

School Safety & Security Task Force

Waterbury Board of Education

Minutes - Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

Waterbury Arts Magnet School, 16 South Elm Street, Waterbury, CT

PRESENT:	Albini, Nicholas	Hudson, Sinclair
	Barry, Dan	Johns, Wendy
	Bhadrasain, Nadina	Michelis, Belen
	Binette, Kim	O'Brien, Maggie
	Bush, Roxanne	Orso, Rocco
	Cavallo, Mary Grace	Pineda, Eva
	Cullen, Donna	Quintana, Carolyn
	DiGiovanni, Melissa	Ruffin, Verna
	Egan, Kevin	Stanco, Ken
	Hendricks, Yonique	Schwartz, Darren
		Thazhampallath, Geen

Board of Education Commissioner Margaret O'Brien called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Dr Ruffin thanked everyone for returning. This is an update on the progress that the Task Force requested at the last meeting. There were many delays due to scheduling and inclement weather. Members of the staff will review four sections – Communications, Safety & Security, Mental Health Resources & Support, and Staffing.

The attached report was shared via SmartBoard with those present.

COMMUNICATIONS: Belen Michelis, Director of Communications, spoke to the report regarding the improvement in the communication system by streamlining notifications, updating situations, and uniformity for notifications. ParetSquare is always kept up to date.

SAFETY & SECURITY: Dan Barry, Director of Security and School Safety, spoke on security infrastructure at 33 different schools. The State continues to give districts money to add onto the current infrastructure. Anything going on in the schools can be seen in real-time in the Crime Center.

Questions arose regarding notice of student off-campus arrests and Mr. Barry spoke on the protocols. Also asked was if there were numbers of cameras we could compare now to those in the past. Mr. Barry stated that would be a security issue; we have gotten large grants to add additional cameras which are standardized in the buildings.

It was mentioned that administrators are more trained but it's not being seen. Teachers are not sure what to do, they feel there were several issues that they believe shelter in place should have been called. There's a lot of new staff that

do not know what to do. It was asked what the evaluation tool is for this Committee?

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES & SUPPORT: Wendy Johns, Director of Pupil Services, spoke regarding questions and concerns raised by the Task Force. She spoke on the resources that have already been in place including the "Mental Health Road Map" which is located on the website. Training for staff and students (high school) was provided during Professional Development in August and throughout our full-day professional development series. Resources are always being analyzed; it's not a one and done.

It was questioned whether the Task Force recommendation of "communicate clear and consistent discipline practices that are uniformly enforced" is actually better than a year ago when the Task Force came up with the recommendation. Ms. Johns stated the Board's policy on progressive discipline is being emphasized. Additional social workers have been hired for support. There is currently a behavior intervention pilot to start planning for students in the buildings. Ongoing teacher and administrator professional development for a clearer understanding of the IEP and 504 process. A lot of new support trainings are being held bi-weekly.

She has stated what she had done, developed a multitier support manual and trained department and principals on different ways to provide discipline.

Discussion arose regarding arrest/non-arrest of students and procedures at the local and state level. Students who are causing problems are being catered to.

STAFFING: Geen Thazhampallath, Interim Director of Personnel & Talent Management, spoke regarding how the staffing piece fits in with many of the concerns. He stated there are 94 classroom vacancies and 50 special education vacancies. We hear the feedback and we're doing everything we can to increase our collaboration internally. There was discussion about ESS employees as to whether they're qualified and trained.

In closing, Dr. Ruffin addressed some of the concerns brought up.

The meeting ended at 7:13 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Carrie A. Swain, Clerk.