Safety and Positive School Culture Committee April 9, 2026 Meeting Notes

The Safety and Positive School Culture Committee (Goal 4) met on April 9, 2026, to discuss areas of concern to be reviewed and potential actions to be discussed further. The four identified areas of concern included: bullying, vaping, weapons, and positive school culture.

Bullying: Committee members recognize the need to establish a clear understanding about what does, and what does not, constitute bullying. The development and posting of signage throughout the district and bringing in speakers from outside the district to address students were ideas that were discussed. Topics to be addressed by both the signage and the speakers could include:

- Bullying vs. Mean Behavior
- Different Types of Bullying (physical, verbal, cyber, etc.)
- Social Media Do's and Don'ts

Emphasis was placed on maintaining positive messaging.

Vaping: Committee members expressed concerns about the ease with which vaping devices (some as small as a ballpoint pen) can be brought into schools. Cartridges for these pens can contain nicotine or THC, and may be scent-free. The committee discussed three topics related to vaping, including:

- The need to update district policy for dealing with vaping at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels
- The development of an educational program to be attended by students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) when students are caught vaping

Weapons: Committee members recognized the number of safety improvements already in place thanks to grants procured by the district. Committee members also recognized the need to continue to identify and address safety throughout the district. Items discussed included:

- The possibility of hiring one or more resource officers
- Utilizing the Leader in Me program to address weapons concerns in a proactive manner
- Continue to assess and address safety needs district-wide

Positive School Culture: Committee members shared concerns they have regarding positive school culture as it relates to both students and staff. Ideas presented included:

- Public recognition of students on Merit Roll, Honor Roll, and the Dean's List, as well as students who score 30 or more on the ACT's or through achievements through programs like FFA or the district's work-based learning program
- The implementation of more professional development for teachers related to new initiatives being put out by ODEW
- "Graffitti-ing" the walls of the high school similarly to the hallways at Newton Elementary School and Utica Elementary School
- Creating a "Retirement Wall" in each building to honor staff who have retired from those buildings
- Continuing "Staff Spirit Days" to improve staff morale
- Holding Staff Appreciation Nights at UMS and UHS sporting events