

**Discipline Equity/Advisory Task Force Meeting
November 14, 2013**

Present:

Katie Ahsell, Jefferson	Stephanie Hayek, CECC
Cathy Mannen, CFT/Bottenfield	Suzanne Meislahn, FIC
Kyle Sondgeroth, Bottenfield	Tomeka Whitfield, Edison
Bryan Yacko, Central	Jeanne Smith, Recorder, Mellon
Orlando Thomas, Chair, Mellon	

Celebrations

Bryan Yacko reported that the new Level 1 referrals are helping to reduce DR's. He also reported that Central's discipline numbers are down, which he attributes to the myriad interventions being used and teachers' actions/reactions to certain student situations.

Tomeka commented that she has been impressed by the efforts of the ACTIONS Program at the middle school level. She said there has been a lot of good follow-up on the part of ACTIONS staff who keep in good communication with teachers via email and classroom visits.

Katie Ahsell reported that student feedback forms were recently initiated at ACTIONS and the comments from students about the usefulness of the program have been quite positive.

Discipline Data

Orlando reported on October discipline data.

Orlando reported that he has noticed an uptick in DRs and suspensions at the K-1 levels. He said there are a few classrooms in the district with some very high needs students who do not qualify for special ed. services because they are "conduct disorder" rather than "emotional disorder." He gave some examples of the types of behaviors they are displaying which were extremely disruptive and/or violent. He asked the group to brainstorm ideas for ways to support these students, their classmates whose learning is being severely disrupted, and the teachers attempting to meet the needs of all the students in the class.

Cathy Mannen asked if referrals to Pavilion had increased in response to these students' outbursts at school. Orlando explained that there may be more assessments being conducted by Pavilion Hospital on these types of students; however, since the students don't qualify for special ed. services, they cannot attend the Pavilion School.

Stephanie Hayek reported that teachers at CECC have seen these types of behaviors in the pre-K program as well. She explained that CECC uses its own discipline system and does not suspend. When students have violent outbursts and cannot be removed from the classroom quickly and safely, sometimes the only way to respond is to evacuate the other students from the classroom so that the impact on them is minimized. She said teachers have developed behavior plans for regular ed. students with conduct disorders. These plans resemble Functional Behavior Analyses

used with special ed. students. She reported that in recent years, funding at Pre-K has been reduced resulting in fewer classrooms and larger class sizes. She wondered if additional funds were budgeted to Pre-K if more individualized instruction and supports could be provided to address these types of behavior concerns (front load services rather than waiting for behaviors to escalate as children get older). She shared a recent incident at CECC that involved a new student (first day at CECC) taking two aides to the ground.

Someone asked if these types of students are being sent to the ACTIONS Program and what impact it was having on their behavior. Orlando reported that some of the students have gone to ACTIONS where they continued their aggressive behavior to the point that a restraint, SASS call, and/or police action have been needed. Orlando reported that even staff who have special ed. backgrounds, aren't sure how to deal with these regular ed. students who are displaying Level 3 needs. Bryan asked if the District would consider having a regular ed. behavioral alternative program for elementary students since interventions in the regular school setting are not working for this small group of students. Orlando said, "Possibly." Orlando reported that if the District decided to create such a program, it would be racially identifiable and consist mainly of African-American males.

Katie Ahsell said if an alternative school is run properly and provides the therapeutic supports necessary for the students' individual needs, the race of the students should be immaterial. Bryan Yacko went so far as to say denying needed services to students based on race is virtually criminal. Tomeka fears that students with severe conduct disorders will drive other families away from Unit 4 if these students' needs are not addressed.

Tomeka said she believes people on this task force understand the need for an alternative program to meet the needs of these types of students, but wondered if those with more decision making authority would view such a program in a positive light and vote to provide the necessary funds. Bryan Yacko said if the program's criteria were clearly identified and decisions for placements were data-based, he thinks such a program could be extremely helpful to all parties involved (students needing support, other students whose learning is interrupted, and the regular ed. teachers who are trying to meet all their students' needs). Orlando said he thinks the same logic should apply to this type of alternative program as applies to the Novak Academy, i.e., not all students are able to learn and succeed in the traditional school setting. Kyle Sonderoth said he believes one of the reasons students like these are not successful in the traditional setting is that the language used in the Tier 2 or Tier 3 setting is not used in the regular classroom; this results in a disconnect between the student and the classroom teacher relative to behavioral expectations.

The group agreed that these types of behaviors are only going to increase and wondered how to move forward with the concept of a behavioral alternative school for elementary students. Katie suggested that support from such a program be solicited from the parents of these students. She reported that she has received very positive feedback from the parents of the students who have attended ACTIONS. She said they made comments to the effect of: "My child needs this type of support *every day*." If parents speak out for this level of support for their children, that might help sway decision-makers to consider such a proposal. Katie also suggested providing decision

makers with student profiles which indicate the many interventions attempted and lack of improvement to justify the need for interventions that are more therapeutic.

Components of Standard PBS/PBIS Implementation and Additions under a Culturally Responsive PBS/PBIS Model

Orlando shared a comparison sheet development by Eddie Ferguson's group from the NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Educational and Human Development Center on School Changes, Practice, and Policy which compares a standard PBS/PBIS model with one that is culturally responsive. Orlando asked those present to discuss each component (and associated culturally responsive bullet points) to determine whether our District's model is culturally responsive and, if not, how to make it so. Below are the culturally responsive implementation goals:

#1 Establish Commitment:

- School-wide commitment to addressing racial/ethnic disparities – The group agreed that the District does this to some extent but not totally. Improvement might include: 1) Well-functioning Equity Teams at each campus, 2) Disaggregating data and then using it to effectively address issues of cultural responsiveness, 3) Expanding Minority Round Table concept currently utilized by Edison.

#2 Establish and Maintain Team:

- Representative team established: racial/ethnic and SES diversity – It was not clear if “team” referred only to the PBIS team or other teams like RtI, Tier 1, or CICO's. It was noted that team/committee memberships are voluntary, so membership cannot be dictated by race or ethnicity. Those present felt that the various teams/committees related to student behavior are fairly diverse in terms of race and SES because staff from a variety of employee groups are represented (bus drivers, aides, cafeteria workers, hall monitors, etc.) It was noted, however, that the District work force does not mirror its student body; the work force, particularly the teaching staff, has a higher percentage of Whites than the student body does.

#3 Self-Assessment:

- Surveys and interviews on culture
- Disaggregated disciplinary data
- Hypotheses about data that *include culture*
- Develop culturally responsive intervention

Since not all schools are represented on this task force, answers could not be generalized to include every campus; however, those present discussed examples that all four of the bulleted points are/have been implemented at Jefferson and Central. It was noted that culture/climate surveys done at the middle and high school levels almost two years ago were instrumental in bringing students' culture/race to the forefront as schools worked to develop culturally responsive interventions.

Katie Ahsell commented that as a part of her doctoral studies, she researched the NYU Steinhardt group's philosophical underpinnings and her interpretation of the literature led her to believe that what that group advocates is not individualizing the rules to fit each student's culture, but rather to keep the rules consistent and intervene in ways that are

culturally responsive. Cathy Mannen said that makes sense because rules have to remain consistent in order to provide safety and educational opportunities for all students. Those at the table found Katie's statement very enlightening because that was not the message the task force received from the NYU project associates during the Oct. 1 work day.

#4 School-Wide Expectations

- Examine intersection of culture and school expectations – Some individuals found the wording of this bullet point a bit unclear, but examples of ways in which the “intersection” is being examined included: Second Step instruction and Tier 2 groups at CECC (and other campuses as well).
- How does a cultural perspective affect instruction and management? –The example of an African-American student rolling his/her eyes at the teacher and the teacher's response to this behavior was discussed. Tomeka noted that she ignores this behavior. Another person said it might be addressed with a Level 1 referral if it was perceived by the teacher as disrespect. Cathy Mannen brought up a counter argument about the teacher's right to have his/her culture respected, if the teacher's culture considers the behavior disrespectful. She asked, “Whose behavior do you respect?”
- Teach with awareness of cultural differences – Tomeka stated that the College Prep Math (CPM) program is respectful of cultural differences as evidenced by the student names used in mathematical problems—“Tomeka” was one of the student's names in the math book she was using. Several task force members said they think the types of student activities teachers use in their classrooms reflect awareness of cultural differences, e.g., kinesthetic activities, literature from different parts of the world, social studies instruction on topics relative to different ethnic and racial groups. The International Academy was also provided as an example of cultural awareness. Katie also stated she believes the new teacher evaluation tool which requires students to take more initiative in their learning is inherently culturally responsive. Tomeka noted that it is difficult to attend to every culture represented in our District because of the District's multicultural, multiethnic composition.

#6 Build Capacity for Function-Based Support

- Text-based discussion and critical friends to enhance awareness of culture – Task force members felt the District provides a variety of avenues for this component to be met. Examples given included: Book studies, Social Justice Committee, Equity Teams, and the DEA Task Force.
- Institutional procedures for ensuring ongoing dialogue on culture-based issues – Examples that the District ensures this were: DEA Task Force, Social Justice Committee, Equity Teams, and Student Representatives to the School Board.

Next meeting: January 23, 2014, 4:00, Mellon. (We will complete discussion of NYC Code of Conduct. Please complete reading on your own and be ready to provide examples of items/issues you think should be incorporated into our District's Code, which will be the focus of remaining meetings.

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