

Student Achievement Committee
October 20, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Laura Errington
John Kilcoyne
Colleen Duggan
Danielle McDonald
Jill Lewis
Patti Durni
Linda Dansa
Rich Hughes

Focus: Social-emotional health

Guests: School Social Workers (Jill Lewis-FMS, Danielle McDonald-CE, Patti Durni-PE)

Both Laura and John complimented our social workers for the comprehensive presentation they shared prior to the start of our meeting today (*Presentation on Mental Health Implications of COVID and the Importance of Being Trauma Sensitive*).

John asked if CPS involvement has increased during this COVID crisis.

Patti Durni stated that calls seem to be way down, and with students being in school half the time, there are fewer referrals being made.

Jill Lewis stated that she met with our CPS Liaison (Jessica Hastings) at FMS. They spoke of the disengagement of students in both hybrid and virtual instructional models. She stated that there are so many kids not participating. CPS is not accepting educational neglect cases, which puts schools in a difficult position. With the PINS piece of it, courts are only seeing emergency cases. Danielle stated that a vast majority of her time at Cloverbank is spent with students not attending school (both hybrid and virtual). The students coming to her attention are the extreme cases. There are many more students who don't rise to that level.

Colleen asked what percentage of students are not engaging.

Jill stated that it is not half, but it is a significant number. She stated that it is tough to say. Danielle stated that the number is not quite half, but higher than they would have anticipated. Linda added her concern with the potential number of course failures. Laura asked about the possibility of getting the five week grade reports and breaking the numbers down between virtual and hybrid models. She noted the relevance of this information for the Student Achievement Committee.

How are teachers being taught the principles of trauma sensitivity during COVID?

Colleen shared the creation of a staff room at the high school that focuses on mindfulness and self-care. She stated that this is challenging for all adults and students. Jill stated that social workers are working on emails to teachers through use of a Google form with the objective of brainstorming professional development topics that would be helpful. The challenge is recognizing what is feasible from a cost and time standpoint.

Colleen noted that the video presentation (Presentation on Mental Health Implications of COVID and the Importance of Being Trauma Sensitive) will be addressed in buildings during Faculty Meetings. She stated that the timing (5 week mark) is a good time in light of the challenges we have encountered since the opening of schools.

Laura asked if families are taking advantage of our free meals.

Jill stated that they reach out to families at FMS to ensure that they know about the backpack program. Laura added that she manages two of the Facebook pages for buildings (PTA) and commended Jason Whipple for his involvement and willingness to support our families.

Danielle noted one situation at Cloverbank where a student had missed three weeks of school, and the Head Cook (Linda) was eager to attempt to link the family with meals. Jill added how our kitchen staff is willing and able to support social workers in recognizing families who may benefit from free meals.

John asked as the flu season comes into gear, what will happen if kids have to quarantine?

Colleen stated that if things do spike and kids go virtual, students would continue to follow their schedules. If they are home for more than 14 days, they would go all virtual. John shared the challenges that may be presented to families if all members are home in terms of online capabilities including devices.

Danielle stated that another trend she is hearing from parents is that if multiple grade levels are working, the amount of time required for parents to support their elementary children is staggering.

John asked Colleen if there is a plan in place in the event that we fully shut down. She stated that we need to plan starting now for January when parents may choose to come out of remote to hybrid.

Colleen added that if we shut down tomorrow, the impact at FMS and FHS would be less of a transition as students would continue with their schedules. The impact would be a greater transition at the elementary level. She added that we continue to make adjustments at all levels.

Rich stated that NYS has classified 43 states as red states. Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Connecticut are not currently listed as red states, but travel is being discouraged.

Colleen noted one of Laura's questions regarding training for staff, and she asked if Mental Health First Aid aligns with trauma-sensitivity practices. Our school social workers stated that it is different training and doesn't fully align with the topic of trauma sensitivity.

Laura stated that it would be good for parents to know that our teachers are being trained in this area. Colleen agreed and added that including documentation and resources on social-emotional needs and what we have available in school would be relevant documentation. Laura stated that as a PTA parent, she agreed that this would be a great idea.

Colleen shared her idea of virtual parent nights with speakers in the coming months. Danielle asked if Beth Anzalone and WNY United Against Drugs & Alcohol Abuse would be able to present relevant topics virtually.

Jill added that the social workers are coming together and producing videos and documentation on a variety of topics. They could provide links to resources in the community. Colleen shared the challenge in having to search the website for information. She stated that we have been developing the Elementary Virtual Academy webpage on our district website.

Next Meeting: November 17, 2020 @ 3:30 p.m.