



Safety Task Force Minutes April 17, 2007

Board Co-Chair, Joanne Jackson, opened the meeting and asked for the committee to review April 3rd's minutes. She and Shalon Easterling facilitated the meeting while Board Co-Chair Erlinda Agron provided translation for the parent of the student panelist. The minutes were approved.

Gretchen Saul introduced Marci Ronald as one of our safety partners. She assisted the district in our anti bullying efforts at the high schools and is a trainee and consultant for Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, K -8.

Ms. Ronald gave an overview of bullying behavior, how it has changed over the years and the devastating effects of continued bullying. She defined bullying as behavior intended to cause harm or distress, repeated over time, involving imbalance of power and strength, not only physical, and often emotional. A new type of bullying is online (cyber bullying) thus, home is no longer a safe haven.

Ms. Ronald noted the Olweus program is the "gold star" in Bullying prevention and it has 30 years of research. She commended ASD for choosing this program and noted we are "head and shoulders" above other districts.

Panel Discussion:

- Mary Dolan, Safe Schools Coordinator representing the Pennsylvania Department of Education, gave a brief overview of her work in bullying prevention.
- Holly Armbuster, South Mountain security guard, described how she assists in preventing and intervening in bullying situations. She noted she often observes the students on the perimeter for they often are the ones promoting the bullying. She also noted it is important to know students by name.
- Ralph Lovelidge, South Mountain principal, agreed with Ms. Dolan's observation that while bullying reporting decreases after 4th grade, bullying behavior increases in middle school.
- Jason Sizemore, Instructional Support Teacher (IST) coach at Roosevelt, noted that often referrals for behavior involve bullying whether it is the victim or the perpetrator.
- Jesus Arzate, student at Roosevelt, described the various posters the Roosevelt students created to illustrate school rules and responsibilities. Jesus shared a strategy that when/if he is bullied; he simply thanks the bully because it then confuses the bully and s/he often stops or walks away.
- REBEL, "Report every bullying event loudly," forms can be used to help report bullying.

Ms. Dolan noted Pennsylvania has one of the largest implementation rates of anti- bullying programs, and sustainability is always a challenge. However, just like a diet you must strictly stick to the components of the program.

The committee voiced concerns about consistency among the schools and want all schools to continue efforts.

Ms. Jackson then agreed with the suggestion that the remainder of the agenda be put aside and the discussion continues on the topic of bullying.

Suggestion was made to offer training for parents – Ms. Ronald indicated there is parent training available.

Ms. Dolan noted that one of the most important components is the once a week class meeting.

A concern in ASD is the mobility of students and turnover of staff and therefore maintaining the integrity of the Olweus program. Thus, need to consider ongoing training for staff every year.

A question was asked about what student bullies become in adult life. Answer - they do escalate and often are incarcerated.

Mr. Heiser strongly recommended that the task force seek ways to involve parents more as they could give great assistance to the schools in addressing bullying.

Ms. Jackson offered a suggestion to revamp the future agendas and spend more time in small group work. Many members suggested we not worry about reworking/rewording the Code of Conduct and the various policies and use our time to examine concerns from the committee.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.