

Bullying Task Force Notes: April 16, 2012

Members Present: Willie Bridges, Curt Carpenter, Brenda Cassellius, Vangie Castro, Philip Duran, Alana Friedman, Julie Herzog, Kevin Lindsey, Mary Mackbee, Lyn Mitchell, Walter Roberts, Kirk Schneidawind, Thomas Scott, Kelly Smith

Absent: Ted Daley, Jim Davnie, Scott Dibble, Tim Kelly, Jacob Reitan,

A. Meeting Convened: Co-Chair Roberts called the meeting to order

Agenda items discussed:

- Add other agencies to the committee's work—L. Mitchell
- Survey of the principals—C. Carpenter
- Committee decision making. Rose outlined other TF's decision making processes.
- Listening Sessions:
 - Bemidji: 4/18/12; 3:30 and 5:30 in the High School and the Middle School
 - Rochester, St. Cloud, Duluth and Metro sessions. Draft listening session questions available for review. Alana could help to combine efforts in Duluth.

B. Reporting Back

- SWOT analysis-in the packet. Use it to check the work that needs to be done.
- Work plan outlined in previous meeting: presenters, strategies, and 'what do we want to look at.'
- Public Requests: List of requests from public for input to the taskforce members.

C. Federal Compliance: Presentation by Marikay Litzau, MDE staff

- Dear Colleague letter: harassment and bullying policies. Harassment is a district legal language, and includes protected classes. The DC Letter attempts to help districts respond to harm—look at the whole picture, to be sure what you are dealing with. Minimize the effect of the harassment on the target. The conduct itself determines the bullying or harassment, not the terms that adults use. The letter also follows with recommended actions, reporting.
- Harassment model policy on the MDE website.
- OCR Investigations, settlements in MN.
 - 3 based upon race/national origin, one sexual orientation.
 - Red Wing: Wigger Day, Wangster Day. OCR and Dept. of Justice did an investigation. Offered an agreement—two year monitoring agreement, not publically available.
 - Owatonna and St. Cloud: Somali American Students being discriminated against in the school districts. Investigation and agreement: 2 year monitoring, public 8 and 9 point agreements, respectively.
- Agreement similarities:
 - Check policy, cover staff and students, and publish.
 - Forum was created for discussion for students and for the community.
 - Collect data—monitoring system, publication of data.
- Anoka: gender stereotypes. Investigation by OCR and DOJ, in addition to two law suits brought against the district. Reached an agreement with ORC and DOJ: 10 point agreement.
 - Review and revise policy; work with equity consultant.
 - Hire Title IX consultant.

- Training for faculty, staff and students on harassment and reporting.
- Hire a mental health consultant, create a taskforce.
- Administer an anti-bullying survey; id, from that hot spots, and take actions.
- Annual meetings with students and superintendents; compliance reports—every trimester for 5 years.
- **Harassment:** The conduct is based upon the protected class, race, national origin, gender, religion, age, etc. Marikay referred to the 'simplified summary of the terms bullying and harassment.'
- **Intimidation:** Discussion of the term; suggested it was more in the bullying category.
- **Definitions:** Stopbullying.gov has a summary of each of the bullying statutes in the country.
 - Look at statutes from other states: Sample of bullying definitions (in packet).
 - Challenge: can have a definition, but there is the challenge of how to get school districts to report accurately.
 - Question: how is adult behavior handled in regards to these issues?
 - Handled through board of teaching. School would have to follow its policy regarding staff behavior.
- **Hazing:** Required by all districts, as well as a harassment policy.

D. MSBA Policies: Presentation by Cathy Miller, MSBA Director of Legal & Policy Services

- MSBA offers policy service, started in 1995. All mandatory policies offered to all members (school districts in MN and Charter Schools, who chose to join), without paying for the policy service. Almost 100% membership with districts, not with Charters. There is unofficial training—by phone primarily and workshops at conferences. MSBA does not track which districts implement policy. MSBA can send along the survey they did with the districts.
- MDE gets assurances from districts that they are in compliance with all required policies. There is no process for reviewing annually the policies.
- Three policies available:
 1. **Bullying and cyberbullying** (that includes off-campus behavior if there is a connection back to the school district); adults are required to report what they see. The definition includes student on student behavior only.
 2. **Harassment** (originally based in MN law—sexual, racial and religious). MSBA now recommends that districts adopt all the protected classes in the harassment policy, for clarification—to cover all of the categories. The human rights act offered a broader application and it made more sense. That changed the definitions, and made the three policies in sync.
 3. **Hazing**
 4. **Equal educational opportunity** (based off of the MN Human Rights Act) (samples all in packet).
- Process: Reporting procedures the same for all of these policies. Once policies are adopted by a district, they are public information. They are publicized, are in student handbooks, and often are on-line.
- Could there be a mental health referral as an option? District decision.
- The MSBA policy was developed prior to statute. MSBA has done a comparison between the model policy and the ND law. Stacks up well—does not require law enforcement referral in the MN policy.

E. Impact on students: Presentations by Nancy Riestenberg, MDE staff and Dr. Brashler, MDH

- Two sources of data: DIRS and MSS (Minnesota Student Survey) on the state level; Office discipline referrals and harassment reports (quantitative) and focus groups, surveys (qualitative).
- MSS will take all suggestions for questions by the middle of July.
- Suicide. Bullying does not cause bullying. Bullying has an impact on mental health. (See the Suicide and Bullying Brief in the packet).
- Dr. Brashler asks that the Taskforce honor the complexity of suicide and bullying; be careful of the language we use so that people do not develop a cognitive link between suicide and bullying.

Questions:

- Suicide is 5 times more common than homicide. 600 suicides and a little over 100 homicides in Minnesota. 30-40 suicides are under 18. The number goes up at the college age. The vast majority of suicides are white middle aged men. And there is an increase among the elderly. There is some research regarding suicide by cop, but there is not a lot of research. In domestic violence, there are homicide/suicides.
- Mental illness is a factor in 90 % of suicide—diagnosable—not necessarily diagnosed. With young people, there may be some impulsive suicides, but the vast majority of youth suicides have mental illness as a factor.
- Conversation about the kinds of calls for help she gets, psychological reviews, prevention, (schools call after a suicide, mostly, kids about their parents, adults about their kids or other adults). Screening for suicide is hard because the ideation is fleeting, and comes and goes. There are questions as to whether schools should do screening from parents, the community and educators.
- Social support and social connectedness is a key protective factor.
- What would she recommend to the taskforce? “I think we all have the opportunity to promote positive health and wellness, and to help communities to think about this issue community- wide. This is a community responsibility.
- Role for comprehensive health education in schools, mental and physical health, collaborative partners developing coping skills and problem solving skills.

F. Group discussion: Definitions

Committee to use MSBA definition as basis and bring back suggested language to next meeting. MSBA has used legal counsel to vet. Also review other definitions and laws from other states

G. Public comment

- **Jeff W. Brown** presented a draft of distinguishing *harassment* and *bullying* in Minnesota. Also, the connection between class sizes and bullying.
- **Michelle Fournier** from Out-front coalition. Provided a handout about Out-front and Safe schools for all.
- **Darren Glynn** Teacher concerned about who was on the taskforce. Teacher & part time dean and father of a 6th grader who is disabled. Enforcement: "I try to work with the preventative side with teachers and staff. Not enough out there for bullying prevention for teachers. I wrote some curriculum."