

Mental Health Committee Meeting
1/8/2019

Board Members in Attendance:

Jody McDougal
Julie Batey
Linda Kramer

Additional Attendees:

Andy Hill
Gabe Tudor
Joyce Walker
Rob Earle
Vicky Albanese
Jenny Manos
Beth Beal
Eric Jackson
Michelle Minick
Joanne Gahan
Lynn Decker
Nikki Farson
Julie Cloonan
Meagan Newmann
Kelly Rapp
Jodie McInnes
Laurie Freund
Lauren Ross
Steve Moore
Steph Schmeltzer
Ashley Ruedisueli
Doug Beeman
Erin Simpson
Chris Sieber
Kathie Parke
Maria Burk - United Way
Chris Roberts

The meeting was called to order by Jody McDougal.

- At our last meeting, the request was made to find and discuss school counseling/student support model data from comparable school districts. Dr. Hill shared the information he was able to find regarding the 12 districts who responded to his request for information.

Additional data will be shared if he hears from other districts he has reached out to. Data included district enrollment, counselors FTE and any additional support the district provides such as drug counselor, social worker, prevention counselor, etc. When comparing this data to WCSD, our enrollment is approximately 4700 students and our school counselor FTE is 9.5. We, too, offer additional support to our students through the MCDAC prevention program, resiliency program and collaborating with 2 different outside mental health agencies who work with students referred to them. The committee noted that our student:counselor ratio district-wide is 522:1. Given the data shared, the highest ratio is 504:1 and the lowest is 361:1.

- The committee discussed the importance of partnerships and understanding that no district can support the needs of all students without community support and expertise. Dr. Hill asked the committee whether we should be looking to collaborate with any other community programs in support of the mental health concerns we are addressing at the school level. Do we have a concern “connecting the dots” between school and outside resources? The committee discussed examples where the resources are there, but families do not have the ability to access those resources due to lack of transportation or poor follow-through. The district vision screening process was discussed as an example of the district communicating need and resources when a student fails the school vision exam, but very few parents follow through on a 2nd evaluation or communicating that the vision concern was addressed. The counselors and principals stated that they are aware of resources, but do not always have the time or ability to make sure follow-through takes place on the part of the family. Counselors have a “help guide” that they share with families.
- The committee members discussed the referral process used when students need referred to Pastoral Counseling or Bellefaire. Their presence in our district is an important part of supporting the needs of our students. All agreed that the referral process is fluid and the resources are utilized when appropriate. The challenge is when families either refuse to consider the service, do not qualify for service and cannot pay the additional cost of counseling, or parents never complete the referral process. These students end up continuing to work with the school counselor, but are in need of additional/different types of support. The agencies are willing to provide more support if the caseloads call for an increase in staff, but that did not appear to be the case at this time. Counselors stated that they are not withholding referrals due to capacity to serve. The committee discussed updating the referral information to include a “Wadsworth Voice” because of the negative stigma that comes with a mental health referral. Those students supported through the resiliency program are able to benefit from the additional counseling support free of charge. There was a brief discussion about whether the resiliency grant needs to be revisited in the future to ensure we are able to accurately and efficiently meet the needs of our students.

- Elementary counselors shared that they are seldom called from one building to respond to a crisis in their other building. The administrators and teachers know their building schedule and will email concerns if the counselor is not in that day. They reported that they do receive teacher emails daily due to not always being available to meet and talk.
- Dr. Hill shared the importance of all committee members sharing their thoughts regarding “gaps” in providing the mental health support necessary to meet the needs of our students. He reminded all members that before a solution can be discussed, the committee needs to be able to clearly define the programming needs.
- The committee discussed providing additional PD for the teachers so they are aware of what support is available.
- Erin Simpson shared her concern that there are students who have mental health issues that need to be addressed in the moment but not as a “billable” service. She questioned whether the district would consider hiring a therapist who could provide that needed support as a district service. In this scenario, that person would work with the student at the time of crisis, but would then work to get the family connected with the appropriate community support. Maria Burke shared that a “wrap around” model is being piloted at Garfield at this time and might be something the district may want to consider in the future.
- Next Meeting: January 31st (rescheduled to Feb. 19th due to Calamity Day) 4PM in WHS Media Center
- Committee actions needing to take place prior to the meeting include:
 - Review of Job Description (Will be emailed to the committee)
 - Review of the most recent counselors’ report that will be shared with the committee. (Will be emailed to the committee)
 - Review of the data shared today by Dr. Hill (Shared at the meeting tonight)
 - Thoughts about what gaps in service we are experiencing when meeting the mental health needs of our students.