

School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Meeting
November 18, 2008
Minutes

In Attendance: Marcia Cattanach, AFT Connecticut; Ellen Tyler, Region 18; Christine Thatcher, Department of Higher Education; Craig Struble, SERC; Stefanie Carbone, SERC; Loyola Welsh, MEUI; Kate Moran, LEARN; Tricia Silva, CREC; Cheryl Kaiser, Watertown School District; Bill Walkauskas, SEIU; Tony Maida, CES; Annie MacDonald, UE/CILU; Regina Birdsell, CAS; Robin Grondahl, CT Parent Advocacy Center, Iris White, CSDE.

Introductions

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the September meeting were approved with a request for an addition to the section referring to the necessity of training of staff for physical restraint. It was requested that training in the appropriate use and documentation of seclusion be added to the minutes.

SERC

Paraprofessional Conference-

Stephanie Carbone reported that 285 people attended the 2008 SERC Para conference. Some people had to be turned away. If the late registrants could have been accommodated, there would probably have been 310 attendees. Seventy fee waivers were paid for DRG 1 participants.

Feedback on the keynote speaker, Calvin Turrell, was overwhelmingly positive (98.6 % completely agreed- positive). Breakout sessions were rated very positively.

SERC is investigating the possibility of running another session during the 2008-09 school year.

Focus Groups- SERC is soliciting opinions from paraprofessionals regarding using study groups as one means of professional development.

Paraprofessional Survey-

Results were reviewed, including the comments. A comment on the survey highlighted the high number of training hours provided to paras in Madison. Madison's training for paraprofessionals was described by Regina Birdsell.

FAQ Draft-

The draft was discussed. Suggestions were made to clarify resources available for paras and to add something about communication between teachers and parents.

Budget Subcommittee-

No monies are presently available from the State Department of Education

Legislation Subcommittee-

The advisory council discussed, point by point, the draft of six recommendations developed by the Legislation Subcommittee. Iris will submit recommendations of the advisory council to the Commissioner of the SDE before December 1, 2008. Iris edited the draft as suggestions were made and, after clarifying and rewording items 1-5, the group added rationale statements to each item. Initially, item #6 which deals with a requirement for districts to provide a number of hours of professional development to paras was tabled. After much discussion, it was determined that this item should be included to underscore the consensus of the council that there is a need for professional development for paraprofessionals in all districts.