


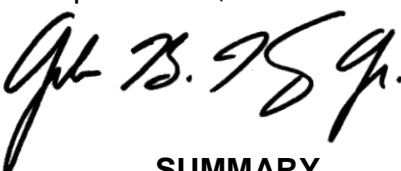


TO: P-12 Education Committee

FROM: Cosimo Tangorra, Jr. 

SUBJECT: Safe Schools Task Force Recommendations

DATE: September 9, 2014

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

Does the Board of Regents wish to authorize the Department to proceed with a budget and legislative request that advances a single comprehensive data reporting system to track both the data required for Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) and for the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) in lieu of the two separate reporting requirements as well as to advance budget requests for appropriate monitoring of and technical assistance to school districts as well as the expansion of support to school districts?

Reason(s) for Consideration

Follow up discussion.

Proposed Handling

This issue will come before the Regents P-12 Education Committee for discussion at the September 2014 meeting.

Background Information

In January 2013, in response to the Newtown, CT school shooting incident, the Board of Regents directed the Department to re-establish the Safe Schools Task Force to be chaired by the Vice Chancellor and Commissioner King. A kick-off meeting of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force was held on May 8, 2013 in which Workgroups were established to move this important work forward.

The next meeting of the Task Force, held on November 14, 2013, brought together the three Workgroups that comprise the Task Force - School Culture and Student Engagement; School Safety Reporting and Data Use; and Building Security and Infrastructure – to focus more narrowly on specific issues and begin developing recommendations for the Board’s consideration. The Workgroups continued to meet regularly throughout the Spring of 2014.

In addition, on February 20, 2014, the Department hosted the first Student Forum on Safe Schools to ensure that the student voice was included in our work. The students developed recommendations for consideration as well.

On June 6, 2014, the full New York State Safe Schools Task Force came together to review and finalize all of the recommendations which were presented by Workgroup members. There were 51 recommendations developed by the three Workgroups that were vetted by the full Task Force. At the end of this meeting, the full New York State Safe Schools Task Force formulated 36 recommendations. Consistent with the Workgroups, the recommendations fall into one or more of the following categories:

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

The list of recommendations by the New York State Safe Schools Task Force is attached (see Attachment A).

At the June 2014 P-12 Committee meeting staff presented a brief overview of the work of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force during the School Year 2014-15. At the July 2014 Board of Regents meeting staff outlined the need for changes to the current New York State Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) and Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) reporting processes.

Panel Discussion

To help present the work of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force that occurred during the 2013-14 school year, there will be a panel discussion.

The panel listed below will discuss how the New York State Safe Schools Task Force developed the recommendations, their work on the Task Force, and the importance of the adoption of the recommendations.

Thomas O’Brien, Roxbury Central School, Superintendent: Mr. O’Brien is the current Superintendent of Roxbury Central School, which is a rural community in the mid-Hudson Valley, and that has a population of roughly 350 students in grades prekindergarten-12. Mr. O’Brien was a member of the Building Security and Infrastructure Workgroup.

Priti Irani, New York State Department of Health, Office of Public Health Practice: Ms. Irani is a member of the "Promote Mental Health and Prevent Substance Abuse" Prevention Agenda Priority as well as the New York State Department of Health sponsored "Quick Strike Proposal." Ms. Irani was a member of the School Culture and Student Engagement Workgroup.

Next Steps

It is recommended that the Board of Regents direct staff to finalize the budget and legislative initiatives that reflect the Workgroups' recommendations with a focus on a single comprehensive data reporting system, support to school districts and strengthening accountability in the following manner:

- **Modernize data collection and reporting:** The Department would develop a single comprehensive data system for the collection and reporting of incidents that also has the capability of capturing new data elements specific to a positive school climate index.
- **Provide support and ensure accountability:** The Department would seek to develop a school climate index, establish regional school safety teams to help local schools and districts develop school climate improvement systems and coordinated first responder safety teams, develop and administer an annual school climate survey, and identify schools that require corrective action plans.
- **Enhance oversight through regular monitoring and audits:** Create capacity to closely review and analyze data from various school incident reporting mechanisms to identify districts with the greatest need of technical assistance and to conduct risk-based analysis. In addition the Department would support regular and meaningful professional development opportunities to school building and faculty leaders, school counselors, Dignity Act coordinators, school resource officers and others.

Attachment A

New York State Safe Schools Task Force Recommendations

Listed in the order of importance, based on a poll given to the members of the New York State Safe Schools Task Force

1. Advocate for investment in and expansion of support staff in schools, including school social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses and school attendance staff.
2. The reporting process for Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) and Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) should be combined and renamed into one system that is not punitive and is reflective of the school climate and can be used for prevention and intervention purposes. Also one that includes positive measures and incorporates most improved schools. The Department, in conjunction with the Task Force, should develop a new process and criteria for the Persistently Dangerous designation and a new set of definitions of incident categories for reporting using a School Climate Index. Provide options for the removal of PD designation for carry over PD schools to utilize their 2014-15 and 2015-16 VADIR /incident data based on their SVI or Climate Index rating.
3. Establish social–emotional development and learning (SEDL) as a key component of meeting Common Core State Standards and revisit the SEDL guidelines and move forward with developing standards and measures on an evidence-based framework for implementation.
4. Assess and evaluate non-academic supports and a positive school climate as key to student achievement that will result in college, career and citizen readiness in all forms of communication from Department leadership. Provide resources for professional development, technical assistance and individual student supports to the field and school community including parents and afterschool programs.
5. Examine all current federal and state data reporting requirements to develop a single comprehensive model data reporting system that incorporates already required reporting that includes but is not limited to, data regarding school suspension and arrest, positive interventions, school climate indicators, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, etc.
6. Re-examine current mandates including the courses for Child Abuse/Neglect Identification, School Violence Prevention/Intervention, and DASA to determine needed changes to pre-service and in-service certification requirements. For example, revise and update the 2-hour School Violence Prevention course, which is required for teacher certification, such that it is complimentary to the new 6-hour required Training in Harassment, Bullying, Cyberbullying and Discrimination in Schools.
7. Support implementation of theoretically grounded and evidence-based multi-tiered frameworks such as PBIS that are designed to:
 - a. Enhance the learning environment for all students who have greater social, emotional and behavioral needs.
 - b. Improve overall school climate, safety and support for students to improve academic achievement.
8. Design a user-friendly technology system for reporting incidents with prompts to aide accurate reporting. To include real time data available (Same) give technical assistance

- to schools on data collection, use and reporting so it is a positive rather than punitive process.
9. Include non-certified school staff (aides, office staff, maintenance, transporters, food service, etc.) in School Violence Prevention training.
 10. Revise New York State Statute 807 to include lockdown drills, armed intruder drills and other drills as part of the 12 annual fire drills currently mandated. Eliminate two of the currently required fire drills and require at least one lockdown drill
 11. Form an inter-agency policy work group that includes youth and student representatives to examine student suspension policies and to incorporate restorative justice practices.
 12. Convene a series of meetings among the offices of P-12, Higher Education, Professions and Teacher Certification to develop a “big picture” plan for identifying the rapidly increasing number of topics, especially in areas such as strategies for classroom management and identifying and addressing individual student SEDL needs or inclusion in Teacher/Administrator Training, and other support staff, both pre-service and in-service.
 13. Develop uniform training and qualification requirements for School Resource Officers (SROs) which will include training in restorative justice practices as well as social-emotional learning. Issue a Department memo to clarify 211 waiver requirements for hiring retired law enforcement officers as SROs.
 14. Improve the ease of student reporting of safety issues not limited to bullying, harassment, discrimination, at-risk behavior and violence by providing opportunities for students to anonymously report incidents of concern.
 15. Train school administrators (Train the trainer) on the new system to effectively use discipline data and give Pre-service training to all pertinent school personnel in the new PD designation system. Train school administrators, teachers and personnel on the new system to effectively analyze and use documents.
 16. Develop a work group across P-12 Offices with representatives from other agencies that include youth and student representatives to develop protocols for the collection and dissemination of data that can assist schools with meeting the non-academic needs of students.
 17. There should be a multi-year change process. The Task Force should continue to collect additional information and assist the Department during this time of transition to a new reporting process.
 18. Public reporting of data to the State and localities should lead to identification of school districts in need of technical assistance for improvement and referrals to additional resources to improve the school climate, making it a safer environment for students.
 19. Use PBIS training more regularly and appropriately.
 20. Continue use of the School Climate Index to assess school environment needs: such as technical assistance from Community Schools, NYS Center for School Safety, and/or the Department; types of support; and funding needs.

21. Survey data from other state and federal agencies to relate to the school's climate and safety to minimize duplication and to develop a fuller picture of school climate for policy makers.
22. Expand School Safety Plans to include protocols for school busses/transporters, areas used by students outside the school building and activities outside of regular school hours.
23. Provide opportunities for districts to pursue funding for hiring additional SROs.
24. SED to develop a guidance document regarding the role of the SRO and other security officials who work with school administration.
25. Develop protocols for collecting, disseminating, and offering technical support to utilizing data, including data related to SEDL to assist schools in creating positive school climates while protecting individual student privacy. Survey the national and state field for effective school climate models, needs assessments and other measures of student well-being.
26. Develop guidance document to clarify and reinforce membership, roles, responsibilities and appropriate training for members of *emergency response teams* as defined in CR 155.17(c)(14) and *post-incident response teams* as defined in CR 155.17(c)(15). Chain of command system should be consistent with FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) model, see <http://www.fema.gov/incident-command-system>).
27. Issue a memorandum specifying that District-wide Safety Plans should be submitted electronically to the Commissioner with amendments on an annual basis to comply with 8 NYCRR 155.17(e)(3).
28. Districts will utilize a locally developed checklist or a checklist from the FEMA website: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/emischool/EL361Toolkit/SampleFormsChecklistsExercises.htm> to conduct an assessment to ensure buildings are safe for re-occupancy after a disaster or evacuation. This checklist should include review of environmental safety factors associated with violence.
29. Transition the carryover Persistently Dangerous schools that do not meet the criteria for removal into a pilot. Create tiers for remaining PD schools to reflect intermediate phases of improvement. Create tiers of technical assistance aligned with improvement phases.
30. Publish climate survey for schools, parents, teachers and students to use.
31. Explore the development of a student-based unique identifier system for the purpose of sharing data to implement proper appropriate interventions and identification of state and local trends.
32. Include school transportation managers/directors as required members on district-wide and building-level school safety teams with the goal of expanding and enhancing bus drills, developing emergency response training to operators and aides, developing policies and practices related to school bus security and enhancing safety equipment for busses.

33. Provide guidance for schools to encourage students to report school safety issues.
34. For school year 2014-15, there should not be an announcement of newly identified Potentially Persistently Dangerous (PPD) or Persistently Dangerous (PD) schools. However, schools that have been designated in past years as PD should be allowed to petition for removal of their designation status.
35. Explore what data is already collected via what data bases and which data points are collected. Find ways in which to be sure that all parties are aware of data system and data points.
36. Issue a memorandum that School District Safety Plans will no longer be requested to be posted on-line. Districts will still have the option to post plans on-line.