

School Paraprofessional Advisory Council

Tuesday, January 8, 2013

In Attendance: Rhonda Kempton, SDE; Loyola Welsh, MEUI; Iris White, SDE; Annie MacDonald, UE; Regina Birdsell, CAS; Marcia Cattanach, AFT Connecticut; Bill Walkauskas, CSEA; Niloufar Rezai, Eastern; Stacey Cronk, CES

Unable to Attend: Heather Dawes and Anthony Brisson, SERC, Tenisha Baker, East Hartford Public Schools, Regina Birdsell, CAS

CAS Update: Regina could not stay, but reported that CAS is meeting with some higher education representatives to provide input on what principals need to know to be effective. Regina plans to speak on the need for principals to understand their role in supervising and supporting paraprofessionals.

CREC Update: CREC continues to work on developing the COMPASS Module on Common Core State Standards. Once they email Iris the draft module she will ask SDE colleagues to help her vet the material. **SERC and CREC** met recently to discuss how they could build capacity for the Compass. They are both very interested in being trained. We floated an idea and want to get your opinion. Should we do a separate train the trainers for the council or perhaps include council members in an existing train the trainer session. Iris and Rhonda have a meeting with Anthony and Heather from SERC to discuss future plans for professional development for paraprofessionals.

Debrief of SERC Paraprofessional Conference and Paraprofessional of the Year Recognition Ceremony: Council members who were able to attend were pleased with the conference breakout sessions and were touched by the ceremony. The keynote speaker, Michael Foran, did a wonderful job diplomatically answering some tough questions. Iris and Rhonda will review the conference evals when they meet with Anthony and Heather later this month.

SDE Update: Iris has had discussions with the Talent Office regarding the resources that are available to assist teachers with understanding their role in supervising (guiding and coaching) paraprofessionals as outlined in the CT Teacher Framework for Teacher Evaluation and Support.

Recommendations and Report to Commissioner: The recommendations are in the SDE Legal Office and then will go to the Commissioner for approval. Iris will forward the report once it is signed off by the Commissioner. Other recommendations from the Council regarding paraprofessional training:

The SDE should provide more guidance to districts on providing quality professional development to paraprofessionals that adequately prepare them to work with different groups of students (i.e. Autism). SDE may also want to consider publicizing a list of “recommended” or “approved” professional development providers for topics, such as Autism. This will require the identification of individuals who can assist CSDE with the vetting of these providers. Districts also need guidance on how to structure professional development sessions for paraprofessionals. This may be part of the larger work that will be done by the CSDE Talent Office regarding what quality professional learning looks like.

CT Paraprofessional of the Year: Plans are underway for the State Board of Education to have a recognition ceremony for all education staff who have received awards from different education organizations. The Paraprofessional of the Year will be included in this recognition. Iris will forward details when she receives them.

Packet has been approved and will be emailed to superintendents, from the Commissioner's Office, tomorrow (January 9th). Packets will also be emailed to district contacts and posted on the CSDE and SERC websites. The more places it is distributed and posted the better.

There was a suggestion to try and find a way to honor the two paraprofessionals who were killed in the Newtown shooting. One idea was to name the Paraprofessional of the Year award in their honor. Another was to ask paraprofessionals to wear green and white on April 3rd (National Paraprofessional Appreciation Day). Iris and Rhonda will check on the appropriate protocols for honoring these two extraordinary women.

The Council set June 18th from 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at CAS for the screening of applications.

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 12th, 9:00 at CAS.