

**Illinois State Board of Education**  
**Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force**  
**Monday, January 31, 2011**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Darren Reisberg, the Deputy Superintendent/General Counsel at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), opened the third meeting of the Task Force. After welcoming the Task Force members, he asked for approval of the minutes from the first two meetings. Brooke Whitted, of the Leslie Shankman School Corporation, made a motion to approve the minutes. Shannon Sullivan, of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, seconded the motion. The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes. Mr. Reisberg reiterated that the goal should be to review drafts of sections of the report at the next, and final, meeting of the Task Force. The workgroups will have time to meet during the meeting and then in subcommittees between meetings to complete the drafts. He thanked Shannon Sullivan for graciously hosting the meeting in her office.

Three speakers addressed the Task Force during the public participation period. The first, Judy Freedman, was a school social worker in Illinois for 20 years. During her time in schools, teasing was the number one issue for students. They had often not developed coping skills to deal with the teasing. Most of the situations in her schools were not bullying. She found that when kids reacted in a more confident way, the incidence of teasing decreased. As a result, she wrote a book, *Easing the Teasing*, to provide a resource for parents and kids who are dealing with teasing. Ms. Freedman is currently working on a follow-up guidebook for teachers. Her book is not evidence-based, but it is intended to empower kids with strategies to increase their confidence.

The second speaker during public participation was Steve Leaver from Imagination Theater. He uses theater techniques in classrooms as a method to encourage kids to explore different solutions to problems they may face. These interactive techniques open up discussions on a range of issues. After reading *Easing the Teasing*, Mr. Leaver partnered with Judy Freedman to write a play that would teach kids the skills that are described in the book. This play is the most requested program that his company offers in schools. In response to the discussion at the previous meeting about evidence-based programs, he noted that there is currently little funding to pay for programs related to bullying prevention. Schools typically pay his company for this performance. In contrast, another performance piece about sexual victims is generously funded by 5 foundations. This program is free for schools and the foundations provide funding to evaluate the impact of the program. Without additional funding for bullying prevention, it will be difficult to establish an evidence base for many programs. In response to a question from Darren Reisberg about how schools become aware of the program, Mr. Leaver responded that many

schools are repeat customers and request the performance year after year. In addition, his company markets their programs at PTA conventions, social worker conventions, through email marketing, and at showcases.

The final speaker, Dr. Keith Avery, clarified his presentation from the previous week by stating that some schools pay for his product, while others schools, those with little discretionary funding, receive the service free of charge.

A student then presented for the group. She described how she transferred to a school district in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, at which time she came out openly as a lesbian. As a result, she faced a great deal of homophobia from her peers. She was told that she had HIV, was asked inappropriate questions, called names, and continually harassed. After authoring an article about transsexual young people, the bullying became so bad that she stopped going to school for weeks. She took up the issue with the school administration, the school board, and her counselors. She received no support from school leaders, who claimed that she provoked the bullying. She has worked to develop of a toolkit for policy change for youth. The toolkit has been well received and is now being used in a number of districts. She has continued to lead a school club that advocates for the rights of gay and lesbian students and has partnered with the Latino club, members of which have also suffered from discrimination and bullying at the school. She noted that there is a great deal of work that needs to be done, but it is refreshing to see students of different races working together, hoping for a time when things will be better. Her next step is to reach out to the school's social workers and to continue to advocate for youth-driven policy change.

She closed by stating that only 3 students at her school of 2500 have the courage to identify as openly gay, although researchers often estimate that ten percent of the population, on average, is gay. She stands in solidarity not only with gay students, but also with young people who are bullied because of their size, religion, race, etc. She is willing to speak out, but many students at her school will not speak out because they are afraid or because they think adults will not listen or help. The administration has yet to investigate her case and the girl who bullied her was never punished and has no idea that what she did was wrong. The only remotely positive step that the administration took was to fly in an expensive mime from California to mime about bullying prevention, an attempt to address the problem that the student assessed as wholly unsuccessful.

In response to the presentation, Brooke Whitted described how Erika Harold, a former Miss America, visited his school and talked to all of the kids because bullying is her issue. He noted that all of the students had experienced bullying, and many of them reported that school staff did nothing in response. Before concluding this section of the agenda, Darren Reisberg commented that there are 869 districts in Illinois, some of which will do the right thing and some of which will need more support. One of the outcomes from the Task Force should be to provide districts

with guidance about the critical components that should be included in a bullying prevention policy.

Caryn Curry, the SEL Project Coordinator for the Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership then delivered a presentation about social and emotional learning (SEL) for the Task Force. She introduced the topic by noting that social and emotional learning provides a framework through which we can learn to be in relationship with one another. She shared a definition of SEL from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a nationally recognized organization that is based in Chicago. She emphasized that SEL is a process through which people develop fundamental emotional and social life skills. Because the SEL framework is developmental, it works well with both the academic and behavioral sides of the RTI pyramid. Research suggests that solid social emotional skills are correlated with behavioral and academic performance, so helping students to develop these skills can also impact other outcomes. Ms. Curry further observed that proficiency in SEL also prepares students for the work of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because these skills focus on teamwork, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving.

The five core SEL competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Individuals must first build an awareness of self before beginning to understand how self and “other” interact. These social and emotional skills are a foundation for success in school and in life. Within evidence-based programs, students develop these skills by receiving explicit and interactive instruction, practicing the skills and receiving feedback, observing others’ good behavior, reflecting on their experience, and applying the skills. She noted that school days are often not structured to support the development of these skills, but that schools should consider how to make time for more reflection and conversation. Although Illinois was the first state to implement SEL standards, she observed that students will continue to fall through the cracks unless there is an infrastructure to support SEL for all kids at the school level. She stressed that these competencies can be taught and that mastery of these competencies can support academic achievement. Consequently, she asserted that it is our job as educators to teach SEL with the same commitment that we currently devote to academics. She implored the Task Force to reflect upon how our children are dying, both literally and figuratively. Thus, educators must take the lead to turn the tide through prevention, not crisis intervention after a violent incident in a school.

Ms. Curry then reviewed the findings from a meta-analysis of more than 200 studies conducted by CASEL and Loyola University. The researchers reviewed studies of interventions that promoted the social and emotional development of students between the ages of 5 and 18. They found that students who developed social and emotional skills had more positive attitudes, improved their prosocial behavior, reduced their negative behaviors, and increased their academic achievement.

Ms. Curry emphasized that SEL is a framework that helps schools to organize a variety of initiatives that promote whole child development. Illinois was the first state to implement social and emotional standards, which means that SEL is at least as important as math, language arts, etc. The Illinois goals are designed around the five competencies and each goal is paired with standards and performance descriptions along a developmental continuum.

She further noted that there is currently a great deal of confusion in Illinois about SEL and PBIS. She clarified that these are complementary initiatives because PBIS is about managing behavior while SEL is about emotional/social development. Interventions are more widespread with PBIS, while SEL is about skill building, which goes deeper than PBIS. She asserted that SEL learning should be embedded in the work of the Task Force because schools that implement this framework will likely have increased productivity and a decreased incidence of bullying.

She encouraged the Task Force to read the brief about SEL and bullying prevention that was authored by CASEL and AIR and can be found at:  
[http://casel.org/downloads/2009\\_bullyingbrief.pdf](http://casel.org/downloads/2009_bullyingbrief.pdf)

In response to a question from the Task Force, Ms. Curry indicated that she has 3 years of data from schools that piloted the implementation of the SEL standards. However, this data does not include a wealth of student-level academic or behavioral outcomes. The world of assessment for SEL is relatively young and not yet fully developed. Researchers have a great deal of perception and qualitative data, but the quantitative data will take more time. That being said, many important factors cannot be captured with quantitative data.

Finally, SEL is a paradigm shift, not another thing to add to educators' already full plates. However, most schools have not yet taken the time to do a crosswalk to identify what they are already doing and where the gaps are. Teachers are not trained that SEL is as important as math and language arts, and this teacher training will be essential for effective implementation of the framework. The Illinois Mental Health Partnership has been cultivating partnerships with higher education to open this conversation, but teacher training is currently not consistent across institutions.

Shannon Sullivan noted that another factor impeding implementation of SEL frameworks in schools is the intense focus on academic accountability. She has observed that at ISAT time the levels of stress, anxiety, and tension increase dramatically for students. She also contended that both Type 75 and pre-service teacher preparation should include a focus on SEL and bullying prevention.

Josh Gray, of Chicago Public Schools, asked about accountability and ensuring that there is consistent implementation across staff. Ms. Curry responded that it would be important to ensure that new teachers were on board with the SEL framework, administrators could assess implementation through classroom observation, educators could reflect upon the development of the SEL competencies in their professional learning communities, and the teacher evaluation system could include a SEL component.

Mike Penicook, of Rantoul School District 137, observed that his school is part of a PBIS district. As a result, they worked to ensure that the union was on board at the beginning of the process, and now include PBIS indicators as part of the teacher evaluation system. He noted that it is easy to change the behavior of young people, but the adults are more difficult. Over time, through PBIS, they have built a positive school environment. There will always be issues, but the incidence is reduced with a positive school climate.

Michelle Carmichael indicated that SEL will be embedded within the school improvement process and the conditions for learning in schools across Illinois. At this point, Darren Reisberg asked Ms. Carmichael to share more about ISBE's vision with her work group and asked the Task Force members to join their work groups before reporting out at the end of the meeting.

After the work group session, the Youth Programming and Professional Development group reported that they have a solid outline of their section of the report, which will include: school climate and culture, the transformation of learning, leadership, pre-service education, implementation, and youth programming. They will include success stories from across different types of schools throughout the state, discuss the impact for kids, propose pilot programs and an evaluation of the pilots, and reference the policy and legislation section. Members of the work group have assignments to work on different sections of the report. Darren Reisberg commented that Shannon Sullivan might want to reach out to Linda Tomlinson, Assistant Superintendent at ISBE, because she could provide some insight into the state education agency's vision.

The Policies and Procedures group decided to work with the Legislative group. The members will look at recent legislation in several states and identify key components for recommended changes in Illinois. The group will then decide which components they agree upon and different members will flesh out the details of each component. Darren Reisberg encouraged the group to consider drafting a model policy for districts because the existing models lack sufficient detail. Such a policy was included in the draft of the legislation that was shared with the Task Force. Rather than outlining general principles as the work group suggested, he observed that school leaders have a great deal on their plate and a model policy might be more effective because it could be easily adopted by a school board.

Finally, the Data group is still in the early stages of defining the types of data that they would like to gather to understand both the extent of bullying, from multiple reporting sources, and the quality of the larger school environment. These data can be used to inform action planning for school leaders. Shannon Sullivan indicated that her group's report will refer to the need for a data-driven decision making process at the school, regular needs assessment, and monitoring the implementation of the program. All of these components will overlap with the Data group's recommendations. Brooke Whitted contended that the New Jersey statute is the most aggressive in the nation in mandating that schools report all data about bullying incidents to the state. He urged the Task Force to include a recommendation with teeth that is modeled on the New Jersey legislation.

Darren Reisberg thanked the members for attending and observed that he looked forward to reviewing the drafts before the final meeting of the Task Force on February 14, 2011. He asked the members to submit their draft sections to Peggie Garcia by the end of the day on February 10, 2011 so that all drafts could be provided to the members to review before the final meeting.

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

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>January 31, 2011 meeting</b>
Darren Reisberg	Illinois State Board of Education	present
Barbara Shaw	Illinois Violence Prevention Authority	absent
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	represented by designee
Lonnie Nasatir	Anti-Defamation League	represented by designee
Julie Justicz	Health and Disability Advocates	present
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	absent
Dorothy Espelage	University of Illinois	absent
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