

Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying

April 25, 2019
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Kansas NEA Room 214
715 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Roll Call –

Members Present:

James Regier	Dr. Rick Ginsberg	Angie Salava	Brenda Deitrich
Camille Straub	Debbie Deere	Dinah Sykes	Dotty Schuckman
Donna Whiteman	Dr. Jane Groff	Dr. Judy Hughey	Gina Meier-Hummel
Jean Clifford	Jose Cornejo	Jose Martinez	Kyle Griffiths
Lindsay Buck	Lori Blake	Pat Happer	Paula Fite
Stephanie Anderson	Stephanie Litton	Susan McMahan	Thomas Witt
Whitney Morgan			

KSDE Staff Present:

Randy Watson Myron Melton Kent Reed Amy Martin

Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order by Rick Ginsberg at 02:00 pm

Commissioner Randy Watson KSDE Welcome:

- Commissioner Randy Watson welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation and donating their time.
- There is not a day that goes by that our office (KSDE) does not get a phone call about Bullying.
- Every school person deals with bullying daily.
- What is the definition of bullying and how do we effectively deal with things that happen 24/7.
- Commissioner Watson introduced his choices to co-chair the taskforce, Dr. Rick Ginsberg and James Regier.
- Bullying is an important conversation for education and we want to contribute to the solution.
- The commissioner welcomed the diversity of voices who have agreed to be members of the taskforce.
- The idea was to gather a taskforce to travel the state gathering information so they can take specific recommendation to the state board by December 2019.
- Commissioner Watson will help and assist anyway possible but wants the taskforce to do the work of coming up with recommendations for the state board.
- There is not predetermined outcome for this council.
- Get those who you know who have experience or expertise in the area of bullying to come present or talk to the council as the taskforce travels the state.
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Co-Chair Comments

Dr. Rick Ginsberg –

- Dean of the School of Education at KU. I am about to finish my fourteenth year as Dean.
- I am honored to serve as the co-chair of the Task Force with my colleague, Superintendent James Regier from Remington-Whitewater.
- I want to thank you all for your willingness to step in and help Kansas address a difficult problem.
- As the Commissioner pointed out, bullying is an issue facing all schools across the country and all our schools in Kansas.
- The data we have on KS reflects many of the national trends.
- Both the legislature and the State Board of Education understand the need to address the problem.

- Although bullying is hard to define, clearly depict and measure, national data underscores its prevalence in schools, with 35% of students reporting being bullied in school, another 15% reporting it happens electronically.
- It is present at all levels of schooling, with some data suggesting it is most prevalent at the middle school level.
- Our task is to gather information and provide a report to the State Board in December.
- We will be guided by five goals we will discuss a little later.
- I chose to be involved with the Task Force for both professional and personal reasons.
 - Professionally, I know bullying is a significant challenge schools face, today exacerbated by our national culture that seems to glorify nasty behavior. With the growth of electronic communication, what is referred to as cyberbullying makes the challenge even greater.
 - Personally, I have a son in high school and a daughter in college. Both have felt the wrath of bullying. I've seen the pain it causes.
 - I was talking to some high school students about the Task Force and asked them what we might do? They were circumspect, thoughtful, but concluded that adults, including school personnel, just don't get it. The word they used was "clueless." One student explained, "short of having teachers or school leaders take the time to follow what we are doing on all our social media sites, you really won't understand."
 - I'm not sure I agree we are all clueless, but I know that changing culture is really hard work. None of you would be here if you weren't ready to roll up your sleeves and help address this challenge
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recognizes the problem. They suggest that:
 - Bullying can be direct or indirect
 - That it can be physical, verbal, relational, or involve damage to property
 - They argue it can occur in many contexts including electronically
- We know that some populations are at escalated risk for bullying.
- Research suggests that school climate – a climate of support - and peer interactions are keys for bullying prevention.
- Some evidence supports the importance of strengthened socio-emotional skills for bullying prevention.
- There are studies that talk about making students bullying prepared, along with the need for training and support for teachers and school leaders.
- My most recent research is examining how social media is impacting leadership in higher education. Bullying is part of that focus.
- Moreover, I am a student of change processes in schools, and know how incredibly difficult it is to address a complex matter like bullying, especially with the multitude of policies and reforms that schools are trying to implement.
- But we know this – implementing new policies is difficult, those on the ground in schools need to recognize the problem, want help and support, they need ongoing training and workable solutions. Preferably, the ideas we suggest can be integrated with other reforms already underway in schools.
- You all know how much teachers and leaders already have on their plates. We need be mindful of that as we make recommendations.
- But Michael Fullan, the great researcher on change in schools, argues that successful change makes use of the human and social capital in schools. In his words, what works best is "letting the group change the group." Our recommendations need to provide help and ideas to support the efforts of schools and their communities in addressing this problem. Given the complex nature of bullying, this will be hard.
- What we are up against is trying to change culture -- in schools, classrooms and online behavior in and out of school.
- Over the next eight months we will meet, we will listen, we will read a whole lot, we will learn. We have a great team – Amy Martin, Pat Bone, Myron Melton and Kent Reed are all helping us from the State Department of Education. And in you we have an incredible Task Force made up of individuals with a wide array of perspectives and a lot of expertise and competence. We will need all of you to help.

- After today we will go around the state and get input.
- We plan on creating sub-groups to tackle components of the issue.
- In the end, we will write a report and present the State Board with a set of recommendations to help the state move forward in addressing bullying in Kansas.
- Education is fraught with fads and the latest remedies for problems that trouble us. Some work, others are snake oil. With bullying, if we have learned anything, it is that there is no magic bullet.
- We go into this work with no pre-conceived notions of what to suggest, just an understanding it is a difficult problem we need address. That is our task.
- Thank you again for being involved.

James Regier

- James is the Superintendent of schools in the Remington school district.
- He has been in the district for quite a few years, he served as both a high school counselor and principle.
- His wife who is a principle and all 3 of his kids are educators.
- He said yes to co-chair the taskforce because he believes in Kansas public education, he believes in our children, our teachers and our leadership.
- Legislation purposed allowed bullied kids to transfer from a public schools to a private school this legislation was not passed.
- This is a daunting task but work that needs to be done.
- James recently dealt with a situation recently that a mom was upset a principle did not deal with bullying. The situation was that one child called another kids dog cream puff. This is not bullying.
- We have to determine what is bullying and what is not.
- We have great complex, emotionally charged work ahead of us.
- It is great to meet all the task force members and thank you for being here.
- We have a lot of work to do in a short amount of time.
- Please try to attend all the meetings we have a diverse group and we want the input of everyone. Zoom will be available if you are not able to attend in person.

Introductions of Members:

- See membership list
- The most important group that is not represented here is students. We are working on an avenue for them to add important input.

Objectives – Meeting parameters:

Objectives/Goals

- Research and Identify current Bullying definition, trends, incidents, and prevention measures occurring across the state.
 - State has a legislative definition – copy in file.
 - Great resource written by Paula Fite and colleagues.
 - We have tons of resources we can tap into.
- Coordinate with stakeholders to address relevant issues effectively, to best meet the needs of students.
 - Kind of change that does not work is that it comes from the top and we tell you what to do.
 - Just because something is said doesn't mean something will happen.
- Review work in the areas of social emotional learning as set forth by the State Board goals, identifying possible avenues that could reduce and prevent bullying and cyber bullying.
 - It's talked about but there is not the ongoing support with training and such.
- Review current statutes, regulations and policy to determine need for change.
 - There is good stuff that is out there we do not have to reinvent the wheel.
- Present recommendation to The Kansas State Board of Education by presenting recommendations to address bullying, cyber bullying, prevention and training measures.
 - Need sharp points not a long report.
 - Get specific information to those who make the policies and laws.

Website

- We have a website that for the task force the link will be at the top of each agenda.
- There is a group of resource documents on the website.
- There are documents written about bullying and lots of data that has been collected.
- We will add to this group of resources as we travel and collect more data.
- Minutes, agendas and membership list will also be posted on the website.

Thoughts of the group

- Are we going to do any work with the barriers to implementing policy?
- If there is any way to not have to legislate this it would be better.
- Our primary goal is to present recommendations to state boards but we will report to the legislature on our work.
- Start to think about as we put out thoughts about groups, start to think about the groups you would like to help out with.
- Rick's additional thoughts
 - We have a lot of resources that we can take advantage of.
 - We are going to use the definition created by the legislature.
 - We have a communications support team to get the word out.
- The schools input is important talking to the principals and teachers is important.
- Kansas School Counselors association has a summer camp is on May 28th and 29th that would be an opportunity to get a survey out at that time due to having a captive audience of school counselors from across the state.
- Paula Fite held a works shop that did a survey of what the knowledge of bullying was that article was recently published. Will make the article and data available on website.
- Possibly reach out to the superintendent groups and principal groups.
- Jane Groff's organization holds a parents conference every year in early November that could be a possible avenue to get surveys to families to gather information and input from families.
- When looking at bullying Literature you also want to look at peer victimization and peer aggression.
- What makes it bullying is the power differential in the peer relationship.
- Intimidating other children is part of bullying it does not have to be physical contact
- There are groups within the general population that are common targets students of color, student of poverty and LGBT community.
- Thomas Witt – Equality Kansas in 2012 surveyed schools to see where schools were with the state statute on bullying.
 - What was found was a significant number of schools adopted the KASB sample policy.
 - Some of these district were compliant only due to putting policy in student hand books.
 - There were no trainings, professional developments, or anything above the minimum requirements.
 - There are other schools who have gone above and beyond.
 - Biggest problem that Equality Kansas has seen is that schools are not being transparent with parents, school officials are not telling parents what they are doing.
- Get examples of successful policies and examples of what schools might be doing that might be effective.
- We need to clearly define what is bullying and what is not bullying. We need to get parents and educators to understand what BULLYING actually is.
- Bullying is keeping a lot of kids from begin able to learn and a lot of educators tied up doing other things other than teaching kids.
- We cannot put anything else on the classroom teacher we need to get them some support.
- Adult to Adult bullying also needs to be addressed because.
- School district accountability when district is not complying with the statutes or regulations that are put in place or only doing the bare minimum to check the box.
 - What is being done to those who are not complying?

- If we don't have some kind of accountability then this taskforce work will go nowhere.
- How do we hold the administrative side accountable?
- We need to come up with a workable solution.
- Taskforce members are tasked with getting the word out to others to come share public comment or present materials.
- KSDE Communications will handle the publicity and there will be media at all other meeting.
- Students are demanding change but for it to change students will have to be one to take the steps to change.
- Is there a way we can go to the students, a school assembly or clubs etc.?
- If we can create some form of electronic means to make the student voice heard.
- In western Kansas information will need to be presented in multi-language.
- Have to think about others besides middle class white.
 - Other cultures may not respond if it goes against their culture or beliefs.
 - We have to be culturally sensitive.
 - It's been advised that we not wear suites to Garden City as the public will be afraid to provide us their public comment and input

Meeting Dates and Locations:

- We will have 5 meetings across the state with a 6th meeting scheduled for the leadership team to do write up work that will be needed.
- We will hold meeting from 10-2 the meeting will be 3 hours with an hour to work collectively
- We are requesting written and verbal public comment at each region meeting
- We are asking that we have the written comment or anyone who wants to present at least one week prior to the meeting.
- Our meetings will follow Robert's rules of order.
- We are going to take a consensus approach to create reports and recommendations.
- Subcommittees will meet electronically or by phone.
- Meeting Dates
 - May 28th, Clearwater Service Center – Orion Educational Service Center
 - June 18th, Garden City – Compass Behavioral Health (this location may change)
 - August 5, Salina Smokey Hill Service center
 - September 25th, Greenbush Girard
 - November 6th, Greenbush Lawrence
 - December 2nd, TBD Topeka or Lawrence (we may or may not have this one but want it on your calendars)
- We will find accommodations for each site and let the taskforce members know.

Meeting adjourned.

By Rick at 03:46