

School Paraprofessional Advisory Council

Tuesday, September 20, 2011

In Attendance: Janet Scialdone, CREC; Rhonda Kempton, SDE; Heather Penfield, SERC; Loyola Welsh, MEUI; Iris White, SDE; Annie MacDonald, UE; Stefanie Carbone, SERC; Tony Maida, CES; Regina Birdsell, CAS; Marcia Cattanach, AFT Connecticut

CREC Update: CREC, in collaboration with the Bureau of Accountability and Improvement, is developing a School Climate/Bullying COMPASS training for paraprofessionals.

SERC Update: ELL, ADHD briefs are very close to being finalized. Behavior Challenges brief is also close to being finished. The Autism brief has been delayed, because the consultant who wrote it has left SERC.

SERC is offering 4 Learning Seminars for paraprofessionals on the topics of Job Coaching, Assistive Technology, Autism, and English Language Learners

SERC's Annual Paraprofessional Conference will be held on November 16, 2011. Information is on the SERC website

SDE Update: New Commissioner Stefan Pryor, will officially start at the beginning of October. He has been making the rounds talking to different educational groups. Rhonda Kempton from the Bureau of Special Education is replacing Perri on the council. The speech language pathologist position will be reposted.

Local/District Update/Concerns: Some districts are telling paraprofessionals that they have to have ParaPro this year otherwise they will be terminated.

There is no consistency across the state on paraprofessional educational requirements or utilization. Past attempts to create a paraprofessional certification program in Connecticut have stalled in the Legislature.

Paraprofessionals are working with students multiply handicapped without having training. Not able to get into contracts, discussion needs to be what does the child need, how that is IEP written, how that child is being serviced.

CT Paraprofessional of the Year: Need to clean up language in the proposal so it's clear that local paraprofessional of the year will apply to the state program.

Honoring one paraprofessional of the year might make the honor more special.

Need to have a good application form. Resume will probably not be necessary, since the application should capture that same information.

Letters of recommendation should center on the applicant's work as a paraprofessional—professional recommendations—related to their work as a paraprofessional, not a personal recommendation.

One site visit would be the final: meeting with staff, administration, and observation in the classroom. Small group of 3 people would visit...getting an idea of the setting, committee would be there for more than 90 minutes.

Rubric needs to be developed for rating applications. Regina has done some work, looking at the Parapro, paraprofessional guidelines, and standards to take a look at who would rise to the top. Rubric will need to align to the application. We need a rubric for the application process as well.

Iris and Regina will meet on October 5th, 9-11 at the SDE to finalize the proposal and the rubrics.

The CT Paraprofessional of the Year is a nice program, but what should the council also focus on this coming school year?

Suggestions:

- Districts need to be continuously aware that paraprofessional pd is available through the RESCs and SERC
- Health and Safety
- Newsletters distributed to all staff. Perhaps the contact should be a paraprofessional union representative as opposed to a central office staff person. Rhonda will also talk to Anne Louise about providing a link to the newsletter in the Bureau of Special Education bulletin
- Bring in parent reps/advocacy groups: CPAC (the role of the paraprofessional). Rhonda will contact Nancy Prescott to see if she would like to have a representative on the council (the representative that previously attended has been unable to do so because of scheduling conflicts).
- Review the recommendations that the council previously made to the Commissioner and receive updates on the progress of those recommendations.

Agenda for next meeting:

Update on recommendations

Finalize the paraprofessional of the year materials

Update on newsletter distribution

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 15th, 9:00-11:00 a.m. CAS Cheshire

Respectfully submitted by Iris White, SDE

