

School Safety Technical Assistance Council

Minutes

Tuesday, April 26, 2016

3 – 5 p.m.

Minnesota Department of Education, Conference Center A, Room 13

Members Present: Commissioner Brenda Cassellius, Commissioner Kevin Lindsey, Julie Blaha, Melissa Callahan, Tom DeGree, Lisa Engelstad, John Hunt, Darren Kermes, Cathy Miller, Beth Ness, Zeam Porter, Jake Ross, Amanda Twite, Angela Willms and William Wyss.

Members Unable to Attend: Joanna Carlson, Julie Hertzog, Randy Johnson, Robyn Millenacker, Dan Porter, Tony Porter and Jeanette Swanson.

MDE Staff Present: Craig Wethington, Kevin McHenry, Heather Hirsch, Amy Marsicano, Patty Mattern and Josh Collins

Guests Present: Dave Edwards, Dan McNeil, Jessica Brennan, Melanie Ross, Katrina Plotz, Blaine Kelly, Chase Underwood, Barb Anderson, Torsten Peterson and Thor Berkson

- I. **Welcome:** Commissioner Brenda Cassellius called the meeting to order. Jake Ross acknowledged the second anniversary of the signing of Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act. Jake Ross also pushed the Council to consider how they are getting the resources of the School Safety Technical Assistance Center out to schools, students especially. Commissioner Cassellius also gave a brief legislative update on discipline bills that the Minnesota Department of Education is following.
- II. **Approval of October 27, 2015 Meeting Minutes:** No Changes were noted to the minutes. Minutes were approved. Julie Blaha moved to accept the minutes; Melissa Callahan seconded. Motion passed. Tom DeGree did note that he had invited Dr. Marla Eisenberg to present to the Charter School Association regarding their Minnesota Student Survey and school climate research.
- III. **School Safety Technical Assistance Center Director's Report:** Craig Wethington provided a report on the work the Center. The phone calls to the Center have been increasing in frequency in past few months and the bullying and harassment issues people are calling about are also increasingly severe. The Center is planning to reach out to the Council members and associations to identify additional referrals for parents and students. The Center has also invested in a training cadre who will work to provide training on bullying and harassment reporting and investigation to school and district personnel. The cadre will begin training in the 2016-17 school year. The Center is wrapping up an 18-month project with the National School Climate Center and the Minnesota Regional Cooperatives to build the capacity of cooperative staff to lead schools through a school climate improvement process. The Center is hosting 10 different Restorative Practices trainings in June 2016 for school and district staff of all levels. An implementation guide for restorative practices has also been developed and is being piloted in schools across Minnesota. The Center is supporting 10 districts through a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

grant and have seen great progress in terms of expanded health education, school based health centers, community-wide school climate assessment and implementation of restorative practices. The Center is hosting a discipline webinar with the Divisions of Compliance and Monitoring and Special Education April 27th, over 100 educators have registered for the webinar, which will be the first in a series. Craig Wethington and Commissioner Brenda Cassellius also provided an overview of the timeline for the Every Student Succeeds Act development and noted that a stakeholder meeting on Social Emotional Learning, School Climate and Healthy Learning Environments will be held on May 11th from 2-3 p.m. in Conference Center B at the Minnesota Department of Education.

IV. **Old Business**

a. Workgroup Updates

i. Social Emotional Learning Statewide Guidelines

Summary: Lisa Englestad provided a revised work plan to the council. She highlighted the workgroups plans to have expert review over the summer months by several national organizations and a public comment period on the guidelines. The goal is have final guidelines for the November 1 Council meeting. The workgroup is also planning to apply for a grant from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) related to furthering the development of supporting materials for districts planning to implement social emotional learning.

ii. Preventing Cyberbullying and Electronic Aggression

Summary: Melissa Callahan provided work group update. The workgroup has added new members over the past few months and plans to spend the summer months developing four to six short videos on topics related to cyberbullying for schools, parents and students. The plan is to work with education associations to distribute and promote the short videos in August as students are preparing to head back to school.

b. Committee Updates

- i. Safe and Supportive Schools Conference Update: Jake Ross provided an update about the January 22nd Symposium, "Minnesota Safe and Supportive Schools Conference" at Hamline University, St. Paul. Over 400 people attend the conference. The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Conference presenters included David Esquith, Director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students, a youth panel and staff from Facebook and PACER. The Council would like to see the conference happen again, during the work week and consider offering smaller versions in greater Minnesota.

V. **New Business**

- a. School Climate Policy Institute: Darren Kermes provided an overview of the Policy Institute held in St. Cloud last October. Zeam Porter asked how the Center

was working to encourage districts to involve students in the process and emphasized the importance of student voice in policy development. Craig Wethington provided an overview of the handouts participants received, which are also posted on the Center's website, along with recordings of several sessions. Darren Kermes prompted the Council to consider revising the state model policy to include harassment, school climate and restorative practices language, but also acknowledged many districts may not adopt this language without the support of the Minnesota School Boards Association. No further action was taken by the Council.

- b. School resources related to gender nonconforming students: Julie Blaha raised the need for the Council to provide technical assistance and resources to schools and districts on best practices to support gender nonconforming students. Craig Wethington said that the Center is currently working with 11 school districts that have requested technical assistance in this area and expressed a need for the Council to create consistent resources that the Center could point schools and districts towards. Julie Blaha moved to create a workgroup of the Council that would address this topic, and Amanda Twite seconded the motion. Zeam Porter requested that community organizations and others outside of the Council be recruited to participate in the development of any tools or resources. Tom DeGee encouraged the workgroup to develop guidance and tools, not policies, to increase the likelihood of authentic stakeholder engagement locally in policy development. Julie Blaha called for a vote and the motion passed.
 - c. Staff to Student Bullying and Harassment: This item was tabled.
- VI. **Public comment:** Dave Edwards commented that the discussion of gender nonconforming guidance was timely and that while policy guidance was important, implementation guidance was equally important for schools and districts. Chase Underwood urged the Council to move on the topic as well, to provide safe education environments for all students and emphasized the need for staff development in this area. Blaine Kelley commented on the urgency of the topic, citing several statistics related to transgender students' experiences and emphasized the need to make connections between education and community organizations that have training and resources available. Zeam Porter reiterated policies that are good and supportive of transgender students are also good and supportive of all students and that was the intent of the Safe and Supportive Schools Act. Commissioner Kevin Lindsey noted that the Office of Human Rights can offer assistance and additional supports for students or families as well. William Wyss thanked all of the students that attended the meeting and made comments and acknowledged the urgency of the Council to address this topic.
- VII. **Other Business/Updates:** Craig reminded the Council that the next meeting is scheduled for August 16th from 3-5 p.m. at the Minnesota Department of Education.
- VIII. **Meeting Adjourned:** John Hunt moved and Melissa Callahan seconded the motion to adjourn. All voted in favor and the meeting was closed.