

Student Achievement Committee
January 19, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Laura Errington
Davis Podkulski
Dr. Douglas Whelan
Colleen Duggan
Linda Dansa

Focus: Social-Emotional Health

Guests:

Amy Brodfuehrer (FHS - SPED teacher and Standards Leader)
Mary Frances Snyder (FHS SPED Teacher, Standards Leader)
Lauren Ellis (FHS Social Worker)
Patti Durni (Pinehurst Elementary Social Worker)
Jill Lewis (FMS Social Worker)

Colleen welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced all participants to Dr. Whelan. She provided an overview of the topics from our District Strategic Plan that will be addressed during this year's Student Achievement Committee meetings. She added that our focus has been on Social-emotional Health for the past two meetings, and we will continue the work on this topic for the January meeting.

Colleen then moved to a review of where we stand with the development of our pilot student mentor/mentee program. She stated that the start of the second semester (February 1st) would be a great time to match up mentors with mentees. She added that during our last meeting, John Kilcoyne had asked whether we should consider offering two different mentor-mentee programs, one focusing on academic performance and a second one focusing on social-emotional health. Colleen suggested that for this year as we get started, our pilot mentoring program will begin with a focus on social-emotional health.

Linda provided an overview of our goals for the meeting, and she listed the elements we will include in a shared Google document which will serve as a resource for our team going forward. The elements will include timeline, training, expectations, methods of communication, rollout, and follow-up/review.

As a group, the discussion turned to each element on the shared Google document, which was presented on the screen. The timeline was defined as the second semester, with the month of February dedicated to matching mentors with mentees, creation of training materials and participation documents, getting necessary documentation signed, and starting the training of mentors.

With regard to the topic of training, Jill Lewis suggested that we consider contacting the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition. She stated that they could provide training and resources. When she reached out to her contact there, they stated that they would be happy to virtually meet to discuss potentially training our students. Colleen added the WNY Coalition for Mental Health as a second resource to potentially support our training.

Mary Frances Snyder stated that there is already an established mentoring program at the high school involving adults and students which could be a resource for parents, students and adults. Lauren Ellis added that perhaps we could consider the development of brief training videos by current adult mentors at the high school.

Colleen reminded the group of Laura's comments during our last meeting when she stressed the importance of parental consent for participation in the pilot. Laura added that documentation for parents providing an overview of the piloting program would be valuable in bringing them up to speed.

Davis asked whether high school students would mentor middle school students and middle school students would mentor only elementary students. Linda stated that during the December meeting, it was stated that some high school students had shared a preference for supporting students at the elementary level. She suggested that allowing choice for a level would promote participation on the part of mentors. Amy added that high school students had been surveyed and expressed choice with regard to the level they would like to mentor (Elementary, MS).

From the standpoint of expectations, the group discussed how allowing for both individual and small group mentoring support would be beneficial to both mentees and mentors. Both would be conducted during the academic day and under the supervision of a faculty member. In addition, Amy stressed the importance of establishing parameters in terms of defining appropriate versus inappropriate discussion points and topics. Furthermore, providing support in starting conversations would benefit our mentors.

Patti Durni also stressed that we include the topic of confidentiality when sensitive topics are brought up by a mentee (ex/ divorce of parent, etc.).

In terms of rollout, the goal of beginning the pilot by March 1st was set. Colleen and Linda will reach out to members of the committee to set up a time to define the timeline and process for development of documentation and methods of training.

Finally, Mary Frances suggested building in “check ins” with mentors at regular intervals between March and June. Based on feedback, adjustments could potentially be made. The pilot will be reviewed and evaluated mid-June in order to arrive at a recommendation going forward into the 2021-2022 year.

Davis commended the committee for this work and suggested that progress be reported to the Board of Education in March.

The meeting ended at 4:14 p.m.

Next Meeting: February 23, 2021
3:30-4:30