



**Task Force on Equitable and Inclusive School
Environments – Meeting #6
March 8, 2022, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.**

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting
Call In: 1-802-828-7667
Conference ID: 334 163 452#
1 National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: Heather Bouchey, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Education; Marianna Donnally, Department of Mental Health; Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Boards Association; Steve Perrin, Vermont Principals' Association; Meaghan Morgan-Puglisi, Vermont-National Education Association; Catherine Gallagher, Vermont Superintendents Association; Charles Becker, Legal Aid Disability Law Project; Karen Price, Vermont Family Network (VFN); Amy Wheeler-Sutton, Building Effective Strategies for Teaching Students Project at the University of Vermont; Lindsey Halman, Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative; Kym Asam, Vermont Independent Schools Association; Justin Pinard, Vermont School Counselor Association;
Members of the public/others: Kheya Ganguly, Chelsea Myers,
AOE: Kate Rogers, Chris Case, Thomas Faris, Maureen Gaidys

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 12:34 p.m. by Cat Gallagher.
Amendments – Cat proposed the receive updates from subcommittees be changed to group work.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – December 8, 2021,

Approval of full Task Force minutes motioned by Sandra Cameron and seconded by Kym Asam.
Approval of subcommittee one minutes motion by Amy Wheeler-Sutton, seconded by Justin Pinard.
The minutes were approved.

Opportunity for Public to be Heard

No members to be heard.

Cat thanked Maureen for doing all of the organizational work as well as the entire Task Force for their efforts. Thanks to Amy for driving the narrative and being the gate keeper of the documents.

Updates from Subcommittees/Group work

Review Final Report – Discussion and Possible Action

Approved acknowledgement section in document, looked at early childhood section and inquired as to whether or not a section should be indented or match the formatting. Decision to match formatting. Changed language to prequalified in early education section. Is general assembly interchangeable with legislature? Heather Bouchey said the official title was general assembly, but we can use legislature and it does not need to be capitalized. First time use general assembly and parenthetically put in legislature. Questioned Jay's comments about "...being a do nothing congress." Language of asking legislature to not add things to educators' plates..." Amy moved all of the recommendations to the earlier section of the document to increase likelihood that legislature would read at least this section of the document.

In data section, explained what 0% meant in data tables. Included language on ensuring data from pre-K and independent schools is collected. Added that annual data reports be completed by outside organization and may need dollars appropriated to ensure it gets done. Heather suggested changing the language to outside organization with requisite quantitative skills and additional information about equity and racially relevant data so we can best leverage the information we have. Kheya suggested including qualitative as well as quantitative. Heather said AOE is not likely to include qualitative data as federal requirements dictates quantitative data be collected.

Standard definitions for all types of behaviors – cleaned up language around model policy being under review and the state has standard definitions.

Section other states approaches to exclusionary discipline – changed language to recommend further study of these approaches rather than recommending we put them in place until we know if they are successful.

In annual snapshot historical status is used and Amy added definition of what it means.

Definitions of most serious behaviors section: pointed out the difference between policy and procedures in the alcohol and substance abuse. Language changed to the Task Force is recommending further exploration/study of this category to see if it should be listed as serious behaviors. Steve Perrin suggested differentiating between selling and using drugs on a campus. There are no state rules that say kids have to be suspended for certain amounts of substances. Task Force had differing opinions about whether or not substance use should be considered a serious behavior. Behaviors that pose imminent and substantial risk section – is that the language they will adopt. Could distribution be considered a behavior that causes imminent risk, etc. Lindsay suggested we take a vote on language. Heather talked about doing more work about policy violations and how they are used. Marianna suggested we include in the narrative that we had areas of disagreement and recommend the legislature connect with substance abuse/recovery specialists and make suggestion for a timeline for them to consult. Lindsay also suggested we explain why there is a difference of opinion and specifics about what they were. Catchall categories while necessary, skew data as they have a wide array of behaviors under the categories.

In equity section, talked about vulnerable decision points and implicit bias training. Task Force discussed how implicit bias training can cause harm and Kheya suggested having professional development (PD) plans that include equity, inclusion, diversity training.

VFN has anecdotal information about kids being taken out of the classroom due to lack of behavioral supports. Confirmed it is anecdotal not data driven. Charles Becker talked about the Disability Law Project also seeing this trend and does include data. The point trying to be made is that these types of responses to behavior happen and it needs to be mentioned even if devoid of quantitative data collected by the school.

Discussion about assuming positive intent on part of educators and not assume that they are simply “trying to get a break” from the student. Meaghan suggested we use language that says this type of response should not be used and is considered a suspension. Kheya had suggestion to add language from the report on the impact of trauma and include recommendations on best practices. Cat asked if this is a recommendation for the legislature or is this something that schools are already doing. Adding impact of informal removals has on children (Kheya suggestion). Included what is considered good policy could result in unintended consequences and schools need training and coaching in addition to policy development. Cat noted that we do not define expulsion or suspension in the document, and we need to include it. Want to remove section on recommendations on implicit bias training because it can have negative impact. We offered a list of behaviors that are not considered serious and encourage list be revisited in 2023. Debate as to whether a list should be included. Suggested taking a vote as to whether or not this list should be in the report. 9 out of 10 voted to keep the list in. Added information about educators needing time for PD and to implement recommendations. Added information about schools wanting more PD about alternatives to exclusionary practices. Moved sections from appendix C into main body/narrative. Cat suggested we remove quote source and say as “one superintendent said.” Marianna added section about Success Beyond Six (SB6). Do we add Task Force recommendation that funding be allocated so school-based clinicians can provide universal and targeted support? Should section on trauma be moved to recommendations? Decision not to do that.

Section on community schools and substance abuse prevention was added. Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and their response to data was also added. Amy referenced that the short-term funding for restorative practices make it difficult to ensure efficacy and fidelity (implementation science). Grants cannot be appropriated for more than one year, so it makes it difficult to plan for sustainability.

Page 8 – legal counsel should determine list of behaviors that should not be responded to with exclusionary practices. Cat suggested we define low level behaviors and should we change community demographics vs. student demographics. Amy suggested that having community data/demographics informs practices.

What is the plan for moving forward, testifying, etc. Maureen will do follow up.

A roll call vote was called for those in favor of making final edits and submitting the report. Yeas: Steve Perrin, Amy Wheeler-Sutton, Lindsey Halman, Marianna Donnally, Kim Asam, Justin Pinard, Sandra Cameron, Meaghan Morgan-Puglisi, Charles Becker, Cat Gallagher, Heather Bouchey, and Karen Price. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

Other Business

Adjourn

Kym Asam made a motion to adjourn; Marianna seconded. The meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

Meeting minutes submitted by: Kym Asam