

Mental Health Committee Meeting Notes
November 21, 2019

In attendance:

Joyce Walker
Joanne Gahan
Erin Simpson
Julie Batey
Linda Kramer
Steve Brady
Hope Zakany
Vicky Albanese
Meagan Neumann

Julie Gunn
Nikki Farson
Ashley Bonenfant
Michelle Minick
Ashley Ruedisueli
Kelly Rapp
Lauren Ross
Sara Kopacko

Beth Beal
Lynn Decker
Steph Schmeltzer
Rob Earle
Roger Havens
Steve Moore
Chris Roberts
Gabe Tudor

Gabe Tudor began the meeting by reviewing key concepts discussed at the October meeting.

Key building updates included:

- WESPA and WEA staff are working collaboratively to discuss the 504 process to determine what part of that process is clerical. The new 504 process at the HS has helped, but the current school counseling staff is still struggling to keep up with meeting student needs on a daily basis while balancing testing/graduation requirement demands.
- Mr. Moore reported that the testing has not been completely taken away from the HS counselors because they need to be involved. Mr. Moore and Mr. Sieber are helping with testing day organization and procedures, but this additional help is not freeing up a significant amount of time to focus on student needs.
- The HS reported that without the support of the former MCDAC Prevention Specialist, little preventative counseling is taking place.
- Mr. Moore shared that the HS counseling staff has been a team of 4 for the past 18 years. Even though student numbers are up a little, the mental health needs of students has drastically increased and that students and staff are desperate for guidance from this year.
- When asked what adding one additional HS counselor would look like, the team stated that an additional counselor would be used to wrap around and support at-risk students. This person would not be assigned an alphabet of students but would instead support the other four counselors in meeting the needs of their most at-risk students. The focus would be more in the mental health area and would focus on wrap-around services/supports. They feel strongly that a school counselor can meet these qualifications.
- The group discussed the Trauma Informed Care training taking place as we train all CIS, WMS and WHS staff. This training will help the teachers feel more confident as the first line of support for all students. Ms. Kramer discussed the Hope Squad program that is being implemented in other Medina schools. Mrs. Beal shared that there is a similar student component to our current Trauma Informed Care program that could be taught once the staff is trained.
- Sara shared how her role as a Prevention Specialist looked when working in Columbus. In that role she worked under the Director of Health and Mental Wellness.

As a social worker, it was her job to work with the school counselors and the students/families as she facilitated wrap-around services. Suicide is the No. 1 cause of death in the youth of Ohio and the second leading cause in the US. The counselors shared their current Suicide Prevention program. Grade-level assessments are completed in the fall, and student follow-up takes place. The current program in place is strong. There simply isn't enough time to on a daily basis to make sure the "walk-in traffic" is addressed and follow-up meetings are scheduled.

- The HS team shared that now that Health has moved into the MS curriculum, they are struggling with where this group learning/instruction will take place.
- Sara updated the committee about her Prevention Specialist Program structure. She is taking the time to learn the prevention needs of the different buildings and grade levels. Huddle is being implemented at this time. Best practice supports strong social/emotional learning district-wide. She is running groups at WMS. At WHS she is analyzing whether we have programming in support of the 5 Skills of Resiliency. She has started the ARC program again at WHS which is helping her connect with students who are not connected with others. She met with Mrs. Walker to discuss the tiers of prevention and will be meeting with all counselors to talk through that model and include their thoughts given current programming.
- Sara and Steve shared that they are going to connect Sara with the department leaders with the goal of discussing how she can better support educating the "whole child" without piling in onto the teachers' plate. Sara would like to see mini lessons taking place during IE throughout the school year in support of social/emotional learning.
- Meagan Neumann shared that at CIS and MS she is focusing on classroom lessons including vaping, peer-pressure, and medication abuse.
- Erin Simpson shared that at Overlook she is launching a new program where one Friday a month every adult in the building will have no more than 10 students in a group. The goal is that every child feel connected with another adult in the building. There will be mixed age groups so that the students can also connect and support each other. There is a four-person teacher committee working on this initiative, which came from the staff discussing the importance of a strong social/emotional curriculum. These staff members are developing the mini lessons that will be covered on the Fridays when these advisory groups meet.
- Steve Brady shared the Adverse Child Experience Survey (ACES) and that his staff has been talking about the fact that kids need to be ready to learn. If students are in a place where they are not learning due to trauma, that must be addressed before learning can take place.
- Joyce shared that she is working closely with Andy and Gabe as we monitor the current behavior needs being addressed at this time. We have our behavior specialist two days a week. Joyce will be proposing a RBT training model to consider as the district looks to have aides/attendance receive additional training in understanding behaviors and molding those behaviors given a direct plan created by the behavior specialist and teacher.
- Joyce shared that the resiliency counselor shared that in K-8 there are currently 92 students enrolled in the resiliency program, 57 students enrolled in groups based on specific needs, and 3 students who have qualified for individual support. There is a reported wait list at Isham and Valley View for the resiliency program, but those students can be included after the completion of the first 10-week lesson cycle.
- The committee was encouraged to remember that we need to keep in mind the needs of our employees, as well as our students. Our staff is experiencing stress when dealing with situations that were not the norm several years ago. Emotional needs are more significant and student behavior/response can often be challenging.

Where do we go from here?

- Next meeting: Thursday, January 16, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m., in WHS media center
- Agenda items for the January meeting:
 - o HS - What would work responsibilities look like if an additional counselor was added to the high school team?
 - o An update on the 504 clerical discussion
 - o How would the RBT/Behavior Specialist model look if implemented at WCS?
 - o Update the committee on the Prevention Specialist district-wide tier of support/instruction.