

## **Monday, February 14, 2011'Meeting Minutes**

Darren Reisberg, the Deputy Superintendent/General Counsel at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) called the fourth meeting of the Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force to order at 3:12 p.m. Mr. Reisberg welcomed the Task Force and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 31<sup>st</sup> meeting. Brooke Whitted, of the Leslie Shankman School Corporation, made the motion, which was seconded by Dorothy Espelage of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Reisberg observed that the Task Force report is due on March 1, 2011 and he is committed to delivering the final report to the legislature and the Governor on time. He asked each work group to appoint a lead writer who could work with a small subcommittee to finalize the report. He recommended taking some time during the meeting to break into work groups to allow each subcommittee an opportunity to identify modifications that should be made to their drafts based upon feedback they received from the larger Task Force. After these breakout sessions, Mr. Reisberg will reconvene the Task Force to decide how to logistically finalize the report.

Mr. Reisberg laid out several general points about revisions to the draft report that the Task Force should consider. He recommended that the report should open by setting out the legislative and policy direction that the Task Force recommends because the audience is legislators. This section could be followed by the professional development section and then the data needs section, both of which should refer back to the policy/legislative section. After the work groups revise their draft sections, a subcommittee of writing leads from each group can compile the sections, add transitions, and remove any duplication.

Brooke Whitted mentioned that he provided a draft of revised language for legislation for the Task Force members, which incorporates most of the principles that the policy group has discussed. Mr. Reisberg responded that ISBE staff could help the policy group revise the current draft to include appropriate legislative language. He pointed out that it is helpful to have draft language for legislators. In addition, a model bullying prevention policy would also be helpful for districts. He remarked that including examples of policies from other states, and then drawing attention to the differences between Illinois and the other states, can be a powerful tool when working with legislators. In the same way, the Task Force might include examples of current district policies that are both sparse and well-developed and point out the differences so legislators can clearly see what elements should be required in the future. This section of the report might also refer to criteria that can be used to assess the effectiveness of district policies.

As the Task Force members revise their draft sections of the report, Mr. Reisberg encouraged them to consider the five charges of the Task Force: explore the causes and consequences of bullying in schools; identify promising practices that reduce incidences of bullying; highlight training and technical assistance opportunities for schools to effectively address bullying; evaluate the effectiveness of schools' current anti-bullying policies and other bullying prevention programs; and other related issues.

Linda Tomlinson, Assistant Superintendent at ISBE, then presented briefly for the Task Force about how ISBE is working to include education about bullying prevention in teacher and principal preparation programs in Illinois. Beginning in 2013, principal preparation programs in

Illinois must include coursework related to the identification of bullying, understanding the different types of bullying behavior, and the importance of teaching, promoting and rewarding a peaceful and productive school climate. The guidelines for principal preparation programs are currently more developed than those for teacher preparation, but Dr. Tomlinson welcomed input from the Task Force on the development of the guidelines for teacher preparation programs.

Teacher preparation programs must address the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, three of which are related to bullying prevention, although bullying is not specifically mentioned. The first related standard focuses on the importance of teachers understanding the spectrum of diversity that they will encounter in their classrooms. Teachers should be prepared to work with students across this spectrum, facilitate a learning community in which individual differences are respected, and demonstrate positive regard for the culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and varying abilities of individual students and their families.

The second standard is related to creating a safe learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. In developing this positive learning environment, teachers should be prepared to teach social skill development to all students and to make decisions that enhance social relationships in the classroom through mutual respect, cooperation, and support for one another.

The third related standard centers on the importance of teachers developing and maintaining collaborative relationships with colleagues, parents/guardians, and the community to support student learning and well-being. Teachers should be prepared to work with colleagues to develop an effective learning climate within the school and to participate in collaborative decision-making and problem-solving with other professionals to support student success.

In addition to the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, bullying prevention is also related to the code of ethics which applies to all educators in Illinois. All educators must create learning environments that are accessible to each student, enable students to achieve their highest academic potential, and maximize their ability to succeed in academic and employment settings as a responsible member of society. Further, Illinois educators must respect the inherent dignity and worth of each student by assuring that the learning environment is characterized by respect and equal opportunity for each student, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, language or socio-economic status. The development of such respectful learning environments should result in a decrease in bullying behavior.

Stacey Horn, of the University of Illinois at Chicago, asked about how teacher preparation programs will be held accountable. Dr. Tomlinson indicated that ISBE guidelines will require changes to all programs to align with the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. These changes will be approved after the preparation program provider presents before the State Teacher Certification Board. In response to a question from Dr. Horn about accountability for alternative routes to certification, Mr. Reisberg mentioned that state law recently opened the door to non-profit organizations developing teacher preparation programs, but they will be subject to the same approval process as institutions of higher education. Mr. Reisberg also mentioned that if a provider is not following ISBE rules, ISBE can take action and the agency has demonstrated a willingness to do that.

In a similar fashion, every principal preparation program must present before an external review team and then before the State Teacher Certification Board. In response to a question from Dr. Horn, Linda Tomlinson affirmed that these reviewers would be provided with training. In response to an inquiry from Malik Nevels, of the African-American Coalition, Mr. Reisberg encouraged the Task Force members to contact the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) to indicate their support for the rules. He will also ask ISBE staff to send the rules, ISBE's responses to public comments, and the code of ethics to all of the members. Shannon Sullivan, of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, observed that the ethics code and Illinois Professional Teaching Standards contradict the current practice of religious institutions of higher education asking students to sign lifestyle statements that are opposed to non-heterosexual sexual orientation. She asked if those discriminatory practices will impact the ability of these institutions to offer approved teacher preparation programs. Mr. Reisberg thanked her for bringing the matter to his attention and he will look into it further.

During public participation, Keith Avery described his data system, which captures information about attitudes and beliefs and social/emotional competencies. Multiple stakeholders (e.g. student, teacher, parent, bus driver, etc.) can rate students on social/emotional competencies and these varied perspectives can be tracked over time. In addition, data can be examined at the student level or aggregated to compare schools within a district or across districts. His reports also provide a summary of strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for next steps.

Eddie Slowikowski also addressed the Task Force about promising practices in district 202 in Plainfield. In that school district, community-buy-in has been important, garnered largely through neighborhood watch groups. He observed that when parents are more involved, the success of bullying prevention programs increases. Initiatives in the district that have been most successful have helped bullies to become a more integral part of the larger community. Brooke Whitted expressed support for comprehensive programs to reduce the epidemic of bullying and to measure reports of bullying systematically.

Before transitioning to the reports from the work groups, Mr. Reisberg mentioned that ISBE is working with education groups in the state on a bill that will require an annual climate survey in schools. If the legislature passes this bill and appropriates funds to support the survey, information from the survey could be added to the annual school report cards that ISBE publishes.

Josh Gray, of Chicago Public Schools, led the reporting for the Policy work group. In their draft section of the report, the group identified 10-12 core components of bullying prevention policies for school districts to consider. While they tried to stay within the scope of the Task Force's charge, they included recommendations that were related not only to bullying prevention, but also to school improvement more broadly. Brooke Whitted added that the group thought it was important for districts to mandate reporting, to implement RTI structures, and to develop written contracts with families. Caryn Curry, of the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership, urged the policy group to look carefully at their Tier 3 recommendations and to clearly state that referral to special education is not a mandate, but an option at this stage. As they revise their section, Mr. Reisberg encouraged the group to include some language about evaluating the effectiveness of policies, with some comments devoted to the evaluation of current district

policies. This section of the report also provides the group with an opportunity to include examples of existing lackluster policies, as examples of what districts should not do, as well as examples of exemplary policies, and a full draft of a model district policy that district leaders could easily bring to their Boards. He also cautioned the group about including legislation that is quite detailed and to examine the overlap in their report between legislative language and recommendations for district policy.

Mr. Gray noted that their recommendation for a contract was designed as a strategy to engage parents. However, Brian Meyer, of the Illinois PBIS Network, observed that mention of a contract was better suited for the report section on programs rather than being included as a component of a state or district policy. He asked the academics in the room if there is research to support the use of contracts. Dr. Horn responded that there is no rigorous research about contracts with bully prevention program, but contracts absolutely do not work for abstinence programs.

Shannon Sullivan then reviewed the report section that focuses on professional development and youth programming. Throughout the section, the members of this group focus on transforming school climate through comprehensive frameworks like PBIS. Bullying prevention is a small piece of this larger recommended transformation, which also includes a call to replace punitive policies with skill building and to implement RTI models and SEL standards. In addition, she noted that working with youth will be critical to the success of these transformations. The section concludes with success stories about prevention programs that are effective.

Stacey Horn then led the reporting for the data group. She noted that the charge of the group was confusing and asked if the group should be focused more on what is currently happening or on what the system should look like? They also need more direction about how far to go, i.e. should they make recommendations for what tools should look like or should they actually design sample tools? She observed that the data section might not be a stand-alone section, but instead the group might contribute language that can be woven into other sections of the report. For example, the data group could provide the policy group with language related to methods for assessing if programs are effective. In the larger report, the data work group believes it will be important to make the case for what we do know about bullying prevention, to discuss the data sources that are currently available, to outline what we need to know, and to describe methods to gather that data. Their recommendations might include: encouraging the development of tools for schools to assess their readiness to engage in bullying prevention work (e.g. do they have a policy in place?, do they have community buy-in?, etc.); adding questions to the IYS or creating modules that are specifically related to bullying; developing a battery of measures that are developmentally appropriate, valid, and reliable; and providing schools with support to collect data, monitor progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of their bullying prevention programs.

Dr. Horn is sensitive to the challenges that schools are facing and would like the recommendations to include a discussion of what kinds of data are reasonable for schools to collect because there is not enough money in the state budget to mandate that districts collect a great deal of data. Instead, the Task Force might encourage the legislature to mandate reporting on 2-3 indicators, which would be published on the annual school report card, and then provide schools that would like to go further with resources and a menu of opportunities to collect data

and evaluate program effectiveness. Dr. Espelage agreed with providing schools with recommendations for tools. She noted that many organizations are selling surveys to schools, but the tools that she has developed are free and psychometrically sound.

Dr. Horn also urged the Task Force to be cautious of the language that is used in the final report and to carefully consider the tone and approach. She recommended an asset-based approach with softened language such as support vs. mandate, agreement vs. contract, etc. Malik Nevels supported Dr. Horn's recommendation to work with the community to build value for data and to strengthen relationships between providers and schools. Josh Gray observed that it would be helpful if the Task Force's final report provided useful outputs, such as sample policies and recommendations on the types of data that schools should be collecting and the questions they should be asking. Shannon Sullivan noted that the menu of opportunities would be important to recognize that context is important and different schools need different things. Mr. Reisberg agreed that attention to a constructive tone would be important as organizations that represent districts are not in favor of any more mandates that require dollars or staff time. He asked the Task Force to recognize that any recommendations for mandates would likely receive push-back from the field. He urged the Task Force to recommend the best way to implement their vision, but cautioned that extending the timeline for the Task Force might not be the best choice; instead other mechanisms might be better choices to continue the momentum on this issue. Before breaking into work groups, Mr. Reisberg clarified that it would be helpful for the Task Force to review resources that are available on ISBE's website and recommend how those resources could be improved to better assist school districts.

After the work groups returned from their breakout sessions, Mr. Reisberg asked each subcommittee to designate one person who would serve as the writing lead for the group. The writing subcommittee will then shape the revised report sections from the work groups into the final report. The writing subcommittee members will be Dorothy Espelage, Stacey Horn and Shannon Sullivan. He observed that the final report should be a consensus document, but a minority report may also be attached.

Barbara Shaw, of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority, and Kim Fornero, of the Illinois Department of Human Services, urged Mr. Reisberg to consider a late submission of the report in order to ensure that the final report is a high-quality document. Mr. Reisberg responded that it would be difficult to request an extension at this late date and that ISBE takes audit findings seriously. He noted that the report does not signal an end to the process, but rather that the recommendations in the report can shape the next stage of the discussion in the legislature. Ms. Shaw and Mr. Reisberg will reach out to Senator Lightford and Representative Yarbrough to explore the possibility of requesting an extension. In the event that an extension is not possible, the Task Force agreed to work toward the following benchmarks to submit the final report on time:

- **February 18:** Work groups will send revised drafts of their sections to the writing subcommittee.
- **February 22:** The writing subcommittee will send a revised draft of the full report to the Task Force by the end of the business day.

- **February 25:** Task Force members will submit any comments they have to the writing subcommittee by 9 a.m.
- **February 28:** The writing subcommittee will send the final draft of the full report to the Task Force and the members will vote to submit the report.
- **March 1:** ISBE staff will prepare the final report for submission to the Governor and the legislature.

Mr. Reisberg adjourned the Task Force meeting at 6:03 p.m.

**Illinois State Board of Education  
Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force Members**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Attendance at 2/14 Meeting</b>
Darren Reisberg	Illinois State Board of Education	Present
Barbara Shaw	Illinois Violence Prevention Authority	Present
Rocco Claps	Illinois Department of Human Rights	Absent
Sarah Migas	Illinois Attorney General	Present
Grace Hong Duffin	Illinois Department of Human Services	Represented by designee
Shannon Sullivan	Safe Schools Alliance	Present
Malik Nevels	African American Coalition	Present
Lonnie Nasatir	Anti-Defamation League	Absent
Julie Justicz	Health and Disability Advocates	Absent
Peggy Thurow	Carpentersville CUSD 300	Present
Heather Nelson	Carpentersville CUSD 300	Present
Mike Penicook	Rantoul School District 137	Present
Maria McCarthy	Rantoul School District 137	Absent
Josh Gray	Chicago Public Schools	Present
Kelly Keating	East Aurora District 131	Absent
Stacey Horn	University of Illinois Chicago	Present
Dorothy Espelage	University of Illinois	Present
Anna Rangos	Student/ Maine South High School	Present
Sukari Stone	Student/ Whitney Young College Prep	Absent
Marc Kiehna	Regional Superintendent Monroe/Randolph Regional Office of Education	Present
Matthew John Rodriguez	Illinois Parent Teacher Association	Absent
Brooke Whitted	President, Leslie Shankman School Corporation	Present
Susan Goodwin	President, Quincy Human Rights Commission	Absent

## **Monday, February 28, 2011 Meeting Minutes**

Darren Reisberg, the Deputy Superintendent/General Counsel at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), opened the final meeting of the Task Force. Fifteen members were present during the meeting, or represented by a designee, and eight members were absent. Each member's attendance status is included on the list of the members that appears on the final page of this document.

Mr. Reisberg observed that he sees this Task Force as a first step. He thanked all of the members for joining ISBE to discuss these sensitive and important issues. He encouraged Task Force members from state agencies to work together to provide leadership on this issue across the state. He pointed out that he sent a draft of the final report to the members yesterday and then made some additional changes today. He included a draft policy in the appendices because it might be helpful for districts across the state. He asked the members to share questions, concerns, or comments before the Task Force voted on the document. On March 1, 2011, ISBE will prepare the report for submission to the Governor and the legislature.

Brooke Whitted, of the Leslie Shankman School Corporation, made a motion to adopt the report, which was seconded by Marc Kiehna, the Regional Superintendent of the Monroe/Randolph Regional Office of Education. Mr. Reisberg then opened discussion on the motion, noting that he wanted to ensure that members did not feel that they were being pressured into voting too soon.

Brooke Whitted remarked that he would like a note on the section that contains the DuPage County policy because he believes the policy is too punitive. Marc Kiehna agreed with Brooke about the punitive nature of the policy, but noted that he was an advocate for including the policy in the larger document as a resource for district leaders. Darren Reisberg pointed out that while the report could include this policy as a sample, the Task Force can also urge caution for other districts against being so punitive. Barbara Shaw, of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority, remarked that she thought such a statement would call attention to the policy, when it was not mentioned elsewhere in document, and might not accurately reflect current practice in DuPage County. Mr. Whitted responded that elsewhere in the document the Task Force makes clear that punitive approaches and zero tolerance are not best practice. He noted that the public minutes of this meeting can also reflect this discussion. Stacey Horn, of the University of Illinois at Chicago, further observed that in the larger report, with the success stories for example, the Task Force does comment that these examples are not perfect, but that they represent the spirit of an ideal approach, even if a universal ideal is not necessarily ideal for each individual context.

To improve the final report, Barbara Shaw recommended that the Task Force provide an executive summary. She remarked that there is a great deal of good material in the report, but she worries that it won't get read in-depth. She would like an executive summary to list the Task Force's key approaches and key messages at the beginning of the report. Mr. Reisberg responded that unless anyone has concerns, in ISBE's cover note to the Governor and the General Assembly, ISBE staff will develop an executive summary that highlights the key points of the report and the Task Force's recommendations. He will send the final report and executive summary to the group.



Marc Kiehna asked for clarification about what happened to the section related to professional development for administrators through an Administrators' Academy. He urged ISBE to ensure that this section is included to encourage implementation of the Task Force's recommendations by administrators in the state of Illinois, to move them along in adopting a plan, and then to guide the implementation of those plans in their school buildings. Mr. Reisberg remarked that the language may have been accidentally removed from the final revision, but ISBE will make sure that language is included in the final report. Stacey Horn and Josh Gray, of Chicago Public Schools, agreed that language should be included in the report. Mr. Reisberg recommended that the language be added to the professional development section of the report as it is related to professional development for administrators. Dorothy Espelage, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, further noted that the administrators' academy is not currently a recommendation, but it should be pulled out as an explicit recommendation in the executive summary and in the recommendation section of the report.

Stacey Horn raised an additional issue about a section of the report that included a paragraph about referral to special education. She observed that special education works very differently in different places across the state, so she wants to be careful about how the Task Force phrases this section. She recommended that the language be changed to, for example, special education or other appropriate services. Mr. Whitted contended that it was important for the report to reflect that special education should be available as an option for students who need it. He views special education in a positive way, not as a tool to marginalize young people. He would like to make clear that special education can be used at every stage of process. He believes there is more of a risk of not referring kids than in over identifying them. For example, autistic kids might be mercilessly harassed in a general education setting and might be better served in a self-contained situation. Barbara Shaw asked about the language used in the paragraph that indicated that special education would be appropriate to achieve a goal of reducing harassment and bullying. Marc Kiehna pointed out that in many districts in southern Illinois, special education referrals are the only way to conduct a high-quality case study analysis and to understand what may be behind a student's behavior. Through special education cooperatives, which work in collaboration with school districts in his region, districts are able to access school social workers and psychologists who can put together a battery of assessments and gather a variety of information about students. Without the special education referral process, many of these services would not otherwise be available downstate and it is the only avenue many districts have to examine the whole child. Dr. Horn remarked that she does not want this to be a big deal, but would like the Task Force to pay attention to how special education is used in different parts of state. She would like to craft the best statement possible so it does not give districts license to over utilize special education services for students when the services are not appropriate. Heather Nelson agreed that there are many districts that over identify students. However, if districts have a behavior system in place with tiers, then they can use the full case study approach after all interventions have been tried. Shannon Sullivan, of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, pointed out that schools are tremendously contextual places. In some instances, there are schools that place gay students in self-contained special education classrooms rather than deal with the homophobic climate that is pervasive in their school. There are some districts that are over identifying students for special education and some that are under identifying students. The Task Force needs to recognize that things happen differently in different parts of state and that special education services can be

utilized, as appropriate, at every stage of the process. Shannon will send language later this evening to reflect her statement to the Task Force.

Barbara Shaw thanked ISBE and the writing team for their responsiveness to the concerns that were raised by the members. She commended them and thanked everyone who worked on the report. Darren Reisberg asked for any final questions or concerns.

Josh Gray requested clarification about a statement in the report that referred to the idea about engaging key stakeholders and holding them accountable in some kind of agreement. It was clear at the last meeting that there is no research-based evidence for contracts, but he would still like to ensure that all stakeholders are held accountable. Dr. Espelage remarked that the language related to that idea should still be in the document. The writing team tempered the language to make it more inclusive, but she believes the message is still included. Dr. Horn noted that the language was in the version of the report that was sent on Sunday morning (either in the legislative/policy section or an appendix), but it looks like it might have been accidentally removed from the latest version. She asked Josh to review the language in the Sunday morning version. If he agreed with that language, it could be inserted again. Mr. Reisberg agreed that ISBE will make sure the language is reinstated if it is not in the current draft.

Mr. Reisberg mentioned that ISBE's goal will be to post the final report on the ISBE Task Force page. At that point, all of the members are welcome to distribute it to any of their colleagues or constituents who are interested in the report. He then called a vote of the members. All those in attendance at the time of the roll call voted to submit the report to the Governor and the General Assembly. Each Task Force member's vote is reflected on the final page of this document.

Darren Reisberg thanked all of the Task Force members for their contributions and hard work and then adjourned the meeting.

Illinois State Board of Education  
**Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force Members**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>February 28, 2011 meeting attendance</b>	<b>Vote to submit report</b>
Darren Reisberg	Illinois State Board of Education	present	yes
Barbara Shaw	Illinois Violence Prevention Authority	present	yes
Rocco Claps	Illinois Department of Human Rights	absent	no vote
Sarah Migas	Illinois Attorney General	absent	no vote
Grace Hong Duffin	Illinois Department of Human Services	represented by designee Kim Fornero (who had to leave early)	no vote
Shannon Sullivan	Safe Schools Alliance	present	yes
Malik Nevels	African American Coalition	present	yes
Lonnie Nasatir	Anti-Defamation League	absent	no vote
Julie Justicz	Health and Disability Advocates	present	yes
Peggy Thurow	Carpentersville CUSD 300	present	yes
Heather Nelson	Carpentersville CUSD 300	present	yes
Mike Penicook	Rantoul School District 137	absent	no vote
Maria McCarthy	Rantoul School District 137	absent	no vote
Josh Gray	Chicago Public Schools	present	yes
Kelly Keating	East Aurora District 131	absent	no vote
Stacey Horn	University of Illinois Chicago	present	yes
Dorothy Espelage	University of Illinois	present	yes
Anna Rangos	Student/ Maine South High School	absent	no vote
Sukari Stone	Student/ Whitney Young College Prep	present	yes
Marc Kiehna	Regional Superintendent Monroe/Randolph Regional Office of Education	present	yes
Matthew John Rodriguez	Illinois Parent Teacher Association	present	yes
Brooke Whitted	President, Leslie Shankman School Corporation	present	yes
Susan Goodwin	President, Quincy Human Rights Commission	absent	no vote

Illinois State Board of Education  
**Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force Members**

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>February 28, 2011 meeting</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Darren Reisberg	Illinois State Board of Education	present	yes
Barbara Shaw	Illinois Violence Prevention Authority	present	yes
Rocco Claps	Illinois Department of Human Rights	absent	no vote
Sarah Migas	Illinois Attorney General	absent	no vote
Grace Hong Duffin	Illinois Department of Human Services	represented by designee Kim Fornero (who had to leave early)	no vote
Shannon Sullivan	Safe Schools Alliance	present	yes
Malik Nevels	African American Coalition	present	yes
Lonnie Nasatir	Anti-Defamation League	absent	no vote
Julie Justicz	Health and Disability Advocates	present	yes
Peggy Thurow	Carpentersville CUSD 300	present	yes
Heather Nelson	Carpentersville CUSD 300	present	yes
Mike Penicook	Rantoul School District 137	absent	no vote
Maria McCarthy	Rantoul School District 137	absent	no vote
Josh Gray	Chicago Public Schools	present	yes
Kelly Keating	East Aurora District 131	absent	no vote
Stacey Horn	University of Illinois Chicago	present	yes
Dorothy Espelage	University of Illinois	present	yes
Anna Rangos	Student/ Maine South High School	absent	no vote
Sukari Stone	Student/ Whitney Young College Prep	present	yes
Marc Kiehna	Regional Superintendent Monroe/Randolph Regional Office of Education	present	yes
Matthew John Rodriguez	Illinois Parent Teacher Association	present	yes
Brooke Whitted	President, Leslie Shankman School Corporation	present	yes
Susan Goodwin	President, Quincy Human Rights Commission	absent	no vote

# MEMORANDUM

Date: January 31, 2011

From: Brooke R. Whitted, Legislation Work Group Member

To: Task Force

Re: Summary of the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act

I have looked at the memorandum outlining all of the state laws, and I have also recently gone over the very forward looking changes that New Jersey recently passed. While it probably would require some tweaking to be in concert with our work group's preference for non-punitive measures, I thought I would take a minute to as concisely as possible summarize the provisions of this excellent piece of legislation:

1. The superintendent must report, in a public meeting two times a year, all acts of violence, harassment, intimidation and bullying to the Board of Education;
2. New school board members and "school leaders" as that statute defines them must receive suicide prevention/anti-bullying and harassment training from a recognized expert, and training must also be received with respect to current research on the connection between bullying and suicide;
3. Information must be gathered and reported to the SEA, and the SEA then gives a "grade" for the climate at every school building in the state;
4. The "grades" must be posted on the homepage of each school's website with a link to the full report. Moreover, there are other posting requirements including clear contact information on each school's website that gives information on how to reach the anti-bullying coordinator, and the act defines special training for these identified personnel;
5. The state superintendent must submit an annual report to the legislature with respect to the bullying/harassment climate of the state and its schools;
6. Offsite harassment (like cyberbullying) is within the jurisdiction of the school and must be reported by staff or they face discipline, if the behavior "substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students";
7. There is more discretion granted (wisely in my opinion) in reporting incidents of harassment when the harassment occurs between special education students otherwise there is no discretion;
8. There is a clear procedure for prompt investigation of all allegations, the result of which must be reported to the superintendent within two days of the event. The superintendent then has a mandate to act (various alternatives are specified) and report not only the allegation but the response to the Board of Education at its next scheduled public meeting;

9. The parents involved have a right to be told what happened (often, parents of victims are not told) and they can then request a hearing before the Board of Education if they are not satisfied, and the hearing must be held in ten days;
10. The decision of the Board of Education may then be appealed to the state superintendent and if the harassment involves discrimination against a protected class, that can be appealed to the state's division on civil rights;
11. Input from recognized anti-bullying experts is built in throughout the law, including an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of each school building's plan and actions;
12. The state's commissioner of education is obligated to develop of model policy, but it is explicit in the statute that any district can choose to be more strict than the state requires but they may not be less strict; and
13. Absolutely no retaliation by anyone against reporters or victims is allowed and in addition, a failure to act in response to a good faith allegation on the part of a school district employee is subject to discipline.

It is my feeling that the New Jersey statute is even better than the Massachusetts bullying policy. In addition, it is probably more evenhanded than a DuPage County policy that we were given to review, as that has in it some punitive measures that are not appropriate according to current research.

I believe the New Jersey statute would likely serve as a reasonable template for what we want to do. It is clearly based on current research as indicated on the preamble and there is no reason why Illinois should reinvent the wheel if another state has done some of the heavy lifting for us already.

Recommendation: Develop draft legislation patterned after the New Jersey statute.

Respectfully submitted,



Brooke R. Whitted  
The Leslie Shankman School Corporation  
Operating the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School  
at the University of Chicago and the Hyde Park  
Day Schools at the University of Chicago  
*Secretary, The University of Chicago Foundation  
For Emotionally Disturbed Children*

BRW/rxm