

School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Meeting Notes
Tuesday, January 13, 2015
AFT Connecticut Offices, Rocky Hill

In Attendance: Stacey Cronk, CES; Geri Lavallee, Paraeducator of the Year; Anthony Brisson, SERC; Heather Dawes, SERC; Marcia Cattnach, AFT Connecticut; Geraldine Jackman, IFTPE; Bill Walkauskas, CSEA, Georgina Cabrera, Wallingford Public Schools; Rhonda Kempton, CSDE; Iris White, CSDE.

CREC Updates: CREC is now a site for the Internet Based ParaPro Assessment. Please check their website for dates and times: www.crec.org/parapro-assessment/index.php.

SERC Updates: Registration numbers are currently low for the Para Learning Seminar scheduled to be held on Saturday, January 31st. Due to late registrations last year, SERC is trying to wait a little longer before cancelling.

Administrators Brief: Anthony is working with Regina. He will reconnect with her to see where we stand.

Programming: SERC is focusing on program development. What are the needs of paras, where do we want to go? Questions that this Council should keep in mind as it moves forward. SERC is moving away from focusing on stand-alone sessions only. In-district contracts for paras has doubled. The most frequently asked for topics are: CCSS, guidelines for roles and responsibilities, roles and responsibilities with data collection, and Challenging Behaviors (de-escalation techniques). Challenges with in-district trainings: if it's not in the contract how you do get people to come. Salary is so low, I'm not getting paid enough to take that extra step;

Due to the national conference this spring, SERC will not hold its annual conference this fall. In 2016, the conference will be held in November. The ceremony will be held earlier (possibly late September or early October).

PRI Staff Findings and Recommendations: the Council's discussion focused on the recommendations for the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council. Recommendations will be brought back to CSDE leadership for their input.

- The State Department of Education shall be required to provide staff support for the council and its work. (Staff person is already assigned).
- CSDE support staff should ensure that all Council meetings and agendas be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting on the CSDE website for paraprofessionals. (Council members will investigate possible meeting locations and bring recommendations to the March meeting)
- The advisory council shall be expanded to include: two paraprofessionals who do not belong to a union; a special education teacher involved in supervising a paraprofessional; a representative of one of the higher education institutions offering teacher preparatory programs; and a parent who has a child who is currently receiving; or in the past has received, instructional paraprofessional support. (Council reviewed the membership list and made recommendations for how to fill slots).

- The council shall elect a chairperson from among its members, and the term of the chair should be for two years. (Current chairperson shall remain).
- The CSDE staff support functions should include securing a public meeting place for the council as well as posting the meeting location on the CSDE website for paraprofessionals at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. (Council members will investigate possible locations and bring recommendations back to the next council meeting)
- CSDE should establish a list of current contact persons in each district who will be responsible for disseminating information to paraprofessionals in that district. The contact should be reviewed annually by the Advisory Council and updated by CSDE. (Council will continue to discuss how to disseminate information to paraprofessionals).

2015 NRCP Para Conference: See Local Arrangements Committee notes.

Para Webpage: CSDE webmaster mocked up a new para webpage with a format that makes it easier to locate information. The Council had a few suggestions for improvement which Iris will bring back.

Paraeducator the Year Award Ceremony: Please save Thursday, October 1st, 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. for the ceremony. SERC is investigating different locations. Council members suggested possibly looking in to banquet halls, universities, etc. We also discussed asking one of the CT Technical High Schools to cater the dinner. Last year, we had 125 attendees and we hope and expect to have more nominees.

Health and Safety for Paraeducators: This issue was brought to the council at its November meeting. The consensus was to focus on training for Paraeducators on how to handle crisis situations. One district provides Life Space Crisis Intervention training to its paras.

Recommendations for CSDE: Follow up with the CSDE Talent Office regarding the CCT Rubric and why it is not specific to paraeducators.