

Discipline Equity/Advisory Task Force
March 10, 2016

Present:

Katie Ahsell, ACTIONS
Ann Cochran, Carrie Busey/CFT
Joel Wright, Jefferson
Abby Heras, Garden Hills
Jeanne Smith, Mellon, Recorder

Kendra Bonam, Centennial
Stephanie Hayek, CECC
Bryan Yacko, Central
Orlando Thomas, Mellon, Chair

Celebrations

Orlando and Katie reported that the Youth Mental Health conference they attended in Las Vegas recently was very exciting and informative.

Follow-Up to Special Education Question Raised Previously

Orlando reported that after speaking with Elizabeth deGruy, he learned that suspension assignments to ACTIONS next year will be counted as out-of-school suspensions for special education students.

Suspension Letters and Codes

Task Force members viewed the proposed suspension letter template and compared it to one of the templates provided by Franczek and Radelet, District legal counsel. The group agreed that the components that the attorney advised us to include should be imbedded into the existing template letter so that it looks like a typical business letter and not a form with blanks and boxes to fill in.

The group also suggested some minor changes to the draft suspension letter template proposed (attached).

Orlando and Jeanne reported that it is their intent to have as few suspension letter templates as possible next year.

Next year if students stay home for a portion of a suspension and attend ACTIONS for a portion of their suspension, (code SUA), the entire suspension period will be counted as an out-of-school suspension so as to incentivize participation in ACTIONS.

Grading Policy/Homework and SB 100

It was suggested that next year all staff be reminded of SB 100's impact on homework and the grading policy.

SB 100 Internal Messaging

Orlando reported that he will be allowed two to three hours at Summer Leadership to explain Administrators will then share what they learned with their building staffs. Messaging will also need to go out to parents/community; Stephanie Stuart will assist in this endeavor. Orlando asked what information and format the task force suggests using. The group thought the "Key Elementary of Illinois' SB 100" flyer prepared by Campaign for Common Sense Discipline be used (minus the logo), provided there are no copyright restrictions. Task Force members suggested putting a checkmark next to each numbered item to indicate the District is in compliance with each one.

The Task Force suggested using the "Key Elements" flyer as:

- 1) As a handout at the Summer Leadership conference for administrators as well as for staff briefing
- 2) As a flyer at registration copied on the flip side of the Superintendent's Student Code of Conduct letter which would introduce SB 100. The Superintendent's letter could also mention that suspensions served at ACTIONS will now be counted as in-school rather than out-of-school suspensions for regular education students.
- 3) Included in the Student Code of Conduct

Next steps: Orlando will put together the SB 100 info. document for principal and teacher use and share with this group. He will send it out ahead of the next meeting for discussion on April 5.

Items from the Floor

Orlando asked if there were other topics related to the Student Code of Conduct that members wanted to discuss. Plagiarizing and cell phones were mentioned. It was explained that the consequences for plagiarizing are included in the grading policy. (Upon further investigation it was learned that plagiarism is not covered in the grading policy but in the high school handbooks.) This topic has been discussed at this committee in the past and the Orlando was told by the administration that this is a curricular area and not subject to the Student Code of Conduct. Kendra Bonam said she wanted to go on record to say she thought the consequences in the grading policy are too lenient in some cases.

Regarding cell phones, Ann Cochrane, on behalf of the union, voiced concerns from teachers, mainly at middle and high school, that phone usage continues to be disruptive to the teaching and learning environment. Bryan Yacko and Kendra Bonam reviewed the cell phone procedures in place at both high schools and stated they think the procedures have worked better this year than in the past. Orlando reminded the committee that when the cell phone policy was last revised, we were advised by legal counsel to avoid confiscating students' phones because they are personal property for which they/their parents pay monthly fees. Administrators may confiscate phones in certain situations, but generally it is safer to request a phone from a student if information is needed off the phone for an investigation or safety issue. If a student refuses to put a phone away when a teacher directs him/her to do so, the student can be disciplined for disobedience. For minor cell phone offenses, Level 1 referrals should be given.

Joel Wright brought up the fact that students sometimes use their phones to record or take pictures of other students without their knowledge or permission, often for the purposes of sexual harassment. Orlando stated that this type of behavior is a violation of the electronic devices guidelines and could result in consequences beyond just a Level 1 referral; in this circumstance students could be disciplined with sexual harassment.

Orlando said he would discuss other school districts' cell phone policies with Jennifer Smith, legal counsel.

Homework: Members were asked to think of a visual to accompany the SB 100 messaging.

Next meeting: April 5, 2016, 4:00 p.m., Mellon North Conference Room

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