

Committee of Practitioners

*November 19, 2012
Department of Education Offices*

A G E N D A

Section 1903(b) of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 - Each State educational agency that receives funds under this title [Title I, Part A] shall create a State committee of practitioners to advise the State in carrying out its responsibilities under this title.

The duties of such committee shall include a review, before publication, of any proposed or final State rule or regulation pursuant to this title.

Vermont has decided to add review of Title II, Part A proposed policies to the duties of this committee.

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| 8:30 | Welcome & Introductions |
| 8:40 | Short Overview of Title I |
| 8:50 | Item #1 – School Improvement Coaches
(Presentation & Discussion) |
| 9:10 | Item #2 – Alignment of CFP strategies with Green Mt. Star
(Presentation & Discussion) |
| 9:35 | Item #3 – Paraprofessionals Hired with Title I Funds
(Presentation & Discussion) |
| 10:00 | Item #4 – Class Size Reduction
(Presentation & Discussion) |
| 10:30 | Adjourn |

Item #1 - School Improvement Coaches

Proposed Policy: School Improvement Coaches may be funded using Title IIA funds but these strategies may not be fiscally included as part of a school's Title I Schoolwide Program. That is, School Improvement Coach Strategies must be shown outside the scope of SWP funding, even when those individuals work in Title I Schoolwide Programs. Therefore, the source of funds for this activity in the online grant program (G3) must read Title IIA.

Rationale: "An outside school coach, properly prepared and sensitive to individual and whole-school concerns, can provide a balance of pressure and support to initiate and sustain meaningful school improvement." (Kostin & Haeger, 2006) Title I, Part A funds are more appropriately spent for direct instruction with students, especially those that are struggling to meet the State standards. Title II, Part A funds are intended to improve teacher quality through professional development which is the intent of the School Improvement Coaches. By not including the funds to support Coaches in the school's schoolwide plan, it will enable schools to add this function without adversely affecting the amount of funds the LEA's targeting & ranking procedure has allocated to the school. This would avoid having to reduce direct student instruction at the cost of adding a School Improvement Coach.

Impact: Little impact on individual school funding except to redirect Title IIA funds to a research-based improvement strategy while directing Title I funds towards direct supplemental instruction of students.

Implementation Plan:

FY 13 – Notify all prospective schools that are required to hire a School Improvement Coach as a result of their level of accountability identification of this policy as well as others that may be interested in hiring coaches. Include information regarding this policy in the May Consolidated Federal Programs Training.

FY 14 – Implement fully in the FY 14 CFP application review procedures.

Resulting Action:

COP approved procedure and, with AOE leadership approval, the CFP team implemented it according to the above implementation plan.

Item #2 - Alignment of the Consolidated Federal Programs (CFP) Strategies with Green Mountain Star Results

Proposed Policy: CFP strategies for schools in Corrective Action/Restructuring (5 Years or more failing to meet AYP) should align with needs identified through their Green Mountain Star Process.

Rationale: The Integrated Support for Learning Team at the Vermont Department of Education initiated a policy this year that schools that are identified as in Year 1 of School Improvement and above (not made AYP for 2 consecutive years) will use Green Mountain Star (Indistar) to assist them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses. It is a web-based system implemented by a school improvement team to inform, coach, sustain, track, and report improvement activities. This process is currently implemented in 25 states as best practice in improving a school's ability to lift student academic performance. The Department feels strongly that a school's use of federal Title funds should be linked to those efforts that stand the best chance of raising student academic performance.

Impact: At the Department, some small changes will be needed in our online granting process and in the way CFP applications are reviewed. At the local level, funds may need to be redirected from some less than successful strategies to those indicated by the school's Green Mountain Star Assessment Process.

Implementation Plan:

FY 13 – Notify all prospective schools in this level of identification that this policy will be implemented in FY 14. Request that the online grant system (G3) be modified to include a PDF of Vermont's Green Mountain Star indicators and a new drop down box next to strategies that includes the codes for each indicator.

FY 14 – Schools in Corrective Action/Restructuring will include the codes for the school specific strategies in G3. Applicable CFP applications will be reviewed and approved by both the CFP reviewers and the School Improvement Coordinator associated with that school.

FY 15 – CFP and School Improvement Coordinators will review the process and initiate any needed changes to improve the process.

Resulting Action: The COP approved the new policy and it was implemented according to the Implementation Plan above.

Item #3 - Use of Paraprofessionals

Proposed Policy: Research does not support using paraprofessionals in a predominantly instructional role with academically-challenged students. Therefore, strategies that include instructional paraprofessionals will no longer be considered “approvable” in CFP applications. The exception would be individuals who possess a current teacher’s license and appropriate endorsements may be hired as instructional paraprofessionals with CFP funds, assuming they follow the other requirements set forth in The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (work under direct supervision of, and in close proximity to, a highly qualified teacher).

Rationale: Although paraprofessional organizations, especially those whose primary membership consists of special education paraprofessionals, espouse one-on-one and small group instruction led by paraprofessionals, much other research has found similar strategies lacking effectiveness. The often touted early research in this regard stems from the Tennessee Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio or STAR, a class- size study. Subsequent research which reanalyzed these data “. . . found very little indication of a positive impact on student achievement of paraprofessional support in the classroom when compared to classrooms with no paraprofessional support. Over all, the literature indicated that providing paraprofessional support for students in an inclusive setting may negatively affect the teacher’s engagement with that student as well as the student’s interaction with his or her peers.” (Regional Education Laboratory at EDC, 2007).

French and Lock (2002) offer suggestions to help teachers become more effective managers of paraprofessionals. These suggestions include: Provide orientation; take time to learn the paraprofessional’s work style; assess the skills of the paraprofessional; observe and coach the paraprofessional, and delegate skillfully. Unfortunately, a UVM study (Giangreco, Broer, Edelman, 2002) offers quotes that cast the availability of appropriately trained and supervised paraprofessionals in a negative light:

- When one administrator was asked, “What do you look for when hiring a paraprofessional?” the response was, “Do they have a pulse? Are they breathing?”
- Another educator opined, “The day hasn’t gotten any longer. I don’t see anyone willing to pay the para-educators to stay extra time so that we can train them. I don’t have any time in the day to train them because I have so many kids on my caseload.”
- Regarding professional development, a paraprofessional herself explained, “There are a number of different seminars and things that come up that we can go to. But to tell you the truth, I don’t know how close they come to really helping us in our jobs.”

Impact: In the last fiscal year, 47 schools or SU preschools used Title I funds to employ paraprofessionals. Over 75 paraprofessionals were hired and that equated to more than 58 FTEs. The amount of funds spent was more than \$1,046,316 which equates to about 3.5% of Vermont’s Title I allocation. (The amount of funds is conservative as I estimated the cost of paraprofessionals when included in a strategy with teacher positions.)

It is impossible to know if any of the paraprofessionals in this analysis are licensed teachers or just high school graduates. All are reported to meet the HQP requirements in NCLB. The per-school impact varies greatly; many schools employ a single (or partial) FTE Title I paraprofessional. One school has 14 instructional paraprofessionals, but only pays 20 % of the cost of those 14 with Title dollars. One large school employs 6.1 FTE paraprofessionals, the highest number in any one Vermont school.

Implementation Plan:

FY 13 - Notify by the beginning of calendar 2013 all Vermont LEAs of this impending change. Provide training at the May CFP annual conference.

FY 14 – If any schools wish to hire paraprofessionals that do not meet the exception listed above, they will need to provide documentation of the past effectiveness in terms of improved student academic performance of the strategy. Others will not be approved. The CFP team will review the documentation and effectiveness data and review/revise the policy.

FY 15 – Based on the review of the policy, fully implement.

Resulting Action: The COP approved the new procedure and it was implemented according to the Implementation Plan above.

Item #4 - Limiting of Class Size Reduction Strategies

Proposed Policy: Class Size Reduction Strategies (CSR) will be limited to those that employ highly qualified educators to serve smaller instructional groups for sustained blocks of time for a specific content area on a regular basis. Those CSR strategies that create additional classes in a particular grade or subject area (regular classroom teachers) will not be considered.

Rationale: “Class size reduction has been shown to work for some students in some grades in some states and countries, but its impact has been found to be mixed or not discernible in other settings and circumstances that seem similar. It is very expensive. The costs and benefits of class size mandates need to be carefully weighed against all of the alternatives when difficult budget and program decisions must be made.” (Brookings, 2011) According to the International Center for Education Statistics, Vermont already has the lowest student/teacher ratio in the entire country – approximately 11 students to each teacher. Thus, it does not seem to make sense to allocate our limited resources to CSR.

Federal funds are intended to supplement and not supplant local and state budgets and, therefore, are not intended to provide support for regular classroom teachers. If a school is using this strategy to fund what they would be required to fund locally per their own class size policy, they may be putting the LEA at risk of a supplanting audit issue.

Impact: Twenty-one schools and fifteen separate LEAs currently utilize federal funds to reduce class size to hire a classroom teacher. It equates to 17.76 FTEs at a cost of \$1,105,458 (about 10.2% of Vermont’s Title IIA allocation).

Implementation Plan:

FY 11 – A technical assistance alert was sent to all CFP Team Leaders to inform LEAs that they should not use CSR for teachers that local policy would require.

FY 12 & FY13 – The Title IIA Cliff Notes given to all attendees of the May CFP Conference included the same language as in the technical assistance alert. Once agreed to with the Committee of Practitioners, alert the field to the new policy. Provide training at the May CFP Conference.

FY 14 – Only approve CSR strategies for classroom teachers if the LEA provides documentation of their policy (each SU is required by Vermont law to have a class size policy) and class rosters by numbers, and the documentation shows that the expenditure of funds would supplement what is required with local funds. LEAs will be responsible for evaluating these strategies for effectiveness in regards to improving student academic achievement.

FY 15 – Only approve those that have proved through documentation that it isn’t supplanting, and the evidence show that it is an effective strategy.

Resulting Action: The COP approved the new procedure and it was implemented according to the Implementation Plan above

**Committee of Practitioners
Minutes of Meeting
November 19, 2012**

Committee Members in Attendance: Nancy Cornell, Christine Reighley, Dawn Moskowitz, Judy Adams, David Baroudi, Ken Remsen, Mike Mulcahy, Sherry Giles, Deb Quackenbush, John Fischer, Jennifer Barone, Armando Vilaseca, Sue Evans

Invited Guests: Deb Price, Lisa Mazzitelli

Committee Members Absent (sent in email feedback): Jeanne Collins, Laurie Singer

Facilitator: Mary Mulloy

Item	Discussion Summary	Tasks
<p>Item #1 Funding of School Improvement Coaches</p>	<p>Discussion centered on the definition of “School Improvement Coaches.” Are we talking about the VTDOE personnel, the external coaches trained by VTDOE, the Green Mt. Star Facilitators, content area coaches, or internal coaches? Would the coaches be mandatory for different or all stages of identification? How does this relate to the Commissioner’s required actions? Is the extra school improvement money schools were getting going away? There were many questions that would need to be clarified.</p> <p>Committee members felt this proposed policy would unfairly limit the flexibility and decision making ability of the LEA (local educational agency). Not all have had good experience with school coaches and VTDOE should not mandate this approach and if so, then the State should pay for them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The internal team at VTDOE will need to meet to clarify the definition and who we are exactly referring to in this proposed policy. • Given the strong comments from the Committee, the internal team will decide if modifications are necessary and if we want to move forward with the proposed implementation. • The internal team should explore how we could research the effectiveness of the current coaching model.

Item	Discussion Summary	Tasks
	<p>Also brought up was the language we are using – should we start referring to these coaches as School Effectiveness Coaches. The suggestion was made that VTDOE do research on the effectiveness of the coaches.</p>	
<p>Item #2 Alignment of CFP strategies with Green Mt. Star Results</p>	<p>Concern was expressed about which LEAs would need to do this – at what level of identification. Currently only a subset of the identified schools are piloting using Green Mt. Star. Mary reminded participants that not all CFP strategies would have to be connected to GMS results. LEA flexibility must be maintained. Both Armando and John reflected on their recent meeting with Arne Duncan and both had the feeling that the feds may make federal funds more prescriptive in the future as the belief is that funds have not been used effectively.</p> <p>Since we are so new in using GMS – does it make sense to align everything.</p> <p>Sherry stated that we are administering the working conditions survey. This and other data sets should also be aligned with use of CFP fund usage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The internal team will need to clarify who must and who may use GMS. • If this is implemented, training must occur on how LEAs would do this while applying for CFP funds.
<p>Item #3 Use of Paraprofessionals</p>	<p>There was a general positive consensus on this</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus was to implement this

Item	Discussion Summary	Tasks
	<p>proposed policy. Members wondered if there would be a similar effort in SPED.</p> <p>Discussion occurred around the credentials and that credentials do not always indicate teacher effectiveness. How will schools measure effectiveness with para usage? VTDOE should give specific guidance. We would need to be sure that we are not sending a global message about para use – in some cases, paras are very effective. Could VTDOE create a template?</p> <p>Some members stated that having a para to teach and manage was often another whole job that it impact adversely on their ability and time to work with students.</p> <p>This may have a significant financial impact on districts. One member suggested that districts demonstrate a plan that shows a teacher drives the instruction and truly supervises the para.</p>	<p>policy but let LEA know as soon as possible to lessen budget issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VTDOE creates a template with instructions on the documentation needed to prove past effectiveness of those paras they want to continue to fund with CFP funds.
<p>Item #4 Limiting of Class Size Reduction Strategies</p>	<p>A clarification was asked if this also referred to content specialists that provide extra support to students in a content area. That is not what this proposed policy is about – it is only for regular classroom teachers. This policy may have a big effect on some budgets where this strategy has been utilized. The issue of supplanting came up and members agreed that some LEA may have</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus was to implement this policy but let LEA know as soon as possible to lessen budget issues. Be clearer in the policy about what staff we are really talking about • Title I staff will contact the 15 LEAs that have used this strategy to give

Item	Discussion Summary	Tasks
	<p>been supplanting - using federal dollars to funds regular classroom teachers. It was suggested that VTDOE have a personal conversation with the 15 LEAs that are currently using this strategy.</p> <p>One member suggested that we give LEAs an additional year before implementing this policy. Both Comm. Vilaseca and Dept. Comm. Fischer expressed concern that if supplanting was happening; we need to stop it as soon as possible.</p> <p>Members expressed concern that this may limit co-teaching – a strategy we have supported.</p> <p>We should be clear how class size is calculated in rolling this policy out. Different places do it differently.</p>	<p>them an early heads-up.</p>
<p>General</p>	<p>How will this process move forward? An internal team will review the notes and suggestions and make recommendations for final policies. Those will then be published and disseminated via CFP Technical Assistance Alerts, Weekly Notes, and on the website.</p> <p>All members will receive minutes and final policy statements. Future meetings will be scheduled when additional policy is proposed.</p>	