



**Task Force on Equitable and Inclusive School Environments –
Subcommittee #1 - Best practices, defining behaviors, other
states and services for students under age 8
February 4, 2022, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.**

VIRTUAL Microsoft Teams Meeting
Call In: 1-802-828-7667
Conference ID: 926 607 260#
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: Marianna Donnally, Department of Mental Health; Charles Becker, Legal Aid Disability Law Project; Karen Price, Vermont Family Network; Amy Wheeler-Sutton, Building Effective Strategies for Teaching Students Project at the University of Vermont; Ana Lindert-Boyes, Twinfield Union High School, UP for Learning; and Justin Picard, Vermont School Counselor Association.

Members of the public/others: Kheya Ganguly, Susan Aranoff

AOE: Maureen Gaidys

Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 12:09 pm by Amy Wheeler-Sutton.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes from January 19, 2022

Charles Becker moved to amend the draft minutes to clarify that his statement regarding legislative drafting pertained to the kids under 8 section of the suspension/expulsion statute. There were no objection to the amendment. A motion was offered and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as amended.

Public to be Heard

No public comments were offered.

Discussion/Working Session

Amy reviewed the draft agenda:

- Update on AOE language from A. Wheeler-Sutton
- Restraint Language – K. Price
- Possible reasons to enact exclusionary discipline – M. Morgan-Puglisi
- Other

Amy - noted we do not have the language for agenda item 1 available at this time.
There were no other additions to the agenda.

Marianna – The Initial Report that was circulated, who was that submitted to?
Consensus was that the Initial Report was submitted to the two relevant legislative committees yesterday evening.

Amy – suggested we utilize the time today to work on the Final Report (draft)

Amy shared her screen and went through the sections of the draft report with the group.

Relevant to Subcommittee 1, the section on “Other states’ approaches” is close to being complete. Currently there is a listing of what other states have done, with links to notable states. There is a Google drive folder link to other states’ materials. Not sure if that link can stay in the final report.

Are there things other states have done that we would recommend?

Discussion:

Other states have prohibited exclusionary discipline for disruption/defiance and truancy. Do we want to do the same?

What about teacher preparation? With respect to restorative justice, there are maybe opportunities to draw on work that Vermont Law School has done. Anything else from other states?

Amy asked for volunteers to finalize the “Other States’ Approach” language?

Justin Pinard stated that “bullets 2-5 should be recommended” (requiring schools w/ high exclusion rates or significant discipline gaps to review and engage in improvement planning; prioritizing school climate and discipline under ESSA; reducing/prohibiting exclusionary discipline for early grades; prohibiting suspension/expulsion for certain behaviors; requiring teacher prep programs to offer semester length course on PBIS, trauma, toxic stress and environment on learning)

Amy – asked about restorative practices training? Pre covid there was enough interest in restorative practices; there could be an organizing body to do training and coaching in restorative practices; should we be recommending improving schools’ capacity to implement restorative practices; how would this be funded?

Justin wondered who would be the organizing body for these teacher prep programs, but thought it would be a huge help.

Amy asked if we should recommend money for restorative practices? for a “Restorative approaches collaborative”

Justin - would be great if every district had a restorative coordinator

Kheya – maybe the restorative coordinator position should be that person’s sole job, so that it actually gets the attention it deserves

Amy - But there would need to be funding; and how do we make the recommendation?

Marianna – We could just make the recommendation if we think it will strengthen restorative practices or inclusionary practices, and we can put in roles that would help; we could make recommendations for AOE requirements or that a FT position created; recommendations for licensing requirements maybe; it would be LEA work to create the position and they would need funding to make it work; but we make the recommendation, and the leg takes it from there

Amy asked for volunteers to finalize the “Other States” section? As for timing, we need to get our work to AOE by March 1, so revisions need to get to Amy a few days before March.

Marianna volunteered to finalize the “Other States” section.

Amy - Then the next really challenging section. Defining the “most serious behaviors”; currently, in the interim report it says we have had lots of discussion, but no recommendations as of yet; plus districts vary greatly; what about schools that lack robust systems to avoid exclusionary discipline?

Should we make recommendations? Or just note the disparities between districts

Justin stated that disparities between districts is definitely an issue now.

Karen - And this ties into restraint and seclusion; and the need to consider students individually, the individual needs of the student, to look at the relevant characteristics of the child when making decisions about discipline

Amy - These are probably the ‘gray” scenarios; not guns, for example, but pushing someone on the playground; and staffing impacts this too; if they do not have staff to supervise a kid who is to miss recess for a week, instead that kid might be suspended due to resources

The Interim Report notes that the most serious behaviors are defined by statute.

In some cases, we will need guidance from AOE regarding interplay between laws.

Charles - Even the ones defined by statute are still vague; for example, the drug and alcohol statute does not really address when students should be excluded for these behaviors; there inequities from one district to the next regarding student drug and alcohol use

Marianna – There are inequities even within districts (based on family characteristics, for example)

Marianna – [in response to a comment] Should we discuss zero tolerance

Amy – wondered if it is possible to get an extension; given the amount of work we have left do in this section

Marianna - we have had concerns from the beginning about needing an extension due to the amount of work

Amy - Our audience is the legislature, but some of this information might be helpful to schools and districts; so how much or what do we put in for these audiences?

Amy - Do we make an appendix of "Available Programs and Services"; keep the high-level stuff, but put the actual programs in an appendix

Kheya - that depends on what you want to emphasize

Amy - Implementation challenges? this was not asked for, but we started it; and the section still needs work

Amy asked for volunteers to work on the "Most Serious Behaviors" section? Probably Meaghan should be involved, since she started it; and hopefully Steve to get the administrator perspective; and Emily from AOE;

Charles - and maybe someone with disability mindset? (Karen Price or Charles)

Amy: Pyramid model? And Sandra's material regarding independent schools and kids under 8

Then the last section: "Educator best practices"; there's good material here, just needs polishing; Justin will work on it

Amy will send out the sections to people today.

Adjourn

Marianna moved to adjourn; seconded by Justin; adjourned at 1:04 pm

Meeting minutes submitted by: Charles Becker