

***School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Meeting Minutes***  
*CSDE Room 357, State Office Building*  
*165 Capitol Avenue*  
*Hartford, Connecticut*  
*4:00-6:00 p.m.*  
*May 17, 2016*

***Advisory Council members and guests in attendance:*** Jennifer Benevento, AFT CT; Regina Birdsell, CAS; Mary Russell, Hartford FPL#2221; Michele O'Neill, CEA; Sean Kavanaugh, SERC; Gary Maynard CFSA; Donna Morelli, CREC; Geraldine Jackman, IFTPE & Newtown Public Schools; Annie MacDonald, UE; Denise Seel, 2016 Paraeducator of the Year; Denise Messina, Somers Public Schools  
***CSDE Staff:*** Teresa Boyd Cowles; Rhonda Kempton  
***Advisory Council members not in attendance:*** Cindy Knudsen, CEUI/MEUI; Stacey L. Cronk, C.E.S.; Bill Walkauskas/Lucila Philips, CSEE-SEIU

### **I. Welcome/Introductions**

Council members introduced themselves.

### **II. Updates on the Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year Program**

May 13, 2016, was the deadline for the applications. There were more than 30 applications. The applications were submitted online, however reviewing the applications will not be done through the online portal. Reviewers will review between five to 10 applications either on a single day or during a two-week window from June 1–20. Reviewers will have the option of attending an in-person session for rating applications or submitting their ratings through e-mail. Teresa will set a date to meet during the June 1-20, timeframe and secure a space for those who want to read applications in-person.

The status of the recognition ceremony for October 15, at the Rentschler Field location is pending at this time awaiting a budget update. A larger recognition program “Celebrating Excellence in Education” will take place on September 22, 2016, at the A.I. Prince Technical High School in Hartford. The 2017 Paraeducator of the Year will be recognized at this event along with other outstanding awardees who represent educational organizations through the state.

### **III. Status of UCONN University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) Draft Paraeducator Survey**

UCEDD had created a new survey for paraeducators to be distributed this school year. UCEDD was looking for council members to provide feedback on the draft. Teresa compiled feedback after discussing the draft with Rhonda. The comments were general suggestions about disability classification and confidentiality. Council members provided additional recommendations regarding the length of the survey, discussed the possibility of rolling out the survey at the districts’ convocation or professional development days and how to obtain aggregated school-based disability information without surveying paraeducators. A copy of the comments already sent to UCEDD will be shared with the council to allow members to add suggestions for the next draft. UCEDD proposed distributing the survey through district’s Director of Special Education and Pupil Services. The CSDE maintains a contact list that is updated annually in January. A communication was sent [on April 18, 2016, by the Special Education Bureau](#) indicating the district contact person who is responsible for disseminating

information regarding paraeducators (e.g., professional learning opportunities, State Paraeducator of the Year program, and any relevant topics regarding paraeducators) will now be the district's Director of Special Education and Pupil Services. As a next step, the draft survey will need to be reviewed by the Special Education Bureau Chief, Dr. Isabelina Rodriguez, before administration through the contact list.

#### **IV. Status of the Connecticut Paraeducators' Conference and other Professional Learning Opportunities**

Sean shared information about the workshop on "Using a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Approach to Individualize Instruction" held at [SERC - The State Education Resource Center of CT](#) on Thursday, May 19, 2016, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in [Middletown, CT](#). Sean attended [The 33rd National Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraeducators](#), sponsored by the National Resource Center for Paraeducators (NRCP), which took place April 1–3, 2016, in Chicago.

Donna from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), provided an update on a symposium similar to past paraeducator conferences concentrating on helping paraprofessionals move up the career ladder. A date has been set for November 16, 2016, at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. Dr. Sarah Barzee, Chief Talent Officer, has agreed to be a keynote speaker. Donna is looking for council members to provide ideas about breakout sessions and to recommend possible presenters from Connecticut colleges and universities. Strands for autism and exceptional learners are being proposed. The symposium will be open to a wide range of non-certified staff, occupational therapists, Registered Behavior Therapists and others who support students.

#### **V. Other Items**

Two bills were introduced during the legislative session involving paraeducators and paraprofessionals. [H.B. No. 5305, AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING](#) was introduced by the Education Committee, and [S.B. No. 66 AN ACT EXTENDING PAID SICK LEAVE TO SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS](#) was introduced by Labor and Public Employees Committee proposing the inclusion of school paraprofessionals in the enumerated list of employees who are eligible for paid sick leave. Neither bill moved to a vote on the House or Senate floor.

The role of the council is to advise the Commissioner of Education about the needs for the training of paraprofessionals and report on recommendations. The council will submit these recommendations for inclusion in the annual report in September 2016. The work of finalizing these recommendations will take place at the July 12, 2016, meeting. Teresa shared the recommendations from last year's September 2015 report. Council members discussed recommending the use of "paraprofessional" versus "paraeducator" for consideration in the report.

#### **VI. Closing/Adjournment**

Next Meeting: July 12, 2016, 2:00–4:00 p.m.