

***School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Meeting Minutes***  
*SDE Room 307B State Office Building at 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford*  
*4-6pm*  
*January 19, 2016*

***Advisory Council members in attendance:*** Jennifer Benevento, AFT CT; Regina Birdsell, CAS; Sean Kavanaugh, SERC; Gary Maynard CFSA; Donna Morelli, CREC; Patrick Sampson, Council 4-AFSCME; Denise Seel, 2016 Paraeducator of the Year; ***SDE Staff:*** Teresa Boyd Cowles, Rhonda Kempton.

***Advisory Council members not in attendance:*** Annie MacDonald, UE; vacant, CEA; Cindy Knudsen, CEUI/MEUI; Geraldine Jackman, IFTPE. Stacey L. Cronk, C.E.S.; Bill Walkauskas/Lucila Philips CSEE-SEIU;

- **Welcome/ Introductions**

*Members introduced themselves, welcomed and congratulated Denise Seel, [the 2016 Paraeducator of the Year](#). She expressed that Hartford is very happy that a Hartford Public School paraprofessional was chosen as Paraeducator of the Year.*

- **Legislative Update**

- a) (effective July 1, 2015) Public Act 15-5, Section 277, amending CGS Section 10-76d(a)(8)(C) and (D)
- b) 2015 Agreement with American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Paraprofessional Staffing Issues

*Rhonda Kempton shared the November 27, 2015 memo sent to Directors of Special Education elaborating on the role of paraprofessionals in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and the participation of assigned paraprofessionals at Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings. In summary, parents can invite the assigned paraeducator to the planning and placement team (PPT) meeting. The Bureau of Special Education's back to school meeting included a presentation on para educators as a member of the PPT and a non-legislative agreement between AFT and SDE regarding "service implementers." On November 27, 2015, Dr. Isabelina Rodriguez, Chief of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Special Education issued a memorandum to Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services. This memorandum served as further guidance for school districts regarding the June 2015 agreement between the CSDE and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) which clarifies the role of Paraprofessionals in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.*

*To review the complete memorandum, please follow the link below.*

[\*Role of Paraprofessionals in IEPs memorandum 11-27-15\*](#)

**CSDE Response to the Council's Recommendations**

- a) Superintendents/Directors of Special Education letters

*A list of recommendations was submitted from council members to Iris White as the commissioner's designee for the council during the 2014-15 school year. Three*

*recommendations were submitted on September 8, 2015 to the legislature in accordance with Section 10-155k of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) in the form of the [School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Annual Report](#) and distributed in accordance with C.G.S. Section 11-4a. SDE will respond to all three of the recommendations.*

**Recommendation #1) Contact List.** *In the past districts would provide the SDE a contact person for paraeducators and the list would be manually updated on an annual basis in January. The Special Education Directors contact list is an already existing list that is continuously updated and maintained electronically throughout the year by SDE. Talent Office and Special Education office representatives made the decision to use the Special Education Directors contact list for the dissemination of information regarding paraprofessionals.*

*Regina Birdsell requested that principals also be included in the notification. Rhonda will talk to Isabelina about the RB's request.*

**Recommendation #2) Behavior Management Training.** *The memo will also include information about SDE guidance for behavior management training. Lists of professional development resources from State Education Resource Center (SERC), Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), and University of Connecticut A.J. Pappanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education (UCEDD) will be included as web links directly to opportunities.*

*Patrick Sampson asked if behavior management training is or can be tied to the required restraint and seclusion training. Rhonda will ask Isabelina if restraint and seclusion training should be reiterated in the memo along with behavior management training.*

**Recommendation #3) The 2012 Connecticut Guidelines for the Training and Support of Paraprofessionals document.** *The memo will also encourage districts to train all of their Paraeducators on the appropriate roles and responsibilities as outlined in the guidelines. The guidelines are being updated to include new legislative mandates and best practices.*

*Teresa has asked the council members to skim through the document headers (**i.e. Six main sections**) and prioritize the need for additional updates, revisions and changes for discussion at the next March Council meeting.*

- **Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Award**

- a) [Announcement and notification letter](#)
- b) Updates to the application process-para portal, application review & interview committees (See Council Member [Action Items](#))
- c) Awards Ceremony- October 13, 2015

*The submission, review and selection process will be transitioning to a completely on line and web-based procedure. Refer to the handout for the timeline and a brief description. Applicants will complete their applications on line and upload supporting documents to the para web-based portal. The same process has been used for the Teacher of the Year Program. In brief, superintendents and the principals must verify that the person completing the application is the district's selection for Paraeducator of the Year. Candidates and Reviewers will need to be trained on the new process for submission. A training for potential reviewers will take place prior to next council meeting in March. EASTCONN will also work to create a webinar and*

informational sessions for nominees and reviewers as well. The submission timeline have been moved up slightly so as not to overlap with the Teacher of the Year time line. Districts can begin their internal selection process now. A memo to superintendents will go out from the SDE Commissioner within a week. Samples of district selection approaches are available on the SDE paraprofessional webpage. May 13<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for districts to put forth nominees for Connecticut's 2017 Paraeducator of the Year through the new system.

**SAVE THE DATE:** The Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year recognition ceremony will be held at the Rentschler Field Club Room in East Hartford, CT on October 13, 2016 from 4-7pm.

- **CT Paraeducators Conference and the [National Conference](#)**

There will not be a Connecticut conference hosted by SDE in the fall of 2016. SDE is looking to have conferences resume in the fall of 2017. The 33rd National Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraeducators, sponsored by the National Resource Center for Paraeducators (NRCP) will take place April 1-3 2016 at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Chicago - Oak Brook, Illinois. Sean Kavanaugh, (SERC) will be presenting at the National Conference and Donna Morelli (CREC) will be attending the conference.

- **Professional Development Updates-**

The UCEDD plans to develop a new survey funded by a grant. The timeline has not been shared as yet. UCEDD conducted their last survey in 2013. CEA and AFT are looking at offering professional development to paras, details about these sessions are not yet available. SERC is working with paras in Watertown, Sterling, and Windsor Locks by contract. CREC is offering Compass training --- Training of trainers in February. CREC is also offers this training in district. As part of the 7 Day Leadership Series in partnership with SERC, a half day presentation "Effective Paraprofessional Supervision" will be presented on March 11, 2016. Rhonda Kempton will be able to provide updates and more information on a [Least Restrictive Environment](#) (LRE) forum at the SERC location 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT on March 1, 2016.

### **Council Members Action Items**

- Council members will have the opportunity to be a reviewer, interviewer or both for the 2017 candidates for Paraeducator of the Year. Reviewers need to be able to read, review and score 10-15 applications during an approximately two-week window (June 1<sup>st</sup>-June 20, 2016). Please contact [Teresa Boyd Cowles](#) by March 1<sup>st</sup> if you would like to be a Reviewer for 2017 candidates. Members interested in serving on the Interviewing Committee need to be available for a daylong session at CSDE between July 1<sup>st</sup>-July 15<sup>th</sup>. The interview date will be confirmed in March.
- Please review [The 2012 Connecticut Guidelines for the Training and Support of Paraprofessionals document](#) by the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to provide suggestions for changes, updates or revisions.

**Informational Training Meeting for Reviewers:**

*March 15<sup>th</sup> – SDE Room 307B 3:00-4:00pm Information Session for Reviewers for Paraeducator of the Year Nominees.*

**Next Meetings;** *All meetings noted below will be from 4-6 PM SDE Room 307B State Office Building 165 Capitol Avenue in Hartford.*

*March 15<sup>th</sup> – SDE Room 307B*

*May 17<sup>th</sup> – SDE Room 307B*

- Closing/Adjournment