

OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL
201 North Scoville Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302

Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee
May 19, 2016

A Culture, Climate and Behavior Committee meeting was held on May 19, 2016. Chair Dixon Spivy called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Board Room. Committee members present were: Mary Blankemeier, Jennifer Cassell, Lincoln Chandler, Anthony Clark, Wendy Daniels, Dr. Steven Gevinson, Cathy Gustafson, Sheila Hardin, Dr. Steven Isoye, Melanie McQueen, Ralph Martire, Nathaniel L. Rouse, Cormac Warden, Jonathan Weintraub, Lee Williams, Val Yarrington, and Sara Dixon Spivy. Absent were Anthony Brooks, Latoya Jackson, Naomi Hildner, Steven Jackson, Lindsay Moore-Fields, and Kayla York.

Visitors: Mr. Silver and Mr. Byers, SIDs and Amy Dickerson of Franczek Radelet

Public Comments

None

Minutes

No action was taken.

Feedback Summary from the May 5, 2016 Meeting

What did you learn?

- The data behind infractions
- It was informative to see the process of how the referral, infraction, consequence works
- None
- Students don't use their lockers

What surprised you?

- It was surprising to see how many actual students commit the infractions. Although 745 is a large number, that is fewer than the total number of 1,945.
- A great number of infractions are committed by a few students.
- Tardies surpass behavioral infractions

What do you want to know more about?

- Are we ready to support students who are repeaters-tardy or discipline?
- The student to counselor/SID and social worker ratio is huge. Many students need a holistic approach to issues deeper than meets the eye.
- How we can motivate students to be on time from a positive viewpoint? How can we raise the bar and promote a culture of "we know you all can be on time and we value your participation as a student from minute one until the end of the school day?"
- PTAC—what have you considered from previous PTAC notes and years of meetings?
- What is the institutional memory on the tardy policy?
- Other schools' best practices used to reduce tardies
- Niles Township High School has students scan ID or input ID when they enter the classroom. Is this something that would lessen the time students are out of class getting tardy slip and we should get their tardy data.

- What PBIS opportunities do other schools use to deter tardies?
- Race and gender data about tardy infractions.
- Past years of tardies to see a trend.

Questions from the group during the meeting

- Is there a relationship between the dress code and discipline referrals?
- How often does faculty review the Code of Conduct to build consistency?
- Would like to better understand the tardies—beginning of the day or late to school, or during the day or late to class, Wednesday late start
- Locks on the lockers, are they an issue?

The Committee had received data and policies from Niles Township and Evanston Township High Schools. This could be a subject at another meeting.

The Committee reviewed its norms.

1. We will work together as a community that values building consensus.
2. We will be fully “present” at our meeting by being prepared and being attentive.
3. Share examples which do not include references to specific individuals or specific situations.
4. We will invite and welcome the contributions of every member and listen to each other.
5. We will operate in a collegial and open atmosphere.
6. We will be guided by the Oak Park and River Forest High School mission statement which enhances success for all students
7. Assume positive intentions from every member and every presenter
8. Listen to understand, not to reply

Discussion ensued about why schools started implementing zero tolerance policies. Some of the reasons voiced were 1) the 80’s war on drugs, 2) pagers, 3) box cutters, and 4) firearms on campus in 1994. Discussion continued about what some states/cities were doing legislatively about school discipline. The Cleveland Schools went to RtI and PBIS, instead of zero tolerance and went from to preventive and supportive system. Some Illinois schools are already using PBIS. Denver reduced its suspension rates by 47%. It was unclear if that were a reduction in infractions or suspensions. In order to see successful changes happen, the administration must it. To reach that step, working definitions are necessary. One member was worried about using catch phrases, such as restorative justice, because it can mean different things. The committee needs to define the terms. Successful change will be mean being more proactive rather than reactive.

Senate Bill 100

Ms. Dickerson provided an overview of Senate Bill 100 (“SB 100”) was enacted as Public Act 99-456, which becomes effective September 15, 2016. SB 100 restricts the authority of school districts to suspend and expel students and imposes new requirements in those cases where school removal will still be allowed. Specifically, VOYCE led this legislation. The purpose is to reduce the learning missed due to and the disproportionate number of African-American students in the discipline system. The reasons for the change were 1) In the 2011 school year, more than 272,000 Out-of-School Suspension (OSS), 2) 2200 expulsions and 3) 10,000 arrests. In 2010, 1 million days were lost to expulsion and suspensions. In 2012, African Americans were suspended at a rate of 19% higher than white students. Illinois had the highest numbers of disparity in the United States.

Suspensions

The legislation requires the Board of Education or the administration to specify the severity of a threat or problem to the school community and then take interventions. Many school districts throughout the state have likely have been issuing them under their guidelines. Districts now have to demonstrate the actions they take before making a recommendation for expulsion.

- 1-3 day suspension would require a continuing threat determination; and reasonable steps to minimize suspension, i.e., separating the students in conflict, providing social work services, writing a behavioral contract, searching the student before he/she enters the building, etc.
- A 4-day suspension would require a continuing threat determination and reasonable steps to minimize suspension, and that intervention have been exhausted, i.e., after school detention, Saturday detention, in-school detention, parent contact, behavior contract, social skills instructions, etc.
- A 5-10 day suspension would mandate all of the requirements for 4-day suspensions and the provision of appropriate and available support services which could include the focus on academics, providing placement in alternative school, tutoring, makeup work, referrals to outside resources, counseling, etc.

All suspension require a makeup work opportunity, a return-to-school plan after the OSS, and a process for appeal right. If parents require the suspension to be reviewed and the board upholds the suspension, the written decision must include the specific act of gross misconduct, the rationale for the duration of the suspension, and, if greater than three days, state whether interventions were attempted and no other ones were available. It is the parents or guardians can make the appeal. School administrators have the authority to suspend students for up to 10 days without board approval. Parents must be provided notice when a student is suspended: a statement of the reasons for the suspension and the right to a review of the decision. The Committee was informed that OPRFHS already does many of these requirements, i.e., students are allowed to make up their work. As to who makes the appeal, the School Code provides that the board makes the appeal, but it can have an interim step before it goes to the Board of Education. If the parents were not satisfied with the interim step, the process would still go to the board, i.e., receiving a hearing officer report or the Board of Education conducting the hearing. Mr. Rouse stated that it is important for the administration to advocate for those families who do not know how to file an appeal to create a more equitable system.

Expulsions

All of the requirements for 5-10 day suspensions must be met, i.e., a continuing threat determination; reasonable steps had been taken to minimize discipline, and Interventions exhausted.

The school board must give specific reasons why removing the student from the school is in the best interests of the school and provide a rationale for the duration of the expulsion. Similar requirements apply for alternative school placements. Each district may define appropriate interventions. At some point in the law, it states that it will be determined state-by-state.

The Discipline rules that remain the same are 1) students can be expelled for acts of gross disobedience or misconduct for up to 2 calendar years. 2) Parents must be provided notice when an expulsion is proposed and a hearing, and 3) suspensions and expulsions may include exclusion from all school activities.

Ms. Dickerson noted that if a student had brought alcohol to school, the school could recommend an OSS or ISS, if it met, its procedures. A four-day suspension could be recommended because the student was a

continuing threat to safety or interferes with the operation of the school. What would that look like? The school could have information that the intent was to distribute it to other students. Each case would have to be analyzed and interventions exhausted. There may be times when no interventions were appropriate for the infraction. Officials would have to conduct that analysis and make that finding before a suspension or expulsion was issued.

The new requirements do apply to bus and In-School Suspensions. SB100 is aimed at reducing the removal of students from the school. In-school suspensions are one method to do this. The new legislation applies equally to general education and special education students. The additional protections afforded to students with disabilities (under the IDEA and Section 504) continue to apply. The law prohibits issuing monetary fines for disciplinary consequences, i.e., targeting charter school who issue monetary fines. Schools cannot advise a student to drop out of school. The law enforces reciprocal agreements with high schools.

Between now and September 15, 2016, the school will make revisions to its student discipline policy and handbook. The student discipline policy is now called Student Behavior.

Zero tolerance mandated infractions include weapons in school (1-year expulsion for weapon possession).

Ms. Dickerson has offered her services to review discipline letters. Ms. Gustafson and Mr. Chandler will chair an Administrators' Academy on Restorative Justice and SB100. Ms. Hardin stated that the IEA recommended teachers and administrators have professional development in order to understand the nuances and the rationale as to why this is so positive.

While the language "all interventions have been exhausted" seemed ambiguous, Ms. Dickerson felt that the best practice was to make certain every student's situation is analyzed and documented.

When asked what would happen if a victim's family pushed for OSS, Ms. Dickerson responded that the law does not provide taking into account the request of the victim. Ms. Spivy stated that from a criminal standpoint, victims are allowed to make a statement concerning on how the action affected them, and it is at the judge's discretion. Victims are not in the best position to decide what appropriate discipline would be.

Questions were raised about the ability of the school to escort students off the property immediately if something egregious occurs. Ms. Dickerson stated that it would be a case-by-case assessment. While the law sets parameters, it leaves much to the district to conduct the analysis. It is important to have a student/school resource officer.

The people who should receive professional development are teachers, administration, school board members, resource officers, and staff. The training should include the following topics: 1) The adverse consequences of school exclusion and justice-system involvement; 2) Effective classroom management strategies; 3) Culturally responsive discipline, and 4) Developmentally appropriate disciplinary methods that promote positive and healthy school climates. SB 100 states that districts shall make reasonable efforts to provide "ongoing" professional development, but does not define "ongoing" or specify whether each group must receive training in each of the topics.

The Student Discipline Policy is now called the Student Behavior Policy.

Future Meeting Dates

The majority of the committee members present determined that Mondays would be the best day of the week to meet in the future.

Reflection

It was suggested that committee members consider areas in which they might want to concentrate in a subcommittee and send their thoughts to Ms. Spivy, Ms. Gustafson, Mr. Chandler and Ms. Kalmerton, i.e., tardies (who benefits and who suffers from the current system of excused absences for vacations, etc.), focusing on what behavior is desired.

Adjournment

At 8:32 p.m., Ms. Dixon Spivy moved to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Cassell. A voice vote resulted in motion carried.

Submitted by
Gail Kalmerton
Clerk of the Board