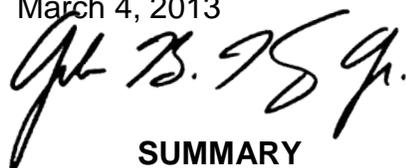




**TO:** P-12 Education Committee  
**FROM:** Ken Slentz   
**SUBJECT:** Safe Schools Task Force  
**DATE:** March 4, 2013  
**AUTHORIZATION(S):**   
**SUMMARY**

**Issue for Discussion**

This is a follow up discussion item from the January 2013 Board of Regents meeting.

**Reason(s) for Consideration**

For Information.

**Proposed Handling**

This issue will come before the Regents P-12 Education Committee at the March 2013 meeting.

**Background Information**

In 1999, Governor Pataki created the Task Force on School Violence. The Task Force issued its first report, *Safer Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Common Sense Approach to Keep New York's Students and Schools Safe*, in October 1999. The work of the Task Force led to the Safe Schools Against Violence Education (SAVE) Act, which became Chapter 181 of the Laws of 2000. From there, the Board of Regents established the School Safety Work Group, which produced SAVE implementation guidance in 2001 that included requiring districts, BOCES, and county vocational education and extension boards to: 1) establish district-wide school safety and building-level school safety teams to develop district-wide and building-level school safety plans; and 2) address crisis intervention, emergency response and management at the district level through comprehensive, multi-hazard school safety plans.

The Department has issued guidance to schools and districts on three separate occasions, including:

- a) April 2001: *Project SAVE Guidance Document for School Safety Plans* were disseminated to all schools statewide;
- b) December 2004: SED partnered with the New York State Office of Homeland Security, New York State Police, and the New York State Office of Emergency Management to issue *Best Practices for School Safety and Security*, which was accompanied by a video, and an updated version was released in 2007; and
- c) June 2010: New York State Center for School Safety and SED provided updated guidance, *School Safety Plan Guidance: Safe Schools Against Violence in Education*

As discussed in January, the Board of Regents directed the Department to reestablish the Safe Schools Task Force which will be chaired by the Vice Chancellor and Commissioner and will be charged with advising the Department in the following areas:

- The effectiveness of the current regulations and guidance governing school building safety and positive learning environments,
- How to reframe the exiting Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting System (VADIR) in combination with the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) reporting requirements to better identify key safety issues and establish a safe school climate for effective teaching and learning (including potential recommendations for legislative changes regarding VADIR),
- The design and effectiveness of District and school building safety plans in preparing students and educators for emergency events,
- The use of the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) to examine school climate and culture, and
- The role and responsibility of the New York State Center for School Safety (NYSCSS).

Department staff recommends that the Board of Regents invite the original stakeholder members of the Task Force as created under Governor Pataki's administration, as well as other key stakeholders, and advocates. Lastly, the Safe Schools Task Force will have operational subgroups in order to better focus on specific goals, rather than general ones that will be discussed at the larger meetings.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Regents direct representatives from the Department to work with outside organizations and agencies to assist and advise the Board of Regents and the Department to review those areas noted above. Thereafter, at the direction of the co-chairs, Department staff will recommend changes to current practice, supports, guidance and regulations to better ensure safe buildings and safe school climates. The Department may also propose to the Board of Regents potential recommendations for legislative changes regarding VADIR.

## **Timetable for Implementation**

Department staff recommends that the first full Task Force group meeting be scheduled for April of this year at which operational subgroups will be established, followed by a June sub-group meeting; regularly scheduled quarterly meetings of the Task Force will commence thereafter.