



**Safety Task Force Minutes
April 24, 2007**

Parent Co-Chair, David Roth, opened the meeting by introducing Marci Ronald (Olweus Bullying Trainer), Mary Ramirez (Director of the Bureau of Community & Student Services – Pennsylvania Department of Education) and Susan Lozada (ASD Director of Community and Student Services).

Mr. Roth asked the committee to review the minutes of April 17, 2007. Corrections to the minutes: 2nd paragraph - Marci Ronald is a trainer not a trainee. Add – The Committee noted there is a need for the consistent implementation of the Olweus bullying program across all ASD schools.

Dr. Angello noted that input will be gained from the task force for future agendas so that both the charge given to the task force and the concerns of the members would be addressed. Due to the time constraints in meeting the charge of the ASD Board of Directors she suggested that an interim report be offered to the Board on May 24, 2007 and an updated report be presented to the Education Committee-of-the-Whole on June 14. Additionally, the Safety Task Force may consider continuing next year to address implementation of the changes as well as work on issues identified by the task force. The Code of Conduct must be ready for printing by July 1. The Support Resource Staff will complete the technical work so that the task force may review it. Dr. Angello shared examples of codes of conduct from Lancaster School District (a booklet) and Harrisburg School District (part of the annual calendar).

Mr. Roth reiterated the need to include task force concerns in future agendas. There will be training on the Olweus Bullying Program at the May 8th meeting as a request of the task force. Mr. Roth then introduced Mary Ramirez, PDE Bureau Director of Community and Student Services.

Ms. Ramirez stated she was happy to meet the task force and stated PDE is a partner to ASD. She emphasized leadership in a district is important for safety. Leadership is not only administration but also includes staff, parents, and students.

Ms. Ramirez discussed Chapter 12 which dictates that a district must have reasonable rules that do not discriminate against any student. Examples: (1) Districts must have a dress code; (2) Due process must be followed when disciplinary consequences are issued; (3) A weapons policy must be in place; and (4) No corporal punishment is allowed, etc. These guidelines are given to districts. The local boards must create their own policies and codes of conducts. She encouraged ASD to ensure policies are simple enough to understand and enforce. She offered technical assistance from PDE, and commended ASD for “being ahead of the curve” by involving parents in this effort.

Question and Answer followed:

Q - *Where is the separation between an individual student's rights and parents' rights to know?*

A – Ms. Ramirez stated that when an incident occurs, a district may write a general letter to parents, indicating a specific incident occurred without revealing the identity of student(s) involved.

Q – *Is there any policy stating that a student may move to another school if s/he feels unsafe?*

A – Yes, according to NCLB a parent may request a change in school and an investigation will occur. Also, if a school is labeled persistently dangerous (according to repeated serious incidents) a change in school must be offered within the district.

Ms. Ramirez offered some grant money for the purposes of safety training, etc.

Q – *Is there money for extra security guards?*

A – Districts can use a small portion of the grant money for salaries, but the funding has dwindled recently. Therefore, personnel salaries are often the district's responsibility. Community policing was also shared.

Principal Ralph Lovelidge, explained South Mountain's program – South Mountain's Alternative to Out of School Suspension (SMATOSS). When a student commits an infraction, s/he is assigned to an In School Suspension (ISS) which keeps them in school 8-4:30. The only time s/he receives Out of School Suspension (OSS) if there is an arrest or expulsion. While in SMATOSS the students are working on academics/standards. Mr. Lovelidge noted the number of OSS has decreased dramatically.

Q – *Are there Alternative Learning Centers (ALC) for elementary students?*

A – Dr. Angello indicated she is aware of the need, but we do not have this provision. The District is facing severe facility constraints and needs more space for both middle and high school alternative programs.

Q – *What can be done about special education students who can not be suspended for more than 15 days?*

A – Schools must be strategic in thinking about special education students' needs and programs. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers.

Q – *How is bullying affecting districts across the state?*

A – Ms. Ramirez noted Pennsylvania has received recognition for the anti-bullying initiatives. She also noted the Olweus program is recognized for its effectiveness. Bullying continues to be pervasive and cyber bullying is increasing which is more difficult to address. We need to start as early as possible with prevention, increase student resiliency, and involve the students in the solutions. Legally student assistance programs (SAP) must be in place.

Marci Ronald then facilitated small group discussions regarding last week's meeting, asking each group to reflect on 5 questions:

1. Thinking back to the panel presentation last week, what are some of the most compelling things that were shared?
2. Around bullying prevention, what are some of the strengths of our program?
3. What are some of the areas for growth?
4. What things do you think should be the major goals as we move forward?
5. What are the key strategies to help us get there? (what should we do first?)

After 25 minutes Ms. Ronald asked the small groups to share their answers.

Ms. Ronald collected the recorded comments and will compile them.

A question was asked of Ms. Ronald - what does she recommend to a teacher who is juggling academics and discipline? She answered that successful teachers simply make bullying prevention a priority and always find time. Also, front loading at the beginning of the year prevents disruptions later in the year, and allows for increased time for academics.

Mr. Roth thanked Ms. Ramirez and Ms. Ronald for attending the meeting and sharing their expertise. He then asked for any key issues/questions for future meeting agendas.

Responses:

1. All teachers should have mentors (emergency certified teachers need assistance). This suggestion will be discussed with the Director of Recruitment and Staff Development and not be a discussion for the task force.
2. What type of simulations would be used during training?
3. Is there a parent training model?
4. Information/highlights from Safety Conference (April 30 – May 2)
5. #4 of the Charge “Help develop systems so that parents have their concerns addressed through the school and know how to access others in the District to assist them.”
6. Asked Ms. Ramirez to share ideas from other districts who have been successful with parent involvement/engagement.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.