

Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force

Monday January 10, 2011
Meeting Minutes

Dr. Christopher Koch, the Illinois State Superintendent, opened the second meeting of the Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force. He thanked the Task Force members for their participation. He noted that every student in Illinois has the right to go to school and not be bullied. He observed that he appreciated the time the Task Force members had dedicated to the Task Force and thanked Darren Reisberg, the Deputy Superintendent/General Counsel at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), for graciously agreeing to chair the Task Force.

Mr. Reisberg welcomed the Task Force members. He noted that the Task Force has a great deal of work to do in a short amount of time in order to send a report to the governor and the General Assembly by March 1st. He would like to review draft sections of the report at the February 14th meeting. In order to make that possible, he will ask Task Force members to share their availability so another meeting can be scheduled before the February meeting. In response to an inquiry from Brooke Whitted, of the Leslie Shankman School Corporation, about the possibility of delaying the submission of the report past the deadline, Mr. Reisberg responded that the law requires that the Task Force deliver the report by that deadline so the Task Force should do their best to meet that goal. He indicated that the work groups will work in between meetings in order to help the Task Force meet the March deadline. He also reminded the Task Force to keep in mind that the time they will be sending the report to the legislature will be the same time that legislators are engaged in a difficult budget discussion.

At this point, Mr. Reisberg reviewed which members had been assigned to each of the five workgroups. He then listed goals for each of the work groups. The Policies and Procedures group will develop a model state policy that outlines what is and what is not required by current state law. ISBE has provided the Task Force with all of the existing school policies in the state as well as a model policy from Massachusetts. The Professional Development and Youth Programming groups will identify the most effective bullying prevention programs and the means by which to make them available, including a discussion of cost implications. The Data group will describe what data is currently available and what data is important to collect, from the perspective of a variety of different stakeholders, when designing a comprehensive system. The Legislative group will dovetail with the Policies group. During the last legislative session, several important changes were made to the existing law, but this work group might recommend how the current statute could be further improved.

Before moving to the items on the agenda, Mr. Reisberg opened the meeting to public participation. Dr. Keith Avery, a psychologist from North Central College, addressed the Task Force. He is interested in getting better data about school climate by capturing information from every student and every teacher in the school. He has designed a system to capture this data. He observed that people in schools are best positioned to make changes to the school climate, but they need to have data in order to make good decisions. He would like to follow-up with the data group to talk more about his system. He is currently working with more than 40,000 students in Illinois and has expanded his business by word of mouth.

Professors Dorothy Espelage and Stacey Horn of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and Chicago respectively, then presented for the Task Force the findings from the most rigorous research that is currently available. They provided a definition of peer harassment which lists different types of bullying behaviors and identifies the abuse of power as a common component. They then listed several myths, which are false, but that are often heard in schools. For example, one commonly held misconception is that the experience of being bullied is character forming because young people have to learn to stand up for themselves. In fact, this is not at all the case, but it can be very damaging for young people if many of the adults in a school building believe these myths.

They then described the different actors on various places of the bully/victim continuum, noting that a bully-victim can both report bullying others and being bullied themselves. The vast majority of students on the continuum are observers. They also remarked that it is important to identify behaviors rather than labeling young people. Professor Horn noted that although this is a controversial claim, some bullying behaviors are not negative in all instances. For example, there might be cases in which gossip about a student can lead to getting them the help that they need. Professor Espelage reviewed data about the prevalence of bullying, noting that this survey data has been quite consistent over the last 15 years. Approximately 15 percent of students report being bullied chronically over time. Although only approximately eight percent are bully-victims (e.g. students who might become school shooters to retaliate against students who bullied them), these are the students who have the greatest need for mental health services. There has not been a dramatic increase in the prevalence of bullying recently, despite reports in the media, but the ways in which students bully has shifted.

Professor Horn commented that technology is just a tool to bully in a different way, but the behavior is the same whether it occurs on school grounds or on social network sites. They then moved into a discussion of cyberbullying and noted that the epidemic that the media presents is not evident in the data. It certainly happens, but school-based bullying is by far the most common type of bullying. They also urged the Task Force to be careful consumers of research when reviewing statistics related to cyberbullying. Prevalence will appear to be much higher when students are asked, for example, if they received a rude text message at some point in their

lifetime rather than in a clearly defined timeframe (e.g. within the last 30 days). Statistics that are based on the lifetime time frame will not provide educators with a clear picture of what is happening in schools on a regular basis.

Professor Horn then moved into a discussion of homophobic language and bullying, remarking that lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning students are at great risk for bullying as 30 to 50 percent of the content of bullying is homophobic in nature. Despite this, most bullying prevention programs do not deeply address homophobic issues, although this is a critical issue for schools to address. High rates of victimization and negative school climates lead to issues with mental, physical, academic and social health for these students.

Professors Espelage and Horn then discussed the development of peer harassment, noting that it tends to peak around the time when students hit puberty and then continues at the same level into high school. This peak is related to biological, cognitive, and social transitions. Another related cause is the social structures of large high schools in which it is impossible to know everyone well. As a result, many teenagers try to put their peers in boxes (e.g. Goths, geeks, jocks, etc.) that do not represent the complexity of each individual's identity.

In the most recently published meta-analysis about bullying prevention programs (Merrell et al., 2008), the overall story is that we are not moving the needle with reducing bullying in the United States. In examining the effectiveness of 16 interventions that have been rigorously studied, all showed small to negligible impacts on bullying behaviors with some trend of small positive effects for enhancing social competence and peer acceptance. Unfortunately, many bullying prevention programs have not yet been evaluated or the developers of the program hid the data, so we do not currently have the data we need to fully assess existing bullying prevention programs. In addition, the federal government has further confused the field by supporting a Norwegian program that has not been proven effective in the United States. In another research synthesis, Farrington, in the U.K., examined 40 studies across several countries, which revealed that programs in the United States did not demonstrate a significant impact. KiVa, in Finland, has demonstrated effectiveness with pilot schools in that country, but the effect sizes dropped dramatically when the program was scaled up and federal financial support was reduced. As Finland has such a homogenous population, it is unclear if the impacts demonstrated in the pilot study can be replicated in the United States.

Finally, they turned to analysis of what is working and recommendations for the Task Force to consider. First, bullying prevention programs must be comprehensive and take into account the context in the family, in the peer group, in the school, and in the larger community. Schools should develop secondary and tertiary programs, not just primary prevention programs because too many programs fail to recognize that bullying co-occurs with other forms of aggression. One large assembly will not be effective because students do not need to simply raise their awareness

about bullying, but rather need assistance with developing basic life and social skills so they are prepared to respond to bullying. Second, because so much of the content of bullying is homophobic in nature, bullying programs should incorporate a discussion of sexual harassment and sexual orientation. Third, other stakeholders in the school and community should also be involved. For example, the research has demonstrated that teachers are often not adequately prepared to respond to bullies or to help their students develop social skills, so it will be important to carefully look at teacher pre-service preparation programs. School administrators and parents also need to be engaged in bullying prevention efforts. Fourth, peer influence has to be considered in developing and evaluating prevention/intervention programs. In the same way that drug and alcohol prevention programs must include peer influence as an important component, the same is true for bullying prevention programs. It is important to look at the roles of allies and bystanders. Ideally, educators can help young people see their role as an ally because everyone in the school is responsible for interactions within the school community. Some research has also identified the importance of peer leaders. If educators are successful at shifting the leaders' attitudes about bullying, there could be a contagion effect throughout the peer group. Although the peer group is critically important, only one program that has been studied directly attempts to address peer norms. Finally, in the randomized trial that Professor Espelage is currently conducting, she noted the importance of using multimedia to engage students in the programs.

In response to a question from Darren Reisberg, Professor Espelage clarified that the 67-69 programs she described were a subset of existing programs that have been evaluated and for which there are data about implementation and outcomes. As many existing programs have not yet been studied in a rigorous way, they could not be included in the meta-analysis because there is no data associated with those programs. This is important to note because bully prevention programs are money making venture for many companies, but there is often not rigorous data to document impacts that resulted from the programs. Bullyinginfo.org is just beginning to collect data about these programs and to house this information in a central location. She urged the Task Force members to be careful consumers of such programs and to be aware of the importance of implementing programs with fidelity. In response to a question from Josh Gray, of Chicago Public Schools, about the types of data that were collected, Professor Espelage remarked that all of the measures used in the studies were quantitative, measuring both social/emotional and academic impacts. However, there has not yet been a federally funded randomized study about bullying prevention programs. Such a study could help to greatly enhance our existing knowledge.

Barbara Shaw, of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA), then presented briefly about an upcoming IVPA grant competition and asked the Task Force for feedback. She is concerned that there are no evidence-based programs that work, but would like Professors Espelage and Horn to share a list of promising programs with her. The appropriation for this

program has decreased over time and is now a relatively small pot of money. The intent is to provide funds to support implementation of school-based bullying prevention programs for students in grades K-12 and to train school personnel and parents on bullying prevention. The funded programs would be 3-year initiatives. Eligible applicants include public schools in Illinois and non-profits with a demonstrated capacity to provide prevention programs and/or training to school personnel. The current guidelines require that the funded bullying prevention programs provide multi-session programs in school settings, demonstrate that they are established evidence-based programs, and include a focus on the role of bystanders. Grantees must also agree to participate in a statewide evaluation of the program. She would like feedback from the Task Force soon as she would like to get the RFP out the door.

In response to a question from Darren Reisberg about ensuring that the funded programs are distributed across the state, Ms. Shaw indicated that the applicants will be judged within their region and the best proposal will win in each region. Josh Gray inquired if for-profit organizations could compete. Ms. Shaw responded that for-profits were not eligible applicants, but school districts were welcome to subcontract with these entities if that intent was made clear in their proposal. Shannon Sullivan, of the Safe Schools Alliance, commented on the requirement for evidence-based programs because there are currently no evidence-based programs that address LGBT concerns. She proposed that IVPA refer to research-based strategies, but not to comprehensive evidence-based programs.

Lucille Eber, the Statewide Director of the IL PBIS Network, spoke to the Task Force about effective bullying prevention programs within a school-wide system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). She urged the Task Force to be careful about drafting a recommendation that would support strict disciplinary policies because research suggests that policies that label students, exclude students, or react only to negative behavior are not effective in changing that behavior. Instead, it is more effective to respond to risk factors within home, peer, school, and community contexts, to teach targeted social skills to all students, to reward students for positive social skills, and to invest in the development of a positive school-wide culture. She reviewed research findings that supported the implementation of school-wide behavioral expectations for all students, which are explicitly taught and for which there are multiple embedded opportunities to practice newly learned behavior. In addition, PBIS provides multiple levels of interventions that align appropriate supports with individual needs. In this way, PBIS is similar to an RTI approach for behavior. Through this approach, bullying behavior is reduced because all students are taught the appropriate social skills and the larger school culture no longer supports aggressive behavior. Consequently, an effective bullying prevention policy should not focus on discipline, but rather on the development of a positive school culture that incorporates data-driven decision making and provides layered levels of support and intervention to meet the needs of all students.

PBIS is currently being implemented in 300 school districts in Illinois. It is a systems approach focused on respect, responsibility and safety. PBIS helps schools build a framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based interventions that impact academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. It is not a curriculum or a packaged program. Instead, school teams choose specific problems to address, use data on an ongoing basis to learn more about those problems, identify and implement solutions, and then monitor changes in both student behavior and performance and with the perceptions and behavior of school staff. Features of PBIS that contribute to the effective implementation of bully prevention programs include the development of a school-wide culture where positive behavior is expected, the training and support that are provided to adults, and the range of individualized supports that are available for students.

Before breaking into work groups, Mr. Reisberg asked the Task Force if there were any other comments. Brooke Whitted responded that he drafted a letter to Charlie Rose, of the U.S. Department of Education, copies of which were circulated to the Task Force members. He is also planning to go to DC to speak with Mr. Rose. Mr. Whitted noted that he would be happy to send the letter and to meet with Mr. Rose on behalf of the Task Force. Mr. Reisberg recommended that the Task Force members review the letter, provide Mr. Whitted with feedback, and if they are interested in submitting a joint letter, sign the letter on behalf of individuals or organizations rather than on behalf of the Task Force as a whole.

Darren Reisberg thanked the members for attending and asked them to join their work groups, the notes from which are included below.

Work Group Notes

Data Work Group

Discussed needs for data:

- state level (e.g. prevalence)
- local level data for planning

Idea of providing the existing data sources

- PBIS
- Illinois Youth Survey (ISY)
- SEL

Briefly reviewed Prevent School Violence Illinois' proposed work plan

Idea of recommending data collection as a requirement of every school

Illinois Youth Survey - provided overview of survey tool

Proposed Work Plan - Preliminary Ideas

1. Develop goals related to data, consider the needs at the state and local levels, consider new and existing data sources (e.g. IYS, ISAT, etc.)

2. Review current IYS questions, identify new potential questions (core and additional), provide a rationale for their selection and identify potential sources for good, existing bullying questions
3. Presentation of SEL
4. Develop recommendations for common data collection (e.g. associated with any grant funds)
5. Develop recommendations for the use of data associated with funding initiatives
6. Develop recommendations for use of data at local level (fully develop recommendations and resources)
7. Re-examine ideas presented by the Prevention School Violence Illinois Data Collection Work Group

Follow Up - IYS Qs currently in place related to bullying

6th grade version: D8, C6, I5 a-c, S2, S3 b-c, S6 b-c

8th grade version: D8, C7, P2, P5, P6 a-c, I3,a, I4 a-c, I9, S2, S6c,

High School version: D8, C7, P2, P7, P8 a-e, P9, I2, I3a, I4 a-c, S2, S3c, S6 a and c,

The group plans to meet face-to-face prior to next meeting. Planning is underway to confirm a date, time and location.

PD/Youth Programming Joint Work Group

Goals of the work groups: Identify the most effective means of PD and youth programming for bullying prevention in schools as well as how to make them available to schools and at what cost(s).

The group discussed how broad and large the goals are especially given our time frame. ROE's were discussed as a potential vehicle for distributing any chosen PD sessions through train-the-trainer opportunities that would make the impact much greater and keep the cost down. Webinars are also a possibility through the ISBE website. It was also discussed as to whether or not any kind of PD had to be given through ISBE rather than outside non-profits, consultants, etc.

The group also discussed how the research presented at the meeting seemed to point to the inefficacy of a lot of pre-packaged programs and how it would be hard to recommend based on that. Also, schools are very different contextually and what works for one may not work for another.

The group then moved to talking about PBIS as an example of putting in a framework to change school culture rather than simply implementing a pre-packaged curriculum and that maybe the group should lean toward creating a set of recommendations about how to change school culture rather than simply doing a bullying prevention lesson or sessions. A member pointed out the instead of calling it school climate it can also be called setting up 'conditions for learning.'

The co-chair present agreed to email everyone the preliminary research put together by the PSVI coalition and to reach out to Professor Espelage prior to our next meeting to discuss any best practices the research suggests. The co-chair also agreed to get word out to everyone re: the next meeting by 1/12 along with a draft agenda for participants to respond to in order to have a solid agenda by 1/18.

Next meeting:
1/19/11, 3-4:30p via teleconference

Legislative Work Group

Brooke Whitted co-convened the legislative work group with Sarah Migas, who is a social worker with the office of the Illinois Attorney General. Other members present were Lisa Pelligrini, a social work intern with the Attorney General, Theresa Geary, with the Policy Bureau of the Attorney General, and by phone, Barbara Shaw of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority. Rocco Claps was not present.

It was observed that no one has had time to look at all the legislation around the country yet, and Brooke Whitted suggested that he may have an intern who would be able to see if someone else has done that work before we reinvent the wheel. Shermin Ali, the intern, has already located a summary of all of the statutes, which was forwarded to the group.

Sarah Migas and others suggested that it might be a good idea to require schools to begin collection of data in light of the presentations at the Task Force meeting preceding the work group meeting, in which it was clearly conveyed that there is no real data out there. Data could be collected, as required by an amended statute, on school climate measures; what schools are doing in response; and a potential effectiveness of the different responses. The purpose of this would be to get an actual baseline of real data and elevate bullying incidents as a priority for archival data, because this information is not of a priority status at the present time.

Brooke also suggested that the definition be looked at and the DuPage County model policy, including our definition, was discussed. Whitted talked about the Finnish KiVa system where they had the equivalent of a “swat team” of anti-bullying individuals, specifically trained to investigate every claim of harassment, in every school building.

The work group is in agreement with Darren that the statute needs to go further than it goes now. The only question is how far it can realistically go for reasonable implementation. The following consensus was reached:

1. There should be no reactive or punitive measures built into the statute, which appears to be the tone of some of the DuPage County model policy;
2. Meaningful data should be required to be collected by school districts for a specific period of time, which might include but not be limited to types of incidents and what the Illinois State Board of Education might require districts to do with the

information. At present, there is no mandate for reporting to ISBE bullying/harassment incidents. Given that there is already a data collection system in place in light of the PBIS presentation, it would appear minimally intrusive to simply mandate collection of this data into that system, and compilation by ISBE.

Policies and Procedures Committee

The policy committee met briefly to outline a plan for next steps. First, Ryan Erickson represented Prevent School Violence Illinois (PSVI) and reported that his group had spent the last two months reviewing bullying policies at the national level and offered a document (pasted below) to the committee to outline their findings. We will review this document more closely during an upcoming phone conference call. We also agreed to review more completely the memo from Arne Duncan and the Massachusetts Bill for the phone conference call. We discussed the importance of communicating with the legislation subcommittee about their work. We discussed the importance of a policy that reflects systematic change and maintenance, professional development training for teachers and administrators, prevention focus, specific strategies for administrators, parental involvement, and school board member involvement. A phone conference call is being scheduled.

PSVI Policy and Procedures Working Group Summary and Perspectives on Anti-Bullying Policies in Massachusetts 9 December 2010 Contributed by Ryan Erickson, Center on Halsted

Introduction

In May of 2010, the Governor of Massachusetts signed “An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools” (MA SB2404) into law. The state legislature approved the measure primarily as a response to a number of documented incidents in which persistent bullying drove youth to suicide. The intention of the bill’s supporters was to create the most comprehensive anti-bullying measure in the country. The authors of the bill therefore aimed to address not only the reaction to bullying and commensurate punishments; they also intended to impact the culture of schools in the state, impressing upon youth, teachers, administrators and parents that they must take a role in bullying prevention.

Summary of the Bill

The Massachusetts anti-bullying measure defines bullying fairly broadly, and outlines a number of specific requirements that school districts must fulfill to be in agreement with the law, including: the development of anti-bullying policies in each district that explicitly condemn bullying and outline punishments for bullies, the development of age-appropriate curricular components for students that stress the harm and dangers of bullying, the education of parents on the deleterious effects of bullying and the professional development of educators, requiring teachers and administrators to attend training that prepares them to recognize bullying and to intervene accordingly.

Each school district is required to develop an “anti-bullying plan” that outlines how they will comply with the anti-bullying law as a component of each school district’s “School Improvement Plan”—a document required of each school district to outline how the school district will improve upon its educational benchmarks over the coming year. The “anti-bullying plan” is expected to enumerate and address several specific components of bullying prevention, e.g. the range of disciplinary measures that could be observed under the policy, how the district will address cyber bullying, etc. Because the “anti-bullying plan” is considered part of the School Improvement Plan, the plan is subject to public comment.

Additionally, the bill mandates the Massachusetts Department of Education to form a task force that will evaluate the school district’s individual plans. The bill also requires the Department of Education to provide a number of resources to school districts in order to help the school districts comply, including teacher/administrator professional development resources, cost effective measures to implement the district-by-district policies, materials for educating parents about bullying and even a model bullying policy.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most definitive feature of the Massachusetts plan is the balance it strikes between local control and standards observed statewide. By requiring schools to develop individualized policies and also outlining the basic tenets that the policies must address, Massachusetts education officials have allowed schools levity to set bullying priorities that will work in their individual districts but hold each school district accountable to the same standards nonetheless. The pledging of resources and assistance from the state Department of Education for local school districts, too, appears helpful; school districts can rely on the state for anti-bullying resources.

However, much of the Massachusetts anti-bullying measure’s success depends on its exclusive applicability to the Massachusetts education system, a system which may be very different from ours in Illinois.

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

Representative	Organization	January 10, 2011 meeting
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	represented by designee
Julie Justicz	Health and Disability Advocates	present
Peggy Thurow	Carpentersville CUSD 300	absent
Lisa Brennan	Carpentersville CUSD 300	absent
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	present
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