

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 31st 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**

Representative	Organization	Attendance at 2/14 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	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