



On January 13, the Communications Conference Committee met via Zoom and discussed a variety of topics with district administrators. Many of these discussions may just be updates about a program or progress to date in an area of interest.

Topics have been grouped under the following headings: District Committees, Focus Group Projects and Student-Related Areas.

District Committees:

1. Food Allergy Committee -

When was the last time the committee met?

The Allergy Committee fulfilled its BOE mandate in the spring of the 2016-17 school year. The committee's recommendations were incorporated into the District [Allergy Policy](#).

Has anyone updated the food allergy list?

Nurses update allergy information in Infinite Campus. Potential allergens are listed on the nutriKids website. Aramark Food service implements protocols so that food service staff is very attentive to allergy information.

Has the Safe Snack List been updated?

The Safe Snack List and directions for adhering to the Safe Snack Protocol have been [updated](#) (effective 3/2/2022) and can be found on the district and individual building websites.

Is shared food now allowed in the classrooms?

No, sharing of food is not permitted.

Are there guidelines for in-class programs' use of food in the classroom?

The recommended Allergy policy implementation guidelines are as follows:

Transportation:

- No food on bus rule to be implemented strictly.
- Students with a significant food allergy requiring special accommodations on the school bus need to have a Section 504 plan created. The 504 plan will identify the need for special accommodations for the student on a bus which has an attendant, e.g. special seating, seat cleaning protocol.
- Continue to discuss appropriate allergy awareness and procedures with the private bus company.
- With parental permission, provide the bus driver/company with the student's emergency healthcare information relative to an allergic reaction.

Awareness:

- At building faculty meetings, include food allergy awareness discussions at least two times yearly e.g. Fall/Spring.
- All buildings participate in Food Allergy Awareness week each year in May.
- Epi-pens are located throughout the buildings for use by the school nurse in case of emergency.

Classroom Celebrations

- Follow the procedures established for classroom birthday celebrations which require that food(s) be selected from the pre-approved list and that there must be at least one snack that is safe for each child in the class.

School-wide Celebrations

- Select packaged foods from the pre-approved list used for classroom birthday celebrations.
- Notify parents of allergy students well before the celebration and provide contact information of vendors.
- For secondary celebrations, include an allergy-free food choice/table.

Food items used for in-class activities, not for consumption, are also reviewed by the nurse for any possible allergy related concerns.

2. Diversity Task Force -

Has there been diversity training for staff? What's mandatory for all staff?

All must complete fourteen Global Compliance Training tutorials by October 1, 2021:

- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Bullying
- Child Abuse NY
- Computer Use Policies
- Cultural Awareness Video: Implicit Bias
- Cultural Competency and Racial Bias
- Dignity for All Students Act/Code of Conduct – NY (Overview)
- FERPA
- First Aid in Schools
- Hazard Communications
- Sexual Harassment NY – State Mandated
- Student Data Privacy (NY State Ed Law Section 2-d)
- Title IX
- Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Awareness in Schools

In addition, Microsoft eLessons on Implicit and Unconscious Bias and Superintendent's Conference Day training (provided by Breaking Borders, Harmony, Tom Murray, Jessica Lahey, Randy Young).

Is the task force focusing on gender issues as well as race and religion?

We strive to create an inclusive environment where all students have a strong sense of belonging to the school learning community. We have intentionally created a multitude of “windows, mirrors, and sliding doors” to give students opportunities to see themselves and learn about others via their coursework, extra-curricular activities, and athletic experiences.

Previous initiatives have successfully addressed issues of gender equity and opportunities in academic, extra-curricular, and athletic areas. These efforts have resulted in a significant increase in the enrollment of girls in many of our STEM classes and clubs.

The Diversity and Inclusivity five subcommittees include:

1. Community Outreach
2. Hiring Practices
3. Student Experience
4. Curriculum and Professional Learning
5. Restorative Practices

How will the goals of the task force be evaluated?

Goals and action plans for each subcommittee are presented to and reviewed by the Superintendent and included in reports to the BOE. Goals are aligned with the BOE mission statement and charges given to each subcommittee. Ongoing task force and sub-committee meetings, continuous discussions, direction, feedback and input from the Superintendent and the BOE into the task force planning and work.

3. Finance - Update on capital improvements - where are we and what's next?

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-hS5cBLQfd9KB_dtR7Tsw3aQcWREXlz6/view?usp=sharing

- Planned for summer 2022 if budget is approved:
 - Turf Field lighting project
 - Tennis court reconstruction
 - SW library renovation - Summer 2022
 - (Re-)Paving work (new walkways, parking lots)
 - Roofing projects at SWMS and SHS
 - Pool ventilation
 - Most new classroom doors have been installed and we will be completing doors for larger spaces by summer.
- Remaining Capital Projects (Phase 1 and Phase 2):
 - One-button lockdown/ballistic doors - project almost complete; larger spaces projected by summer.
 - District wide A/C is complete - in punch-list phase.
 - DOAS (Dedicated Outside Air System) is in punch-list phase

- Underground Fuel Tanks have been replaced in most buildings; the remaining will be done this summer.
- EPC Status (photovoltaics - i.e. solar - are installed at RL and Baylis, HS this summer after roof work). New lighting and ceiling work is complete, building envelope work is complete, boilers will be complete this summer at Village and Willits.
- New Building Condition Survey in progress, to be completed in 2022.

Focus Group Projects:

1. Elementary School Report Cards - Parents who sat on the focus group to revamp report cards do not believe that their recommendations are mirrored in the current report card. Parents are getting few to no comments from teachers, but the goal was to receive more feedback from the report cards.

The Syosset Standards Based Report Card (SBRC) for grades K-5 can be found here: <https://www.syossetschools.org/domain/129>

The SBRC provides more detailed feedback to parents/guardians regarding the progress their child is making towards specific learning standards at each grade level. It allows parents and students to understand more clearly what is expected; and with this understanding, parents are better able to guide and support their child and to help them be successful in a rigorous academic program. SBRC benefits students, teachers and parents/guardians by stating what is expected in the academic content areas, and how well the student is progressing towards their grade level standards for those areas.

The report card reflects achievement, as demonstrated by the knowledge and skill components of the standards. The indicators are designed to distinguish the consistency in level of achievement, with emphasis placed on the ***most recent performance*** to reflect the current status of the student's growth. The focus is on individual learning and achievement. Behaviors (such as effort, participation, and attitude) will be reported separately from mastery of the academic standards.

Our new report cards include standards-based indicators that will clearly communicate each student's level of performance. These new indicators are so closely aligned with our instructional program that teachers will only be adding comments to convey information that is not already communicated through the indicators, or that reflects information about behaviors.

We are interested in getting feedback from parents to make the report cards more useful.

2. Code of Character, Conduct & Support

Say Something Reporting System (Is it working? Does anyone use it?).

- Students do use the Say Something System. It has provided a secure and anonymous means to report concerns they have for their friends and

classmates. These events range from self-harm ideation(s) to fear of emotional or physical abuse to bullying.

- We have experienced some misuse of the system as well, which we have been addressing on an individual basis.

Overall, how has the revised code of conduct impacted disciplinary incidents?

- **Have they decreased?** The District works through programs such as Harmony (grades K-5) to reduce incidents that would lead to discipline. Implementing Restorative Practices when incidents do occur has resulted in a decrease in the frequency of repeat offenders.
- **Has there been less of a need for suspensions?** Suspension numbers have remained consistent, but the number of repeat offenders has decreased.
- **Has it been easier to categorize incidents based on the revised code of conduct?** The revised Code of Character was intended to help support Restorative Practices and to work towards increased sensitivity and healing wrong-doings. The work of Restorative Practices is intentional in underscoring that we are all part of a shared community and that we all have a shared responsibility in addressing and fixing the harms that are caused by the wrongdoings of any member of our shared learning community. The revised Code of Conduct has put the focus on repairing the harm as a primary desired outcome and restorative conversations are employed in conjunction with consequences when such are warranted.

Student-Related Areas:

1a. High School Advisory Program -

Is this initiative on hold?

The High School Advisory program is running within the Wellness, Physical Education and Health Education programs. The High School Advisory curriculum has been blended and incorporated into the Wellness Physical Education, and Health curriculum. Prior to the pandemic, we had a plan to implement Advisory with Freshmen, and then move it up each grade. The pandemic interrupted that plan. High School Advisory has just restarted this year with the full in-person learning. Student feedback will be collected and used to refine the Advisory Program.

Every student participates in at least two Advisory lessons per month in grades 9-12.

- Grades 9 and 10 participate in Advisory, during their Wellness Units within Phys. Ed.
- 11th graders participate during their health classes
- 12th graders participate during Phys Ed.

Sample Advisory Lessons may be found [here](#). Lessons are differentiated by grade level as per the [NYS Social Emotional Learning benchmarks](#))

What are the goals?

Advisory mission statement:

SHS Advisory is a grade 9-12 program which, through bi-monthly meetings, aims to empower students with needed skills as they navigate the ups and downs of their high school experience. In meetings with grade-level groups, students will participate in curricula-driven discussions, guided by teachers, incorporating social/emotional themes. Through this work, the goal is that students will develop more trusting connections among student peers, teachers and the school community. The goal is for the Advisory meetings to become a safe and non-judgmental opportunity to feel **connected, supported and understood** within the school environment.

Advisory Goals:

The goals of the Advisory program are directly tied to the [NYS Social Emotional Learning Benchmarks](#)

To enable students to take full advantage of educational opportunities throughout the school experience in grades K-12 and, equally important, to prepare them for college and/or career, the School Climate and Student Engagement Workgroup of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force have identified the following goals to guide SEL benchmarks for New York State schools:

<p>GOAL 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills essential to success in school and in life</p>
--

Associated Benchmarks:

- A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior
- B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports
- C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals

<p>GOAL 2: Use social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships</p>
--

Associated Benchmarks:

- A. Recognize the feelings and perspective of others
- B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences
- C. Use communication and social skills to interactive effectively with others

- D. Demonstrate the ability to prevent, manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways

GOAL 3: Demonstrate ethical decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school and community contexts

Associated Benchmarks:

- A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions
- B. Apply decision-making to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations
- C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community

Who is involved in feedback on how it works?

Students and teachers are involved in a bi-annual feedback process that includes both student and teacher feedback surveys. The Advisory-SEL building committee meets to review the feedback and institute necessary shifts to the program.

The Advisory program is running within the Wellness, Physical Education and Health Education programs. The Advisory curriculum has been blended and incorporated into the Wellness Physical Education, and Health curriculum so that every student is participating in at least two Advisory lessons per month in grades 9-12. Grades 9 and 10 participate in Advisory through their Wellness Units within Phys. Ed. 11th graders participate through their health classes while 12th graders participate through Phys Ed.

1b. Middle School Advisory Program -

Is this initiative on hold?

While the pandemic forced a shift in the Middle School Advisory Program from multi-grade groups to grade-level groups (the result of cohorting requirements), the return to the non-cohort format has allowed us to return to the pre-pandemic Advisory structure.

Daily Advisory is the first 10 minutes of each day. Daily Advisory "check-ins" are intended to foster peer relationships, facilitate communication with trusted adults, and build positive school culture. Students "check in" daily with a supportive teacher-adviser, and learning experiences are also focused on emphasizing safety, belonging, identity, and connections with others.

During the daily “check-in” teachers are “taking the pulse”: assessing student affect and behavior and interacting closely with any students who seem to be having an “off” day. Efforts are made so that all students feel welcomed and part of a community. Since these “check-ins” happen every day, the long-term, cumulative impact of the 10-minute daily sessions are the connections, the relationships, the home-base feel, and that the teachers become recognized as caring adults that students can go to if there are concerns or questions.

Special Extended Advisory programming (typically once per month) are centered on school culture and climate, and ongoing themes and initiatives emphasizing the central goals of middle-level education. (i.e., Advisories in each middle school honor P.S. I Love You Day in Advisory in February by engaging in activities that promote friendship and belonging.)

Advisory also serves as the place for our *ADL No Place for Hate* learning activities and where we set community norms and expectations and revisit things throughout the year, such as the Dignity for All Students Act and the Code of Character, Conduct, and Support.

Advisory teachers participate in professional development:

- Restorative Practices
- Community Circles
- [Nancy Doda's Advisory for Challenging Times](#)

2. Transitions between elementary, middle and high school -

**What changes have been made from elementary to middle school?
How can parents get a better orientation on what to expect (especially at the middle school level)?**

- Middle School psychologists/APs attend the Annual Review meetings and explain the schedule/course options to parents.
- Middle Schools send out information on student programming (forms for available language/music options).

Emphasis last year continued to be on student orientation and parent communication.

- Email communication, transition slide presentations, and direct student-to-student orientation activities supported 5th graders in transition to middle school.

- Incoming 6th graders were invited to an in-person August 2021 orientation.
 - Links below represent parent and student communication/experiences:
 - [World Language/Music Selection](#)
 - [MS Road Trip 2021](#)
 - [2021-22 MS Program of Study](#)
 - [2021-22 Middle School Orientation - Welcome Back!](#)
 - [Summer Orientation Sample Letter -SW](#)
 - [Summer Orientation Sample Presentation -HBT](#)
- Middle school “virtual road trips” included virtual visits to 5th grade classrooms by middle school student leaders, administrators, and counselors.
- We welcome the opportunity to host in-person parent orientations and in-person student visits (in-district field trips) as we hosted annually pre-Covid.
 - Used a series of slides the last two years.
 - Opening PTSA meetings also featured time for new parents to talk to the administrative team and ask questions.
 - Both buildings send out welcome information that provides details to parents.
 - This year the plan is to have an in-person parent orientation.

3. College Admissions process - The college admissions process has been impacted by the pandemic and admissions rates have dramatically dropped in the last few years. Students also now more than ever need to find ways to differentiate themselves, and many seniors have specific needs or areas of interest (student athletes, arts).

How has the guidance department modified their approach to match this new environment?

The department attends college workshops to reflect updates in this process. We also review college information at department meetings discussing the latest trends while adapting this information into our programs and individual meetings.

The transition from grade 8 into grade 9 begins the process of preparing all students for both High School and beyond. In grade 8 students register for Naviance and complete a career/vocational interest survey. These set the stage for the beginnings of the conversations the students will have throughout grade 9 with their counselors and help to inform their grade 9 scheduling.

Our [Developmental School Counseling Program](#) begins in 9th grade with career based programs to impact their schedule, interests, and how this will affect the college search process. We build upon this information in 10th grade with our Career Cluster program through Naviance, including an exploratory college search with our students. This updated information is also reviewed in our evening guidance workshops.

The department revised the junior planning meeting packet, college planning workshop presentation, college application workshop information, and senior meetings to reflect the changes/trends of the application process. Most notably, [College Night](#) has various questions with our admissions panel representatives to discuss these updates.

Are there guidance counselors who have specialties in certain areas (special education for example)?

Each guidance counselor works with all of our students throughout high school. They work as a team with all departments to support our students. During the college search process, they review support and/or comprehensive programs for students with learning differences. We also provide our [College Planning Guide for Students with Learning Differences](#) handbook for our parents/students.

Is there a clear list of what the counselors do and do not assist with (e.g., essays - individualized assistance with topic, review of drafts vs. one read through once complete, creation of list of schools to apply to vs. list review right before applications), and does it include the rough number of hours counselors spend with each student on the college admission process? Is there a minimum expectation?

The guidance department works with each family on every aspect of the application process. This begins with an overview of what to expect at their individual junior planning meetings and various evening workshops. There is also our College Boot Camp program in the summer to review your application and work on your essay.

This work continues senior year with our senior meetings and college application evening workshop. Unlimited individual followup and meetings continue throughout senior year, that includes, but not limited to, the college essay, college search, application assistance, and submission of transcripts.

We also provide a College Essay Workshop for juniors in the spring and seniors in the fall.

The guidance counselors work with each family/student during the application process:

- Essay topics- revise, review, and structure of essay
- Initial colleges to consider applying to based on transcript and extra curriculars
- Revision of colleges to apply to during senior year
- Review of Early Decision, Early Action, and Regular Decision deadlines—review the importance of commitment for ED schools
- Connecting Naviance and Common Application account- FERPA form, and other application questions

Can the collection of resources for college admissions (located on the guidance tab) be more prominently featured on the district home page?

Yes, [the website](#) was updated under "Guidance". The top left corner has a [College Information](#) that has a list of resources.

4. SEPTA inclusion/communication - Parents are getting a lot of information from the district, but it doesn't always include mention of how it affects special education students.

How can the district improve communications to "drill down" to what it means for students in special education?

District communications are intended for all members of our learning community. Should communication topics relate specifically to families of classified students, those communications would be shared with the families by the PPS Office. Should a parent have a question about how a communication topic affects a particular student, they are encouraged to contact the building principal.

Additionally, students lost services during COVID - how/when will they be reinstated?

When students returned to in-school instruction including the hybrid model at the high school, all programs and services as listed on a student's IEP were provided. During the period of remote instruction, IEP services were provided to students to the "greatest extent possible" per the guidance from the USDOE. During this period of remote instruction, the district provided compensatory sessions. Going forward, students did not lose services; the special education services listed on an IEP are determined by the CSE. Should a parent have questions relative to a student's IEP services, they are encouraged to contact the building psychologist or the PPS Office.

How can these students be more included so that they have the opportunity for socialization?

The District has worked to enhance the social emotional learning opportunities for all of our students. At the elementary level, the Harmony program addresses skills necessary for effective social-emotional development and interaction. Particular attention has been paid to the elementary level with the addition of social workers. Each social worker has developed social-emotional Tier II group opportunities for identified students. Opportunities for classified students to participate in social/emotional learning activities are available at all buildings. Should a parent have particular concerns for a student, they are encouraged to contact the building psychologist and/or social worker.