

Professional Development Task Force
Friday, August 26, 2016
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
307B

Present: Kimberly Audet, Kate Field, Kathy Greider, Dan Hansen, Kristin Heckt, Ev Lyons, Shannon Marimón, Gary Maynard, Patrice McCarthy, Steve McKeever, Chris Todd

Not Present: Denise Seel

Meeting Minutes

Shannon Marimón welcomed the Professional Development Task Force. Members described looking forward to the task force in order to:

- Provide more time for educator professional learning;
- Provide support for Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECs);
- Provide support for teacher and administrator learning; and
- Streamline the mandated trainings.

Shannon Marimón reviewed the materials for the meeting. She asked that members review the membership roster and notify her of any changes that need to be made. She reviewed the Professional Development Task Force statute.

Members asked to look at additional topics outside of Connecticut General Statute (C.G.S.) 10-220a, time permitting, such as:

- The reading survey, which is in addition to the support districts already provide around reading;
- Restraint and seclusion;
- Identifying potential impact of adding mandated trainings;
- Reducing or putting restrictions on statutes that mandate training and professional learning; and
- Requirements of Alliance Districts versus non-Alliance Districts, as the training requirements differ.

Shannon Marimón reminded the task force that its charge is to review C.G.S. 10-220a and 10-148a and 10-148b with the goal of providing recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly by January 1, 2017. She shared a table that includes C.G.S. 10-220a broken into the different topics it addresses, which will be sent after the meeting. This is a tool that can be used for a crosswalk of any redundant training in other statutes, which may touch upon some of the other topics identified above.

Kathy Greider recommended that Tom Mooney of Shipman and Goodwin be a guest speaker at a task force meeting to provide expertise on the background of the statute. Patrice McCarthy will reach out to Tom Mooney to inquire of his availability to attend a task force meeting.

Shannon Marimón added that each topic could be a study, but the group needs to first and foremost focus on the key components of C.G.S. 10-220a. The task force could review an overall scan of mandated professional learning and identify the costs at the district level and what this looks like in small, medium, and large districts. However, this group needs to be realistic about the amount of time any of this research will take keeping in mind the report deadline of January 1, 2017.

Various members mention that they struggle with providing teachers with adequate time to engage in professional learning because of the time it takes to cover all of the mandated training.

Dan Hansen asked how districts are currently managing 1(A) of the Professional Development Task Force statute, which states “(1) examine (A) how the professional development and in-service training requirements prescribed by law are being implemented by local and regional boards of education.” He also asked if the charge of the task force was to identify a successful way that districts might manage all of the mandated trainings. He suggested it might be helpful to look at exemplars to illustrate how overwhelming all the required trainings can be for districts.

Shannon Marimón shared that there will be a page on the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) website where the roster, meeting dates, and meeting agendas will be posted. The link will be sent out to the task force members.

Shannon Marimón directed the committee to C.G.S. 10-148a/b. This statute describes what Connecticut is supposed to be doing for professional learning. C.G.S. 10-148a includes a definition of professional development which informed the CT Standards for Professional Learning (adopted by the State Board of Education in May 2015), which were developed by the Professional Learning Advisory Committee (PLAC). The standards are used across the state to varying degrees; the development of a definition, standards, and supporting resources was intended to align and bring to life 10-148a. However, there is a conflict with the professional learning support and the language in 10-148a, which states “Each local and regional board of education must make available, annually, at no cost to its certified employees, a program of professional development that is not fewer than **18 hours** in length.” This language is inconsistent with high-quality professional learning, which focuses on individualized and collaborative learning opportunities and is not based on seat time. The 18 hours comes from the former CEU requirement of 90 hours over a six year period for certification. This part of the statute is something the task force can discuss further. In addition to this section, members were encouraged to identify any other aspects of C.G.S. 10-148a/b that may need rethinking.

The task force discussed another part of C.G.S. 10-148a to review, which is the “repository or best practices for teaching methods developed by educators within each school.” Shannon Marimón suggested that the task force looks for examples from schools and districts to see how this is being implemented.

Kathy Greider shared Farmington Public School’s (FPS) 2015-16 plan for mandated training. The trainings on the list do not reflect all of the trainings that are mandated, as it is from the previous school year. She described the trainings on the chart as the ones that do not fit naturally into a school setting, such as TEAM and Mentor Training. Principals would need to provide each mandated training on their own, so FPS has used some videos for training. The list begins with the requirements for all certified employees, next is for administrators, and then for non-certified employees. The bus company and outside consultants also need to certify that they have completed certain trainings. Some things are not in statute but are actually in other requirements; for example, there are safety and security requirements that may sit outside of statute. If the trainings are not completed, there could be legal consequences. Another mandated training is restraint and seclusion, which requires days of training. FPS is in the process of scaling up over a number of years, so everyone is trained on this topic.

The task force discussed that there are unintended consequences with the restraint and seclusion training, specifically. Multiple members suggested that there be an established committee of educators and teachers who can consider the consequences of passing any future PD-related statutes before passage occurs. The statutes that mandate training can be an over simplification and not reflect the realities of how districts actually implement. Things that need to be added based on new mandates are people and resources, which becomes an added cost.

Karen Greider explained that FPS receives many different requirements from different committees. They will conduct a cost analysis of the mandated trainings.

Shannon Marimón asked for clarification on the frequency of the trainings, “How many mandated trainings have to be available to educators versus the need to show that it is completed?” The group discussed the logistics of recording attendance at the trainings. Kathy Greider shared that it is a lot to keep track of if it is done in person. The video trainings are nice because the platform keeps track of attendance. The length of time for trainings varies between 10 and 45 minutes.

Chris Todd explained that Windsor Public Schools uses a blend of video and in-person trainings. If a teacher misses an in-person training, then the teacher has to schedule to meet with the trainer on his or her own time. For other video-based trainings, teachers have to print off certificates of completion, turn them into their administrator, and the attendance is documented with central office.

The task force discussed the timing of trainings. It seems that many of these trainings must be done annually and at the beginning of the year, which can be a challenging time. Dan Hansen added that districts are trying to do these trainings in the context of the contractual day, which can then take away from planning time. Steve McKeever explained that servers crash and technology does not always function properly. Some districts expect teachers to complete the training on their own time, which can also add to the cost.

The recommendation of the group was to add the hours together for mandated training, create a mock-up of a district plan inclusive of the cost and time it would take to complete all of the trainings. This document would then be shared as a key piece to setting the stage for task force’s final report.

Chris Todd asked if the task force could recommend initiating a process before a statute moves forward whereby focus groups are convened or there is an established committee that informs any new statutes.

Shannon Marimón stated that all suggestions/ideas could be considered as recommendations to include in the final task force report.

The task force continued to discuss the logistics of managing all the trainings and keeping track of who completed the trainings. Kristen Heckt added that the cost is challenging for a small district. In a small district, there may not be a dedicated Human Resource director so the task gets added to another person’s workload. Chris Todd explained that his district administers the trainings every year because it is easier to keep track of the teachers who completed and did not complete the training. Others noted that it is better to go above and beyond in order to avoid a claim of negligence on the part of the district.

Dan Hansen added that what a district will be held accountable for is what they say their procedure is for training. Teacher turnover also makes the tracking of training difficult.

Kate Field noted that from her experience with organizing mandated reporting, it is a logistical challenge.

Patrice McCarthy shared Old Saybrook Public Schools' training overview/summary. She explained that it was presented by the superintendent to track all the mandated training. It was also used as an advocacy tool to the legislature to show the impact of the training. The bottom line is out of 65 hours of dedicated professional learning time, 40 hours are used to complete mandated training. Time is money and most districts are not in the position to bargain additional time for professional learning. Old Saybrook identified in 2015 that completion of the mandated training amounted to \$400,000 in staff time.

Chris Todd recommended that more superintendents should complete a chart similar to the ones created by Old Saybrook or FPS. He asked if the task force could identify a small, medium, and large district from each of the six RESCs.

The group discussed creating a template for superintendents to identify mandated trainings, hours allotted, and cost in staff time. They also raised that Alliance Districts must complete additional trainings beyond those already discussed. In addition, smaller towns with limited staff have additional burdens to manage all of the trainings. Since they are not able to hire additional staff, they have to add it to existing workloads.

Steve McKeever stated that he will talk with Middletown Public Schools and will follow-up on Alliance District requirements.

The discussion of the group also focused on the possibility of the RESCs providing additional support to manage the trainings. RESC Curriculum Councils could be an avenue for districts to communicate their training needs to the RESCs.

Shannon Marimón emphasized that the task force brainstormed a lot of good ideas for future meetings. She recommended that the task force begin outlining the report and continue to work on it at each meeting. The next steps for the task force include:

- Survey and identify representative districts (a small, medium, and large district from each RESC) to complete the training template before the next meeting (Shannon/Kimberly);
- Identify best practice that emerge from the completed templates (Task Force discussion);
- Contact Tom Mooney about being a guest speaker at the next meeting (Patrice McCarthy);
- Review additional resources from Connecticut Education Association at a future meeting (Kate Field); and
- Members will receive the crosswalk table with the topics and a column to identify redundancies of statutes between now and the next meeting (Shannon/Kimberly).

The November 17th meeting at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. was changed to November 16th at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. to accommodate scheduled. The next meeting is scheduled for September 22nd from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.