

Pinellas County (FL) Schools
District Monitoring and Advisory Committee Minutes
Morgan Fitzgerald Middle School
April 13, 2017
6:00pm

DMAC Members Present: Lawrence Clermont, Tom Bradwell, Rick Bose, Marty Shapiro, Lynne Tucker
Guests: Paula Texel, Assistant Superintendent (Human Resources); Mike Gandolfo (President, PCTA);
Jesse Ziegler (Representative, AFT);
District Representatives Presenting: Bob Poth (Area 3 Superintendent); Pat Wright (Area 4 Superintendent)

Meeting was called to order by Lawrence Clermont at 6:08 p.m.

Lynne Tucker volunteered to take meeting minutes. Recording device was used to record the meeting.

1. Introductions
2. Agenda was not approved because a quorum was not present
3. Minutes were not approved because a quorum was not present. Minutes for March and April Meeting will be approved at next scheduled meeting.
4. Restorative Practices Presentation

Bob Poth, Area 3 Superintendent and Pat Wright, Area 4 Superintendent updated the DMAC Committee on district progress in implementing Restorative Practices in Pinellas County Schools.

Pat Wright discussed the history of how school districts were “rethinking discipline” across the country. Research from the Equity Project and tools used to train Pinellas Schools administrators were shared, as was articles from Indiana University about “What makes educators respond differently at the district, school and classroom levels”.

Bob Poth talked about 2015-16 Risk Ratios being shared with assistant principals, noting that some schools advanced cultural competence work and Privilege Questionnaires which highlight how our experiences make us respond differently. In the 2016-17 school year, the district received training from International Institute of Restorative Practices. 45 persons were trained, including persons from student services (guidance, social workers, psychologists), 4 area superintendents, 4 MTSS, and representatives from Gibbs High School, Lealman Innovation Academy, Azalea Middle School and Dunedin Highland Middle School.

Committee heard that “Defiance” is the highest category for referrals for discipline and that consequences are different for Black and Non-Black students, with Black students receiving more exclusionary practices. District has included “Risk Factor” focus in strategic plan to reduce overall discipline rates.

Presenters talked about the way Restorative Practices use a different philosophy, changing the culture and the way we look at children. The practice is to educate and change student behavior to a more positive one. For those students removed from the educational setting, schools work with family and student to create a reintegration plan that supports student success when returning.

Other information was shared by district representatives on changes in district policy and practices which may play a role in reducing discipline referrals and keeping students engaged in learning:

- * Number of days a student can be suspended has been reduced to 3 days maximum.
- * Elementary students discipline is investigated before suspending.
- * Alternative centers have been established to keep suspensions to low rate and continue student education.

The area of School Resource Officers (SROs) use as a discipline tool was discussed. It was noted by district representatives that schools do not oversee SROs and SROs are on a “shared-cooperative agreement” or established MOU with schools. School representatives noted that there are 19 separate police departments involved. The district is not meeting on a regular basis with SROs and try, whenever possible, to reduce criminal records. District does share data with SROs. DMAC member, Lynne Tucker inquired if there was required training for SROs? The district responded – none was required.

DMAC Member, Rick Bose provided input on Restorative Practices observed at Gibbs High School where he teaches. Mr. Bose noted that teachers were trained on Restorative Practices with administrative teams charged with practices implementation. There were identified concerns with implementation around parent buy-in; time constraints for implementation; and information on implementation plan and data. He shared that two Restorative Practices trainers came to school and they have not been observed returning for follow-up training. Key school staff, social workers have not been involved.

District representatives talked about Restorative Practices summer training being offered and orientation of principals around implicit biases. The district is moving away from exclusionary discipline practices.

There was group discussion about training opportunities for restorative practices involving: training more teachers who are in front of students; training administrators who are addressing discipline; planning time; and follow-up training.

DMAC meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

As a follow up to the minutes from our previous DMAC meeting, Chief Rick Steljis provided some further clarification regarding the information shared dealing with School Resource Officers (SROs).

Excerpt from Minutes 4.13.17

“The area of School Resource Officers (SROs) use as a discipline tool was discussed. It was noted by district representatives that schools do not oversee SROs and SROs are on a “shared-cooperative agreement” or established MOU with schools. School representatives noted that there are 19 separate police departments involved. The district is not meeting on a regular basis with SROs and try, whenever possible, to reduce criminal records. District does share data with SROs. DMAC member, Lynne Tucker inquired if there was required training for SROs? The district responded – none was required.”

Clarification provided by Chief Rick Steljis (September, 2017)

Pinellas County Schools Police provides School Resource Officers (SRO’s) for eleven (11) schools and several float SRO’s for the elementary schools throughout Pinellas County. Schools Police also coordinates SRO services with seven (7) other law enforcement agencies, which provide an SRO in middle and high schools. In 2014, all the agencies enacted a Collaborative Agreement that provides an increased emphasis to deal with minor incidents at the school level and not criminalize minor misbehavior. The SRO’s meet together several times a year. The SRO’s, Principal’s and Assistant Principals met over the summer in May 2017. There was a countywide SRO meeting in August just before school started and there are scheduled meetings in October 2017 and March 2018. Arrest data is shared during these meetings as we continue to review and discuss various trends in our schools. Most of the SRO’s attend a state certified SRO School at the beginning of their assignment. The SRO’s also receive on-going training which has recently included a class on Restorative Practices, Implicit Bias and Dealing with an Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) student.