

Connecticut Guidance for a Professional Learning System (November 2015)



CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Overview

The goal of professional learning is to improve and enhance educator practice in order to support student growth and development. All professionals, regardless of their field of work, engage in continuous learning as part of their professional practice. Educator professional learning requires collaboration with colleagues to meet the diverse learning needs of all students, a commitment to continuously analyze and refine one's practice, and a responsibility to take action to improve one's performance. It is sustained over time, not the result of a single event or episode, focused on deep learning and application of learning, and incorporates effective adult learning practices.

Every district will be at a different place in its development of a high-quality professional learning system, but the approach described in this document can support districts as they develop and refine their vision and goals for a high-quality professional learning system. A Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) may choose to use this professional learning document as they develop and enhance their district's professional learning system.

Note: The information in this guide will evolve over time to reflect effective practices within the professional learning systems across Connecticut.



High-quality professional learning is a process that ensures all educators have equitable access throughout their career continuum to relevant, individual and collaborative opportunities to enhance their practice so that all students advance towards positive academic and non-academic outcomes.

Connecticut Definition of Professional Learning

High-quality professional learning is a process that ensures all educators¹ have equitable access, throughout their career continuum, to relevant individual and collaborative opportunities to enhance their practice so that all students advance towards positive academic and non-academic outcomes.

Introduction

Background

A major Connecticut educational reform statute, passed in 2012, redefines professional learning as intensive and sustained continuous improvement for educators that is aligned to standards, is conducted among educators, occurs frequently, and includes a repository of best practices for teaching methods developed by educators. The statute requires that professional learning programs reflect a comprehensive approach to increasing teacher and administrator effectiveness, focused on improving teaching methods and developing a shared collective responsibility for student growth (See Appendix A).

Student success depends on effective teaching and leadership. Connecticut's vision for professional learning is that each and every Connecticut educator engages in continuous learning every day to increase their skills and knowledge to enhance practice, resulting in positive outcomes for each and every student. For Connecticut's students to graduate ready for college and careers, educators must engage in strategically-planned, well-supported, standards-based, continuous professional learning focused on the growth and development of students.

Values and Beliefs

The foundation of any effective system is built on core values and beliefs. Values and beliefs "endure over time. They supersede time, programs, strategies, and practice."² They drive the decisions designers make to develop and sustain an effective professional learning system. An effective professional learning system:

- is fundamental to both educator and student growth;
- supports the developmental process for educator growth in knowledge and skills, and addresses stages of change;
- provides each and every educator access to opportunities to engage in continuous, career-long learning to refine, improve and enhance practice;
- supports an ongoing process, not an isolated event, that results in changes to individuals first, then organizations;
- includes relevant job-embedded learning that requires dedicated and sustained time;
- supports individual educator, team, school, district and state improvement goals aligned to a vision for teaching and learning;
- promotes educator collaboration around relevant, meaningful goals that support teaching and learning;
- encourages all members of the learning community to build and cultivate collective responsibility, continuous improvement, and shared leadership toward effective professional learning experiences; and
- uses knowledge and understanding of different cultures in the school community to promote effective interactions among students, educators, families and the larger community.

¹ Must apply to all certified employees and can extend to all school and district staff.

² Hirsh, S., & Killion, J. (2007). *The Learning Educator: A New Era in Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

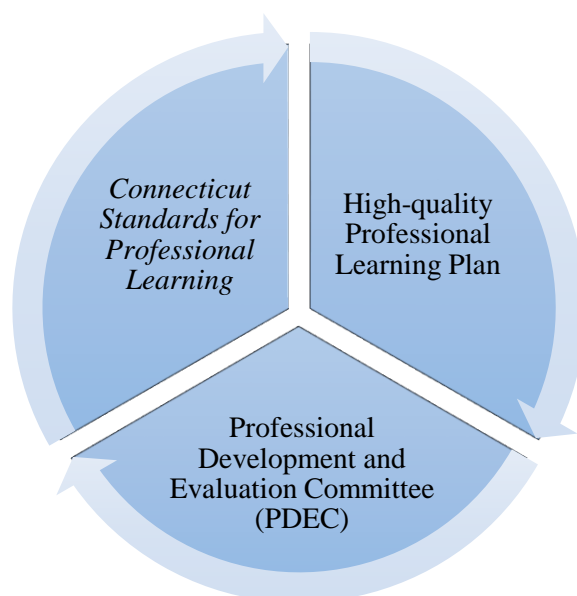


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Elements of a High-quality Professional Learning System

The three interdependent elements of Connecticut's high-quality professional learning system are: 1) the *Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning*, 2) an effective Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC), and 3) a comprehensive professional learning plan (Figure 1). These elements must be continuously reviewed, refined and adapted to support educator and student growth and development.

Figure 1: Key Elements of Connecticut's Professional Learning System



In order to achieve results for educators and students, professional learning must shift from common historical practices, which were measured by documented hours spent in professional development or continuing education units (CEUs), to sustained, authentic, job-embedded professional learning measured by evidence of impact on practice and student growth. Figure 2 summarizes the major research-supported shifts (Killion, 2012).

Figure 2: Shifts in Professional Learning

Less	More
Driven by educator preference	Driven by student, educator and systems data
Focused on generic instruction	Focused on depth of knowledge, including cross-disciplinary and discipline-specific instruction and/or practice
Large group, formal, one-size-fits-all to build awareness	Informal, self-directed and collaborative learning to develop, refine and enhance practice
Occasional, episodic learning	Cycles of continuous improvement



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Figure 3: Connecticut's Professional Learning System

This graphic demonstrates how a sustainable system for professional learning integrates three interdependent elements. High-quality professional learning systems are designed using a set of standards as the foundation. Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECs) use those standards to define and expand upon a shared vision and share the responsibility for designing a comprehensive professional learning plan. The high-quality professional learning plan describes the opportunities for educators to engage in meaningful learning that improves and/or enhances practice.



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Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning

Adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education on May 6, 2015, the *Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning* were designed to support excellence in teaching and learning through high-quality professional learning for educators. More than three decades of research in the field of professional learning served as the foundation for the *Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning*. The research-base includes the *Standards for Professional Learning*¹ originally developed by Learning Forward in 1995. Learning Forward convened a broadly representative stakeholder group to develop these standards to reflect successful practices and define high-quality professional learning.

The eight *Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning* are important to the design, implementation and sustainability of a professional learning system. They define the characteristics of a high-quality system of professional learning and can be used by Professional Development and Evaluation Committees (PDECs), district and/or school administrators, educators and stakeholders.

Cultural Competence: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* facilitates educators' self-examination of their awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions that pertain to culture and how they can develop culturally-responsive strategies to enrich the educational experiences for all students.

Learning Communities: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* occurs within learning communities committed to continuous growth, collective responsibility, family and community engagement and alignment of district and school vision and goals.

Leadership: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* requires and develops leadership capacity at all levels to advocate for and create systems for professional learning.

Resources: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* requires purposeful planning for the identification, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and equitable use and allocation of resources to support educator learning.

Data: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* requires the use of both quantitative and qualitative student, educator and system data to plan, implement, monitor and assess professional learning.

Learning Designs: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* integrates research on effective adult learning and uses flexible learning designs to achieve intended outcomes.

Implementation: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* applies change research and uses tools to identify and support the developmental stages of change and ensures the fidelity of implementation.

Outcomes: *Professional learning that enhances both educator practice and outcomes for each and every student* is aligned with district/school goals, relevant Connecticut standards, and other agreed-upon standards for educator practice and student growth.

¹ **Learning Forward. (2011).** Standards for Professional Learning. Oxford, OH: Author.



Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC)

An effective PDEC is composed of certified teachers, administrators and other appropriate school personnel including representatives selected by the respective bargaining units. Members of a PDEC collaboratively define a shared vision and establish collective responsibility for the development, evaluation and updating of a local comprehensive professional learning plan and participation in the development or adoption of the district educator evaluation and support program. The PDEC designs and regularly updates a comprehensive plan that clearly describes how professional learning is developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated within a district.

A district-level PDEC is required by statute; however, school-based PDECs may also exist. Those educators who sit on the PDEC have and/or gain a fundamental knowledge base about good practice that helps develop and implement their professional learning plan as aligned with the *Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning*. Members are expected to understand Connecticut's definition and standards for professional learning. Figure 4 describes what a district and school-based PDEC should know and be able to do when designing and implementing a professional learning plan.

NOTE: This chart should be used as guidance *only*. This is a tool that provides an opportunity for valuable professional learning as PDEC members work with one another to enhance their district's professional learning system. PDECs can reference the descriptions below to this to identify clear short-term and long-term goals as a committee. While all items in the chart are important, every district is in a different place and PDECs must identify their current practices based on their district's context to identify focus areas for the committee's growth and development.

Figure 4: Guidance for an Effective PDEC

The PDEC understands/has an awareness of...	In developing the plan, the PDEC...	In implementing the plan, the PDEC...
the district's strategic plan and the key needs and issues in the areas of student and educator growth, curriculum and instruction, and leadership at the district and school level.	analyzes and synthesizes key needs and issues that contribute to professional learning, educator and student growth, and district and/or school development, inclusive of available resources - funding, people, time, technology and materials.	monitors to determine if the comprehensive plan addresses needs and issues as identified at the district and school level.
how professional learning supports district and school level strategic planning in areas including, but not limited to: curricular change, new initiatives, instructional practices, content-specific knowledge and skills, and leadership growth for teachers and administrators.	aligns educator professional learning to student growth and development needs and district and school goals.	identifies representatives, at the district and school level, to facilitate discussion with educators focused on how the plan will support district and school goals.



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Figure 4:, Guidance for an Effective PDEC, continued

The PDEC understands/has an awareness of...	In developing the plan, the PDEC...	In implementing the plan, the PDEC...
the areas in which, and the degree to which, the PDEC makes decisions regarding how resources – funding, people, time, technology and materials – are identified, accessed, used and evaluated for professional learning.	identifies the available and appropriate resources that support what is outlined in the plan.	<p>makes decisions regarding how identified available and appropriate resources – funding, people, time, technology and materials – are used so that professional learning that is planned can be implemented.</p> <p>helps educators access available/appropriate resources and evaluates the effectiveness of resources and their use.</p>
the <i>Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning</i> and how to align them with relevant Connecticut standards and other agreed-upon standards for educator practice and student growth.	<p>ensures alignment to the <i>Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning</i>, relevant Connecticut standards, and other agreed-upon standards for educator practice and student growth.</p> <p>develops avenues through which district and school staff will become familiar with the <i>Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning</i> and how they align with agreed-upon standards for educator practice and student growth.</p>	identifies representatives, at the district and school level, to facilitate discussion with educators focused on how they will build their awareness of the <i>Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning</i> , relevant Connecticut standards, and other agreed-upon standards for educator practice and student growth.
the principles and developmental stages of change and how professional learning leads to building district capacity and long-lasting change.	plans implementation of professional learning so as to support long-lasting change that leads to educator and student success.	identifies and uses tools to support the professional learning needed to implement change and to monitor change efforts.



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Figure 4: Guidance for an Effective PDEC, continued

The PDEC understands/has an awareness of...	In developing the plan, the PDEC...	In implementing the plan, the PDEC...
professional learning as a series of varied learning experiences, not single events or a one-size-fits-all approach to learning.	models, advocates for, and supports relevant, job-embedded learning that enhances practices, facilitates skill development and builds capacity of educators throughout the district.	ensures that the resources and learning designs educators can choose to use are flexible and appropriate for helping them meet their individual and/or collective learning goals.
how adults learn.	ensures that the plan has the flexibility to enable educators to self-direct their learning and connect it to practice, so the context in and methods by which they learn meet their learning styles and needs.	actively works with educators at the district and school level to learn how to develop, implement and assess learning plans that connect district and school goals, student learning needs, and their individual and/or collective learning needs.
how to appropriately include all educators in planning professional learning that takes place on the district, school and individual level, and is highly self-directed, intensive, sustained and connected to their practice.	<p>collaborates with teachers, administrators, and representative groups to determine what professional learning is needed at the district level</p> <p>determines how to support collaboration at the school, small group, and individual level to plan professional learning activities.</p>	<p>ensures that district-wide professional learning is planned for representative groups of educators and is appropriate for district level professional learning objectives.</p> <p>ensures that planning at the school, small group and individual level is done collaboratively to best meet educator learning needs</p>
<p>what professional learning practices used in the district and school(s) are successful, and why they are successful, based on qualitative and quantitative data.</p> <p>how monitoring and evaluation of professional learning are used to continuously review and refine practice.</p>	<p>uses needs assessments and qualitative and quantitative data throughout the stages of planning/designing, implementing, monitoring and assessing a high-quality professional learning plan.</p> <p>develops a method for monitoring professional learning processes and evaluating the impact of professional learning.</p>	gathers data to monitor implementation, oversees the evaluation of the plan, and shares that information with the appropriate audience.



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Figure 4: Guidance for an Effective PDEC, continued

The PDEC understands/has an awareness of...	In developing the plan, the PDEC...	In implementing the plan, the PDEC...
<p>how cultural competency involves self-examination of one's own cultural background and biases, and the similarities and differences in culture among students, communities and families.</p>	<p>intentionally include processes that prompt educators to examine their beliefs and practices around cultural competence.</p> <p>maintains a commitment to support multicultural education at the district and school level.</p>	<p>gathers data to monitor that culturally-responsive strategies are embedded in professional learning at the district and school level.</p>



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A High-quality Professional Learning Plan

A comprehensive professional learning plan is the map that guides professional learning for all educators to enhance their practice and support student growth. It clearly describes how professional learning is developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated within a district and school.

A high-quality professional learning plan reflects the *Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning* and describes...

- the district vision for linking student, educator, and organizational growth and improvement;
- how professional learning is used to support district and school goals, educator growth and evaluation, curriculum development and implementation, , cultural competency, family and community engagement, and student growth and development;
- clear and specific steps for plan implementation;
- flexible learning designs that provide for self-directed, collaborative and guided learning to address variability of grade configurations, educator experience(s), and the specific demands of the curriculum and instructional practice;
- how all educators are appropriately included in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating professional learning;
- how needs assessment and quantitative and qualitative data are used to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate professional learning activities that support individual educator, team, school and district goals and sustainable change;
- clear, simple methods for all educators to use to monitor and evaluate how professional learning is transferred to practice; and
- how decisions regarding resources – funding, people, time, technology and materials – are made to support professional learning.



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Appendix A
Connecticut General Statutes

C.G.S. 10-148a. Required Professional Development Programs

(a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2013, and each school year thereafter, each certified employee shall participate in a program of professional development. Each local and regional board of education shall make available, annually, at no cost to its certified employees, a program of professional development that is not fewer than eighteen hours in length, of which preponderance is in a small group or individual instructional setting. Such program of professional development shall

- (1) be a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teacher and administrator effectiveness in increasing student knowledge achievement,
- (2) focus on refining and improving various effective teaching methods that are shared between and among educators,
- (3) foster collective responsibility for improved student performance, and
- (4) be comprised of professional learning that
 - (A) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards,
 - (B) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by principals, coaches, mentors, distinguished educators, as described in section 10-145s, or other appropriate teachers,
 - (C) occurs frequently on an individual basis or among groups of teachers in a job-embedded process of continuous improvement, and
 - (D) includes a repository of best practices for teaching methods developed by educators within each school that is continuously available to such educators for comment and updating. Each program of professional development shall include professional development activities in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of this section.

C.G.S. 10-148a. Required Outcomes Planning for Professional Development

(b) Local and regional boards of education shall offer professional development activities to certified employees as part of the plan developed pursuant to subsection (b) of section 10-220a or for any individual certified employee. Such professional development activities may be made available by a board of education directly, through a regional educational service center or cooperative arrangement with another board of education or through arrangements with any professional development provider approved by the Commissioner of Education. Such professional development activities shall (1) improve the integration of reading instruction, literacy and numeracy enhancement, and cultural awareness into instructional practice, (2) include strategies to improve English language learner instruction into instructional practice, (3) be determined by each board of education with the advice and assistance of the teachers employed by such board, including representatives of the exclusive bargaining unit for such teachers pursuant to section 10-153b, and on and after July 1, 2012, in full consideration of priorities and needs related to student outcomes as determined by the State Board of Education, (4) use the results and findings of teacher and administrator performance evaluations, conducted pursuant to section 10-151b, to improve teacher and administrator practice and provide professional growth, and (5) include training in the implementation of student individualized education programs and the



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communication of individualized education program procedures to parents or guardians of students who require special education and related services for certified employees with an endorsement in special education who hold a position requiring such an endorsement.

Training Required for Superintendents and Administrators

Professional development completed by superintendents of schools and administrators, as defined in section 10-144e, shall include at least fifteen hours of training in the evaluation and support of teachers under the teacher and administrator evaluation and support program, pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of section 10-151b, during each five-year period.

Scheduling

The time and location for the provision of such activities shall be in accordance with either an agreement between the board of education and the exclusive bargaining unit pursuant to section 10-153b or, in the absence of such agreement or to the extent such agreement does not provide for the time and location of all such activities, in accordance with a determination by the board of education.

C.G.S. 10-148a. Attestation to the CSDE

(c) Each local and regional board of education or supervisory agent of a nonpublic school approved by the State Board of Education shall attest to the Department of Education, in such form and at such time as the commissioner shall prescribe, that professional development activities under this section:

- (1) Are planned in response to identified needs,
- (2) are provided by qualified instructional personnel, as appropriate,
- (3) have the requirements for participation in the activity shared with participants before the commencement of the activity,
- (4) are evaluated in terms of its effectiveness and its contribution to the attainment of school or district-wide goals, and
- (5) are documented in accordance with procedures established by the State Board of Education. In the event that the Department of Education notifies the local or regional board of education that the provisions of this subsection have not been met and that specific corrective action is necessary, the local or regional board of education shall take such corrective action immediately.

C.G.S. 10-148a. Audits by CSDE

(d) The Department of Education shall conduct audits of the professional development programs provided by local and regional boards of education. If the State Board of Education determines, based on such audit, that a local or regional board of education is not in compliance with any provision of this section, the State Board of Education may require the local or regional board of education to forfeit of the total sum which is paid to such board of education from the State Treasury an amount determined by the State Board of Education. The amount so forfeited shall be withheld from a grant payment, as determined by the Commissioner of Education, during the fiscal year following the fiscal year in which noncompliance is determined. The State Board of Education may waive such forfeiture if the State



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Board of Education determines that the failure of the local or regional board of education to comply with the provisions of this section was due to circumstances beyond its control.

C.G.S. 10-148b. Professional Development Program Re Scientifically-Based Reading Research and Instruction.

(a) On or before July 1, 2013, the Commissioner of Education shall create a program of professional development for teachers, as defined in section 10-144d, and principals in scientifically-based reading research and instruction, as defined in section 10-14u. Such program of professional development shall (1) count towards the professional development requirements pursuant to section 10-148a, (2) be based on data collected from student reading assessments, (3) provide differentiated and intensified training in reading instruction for teachers, (4) outline how mentor teachers will train teachers in reading instruction, (5) outline how model classrooms will be established in schools for reading instruction, (6) inform principals on how to evaluate classrooms and teacher performance in scientifically-based reading research and instruction, and (7) be job-embedded and local whenever possible. In the case of any certified individual who is required to complete the reading instruction survey, pursuant to section 10-145r, the program of professional development for such individual shall be designed using the results of such survey, in accordance with said section 10-145r.

C.G.S. 10-148b Review and Assessment of Professional Development.

(b) The Commissioner of Education shall annually review the professional development required under section 10-148a for certified employees who hold a professional educator certificate with an early childhood nursery through grade three or an elementary endorsement and who hold a position requiring such an endorsement. The commissioner shall assess whether such professional development meets the state goals for student academic achievement through implementation of the common core state standards adopted by the State Board of Education, research-based interventions in reading and the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq., as amended from time to time. The commissioner shall submit such review to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a.

C.G.S. 10-151b. Required District Professional Development and Evaluation Committee

(b) Except as provided in subsection (d) of this section, not later than September 1, 2013, each local and regional board of education shall adopt and implement a teacher evaluation and support program that is consistent with the guidelines for a model teacher evaluation and support program adopted by the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. Such teacher evaluation and support program shall be developed through mutual agreement between the local or regional board of education and the professional development and evaluation committee for the school district, established pursuant to subsection (b) of section 10-220a, as amended by this act. If a local or regional board of education is unable to develop a teacher evaluation and support program through mutual agreement with such professional development and evaluation committee, then such board of education and such professional development and evaluation committee shall consider the model



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teacher evaluation and support program adopted by the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, and such board of education may adopt, through mutual agreement with such professional development and evaluation committee, such model teacher evaluation and support program. If a local or regional board of education and the professional development and evaluation committee are unable to mutually agree on the adoption of such model teacher evaluation and support program, then such board of education shall adopt and implement a teacher evaluation and support program developed by such board of education, provided such teacher evaluation and support program is consistent with the guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education, pursuant to subsection (c) of this section. Each local and regional board of education may commence implementation of the teacher evaluation and support program adopted pursuant to this subsection in accordance with a teacher evaluation and support program implementation plan adopted pursuant to subsection (d) of this section.

C.G.S. 10-220a. Required District Professional Development and Evaluation Committee

(b) Not later than a date prescribed by the commissioner, each local and regional board of education shall establish a professional development and evaluation committee consisting of certified employees, and such other school personnel as the board deems appropriate, including representatives selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for such employees chosen pursuant to subsection (b) of [section 10-153](#). The duties of such committees shall include, but not be limited to, participation in the development or adoption of a teacher evaluation and support program for the district, pursuant to [section 10-151b](#), and the development, evaluation and annual updating of a comprehensive local professional development plan for certified employees of the district. Such plan shall: (1) Be directly related to the educational goals prepared by the local or regional board of education pursuant to subsection (b) of [section 10-220](#), (2) on and after July 1, 2011, be developed with full consideration of the priorities and needs related to student outcomes as determined by the State Board of Education, and (3) provide for the ongoing and systematic assessment and improvement of both teacher evaluation and professional development of the professional staff members of each such board, including personnel management and evaluation training or experience for administrators, shall be related to regular and special student needs and may include provisions concerning career incentives and parent involvement. The State Board of Education shall develop guidelines to assist local and regional boards of education in determining the objectives of the plans and in coordinating staff development activities with student needs and school programs.

C.G.S. 10-220a. In-Service training

(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-service training program for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide such teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on (1) the nature and the relationship of drugs, as defined in subdivision (17) of [section 21a-240](#), and alcohol to health and personality development, and procedures for discouraging their abuse, (2) health and mental health risk reduction education which includes, but need not be limited to, the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and the relationship of such behavior to substance abuse, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-infection and AIDS, as defined in [section 19a-581](#), violence, teen dating violence, domestic violence, child abuse and youth suicide, (3) the growth and



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development of exceptional children, including handicapped and gifted and talented children and children who may require special education, including, but not limited to, children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or learning disabilities, and methods for identifying, planning for and working effectively with special needs children in a regular classroom, including, but not limited to, implementation of student individualized education programs, (4) school violence prevention, conflict resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, as defined in subsection (a) of [section 10-222d](#), except that those boards of education that implement any evidence-based model approach that is approved by the Department of Education and is consistent with subsection (d) of [section 10-145a](#), [sections 10-222d](#), [10-222g](#) and [10-222h](#), subsection (g) of [section 10-233c](#) and sections 1 and 3 of public act 08-160, [\[FN1\]](#) shall not be required to provide in-service training on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, (5) cardiopulmonary resuscitation and other emergency lifesaving procedures, (6) computer and other information technology as applied to student learning and classroom instruction, communications and data management, (7) the teaching of the language arts, reading and reading readiness for teachers in grades kindergarten to three, inclusive, (8) second language acquisition in districts required to provide a program of bilingual education pursuant to [section 10-17f](#), (9) the requirements and obligations of a mandated reporter, and (10) the teacher evaluation and support program adopted pursuant to subsection (b) of [section 10-151b](#). Each local and regional board of education may allow any paraprofessional or noncertified employee to participate, on a voluntary basis, in any in-service training program provided pursuant to this section. The State Board of Education, within available appropriations and utilizing available materials, shall assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to include: (A) Holocaust and genocide education and awareness; (B) the historical events surrounding the Great Famine in Ireland; (C) African-American history; (D) Puerto Rican history; (E) Native American history; (F) personal financial management; (G) domestic violence and teen dating violence; (H) mental health first aid training; and (I) topics approved by the state board upon the request of local or regional boards of education as part of in-service training programs pursuant to this subsection.

