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Our Students. Their Moment.

NYS SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE

NEW YORK STATE BOARD OF REGENTS
JUNE 23, 2014



SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE – RE-ESTABLISHED IN 2013

- **Jan. 2013:** Board of Regents directed SED to re-establish the NYS Safe Schools Task Force after the Newtown, CT tragedy
- **Co-chairs:** Vice Chancellor Anthony Bottar and Commissioner John King
- **Task Force Members:** school district officials; school personnel; parents; education advocates and union representatives; community health, mental health, social services and law enforcement personnel; Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services; Division of State Police; Division of Criminal Justice Services and SED staff



SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE VISION

“School environments in New York State will effectively promote and protect the well-being of ALL students and personnel each day and into the future.”

LEGISLATION GUIDING THE SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE

- **Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act:** passed into law in 2000
- **Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act):** passed into law July 2012 with an amendment to address cyberbullying in July 2013
- **New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement (SAFE) Act:** passed into law in January 2013

Visit the website at:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ssss/ssae/schoolsafety>

SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE ACTIONS

Date	Activity
May 8, 2013	Kickoff Meeting
November 14, 2013	Established Workgroups & Developed Preliminary Recommendations
Jan - April 2014	Workgroups met to develop Preliminary Recommendations
Feb 20, 2014	SED hosted a Student Forum to get the student's perspective on promoting safe and healthy schools
April 15, 2014	Task Force members discussed school climate, data collection and reporting, and suspension policies with the National School Climate Center President
May 2014	Workgroup members finalized recommendations to present to the full Task Force
June 6, 2014	Full Task Force met to refine and prioritize recommendations

NYS SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE WORKGROUPS

- School Culture & Student Engagement
- School Safety Reporting & Data Use
- Building Security & Infrastructure

Issues related to legislation, regulations and fiscal implications are specifically addressed within each Workgroup.



TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Workgroup members formulated 36 recommendations and identified the following as the top nine priorities *(not necessarily in priority order)*:

1. Advocate for investment in and expansion of support staff in schools (school counselors, psychologists, social workers, etc.); seek to obtain additional resources from federal, state, and private resources, given that this would have fiscal implications.
2. Re-examine current professional development requirements to determine needed changes to pre-service and in-service certification requirements.
3. Support implementation of theoretically grounded and evidence-based multi-tiered frameworks such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to improve overall school climate.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Examine all current federal and state data reporting requirements to develop a single comprehensive model data reporting system;
5. Train school administrators, teachers and other school personnel on this new data system to effectively use, document and analyze discipline and other pertinent data;
6. Expand School Safety Plans to include protocols for school busses/transporters and locations outside of the school building as well as to include outside of “school day” programs (e.g., pre-K & afterschool programs);
7. Develop uniform training, which should include restorative justice practices as well as child psychology and other requirements, for School Safety Staff (Rest of State) and School Safety Agents (NYC);

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Revise Education Law Section 807 to include lockdown drills, armed intruder drills, and other drills as part of the twelve annual fire drills currently mandated. *(Suggestion: eliminate two of the currently required fire drills due to concerns of loss of classroom time and require one or more other drills).*
9. Form an interagency policy Workgroup that includes youth and student representatives to examine student suspension policies and make recommendations for change that incorporate restorative justice practices and that enhance interagency coordination and communication.

STUDENT FORUM: FEBRUARY 20, 2014

Nearly 40 students attended from across the State representing large, medium and small school districts: NYC, Utica, Syracuse, Oswego, Albany, Poughkeepsie, and Rochester

Goal: To give students from around the State an opportunity to discuss and describe school climate and safety from their perspectives.

The students formulated the following recommendations:

1. Allow students or a student representative to participate in district governing bodies.
2. School Districts should pursue Alternative to Suspension (ATS) procedures and better incorporate them into disciplinary codes.

STUDENT FORUM CONTINUED

Student Recommendations Continued:

3. Integrate school rules, codes of conduct, and school climate into school curriculum so that it is better understood by students and parents.
4. The identity and role of the Dignity Act Coordinator should be made more clear to students.
5. Annual orientations should include information on the Dignity Act Coordinator, as well as information on safe and healthy school climate.
6. There should be an increased number of school counselors, who are often where students turn to get information and/or seek help and guidance in regard to school climate.

NEXT STEPS

- At the **June 23, 2014, Board meeting**, the Board will:
 - review and discuss the NYS Safe Schools Task Force work during the 2014-15 school year and the draft recommendations.
 - provide feedback to the Department on the Task Force draft recommendations.
- At the **September 2014**: Task Force members and Department staff will present the full set of recommendations with a final draft of the Task Force report for the Board's review.
- **September – December 2014**: Department staff will begin drafting regulatory recommendations to be presented to the Board by the end of the year.
- **December 2014**: Department staff present the new set of recommendations to the Board.