

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)  
Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC) Meeting Minutes  
March 9, 2016  
CSDE, Room 307 A/B  
9 a.m. - 11 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell, Sarah Barzee, Shannon Marimón, Eileen Howley, Sheila Cohen, Everett Lyons, Joseph Cirusuolo, Miguel Cardona, Robert Rader, Jan Hochadel, David Cicarella, Gary Maynard, Paula Colen, Mark Waxenberg, Patrice McCarthy, Karissa Niehoff

**ABSENT:** Catherine O’Callaghan, Randy Collins

**FACILATATOR:** Mary Broderick

**I. Welcome**

Commissioner Wentzell welcomed PEAC members and expressed her appreciation for their time. She thanked the members again for their attention to these critical matters and for their professionalism in these meetings. She acknowledged that while PEAC meetings are scheduled quarterly, it may need to meet more frequently in the coming months to address the implications of ESSA. The length of the meeting may vary due to the priority of discussion and decision making.

Commissioner Wentzell explained that the CSDE is working with the United States Education Department (USED) to better understand the implications of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in order to transition from the current ESEA waiver which sunsets on Aug. 1, 2016. PEAC’s role, therefore, is more important than ever because ESSA gives states more flexibility in designing their educator evaluation plans. PEAC remains the body charged with making recommendations for amendments to the current system and ongoing implementation.

Commissioner Wentzell added that per CT’s ESEA Waiver, up to now, state test data in educator evaluation has not been required. The plan had been to begin to do so in 2016-17; however, if PEAC wants to recommend otherwise, they have the right to do so. As Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are currently preparing to submit their evaluation 2016-17 plans, the CSDE must provide guidance as soon as possible. Therefore, the agenda has been adjusted to ensure we reach decisions today about the most pressing issues: 1) the use of state test scores in educator evaluation for 2016-17 and 2) plan submission.

Mary Broderick reviewed the objectives of the meeting and the agenda. She called attention to the norms, posted in front of the room.

## **II. Highlights of February 4, 2016 Meeting/Acceptance of Minutes**

Mary Broderick asked if members had the opportunity to review the minutes that were previously emailed to them, and if there were any revisions needed. None were made. The minutes were approved.

Mary Broderick reviewed the role of PEAC. She emphasized that it is important to ensure the voices of all stakeholders are heard and represent the students of the state. She introduced Joe Frey of the Comprehensive Technical Assistance Center (CTAC) to present on the survey data.

## **III. Review of Survey Results**

Joe Frey introduced himself and gave some background on CTAC and his ongoing work with CSDE. He shared the survey methodology, emphasizing that it was developed using a stratified random sampling process to ensure a representative group of educators from the state. He reviewed some of the key details of the survey, including the number of respondents-1299 teachers and 141 administrators. He indicated that while we would like a higher percentage of responses, the survey closed on Friday, March 4th, and the data was emailed to PEAC members by that afternoon in order to review in advance of this meeting.

Joe Frey reported the following:

- Most of the responders completed all of the questions. Responses are reflective of surveys around the country. Administrator rates are usually higher than teachers.
- Data indicates a need for more work on developing student learning objectives (SLOs);
- Observations of practice is one area where teachers and administrators' responses suggest that the system is working;
- The strongest agreement is on the process of observation;
- The data are divided when asked about opportunities for career growth and professional learning regarding the link between professional learning and observation;
- The responses in this area are fairly consistent regarding capacity building efforts and support from the CSDE, LEAs, and RESCs;
- Responses indicate a need for ongoing support on goal setting, identifying instructional strategies and providing feedback;
- Responses clearly reveal that all educators believe the system promotes more focused dialogue about teaching and learning;

- When asked about the use of state tests and assessments, the majority of teachers said they use district assessments rather than state assessments; and
- Approximately 55% of teachers and 64% of administrators said that, where appropriate, teachers should have the option of using state assessments as one of multiple measures of student outcomes in the evaluation system.

Joe Frey emphasized that the most important question is – is the system having an effect? He concluded that the data provides us with good information about where additional training and support can strengthen the system.

Mary Broderick asked for questions.

More detail about the demographics, such as tenure teachers versus non-tenured was requested. Joe Frey explained that the data presented is raw data and they have not had the opportunity to do a break down yet, but they will.

Sheila Cohen raised a concern about the security of the survey because non-educators were able to access it and people could take the survey more than once.

Joe Frey reassured the group that this was not a high-stakes survey. It was intended to inform continuous improvement to the system, and the data clearly confirms that it is not skewed to any one side. He added that it was not a public survey; it was disseminated through superintendents who distributed it to administrators and teachers.

A member raised the concern that the wording of question regarding testing might solicited “self-serving answers.” Joe Frey responded that the wording of the question was simply, do people think there should be an option? It was acknowledged that different educators might interpret ‘state assessment’ differently. For example a PE teacher might think it refers the PE state assessment.

Joseph Cirusuolo reminded everyone that it is a survey, not a referendum and suggested that the survey data serve as a way to structure discussions going forward.

Sarah Barzee elaborated on the process of developing the survey, explaining that in CT’s ESEA Waiver, the CSDE was required to monitor the implementation of the educator evaluation and support system. “We have been planning this for a long time; it is not something that we just did last week.” Level 1 monitoring began last year when LEAs submitted their 2015-16 evaluation and support plans, and they completed an online checklist. Level 2 monitoring was ready to go with a survey of 30 randomly selected districts (this is the survey being discussed today). Level 3 monitoring would be a deeper dive into the LEA’s implementation.

Mark Waxenberg suggested that the discussion begin with the Level 3 monitoring, and that this group collaboratively put together a survey that is representative of the questions each PEAC representative wants to ask their members. CEA offered to conduct focus groups.

Mary Broderick acknowledged the work that Joe Frey and CSDE did to get the survey data ready for this meeting.

#### **IV. Plan Approval and Submission Process**

##### **a) Plan Development**

##### **b) Plan Submission/Approval**

Mary Broderick reminded everyone that at the previous PEAC meeting, PEAC members requested a document to outline which elements of the current educator evaluation system are outlined in statute and which are outlined in the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation. The CSDE staff prepared this chart as requested. She instructed the group to review the chart provided in their folders with their table members. Small group discussions followed. The group agreed that the chart was what they envisioned and it would be helpful as PEAC continues their discussions.

Sarah Barzee pointed out that the document does not contain all of the statutes/guidelines but only those issues that were identified as focus areas in the last PEAC meeting.

Commissioner Wentzell proposed that the topic of testing be discussed given the fact that it is a priority issue. Based on CT's ESEA Waiver, CT was scheduled to require all districts to incorporate student growth on the state test as one of the multiple measures of student growth measures in 2016-17 academic year. However, the other option is that we continue for an additional year under the current system, whereby the incorporation of growth on the state test in educator evaluations is a local decision, and allow PEAC to continue to explore flexibilities provided under ESSA. A discussion followed as to what is required regarding the use of state assessments.

Mark Waxenberg asked if PEAC could recommend that state test data be prohibited in educator evaluation.

Mary Broderick interjected that the plan for this meeting was to get into that discussion shortly, but the plan submission process comes first on the agenda as it is important for LEAs to know what is expected of them for the 2016-17 school year; they are waiting for direction. The following proposal was put forth: There will be no plan submission in 2016-17 unless a substantive change has been made to an LEA's plan, in which case the LEA would submit an amendment to the CSDE.

The group agreed that given the previous discussion this proposal makes perfect sense until PEAC figures out the other parts.

A motion was made by Joseph Cirusuolo.

Mary Broderick polled the membership to determine if there was consensus among the group. The group reached consensus and the following motion was approved:

PEAC recommends that local educational agencies (LEAs) be allowed to continue with their current CSDE-approved plan for the 2016-17 school year. LEAs would not be required to submit their 2016-17 Educator Evaluation and Support Plan to the CSDE for approval. If an LEA; PDEC recommends a substantive change, the LEA would submit an amendment form for review and approval.

Mark Waxenberg proposed that the composition of the PDEC and the process for reaching mutual be examined. CEA shared that their experience showed that the most successful PDECs are those with 50% teachers and 50% administrators. From a collaborative point of view the PDECs are important in this process. The question was asked as to how many boards of education did not accept the PDEC evaluation proposal? Sarah Barzee replied, "None that we are aware of."

Miguel Cardona stated that "the success of the PDEC is dependent on the local team, not the guidelines or the statute, but how the local district handles it." He suggested that we offer a model for districts.

Sarah Barzee acknowledged the need to continue to provide guidance to the field and informed the members that the RESCs are providing state-supported training and coaching for PDECs. She asked that PEAC members/associations encourage LEAs to reach out for the available training and support.

Commissioner Wentzell maintained that it is important to distinguish between the guidelines and the implementation of them. She encouraged PEAC members to do their research and present their issues. A discussion followed regarding outreach to stakeholders to get information on the implementation. There was a strong agreement that if each PEAC member reaches out to his or her own membership, the responses would be richer. Further discussion focused on the development of the questions, the content, and the coordination of a survey. The group agreed that they want factual information, not just perceptual.

It was determined that the same questions would be preferable, and the CSDE would develop the survey with input from PEAC members. Each of the PEAC members would then distribute the survey to their membership. Sarah Barzee requested that PEAC members send suggestions to

CSDE after the meeting. It was agreed that the CSDE will draft the survey, send it out for their review, and then coordinate the distribution through the representative groups.

## **V. Use of State Test Data**

Mary Broderick introduced the next agenda item – Use of State Test Data. She reminded the group there is no requirement to use state test data in statute; it is only in the guidelines. There are two proposals that can be considered– one is to permit and the other is to prohibit the use of state test data in educator evaluation in 2016-17.

The Commissioner clarified that the proposal is to make no change, meaning in 2016-17, educators will not be required to use state test data in educator evaluation.

Mary Broderick outlined three (3) options:

Option 1: Require the use of state test data in educator evaluation in 2016-17

Option 2. Do not require the use of state test data in educator evaluation in 2016-17

Option 3. Prohibit the use of state test data in educator evaluation in 2016-17

Karissa Niehoff questioned how other federal legislation might influence this decision. The Commissioner explained that there is an 18 month transition period while details of ESSA are finalized. CT's the waiver is the law until Aug 1, 2016. However, we feel confident that as a state we can make decisions regarding the use of state test data in educator evaluation.

Joseph Cirusuolo suggested another proposal- do not require the use of state tests until we (PEAC) have had time to examine the issue in more detail. "I don't think we can look at this issue in isolation from others. There are many questions that need to be examined. We need time to look at this before any substantive change is made."

Eileen Howley questioned if this discussion was pertinent to only teachers or to administrators as well. Shannon Marimón responded that it would apply to both.

Mark Waxenberg requested that the issue be tabled until the next PEAC meeting. The Commissioner responded that we could decide today that we will not require state test data to be use in educator evaluation in 2016-17 and recommend to the SBE that the guidelines be adjusted to reflect that decision until further notice.

Members agreed that a decision on the use of state test data in evaluation needed to be made at this meeting. Further discussion caused the members to question how changing the guidelines for teachers would impact administrators. They are intricately linked to one another. The

Commissioner agreed it is an important consideration. One more year without the required use of state test data in educator evaluation, would give us time to make an informed decision.

Several members shared their views on the importance of having all of the data before making a decision. Miguel Cardona said, “I don’t think we should ever legislate it, it should rest on the LEA to make their decisions.”

Several members agree they did not like the idea of prohibiting the use of the test. The CEA shared their concerns about the appropriateness of the state test, the Smarter Balanced Assessments. The Commissioner commented that she is not aware of any study or research that claims that the test is inappropriate for use in educator evaluation. We have not had the second year of administration yet to get the information. There is no research for or against that yet.

Mark Waxenberg made a motion to postpone the vote on the use of state test data in educator evaluation. Eileen Howley commented that you can’t have a discussion on the use of the test and the 22.5% without also having a discussion about the metric. Let’s give ourselves time to discuss this further before making any decisions.

Jan Hochadel reminded the group that there is still a Senate bill out there and suggested we postpone this vote until that issue is decided.

Karissa Niehoff pointed out, “If we are the governing body, our job is to make a decision and not wait for a legislative decision. That is what we have been tasked with doing.”

Patrice McCarthy stated, “We have all told the legislators that PEAC was meeting today, and I am not comfortable not making a decision.”

Mary Broderick repeated that there is a proposal and since we cannot reach consensus on this issue, then it should go to a vote. She reminded members that each organization has one vote. She restated the proposal- To postpone voting on the use of state test data in evaluation.

The vote was taken with the following results:

Commissioner - Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)	ABSTAIN
CT Education Association (CEA)	YES
CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE)	NO
CT Association of Schools (CAS)	NO
American Federation of Teachers-CT (AFT)	YES
RESC Alliance	NO
CT Federation of School Administrators (CFSA)	NO
CT Association of Public School Superintendents, Inc. (CAPSS)	NO
Person appointment by the Commissioner with expertise in performance evaluation processes and systems	NO
Board of Regents	ABSENT

The motion failed with a final vote of 6-2 and 1 abstention. PEAC recommends that the decision regarding the use of state test data not be postponed.

Mark Waxenberg made a motion to vote to prohibit the use of state test data.

Commissioner Wentzell again clarified the three proposals that were on the table.

Mary Broderick confirmed that the CEA is proposing to prohibit the use of state tests in teacher evaluation. Discussion followed. Members expressed a concern that there was insufficient information to make a decision at this point, especially pertaining to administrators. The Commissioner asked if the concern was more about the percentages tied to test scores. While some members favored no percentage of a teacher's evaluation being tied to state test data, others were not prepared to make a decision at this time.

Mary Broderick called for a vote on the proposal: To prohibit the use of state test data in evaluation.

The vote was taken with the following results:

Commissioner - Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)	NO
CT Education Association (CEA)	YES
CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE)	NO
CT Association of Schools (CAS)	NO
American Federation of Teachers-CT (AFT)	YES
RESC Alliance	NO
CT Federation of School Administrators (CFSA)	NO
CT Association of Public School Superintendents, Inc. (CAPSS)	NO
Person appointment by the Commissioner with expertise in performance evaluation processes and systems	NO
Board of Regents	ABSENT

The motion failed with 2 in favor and 7 opposed.

Commissioner Wentzell moved to vote on the proposal to delay the use of state test data in educator evaluation for one year to study the issue further. The discussion that followed focused on the importance of providing clear, timely guidance for what will be required during the 2016-17 school year while PEAC continues to develop long-term recommendations for guideline revisions.

David Cicarella asked for clarification on the rules for voting and who is allowed to vote. The Commissioner explained that each organization has one vote.

Mary Broderick restated the motion: To extend current flexibility regarding incorporating state test data scores in the evaluation of educators for the 2016-17 school year.



The vote was taken with the following results:

Commissioner - Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)	YES
CT Education Association (CEA)	NO
CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE)	YES
CT Association of Schools (CAS)	YES
American Federation of Teachers-CT (AFT)	YES
RESC Alliance	YES
CT Federation of School Administrators (CFSA)	YES
CT Association of Public School Superintendents, Inc. (CAPSS)	YES
Person appointment by the Commissioner with expertise in performance evaluation processes and systems	YES
Board of Regents	ABSENT

The motion passed 8 to 1. PEAC recommends to the SBE the extension of current flexibility with respect to the incorporation of state test data scores in the evaluation of educators in the 2016-17 school year.

The Commissioner suggested that another meeting be scheduled before the scheduled April 21, 2016 meeting and thanked the group for their hard work and effort put forth. The CSDE will determine a date and notify PEAC members.

#### **VII. Planning for April 21, 2016 Meeting**

Mary Broderick reviewed the other topics that will be covered at the next meeting.

#### **VIII. Adjournment/Closing**

Miguel Cardona inquired about what could be communicated to PDECs about the recommendations decided at this meeting. The Commissioner explained that the recommendations would be presented to the SBE on April 6, 2016 for their consideration. It is acceptable to share what recommendations are being made, with the understanding that the SBE still needs to vote.

The meeting was adjourned.