



Session Summary

Session 5 • July 20, 2021

Preparing & Supporting Our Educator Workforce

Presenter: Dr. Shuana K. Tucker, Chief Talent Officer

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Overview

As we embark upon the 2021–22 school year, the need for continued support that focuses on the well-being of students and staff has increased greatly. During this past year, the CSDE spent time engaging with educators from across the state on a variety of topic areas to ensure we are meeting the needs of Connecticut’s educator workforce and preparing for the new normal. As a result, we believe that wellness and academic supports and targeted professional development will be critical in assisting with learning loss and staff retention.

Supporting Educators Wellness: Holistically and Academically

Consider polling your employees about topics and resources to better assist them with their daily responsibilities. During our focus groups, educators made it clear that more time is needed for planning and collaboration as we transition back to in-person learning, utilizing TEAM mentors to work with new teachers as they transition and host professional development sessions to share best practices. Many expressed the need for lowering stress and anxiety levels.

Suggestions include creating a safe space for teachers within a school building that may involve meditation, yoga offerings, a monthly 15-minute massage for all, and even a “kindness kart” with a variety of snacks and treats for staff to enjoy.

Targeted Professional Development and Necessary Structures for Success

More support and sharing of best practices are needed for teachers to better equip themselves to adapt and meet the needs of all students, whether remote or in person. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and addressing the mental health of our students, particularly those with special needs, is critical to academic achievement.

Overwhelmingly, educators voiced the need for more trauma-informed training for teachers, parents, and students. Districts should consider using district experts or engaging higher education experts to assist with cultural competency, SEL, and how to handle discipline where it is not viewed as punitive.

Suggestions include peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring, PDEC community, extending PD over time instead of an all-day activity, offering PD at different times/days so teachers can select the one that works best for them, and considering a hybrid model with a mixture of both in-person and virtual learning.

Supporting Building Leaders

Moving forward, districts may consider a variety of ways to support their administrators. Some are utilizing one or two building leaders as coaches, not evaluators, to support colleagues who may be newer administrators, ensuring them the support they need. Building leaders seek to collaborate with other building leaders. It was shared that they enjoy analyzing problems of practice and developing solutions.

Suggestions include utilizing Courageous Conversations, book study groups, or accountability partners between administrators to ensure overall personal wellness while also serving as professional support.