



WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS MEETING MINUTES

November 8, 2021

1. OPENING ITEMS

1.01 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Safe and Healthy Schools Committee was called to order at 2:00 P.M.

1.02 Roll Call

Chair Scott Benton and Members Ivy Batmale, and Jessica Goicoechea were present with Members Lorraine Benuto, Elizabeth Florez, Amber Joiner, Leanne McCulley Larson, were present via TEAMS at roll call. Vice-Chair Misty Vaughan Allen and Members Darin Balaam, Charlene Bybee, Peg Samples, and Natalie Sanchez were absent. Dr. Paul LaMarca, Committee Staff Liaison and Superintendent, Dr. Kristen McNeill, were also present.

2. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION, PRESENTATION AND/OR ACTION

2.01 APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 11, 2021, SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS COMMISSION MEETING (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION)

Commissioner Jessica Goicoechea moved to approve the minutes of October 11, 2021, Safe and Healthy Schools Commission meeting, motion was seconded by Commissioner Lorraine Benuto. Chair Benton opened for discussion, there was no public comment.

On motion by Jessica Goicoechea, second by Lorraine Benuto, the Safe and Healthy Schools Committee approved the agenda as presented. (Yea: Scott Benton, Amber Joiner, Leanne McCulley Larson, Lorraine Benuto, Jessica Goicoechea, Elizabeth Florez, and Ivy Batmale) Final Resolution: Motion Carries 7-0

2.02 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 11TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL CELEBRATION THAT OCCURRED ON OCTOBER 6, 2021 (FOR PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ONLY)

Chair Benton stated this item is to be moved to the next meeting as the presenter was not able to be present.

2.03 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RESTORATIVE PRACTICES PLAN USED TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE STUDENT BEHAVIOR (FOR PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ONLY)

Tristan McElhany, Director of Behavior and Trish Shaffer, MTSS Coordinator presented.

Ms. Shaffer let the Commissioners know about the restorative practices in discipline that the District has been engaging in for approximately the last five years. Legislation was passed in 2019 and 2021 in Nevada that required the implementation of restorative practices in schools. Ms. Shaffer shared that there are currently seven pieces of legislation that are guiding their work. She reviewed systemic requirements, and the work they have done on the revision of the behavior manual. She stated they have been training schools and a quarter of the District schools were able to go through training pre-pandemic. Covid has impacted their ability to train schools because they train teams through a multi-day training. Stated they are documenting restorative efforts in Infinite Campus.

She stated the practices that you can see going on in the schools every day as they work on forming and building communities through "restore at the door". This practice happens when there is a disciplinary infraction in the classroom, where instead of the student being sent to the office, the administration comes to the classroom so that person can take over the classroom and allow the student and teacher to step outside and work to resolve conflict. They have school-wide social and emotional learning practices that is taught through evidence-based curriculum. They have "restorative questions" that gives staff a script of four to five questions to ask the students in conflict without presuming blame. They also have "the early warning system" that is an indicator put together through different sets of data, attendance, grades, transiency, and disciplinary infractions. This will help staff know if a student may be at risk, allowing them to try and help the student to have mentors and different relationships and programs.

Ms. Shaffer reviewed the intent of restorative practices are meant to hold a student accountable for behavior, restore them to the community, look for remedies that teach skills they need, and focuses for relief if there was a victim involved.

Tristan McElhany reviewed the restorative practices in the behavior manual as this is the first time there is mention of them in the manual. The objective is to ensure that students are excluded as little as possible and trying to ensure that things that happen on campus have a pathway back into the school system. He discussed the administrator's role is to ensure the teacher is getting the support they need for different ways to intervene. He went over the behavior matrix that talks about the different infractions that students may experience at school and shows in the different tiers how they use restorative practices to couple with the accountability piece.

Ms. Shaffer discussed how they apply restorative practices at tier 2 by focusing on restoring community, and creative positive relationships that must be co-created with student and families so they can repair and move forward. She stated in tier 3 they would have more intensive supports and needs and student may be considered alternative placement through habitual discipline which requires a student has five significant suspensions. At the third significant suspension, the District requires a restorative behavior plan to be proactive in preventing the student reaching the five suspensions.

Superintendent, Dr. Kristen McNeill stated she appreciated the presentation because that sometimes out in the public restorative practices are misinterpreted for ignoring or

not dealing with consequences. Stated she appreciated them coming and explaining and showing the Commissioners what the restorative practices look like during the day and looking at the root cause to understand behavior and how to move forward.

Commissioner Jessica Goicoechea had two questions. The first one was regarding a quarter of the schools being trained and what type of schools were trained. Ms. Shaffer joked it was a coalition of the willing and they required the schools to have a strong foundation of social and emotional learning, with positive behavioral interventions and supports. They were able to train at all levels and started with schools that were excited and wanted the training. Her second question, she asked about the de-escalation techniques that teachers and staff are being taught and if there was a specific model that is used. Ms. Shaffer stated they teach them on a protocol called managing the cycle of defiance and different elements around restorative work and trauma-informed practices that guides a school team from calm all the way up through agitation to peak.

Student Representative, Ivy Batmale asked if they were training school police as well as administrators and teachers. Ms. Shaffer stated that they have trained school police and that they would like to also work with students to be restorative leaders in their building.

Commissioner Elizabeth Florez thanked them for the presentation and stated it was fascinating to review. She asked how it is decided when a delinquent act is going to proceed via citation or arrest. Chief Jason Trevino answered they are working through the nuances such as if the victim wishes to press charges. They work to try and resolve at the lowest level if possible. Ms. Shaffer followed up that they work to have the offender restored to the community, because they go hand in hand. Commissioner Florez thanked Chief Trevino for highlighting the process. Dr. Paul LaMarca, Staff Liaison pointed out that Ms. Shaffer and Mr. McElhany are referring to administrative remedies, not criminal remedies. He stated that they always defer to school police when it comes to a criminal investigation or any sort of prosecution. He also stated that restorative practices are victim centered.

Chair Benton had a question about what the interventions are at the third suspension before student is habitual. Mr. McElhany responded that they have an in-depth conversation with administrator to look at what steps have already been taken and look to see what they can do to help the student re-engage in the community and will bring the family in to work together to help get the student back to where they need to be. Chair Benton also asked if those meetings were successful. Mr. McElhany stated he was new to the position but had been a part of the meeting recently in a behavior hearing and the family was pleased that they were there to help and not only tell the student what they did wrong. Chair Benton thanked them for their presentation and stated it was great information.

2.04 INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION OF EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN THE WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ONLY)

Rechelle Murillo, Director of Intervention presented a brief overview of what chronic

absenteeism looked last year and what the District is doing this year to continue to welcome students back into the schools and are supported. Ms. Murrillo pointed out that chronic absenteeism was an issue across the nation last year due to Covid. Ms. Murrillo stated they had held student town hall last year where they had the students write down some words on how they were feeling and the word that stood out the most for them was stress due to the different models of how school was being conducted at the time due to Covid. The students described missing their peers, interaction with teachers and needing to be in the classroom to learn.

Ms. Murrillo stated that 39% of District students were chronically absent. She explained that chronic absenteeism is 10% of the days those students are enrolled in school and that time fluctuates as time goes on depending on how many days students are enrolled and how many days they attend or miss. She stated that high school seniors saw the highest increase in chronic absenteeism. They looked at chronic absenteeism by race/ethnicity and the highest rates of students with absenteeism were Pacific Islander, African American, and American Indian were above 50% which was a significant increase from the 18-19 school year.

Ms. Murrillo asked if there were any questions before moving on. Commissioner Goicoechea asked in the overall 39% asked if they count exclusions as absence. Ms. Murrillo stated that they do not.

Ms. Murrillo state that they have been doing a lot to help reach out to students and welcome them back and support the families. They were able to secure funding for four new attendance officers for a total of 10 attendance officers. This has helped lower the case load and allow them to have more home visits and provide additional support for student and family. They also have 6 re-engagement specialists that work with students to welcome them back and re-enroll them in the District. With the Children in Transition (CIT) they work with students and families who have experienced homelessness and are targeting students in high school and providing them case management, identifying the barriers to attendance, which could be paying for housing for students. They have partnered with human services agencies to work with students who are in foster care to help provide intensive support for those students. They started the student attendance review board in October to work with severely chronic absentee students to collaborate and partner with families to identify barriers and provide supports. They have also started an attendance campaign in partnership with communications department who developed a student led PSA with students from Sparks High School. Ms. Murrillo shared the PSA with the Commissioners. She stated the students at Sparks High School wanted to be solution focused and give other students with ideas that worked for them. They released the attendance campaign via social media and the local PBS station is running the PSA and they have written some radio PSA's as well. They have also partnered with United Way of Nevada who also have an attendance campaign with Districts in Nevada focusing on elementary aged students. Ms. Murrillo shared WCSD Family Guide to Attendance so families can better understand exclusions, how to do make up work and how much time students have to complete make up work.

Ms. Murrillo stated they are ready to launch an attendance messaging campaign in January through text messages and emails to families, giving them strategies of how to encourage attendance. They are also developing a principal tool kit to provide them strategies and interventions to reach out to their families and build relationships.

Ms. Murrillo let the Commissioners know that her office provides training and support along with Doug Taylor, attendance coordinator, to work directly with schools to show them what it looks like when they are regularly looking at attendance data, how to intervene, and how to look at it through multi-tiered systems of support to make decisions on when to provide interventions for students. They will be having focus groups with attendance administrators, principals, assistant principals, and counselors to discuss what works and what doesn't work and what other supports students may need. She stated that our family school partnerships have developed additional videos in English and Spanish, that can be found on the District website. Ms. Murrillo stated they developed a PSA for middle school students with students from Dilworth Middle School that should be released after Thanksgiving holiday and will do a final one with elementary students sometime in the winter or spring.

Ms. Murrillo opened for question. Chair Benton had a question about what some of the barriers were that led to the increase in chronic absenteeism last year. Ms. Murrillo stated that being in person has helped and providing transportation to the best of the District's ability has helped with this year. She stated that last year some of the older students went to work to help families make ends meet. She said childcare is an issue, and home prices are expensive for families and have been responding through a family resource center to help when a family is in crisis. Ms. Murrillo said in her opinion the decrease in chronic absenteeism is due to students wanting to be back in school to be with their peers and their teachers. Chair Benton asked for clarification that the case managers don't just treat the absenteeism, they treat the whole picture and provide wrap around services. Ms. Murrillo agreed and said her department wants to understand the why and it is not a punitive approach, they work to break down the barriers.

Commissioner Lorraine Benuto asked if the District had a sense of different factors for absenteeism. Ms. Murrillo stated there are a lot of reasons students are chronically absent, Covid and distance learning were factors, hard to stay motivated and felt overwhelmed. She said if you look at chronic absenteeism as a whole, it could be due to transportation, students feeling unsuccessful academically, or things in the home preventing students from attending. She reiterated that it is why it is important to sit down with the families and build relationships.

Student Representative, Ivy Batmale stated talking to her peers this year, it is great to be back in school to see everyone and it has motivated them to be in school. She stated she believes that mental health was preventing students from attending last year, due to huge uptick in anxiety and felt they were dealing with it alone. She asked if attendance started to increase again in the spring when students were able to be back at school. Ms. Murrillo stated that was a good question and she would need to look back as she doesn't know specifically.

Chair Benton thanked Ms. Murrillo and said he appreciated everything that her team

does for the students and families.

2.05 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE THREAT ASSESSMENT PROCESS USED TO DETERMINE POSSIBLE THREATS FROM STUDENTS (FOR PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ONLY)

Brandy Olson, Psychological Services Coordinator and Brian Moll, School Psychologist presented. Ms. Olson stated they recently had a shift in the threat assessment process to align with NRS 388.253 (e), best practices, and national standards. She said they gathered information from the Virginia model, secret service threat assessment center and the Colorado model when they created the model for the District. Coordinated with the District's legal counsel to differentiate when an assessment could be completed by a mental health professional such as a school psychologist, school counselor or school social worker and what role a building administrator can take in the process. She stated the purpose of the threat assessment is to help identify, assess, and manage individuals and groups that may pose a threat of targeted violence. The assessment doesn't look at a student who made a threat, rather looks at if they pose a threat and is not a predictive tool. The end result is to come up with a safety plan that will protect student and support any potential victims and buildings. Ms. Olson stated they work with mental health colleagues in the case a student makes a threat and expresses suicidal ideation, they work for a suicide risk assessment or if threat involves bullying, they work with the bully investigation team as well. Ms. Olson said part of the shift of threat assessment is a collaboration of individuals being part of the process.

Mr. Moll reviewed the threat assessment flow chart with the Commissioners so they understand the process. He emphasized in this model is the pathway to violence where students engaged in pattern of behavior and pre-attach behaviors that showed they had inclination to commit targeted violence within a school. He stated each step in the pathway to violence is an opportunity to intervene with a student and find ways to support them. They know that it is important to act quickly, gather information, and figure out how to support the student. He stated they look at protective factors, like having strong relationships within the building.

Mr. Moll asked if there were any questions. Superintendent, Dr. Kristen McNeill wanted to clarify that the team has spent years on putting this system in place and began in a pilot project with several schools that worked through some of these issues to what worked with the threat assessment. She asked Ms. Olsen and Mr. Moll to briefly discuss how they went from pilot program to where they are today. Ms. Olson stated it started approximately five years ago and had come up with a model they wanted to try a year before the pandemic hit. They worked in two areas and worked with eight schools to get feedback from administrators, counselors, and school social workers for what things worked well in the pilot and things that could be improved. She stated one process that came up was the initial inquiry was done by the school psychologist, which they modified and had it done by the school administrator. They modified the process again with this rollout so that it was a team process so that no one does this alone. She stated with support from the Superintendent and OSL, they have been able to train all the counselors, psychologist,

social workers, and all the administrators on the new process.

Chair Benton opened for questions. Student Representative, Ivy Batmale asked about when a student makes a bomb or shooting threat and when is that considered that they need to evacuate or take precautions. Mr. Moll responded when the initial threat comes in, they work with law enforcement based on things that may pose great safety risk. Stated at anytime during the assessment if they find a crime has been committed, the threat assessment goes is on hold while law enforcement conducts their investigation.

Dr. Paul LaMarca added that the behavior manual and crisis intervention includes the threat assessment, and counseling works very closely with emergency manager and school psychologists as they respond to crisis within the building. He stated there are several incidences that call for threat assessments. Wanted to let the Commissioners know that the threat assessment is one tool used to support students, keep everyone safe and take action when necessary. Dr. LaMarca also stated this is school psychology awareness week and last year the Commission recognized school psychologists, he said the District has 48 school psychologists who incredible work every day for the schools and thanked Ms. Olson and Mr. Moll.

Ms. Katherine Loudon, Counseling Coordinator echoed what Dr. LaMarca stated and reiterated that the school psychologists are essential and are a vital part of the whole comprehensive educational process and partner with counselors and school social workers. She stated counseling may work on the initial assessment and then collaborate and work together on safety planning, follow-up, and other things that go along with assessment. She commended the work that Ms. Olson and Mr. Moll have done with the process, research and state collaboration with southern Nevada and the balance of the state to ensure that the District has the absolute most comprehensive assessment.

Mr. Moll added that this is a small snapshot of a very comprehensive process and through their process they talk a lot about restorative justice practices in terms of repairing relationships. Ms. Olson stated when they create the safety plan, they don't just create it, they have built in follow-up schedules in a timeframe to keep an eye on the students at risk to ensure they are providing support they need.

Chair Benton asked if they have seen a correlation in attendance to any threats and how it is addressed. Mr. Moll stated one of the first things they do in process is the threat inquiry prior to any consideration of any disciplinary procedures that could result in taking a student off campus. He stated there hasn't been a correlation to a student being habitually absent and threats. Dr. LaMarca stated there is probably some association between underlying factors that might lead to both behaviors.

Dr. Benton thanked them for the information and presentation.

2.06 PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON THE BRAVE SPACES INITIATIVE (FOR PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ONLY)

LaNesha Battle, Director of Equity and Diversity and Katherine Loudon, Counseling

Coordinator presented. Ms. Loudon stated this has been an effort and cross-departmental collaboration. She stated they had begun this effort before LaNesha started as the Equity and Diversity Director and has really expanded under her leadership and has been delivered with their first training. Ms. Loudon explained what a brave space is and what the Brave Space program is to the Commissioners.

Ms. Battle stated the Brave Space program is linked to District Strategic Goal 5.1 that has to do with a climate of belonging and self-worth amongst students along with inclusive practices. She stated the purpose of the Brave Space program is to provide a welcoming environment for students regardless of sex, race and/or gender identity. They wanted to provide a space for students to be brave and be able to come and approach and discuss sensitive subjects with staff who have received training. The goal is to have all the spaces in our schools be brave spaces.

Ms. Loudon discussed what the brave space is and what the partnership is with the Commissioners. She stated Brave Space training was put on collaboratively across departments and is an opportunity for those who are willing and have a passion for students and want to reach out to them and provide support. She said with the first enrollment of the training they had teachers, administrators, and a cross-section of District staff. In the training they discuss confidentiality, how to receive and support a student have had thoughts or feelings about suicide or if bullying is involved.

Ms. Battle continued that confidentiality is important if we are having a brave space for students to feel comfortable coming to a staff member and feel supported and know there is a balance for confidentiality while still adhering to the mandatory reporting administrative regulation 4560 and state regulations to keep student protected in their environment.

Ms. Battle stated students had been reporting more stress and asking for more emotional support especially since the pandemic. Chair Benton asked if brave space was a one-on-one situation or three students feeling the same way and they can go to an adult they can all three discuss the matter with. Ms. Battle responded that it would be up to the students and their comfort because staff wouldn't want to break the confidentiality.

Gina Session, Civil Rights Compliance Director and Title IX Coordinator provided an overview of the content of the Brave Space Program. In the first section of training, they go into Board Policy 1310 and discuss protected classes and history of 14th amendment, and why individuals are protected under federal law. There is also an overview of sexual harassment and the new regulations under Title IX and discussion on staff speech administrative regulation 5161 and how that works with Board Policy 1310. She reiterated that it is a sensitive balance between mandatory reporting and guarding confidentiality of students and wants to make sure the staff taking the trainings have a clear idea about those boundaries.

Ms. Loudon said the second section of the training is an LGBTQ education. She stated the District hasn't really had the opportunity to have a dialogue and some intensive training around this specifically. She stated Beth Schroeder who is part of the counseling and social work department as a crisis school social worker collaborated

with YeVonne Allen, Program Director for Equity, Inclusion, and Sustainability at Truckee Meadow Community College to do the second portion of the training. Ms. Schroeder stated section two goes over acronyms and terminology, definitions, and accurate use of terms within the LGBTQ youth community. Stated this portion of the training was important because this is a high-risk population of the student body and having support of adults in a building is incredibly important. Ms. Schroeder stated they have learned that 31.8% of the youth LGBTQ identifying students have missed at least one day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable and they are four times more likely to attempt suicide. This section is about keeping them feeling safe, keeping them in school and keeping them connected so they have the supports they need.

Ms. Loudon stated in the training they provide a list of local resources and talk about where to go for help, where to get additional information, and how to reach the trainers for additional support.

Ms. Battle reviewed the third section of the training, and let the Commissioners know during this section is about cultural competency and equity work. The third section centers around discussions so that staff can be culturally competent leaders and being sensitive in the way they approach conversations with students within different cultures. Explained when they discuss equity, they are focusing on educational equity which is different than equity and want to make sure the participants understand the difference. They discuss the difference between culture and diversity, understanding their own assumptions, beliefs and values about people and cultures that are different from their own. She discussed the four strategies for advocacy - interrupt, question, educate, and echoing that they use to help participants practice with responding to different scenarios to help them not make assumptions about what someone is saying.

Ms. Session shared what the placard for the Brave Space Program looks like and let the Commissioners know they worked with the Student Advisory Council and Communications Department to come up with the design. She stated participants that finish the three sections of training receive the placard to display in their classroom or workspace so kids know who they can go to.

Ms. Loudon stated they are working on the next session of trainings and have received feedback from participants who want to stay in contact with the trainers and other participants to communicate and work together.

They opened for questions and Commissioner Goicoechea stated she thought this was a beautiful program and appreciates and was excited to hear how this impacts the students and families in the schools who have been going through so much and how as this evolves if this could become a group experience for students to share with each other.

Chair Benton thanked them for the presentation and that it meant a lot for the Director of Equity and Diversity present as they have never had a Director from Equity and Diversity present to them before and was important for the Commissioners to know that this was a collaboration to help make the students and families feel safe in

the District.

2.07 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO DETERMINE TENTATIVE CONTENT, LOGISTICS, AND MARKETING OF THE 2022 SAFETY FORUM (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION)

Chair Benton stated he wanted to hear from the Commissioners what topics should be for the next safety forum that will be held in late spring or early summer.

Commissioner Goicoechea would like to see conversation around fentanyl awareness and the epidemic that is sweeping Washoe County and the United States. To help students and families understand that opioid overdose can be overturned and there are safety resources available.

Commissioner reviewed past topics. Commissioner Lorraine Benuto stated with absenteeism being so prevalent a topic to look at would be the ethnic disparities related to absenteeism. Commissioner Elizabeth Florez stated driver safety has been an issue and increase in fatalities and road incidents during Covid and teen driving continues to be an issue.

Chair Benton stated as a Commission they get to decide the content and when it comes down to items, they will be looking for subject matter experts for the topics and asked Commissioners if they know someone who would be a great presenter to let the Commission know so they can work with them for the safety forum.

Student Representative, Ivy Batmale stated she has had conversations with parents and peers regarding gun safety and the ongoing threat of school shootings. She stated that in the high schools there has recently been instances that have all been handled differently and would like a topic on how the process is usually handled.

Commissioner Goicoechea would like to see an ongoing conversation about sex trafficking and exploitation. Commissioner Amber Joiner asked for clarification if the Commissioner has determined what the goals are and stated in the past, they have listened to parents via forums for direction on what topics to have in the safety forum. Chair Benton stated that was true in the past and with Covid there was some budgetary restrictions that changed and could put on a future agenda to discuss. Commissioner Joiner stated she thinks it would be a good idea to have some sort of discussion forum with public to determine topics.

Chair Benton asked that this topic be on every agenda leading up to the safety forum so the Commission can continue to have the momentum to go forward with the safety forum. Chair Benton asked for the Commission to think about who the community resources are that would be willing to work with them on the safety forum and will look at topic of brainstorming and planning what Commissioner's priorities are and stated there are only four meetings to plan the safety forum.

3. CLOSING ITEMS

3.01 PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received.

3.02 ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING

Chair Benton stated the next meeting of the Safe and Healthy Schools is scheduled for Monday, December 13, 2021, in the Board Room at 425 E. Ninth Street, Reno, NV 89512.

3.03 MEETING ADJOURNED

There being no more business, Chair Benton adjourned the meeting at 3:40 PM.