during the March 9, 2016, meeting. The survey includes questions about the operation of the PDEC, inclusive of a PDEC's decision-making process. The survey incorporates a Likert scale and open-ended questions. The expectation is that each member of the PDEC would complete the survey. Shannon Marimón and Joe Frey will revise the survey based on feedback provided during today's meeting and the CSDE will email a new version of the survey for final review by PEAC prior to distributing to districts through CAPSS. The goal is to finalize the survey prior to the April 21, 2016, PEAC meeting.

Shannon Marimón emphasized that language matters in the proposed survey and encouraged PEAC members to identify anything that needed to be modified so that the survey is clear about how the role of the PDEC may vary between districts. This survey will complement what the CEA is collecting about the composition of PDECs.

Mary Broderick asked PEAC members to discuss the draft survey in small groups and document feedback/suggestions. The draft survey had been emailed for review the prior week.

Mary Broderick asked members to share their feedback with the whole group starting on page two of the survey. She charted the feedback, which was as follows:

- Phrase item 1 as “Our PDEC works collaboratively” and take out the word “members.”
- Delete the word “continuous” from item 3.
- There is a need for greater clarity up-front on the role of the PDEC as aligned with statute language. For example, “To what extent does my PDEC work on the evaluation plan?” and “To what extent does the PDEC develop the professional learning plan?”
- There should be an open-response item for PDECs to identify other things the committee spends time doing.
- Add an open-response textbox for the “Yes” responses in item 10. The information could identify best practices.
- Items 5 and 6 are inappropriate because it is not outlined in statute.
- There is no mention about professional development. One of the PDEC's major roles is to link professional development to evaluation. If rewritten, items 5 and 6 should refocus on professional development and how that is integrated into PDEC discussions.
- Item 11 should have a box to check-off for mutual agreement. Shannon Marimón clarified that mutual agreement happens between the local or regional board of education and the PDEC. Members agreed that this should be a separate question.
- There should be a box to check if a PDEC decision has been overruled. That item should have a range of options (i.e., never, occasionally, and regularly). Include an option to identify if the PDEC has been overruled by the superintendent and/or the board of education.
- Item 17 should be revised. A question where PDEC members must identify their district could result in data that is not open and honest because of the identifying information. Other suggestions included:
  - An item could ask for the size of the district and/or other demographics.
  - The item could ask for RESC or region.

- If possible, CTAC could provide a unique identifier so the respondent doesn't need to identify anything about the district.
- An item should ask how many people serve on the PDEC.
- Item 13 asks about CSDE supports for PDECs. But all stakeholder groups support PDECs. Rephrase to "Please comment below on areas where your PDEC needs/would like additional support."
- Expand Item 9 to ask for "What are the indicators of success?" when participants select "Yes."

Members engaged in a discussion about including an item to identify individual districts.

Paula Colen said that we are not looking at the effectiveness of a district's PDEC, so identifying a district is not important.

Patrice McCarthy responded that it is important to know that there is a broad response from a variety of districts and a variety of PDEC members.

Sarah Barzee noted that there are two different issues that need to be considered. First, the survey needs to have a large enough sample size for data analysis. Second, PEAC wants to know if some PDECs are performing better than others.

Shannon Marimón suggested that the district identification item be optional.

Commissioner Wentzell said that knowing how many responses come from a district is important in analyzing the latest survey data. 200 responses from one district provides a different story than if there are 200 responses from across the state.

Mark Waxenberg shared that the CEA is in the process of collecting PDEC demographics. The CEA survey does not go into the effectiveness of the committee. Identifying the size of a district could provide the necessary data. CEA is learning that urban districts are operating more effectively than others.

Robert Rader requested clarification from the CEA as to what data is supposed to be used by PDECs to determine professional development needs if they aren't supposed to use evaluation data as stated in survey items 5 and 6.

Mark Waxenberg replied that the point is to marry the link between professional development and evaluation.

Sarah Barzee explained that the one thing that is often discussed are the needs for professional learning and the link to evaluation. It is also important to identify strengths at the school level, as well.

Joe Cirusuolo suggested that one possibility to identify districts is to code the survey. Commissioner Wentzell recommended not forcing results of the survey for the April 21, 2016, meeting and suggested providing a greater window of time for PDEC members to respond,

especially those whose April vacations fall within the survey window. The survey will be revised and sent out through CAPSS.

Joe Frey pointed out that the last survey was open for eleven business days with only fifteen percent of all educators in districts responding. He suggested that communication about the survey is essential and that a sufficient window be provided to ensure a good response rate.

Commissioner Wentzell reminded PEAC that this is the time of year to send out the survey because PDECs are meeting. The survey could be shared at a PDEC meeting if there is a large enough window. If there is a small survey window the PDEC may not meet during that time.

Joe Cirasoulo recommended that PDEC members should take the survey outside of a PDEC meeting because the survey is intended to capture individual perceptions/responses.

Sarah Barzee recommended that the CSDE email out the next version of the survey electronically to PEAC members, including the feedback from today's meeting. PEAC members will have a final opportunity to provide any additional feedback. After that point, if the CSDE does not hear from members about revisions, they will assume that the survey is ready to send out to PDEC members.

Mary Broderick collected additional written feedback from groups.

#### **IV. Performance Designators and Summative Ratings**

##### **a) Performance Designators**

Mary Broderick reminded the group that they previously identified topics that needed further exploration. She instructed the members to reference the document provided that aligns the statutes with the corresponding sections of the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation. Mary introduced the first topic of discussion: required number of performance designators. She advised members to bear in mind that a few districts have five levels of performance, but they are required to translate ratings into four levels when reporting the data to the CSDE. She called their attention to the three options on the screen for consideration: 1.) No Change 2.) Better Communicate Flexibility Permitted through the Waiver Process to have Greater than Four Designators and 3.) Other Proposals?

PEAC members discussed this topic in their small groups and then shared their thinking with the whole group.

Mary Broderick re-emphasized that no decisions would be made today. The focus would be on capturing PEAC's thinking about this topic.

Mark Waxenberg expressed his concern that districts are reporting to the state four categories that are systematically questionable. It is unknown how districts are deriving the scores. Within the system, the four designators are creating animosity. The bottom line is to know which teachers are doing a good job. He said that there should be a minimum of two designators. This gives the district flexibility to craft the system to identify teachers who are meeting goals.

Eileen Howley conveyed that a binary system does not create a growth continuum. If a binary system is used then the focus on growth is lost. Evaluation is a summative moment in time. It is the growth that is most important for teachers.

David Cicarella expressed concern that a binary system does not provide a gradation. There are teachers who need more support in areas. There are also teachers who are leaders, and this is a way to recommend them for leadership positions.

Karissa Neihoff shared that her group talked about the growth issue with a binary system. Because the evaluation system is about growth, they would like a pathway defined by educator growth and a definition of excellence. There needs to be a way to identify and support the best teachers who are mentors and provide the most authentic learning for them. A continuum helps to better define professional development needs. The leveled designations show areas of strengths and needs.

Patrice McCarthy reiterated that it is about the continuum of growth. There would be different expectations for new teachers vs. veteran teachers. Without a continuum of growth, it is challenging to have clear expectations for beginning teachers. Without four or five designators, how are differentiated needs identified, how is professional development provided, and how are teacher leaders identified?

Sheila Cohen shared that there must be a clarification of who the “we” is. “We” - the state determining evaluation or the “We” - the district who gets to have full autonomy and is able to make decisions of what fits best for the district? There are some districts with only nine teachers. It is hard to not make it a “gotcha.” The whole idea of evaluation is not to get a rating but to enhance practice and help students.

Joe Cirusuolo acknowledged the need for something between good and bad. There was some discussion about four designators and about how some people react to not being exemplary. When teachers are singled out for exemplary performance, others say, “What is wrong with me?” There could be a better connection to professional development with more than two designators. He shared that Waterford Public Schools pairs up developing with exemplary teachers to help them improve. He reiterated that there should be a minimum of four performance levels.

Mark Waxenberg clarified that he is not advocating for a binary system. He is suggesting a minimum of two so that it isn't dictated by PEAC. PEAC should not develop four categories and send them out to districts and expect it to be successful. Local districts should do what is best for them, but they have to abide by standards. Teachers who are not succeeding have to be identified, but how the growth continuum is created and communicated is a local decision.

Miguel Cardona stated that he worries that at the end of the day, it is about rating and sorting. The perception of that can be an obstacle to growth and a gaming of the system. He would favor the term “accomplished” and identifying specific areas of “distinction.” There should be specific areas of focus that are aligned to the Common Core of Teaching standards. It should be more focused on developing within specific areas instead of dependent on a number.

Commissioner Wentzell reminded the group that there continues to be a distinction between the Guidelines and implementation. No matter what the design of evaluation is, PEAC is the body that is tasked with implementation across the state. No one gets better when getting a number on scale. Educators get better through feedback. Feedback teachers receive on varying levels will help them improve their practice. The same goes for leaders. Leaders need feedback to grow. It is important to give feedback to the SBE and the CSDE about how to best support this growth.

Sarah Barzee emphasized that when we talk about growth and development it should be on a continuum. Early career teachers are not automatically assumed to be developing. It sounds like there are implementation issues if it is communicated that an early career teacher must be developing until a teacher is tenured.

### **b) Component Weightings**

Mary Broderick reviewed the slide that outlined the options for this second topic- Component weightings: 1. No Change 2.) Identify an Allowable Range of Weighting for each Component 3.) Other Proposals?

Small group discussion was followed by whole group sharing.

Mary Broderick explained that the components weighting and final summative ratings process discussions will be discussed together, and at the next meeting, case studies will be provided.

Shannon Marimón reminded everyone that these two topics, components weighting and final summative ratings process, are interconnected.

Mary Broderick began recording members' thinking about the component weightings.

Joe Cirusuolo suggested that there needs to be local flexibility in deciding the percentage amounts of components where student growth can be worth 35-55%, performance and practice can be worth 30-50%, and stakeholder feedback is 0-20%. There should be flexibility within educator growth and student achievement until PEAC can examine what other districts/states are doing.

Commissioner Wentzell reiterated that the Guidelines could identify ranges and the total would need to add up to 100%.

Joe Cirusuolo said his group agreed that student growth and observation are the two most important components, which is why they recommend maintaining weightings/percentages.

Mark Waxenberg said his group focused more on the weightings and agreed that talking about flexibilities and percentages sends the wrong message. It is saying we are going to micro-manage districts. The matrix gives false positives and false negatives. He recommended that there needs to be a lot more discussion and dialogue, but he thought that a decision could be made on the weightings.

David Cicarella stated that the numbers help take the subjectivity out of evaluation. The downside to the component weightings is the extreme such as the 22.5%. He offered to share what New Haven does in evaluation. Fifty percent of the summative rating is student learning and the other 50% is for performance and practice. New Haven does not use student and parent feedback because they are concerned about the impact on the teacher's rating if a parent or student is upset. Instead teachers have to show how they are collecting the feedback and how they use it to inform their instruction.

Commissioner Wentzell expressed concern about micro-managing. She suggested considering ranges. She has looked at what other states are doing, some of which are moving towards ranges. However, there is flexibility in how districts comprise each category of student growth and observation. The evaluation system is getting closer to what makes sense for teachers and administrators in order to emphasize growth.

Mark Waxenberg referred back to New Haven's plan where it is 50% and 50%. Growth and development has to be part of the 50%. The ranges should be a decision at the local level.

Eileen Howley shared that her group's discussion focused around the importance of the observation of practice, student learning, and looking at the two together. The current 10% and 5% somehow gets in the way and is more connected to the administrator's role. She emphasized that there needs to be a definition of growth, a piece that addresses how educators help students grow, and how that is differentiated for all teachers and students.

Commissioner Wentzell added that she liked the student indicators and the collective efficacy part of the evaluation.

Paula Colen suggested that there be a broader sense of professional responsibilities and not just the 10%.

Miguel Cardona pointed out that his group discussed how the role of the teacher is focused on growth and is connected to the larger community. He added that PEAC members are closer in agreement on this topic than the category that was discussed earlier in the meeting. He suggested that more research be done as to what other states and districts are doing.

Eileen Howley interjected that the matrix inhibits the holistic piece in educator growth. In practice, it is about how the package comes together, which transcends a matrix and metrics.

Paula Colen added that the matrix it is driven by metrics. It gives false positives and negatives. It lends doubt to the credibility of the system. Evaluators should be able to create the results and a rating should be more holistic.

Commissioner Wentzell added that it is about professional judgment in the face of the evidence.

### **c) Final Summative Rating Process**

Mary Broderick transitioned the group to discuss the final summative rating process. She gathered everyone's ideas in the last few minutes of the meeting.

Joe Cirusuolo suggested that if districts are submitting waivers on the matrix that flexibility should be allowed for all districts. He recommended that districts not have to go through a waiver process on the matrix while PEAC takes the time to make a decision. He is concerned about having cutoff scores. For example, 8 is developing and 9 is proficient.

Mark Waxenberg shared that he has shifted his thinking from very rigid in using a matrix to the belief that there needs to be a different mentality. It will create a different dynamic with teachers for example, when the evaluator may like someone as an individual but the evidence doesn't align. There needs to be a discussion and local flexibility about the matter.

Miguel Cardona shared that the training Everett Lyons delivered in Meriden was very evidence-based. He referenced the "horns and halos" effect. Because an evaluator likes a teacher as a person doesn't make him/her a great teacher. He wouldn't want PEAC to reduce the objectivity so much that the process of evaluation is inconsistent across districts and the state.

Commissioner Wentzell reminded everyone to recognize the gains of the evaluation system. It is an advancement to have a common language and conversations about teaching and learning. It is important to build on that because the goal is to have effective educators; to have everyone to move up the continuum and have the talent development lens on this.

Shannon Marimón reminded PEAC that there is a workgroup that started on the topic of educator training, proficiency and calibration needs. This group started to come to a set of recommendations, but it was put on pause. It is important to not lose the fact that this conversation had been started at one point and can/should be continued in the future.

Eileen Howley said that there are districts that have waivers on certain parts of the evaluation. She would like to see the data from these districts. The strength is when there is evidence to make a judgment. In evaluation, it is important to be informed, supported, and be defensible.

Joe Cirusuolo reminded PEAC that they are in the information gathering stage. The group needs to hear from districts like New Haven and to hear what has happened outside of CT. He asked the question of how people in other professions that improve human behavior deal with evaluation. The recommendation is to suspend conclusions and gather further information. It may take months to do this, but PEAC will arrive at a better conclusion.

## **V. Planning for April 21, 2016 Meeting**

Mary Broderick transitioned to wrap-up and preparing for the next meeting.

Commissioner Wentzell recommended that PEAC hear from waiver districts. She would also like PEAC to address the meeting schedule going forward. She will identify dates for future meetings and share at the April 21, 2016, meeting.

Mark Waxenberg shared that he should have the PDEC demographic survey back by the next meeting.

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

Patrice McCarthy identified the strength of the meeting was that it was broken into manageable chunks with small group discussions.

Karissa Niehoff identified the topics as a strength.

Commissioner Wentzell expressed her appreciation to the participants again; specifically for their active participation and commitment to meeting norms.

Mary Broderick adjourned the meeting at 3:29 p.m.