

**Discipline Equity/Advisory (DEA) Task Force Meeting
March 30, 2017**

Present:

Jill Johnson, FIC	Gwenetta Posey, Dr. Howard
Kathy Shannon, Board of Ed.	Joel Wright, Jefferson
Bryan Yacko, Central	Gianina Baker, Board of Ed.
Orlando Thomas, Chair	Jeanne Smith, Recorder
Rick Carr, FIC (arrived 4:55, conflict)	

Feedback from Board Members

Kathy Shannon explained that she sought suggestions from Board members on changes to the Code of Conduct. She said the Board does not want to drive the decision-making process, but Kathy Richards did share her thoughts regarding bullying, SB 100 impact, and dress code. Regarding bullying, Kathy Shannon shared a concern that “bullying” has become a buzzword that is greatly overused by students, parents, and community members to the point that it has lost its meaning. Kathy Richards is also concerned that sometimes both parties in a physical confrontation are disciplined even though one was clearly the aggressor and the other was merely defending himself/herself.

Bullying: Bryan Yacko agreed that the term “bullying” is used loosely and often by the party that loses a fight. He said in the great majority of cases, both parties take part in behavior that leads to a fight and no one party is totally innocent. Regarding students being disciplined for defending themselves, he said the line between protecting oneself and being an aggressor is often blurred, which is why, in most cases, both students receive disciplinary consequences for fighting.

The Code of Conduct definition was read aloud twice. Members agreed that it was quite clear. They noted that the definition does not consider an imbalance of power/authority. Kathy wondered if the imbalance of power is implied in the “reasonably predicted to have the effect of....” language. The question whether two parties can “bully” each other was posed.

SB 100 Impact: Kathy Richards was curious to hear how staff have reacted to SB 100 and its impact on student behavior and teacher morale. Bryan Yacko, Joel Wright, and Gwenetta Posey discussed the impact at their respective levels concluding that SB 100 has not negatively impacted the climate at their campuses. Jill Johnson said attendance at ACTIONS is up this year and the reduction of suspension durations for substance abuse infractions combined with drug counseling at ACTIONS have been positive changes.

Dress Code: Kathy Richards, who described herself to Kathy Shannon as a “bleeding heart, liberal, feminist,” said she would favor having buildings take the lead on dress code violations rather than having DEA recommend changes to the Code. She said she would like to see the dress code enforced in a way that does not impact girls unfairly.

Climate Task Force

Orlando reported that in response to community outcry over the alleged bullying incident involving the

death of a Centennial student, the District will be using a multi-pronged approach to address future bullying/harassment in our schools. One component of this initiative will be the creation of a ***Climate Task Force*** to review the District's bullying and harassment policies, procedures, curricula, and practices. The committee will be comprised of District- and building-level administrators including Elizabeth deGruy, teachers, parents, social workers, and possibly students and Board members. This task force suggested having students from upper elementary, middle (3), and high school (3) levels. Gwenetta Posey, Joel Wright, and Kathy Shannon volunteered to serve on this task force.

Second, ***student focus groups*** will be conducted to ascertain if cases of bullying/harassment are going unreported and why. Ways to improve reporting will be discussed.

Third, a ***new Safe Schools staff training module on the topic of bullying*** will be mandatory next year.

Fourth, ***bullying incidents will be reviewed and discussed with building administrators twice annually*** beginning next year. It was suggested that a PowerPoint or some written information be provided to all staff to assist them in identifying and reporting bullying/harassment. The definition of bullying which appears in the Code should be included.

Jill Johnson said she thinks the Second Step curriculum could be improved by having a component that teaches children what to do if they witness bullying. She also commented that she thinks some of the information in Second Step, if taken out of context, can teach students to be bullies. Jill said it's also important to consider the reasons people bully. Gwenetta Posey said she thinks Second Step is fairly comprehensive.

Orlando and Jill discussed that all reports of alleged bullying are recorded on a District form. Jill noted that even if the first instance doesn't meet the strict definition of bullying, having that initial record is important in case a pattern develops later.

Code of Conduct Changes

In response to the alleged bullying incident at Centennial, Orlando will discuss with Jennifer Smith whether it is advised to include both the policy *and* the procedure for sexual harassment and bullying in the Code. Currently just the sexual harassment procedure (but not policy) and the bullying policy (but not procedure) are included.

After Orlando and Jeanne speak with Jennifer Smith, a summary of changes will be typed and sent to task force members prior to the changes going to the Board for review and approval.

Next (and final) meeting: April 6, 4:00 p.m., Mellon NE Board Room (note location change)

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