

Discipline Equity Task Force Meeting
November 12, 2015

Present:

Katie Ahsell, ACTIONS
Ann Cochrane, Carrie Busey/CFT
Amber Owens, Bottenfield
Ben Trupin, Mellon
Bryan Yacko, Central
Orlando Thomas, Mellon, chair

Kendra Bonam, Centennial
Katharine Fettig, Central
Gwenetta Posey, Dr. Howard
Joel Wright, Jefferson
Abby Heras, Garden Hills
Jeanne Smith, Mellon, recorder

Additional Meetings

Orlando Thomas explained that the reason for the additional meetings this year was in response to the impact of SB100 on the Code of Conduct.

Legal Impact of SB100 on Suspensions and Expulsions

Orlando reviewed a handout produced by the Illinois Principals Association that highlights the changes that will need to be made to student discipline policies as a result of SB 100.

One of the bulleted items states, “School officials shall not advise students to drop out voluntarily due to academic or behavioral difficulties.” This prompted a question regarding schools’ obligation to accept new students who cannot graduate in a timely basis. Bryan Yacko said he didn’t think it would impact the current practice that states schools do not have to accept (regular education) 18-year-olds who cannot graduate by their 19th birthday. It was acknowledged that special ed. students have until age 21 to graduate.

Another question came up regarding the impact SB100 would have on current laws regarding drugs, weapons, and physical confrontations with staff. Currently those violations are expellable offenses unless the principal decides to mitigate.

It was noted that additional verbiage will need to be added to suspension letters that explains the rationale for the duration of the suspension. The same will be needed for suspension/expulsion letters explaining why removing the student is in the best interest of the school and the duration of the expulsion.

Transforming School Discipline Collaborative

Orlando reported that the Transforming School Discipline Collaborative had sent him and Laura Taylor a draft of a model code of conduct taking into consideration the goals and objectives of SB100. He and Laura Taylor were asked to provide feedback to the draft. Orlando discussed a few concepts that this group promoted:

1) **Proposed language:** No students in third grade or below may be suspended.

Task Force Response: The group disagreed and thought schools should have the prerogative to determine whether a suspension is necessary.

2) **Proposed language:** A suspension of more than three days cannot be imposed for a first-time offense. (The district and school **must** have first implemented other behavioral interventions and followed the district and school process for documenting that these interventions have been “exhausted.”)

Task Force Response: The task force believed there should be exceptions made for first-time offenses that are severe.

3) **Proposed language:** In the case of an expulsion, a student may appeal a decision to the full school board. If the expulsion hearing was initially held before a hearing officer (as is the case in Unit 4), the student may request a re-hearing before the board.

Task Force Response: Two people on the task force agreed with the proposed language; the rest did not.

Restorative Justice Training for Administrators

Orlando reported that a Restorative Justice training will be held for administrators December 7-8, 2015. A second training will be scheduled for spring. It is expected that administrators will be trained initially and then building staff will be trained later. Orlando reported that Restorative Justice only works when an entire school supports the initiative. It cannot work in “pockets” within a school.

Gwenetta Posey said she wasn’t terribly familiar with Restorative Justice concepts but is very supportive of the Responsive Classroom concept being used this year at Dr. Howard. She shared some of her experiences with this new initiative.

Behavior Plan Document Developed by ACTIONS

Orlando shared a behavior plan that ACTIONS staff use when they consult with teachers about students who demonstrate unsafe or disruptive behaviors they are having difficulty controlling. It was noted that these plans would be used for a small percentage of students. Orlando asked the group whether they thought it would be helpful to include this form in the Code. Some people thought it might be helpful and others thought it should be addressed through professional development but not included in the Code.

“Subjective” Violations #6 (Disobedience) and #7 (Disruptive Behavior)

The decision of whether to delete these violations from the 2016-17 Code will be discussed further at the next meeting since time did not allow for discussion at this meeting.

Review of Elementary and Secondary Interventions/Rockford Code of Conduct

Orlando shared a copy of Rockford’s student code of conduct. He noted that a consistent menu of interventions is included alongside the violation listing. He said he’d send this document to the group in order for them to review it in more detail to determine whether they thought this format should be adopted in next year’s Code of Conduct. As homework, he asked the group to review the elementary interventions listed on p. 9 and the secondary interventions listed on p. 20 of the Code to see which ones they might want to include as an added “menu column” to next year’s code. Task force members were also asked to think of additional interventions that might be added.

Next meeting: November 19, 2015, Mellon North Conference Room, 4:00 p.m.

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