

Location

Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT)
52 Pike Drive
Berlin, Vermont 05602

March 27, 2023

Present: Henri Sparks, Burlington Schools; Amanda Garces, Human Rights Commission; Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA); Ken Canning, Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust (VSBIT); Sue Ceglowski, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA); Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA); Jeff Fannon, Vermont National Education Association (VT-NEA); Xusana Davis, Office of Racial Equity

AOE: Suzanne Sprague

Agenda:

1. Public to be Heard
2. Working Session

The meeting convened at 2:33 p.m.

Chair Sparks thanked Secretary French for his work over the past few years. Chair Sparks asked if there was any public to be heard. There was none.

Chair Sparks invited Davis to lead the working session. Davis recapped the prior working session. She reminded the Council of the individual aims and collective goals. Davis also reminded the Council of the group objectives and the challenges. Challenges include the advisory role limitations for making change, data or the lack of data, and risks and benefits of legal actions. Open questions include the tension between prevention and mitigation, engaging with the legislature when the AOE does not take action, communicating recommendations that do not have Council consensus, and primordial prevention.

Davis facilitated the working session. Discussion began on if the Council was in agreement that there is a problem in schools regarding Harassment, Hazing and Bullying (HHB) and if the Council feels empowered and has the capacity to make recommendations to address them. Discussion topics included HHB problems in schools, lack of free training for designated employees, uptick in racial harassment, different and new behaviors in cyberbullying, Eisenhower matrix, prioritizing issues, all incidents of HHB are urgent, symptoms versus

nature of the issue, delineating the Council's role from that of the Secretary, laments that the Council does not have more control, addressing the issues of the moment and creating policy for the long term, clear recommendations from the Council to the Secretary, more focus on coordinating statewide activities, current representation on the Council, keeping kids safe, parental responsibility to school systems, no authority if the Secretary does not respond, Title IX cases, including voices from community members (parents, students and teachers) in Council meetings, composition change of the Council membership requires legislative actions, should another group do this work, budget, positive behavior interventions, de-escalation training, equity, future of the group, leadership transition at the AOE, systems approach, restorative justice, changing the language in the HHB policy, action-oriented Council, bringing back listening tours and using social media to the Council's advantage.

Davis offered potential actionable tasks to the Council including sketching out a draft itinerary and set of goals for a listening tour, presenting to Secretary findings and reviewing stale ideas as potential new recommendations. Discussion followed regarding generating a clear list of recommendations first, balancing recommendations that have consensus and those that do not, frustration with the Council, AOE delay in reviewing updated draft policy, meeting more frequently and hardening recommendations, preparing for upcoming school year, expectation that the Secretary respond to recommendations and keeping students and adults safe in schools.

Davis reviewed the action items: 1) increase the frequency of meetings; 2) work to put together clear recommendations; 3) identify additional recommendations that are for the AOE or another entity; 4) present to the Secretary with insistence for response at the next meeting; 5) hear AOE feedback and determine if recommendation is for another entity (legislature or other partners); and, 6) determine how, where and when to do the listening tour and package the feedback from the tour. Discussion followed on bi-directional feedback, feedback on draft policy, necessary trainings, conflict of interest, and weighting contributions of the Council members.

It was agreed that there will be 4 meetings in three months to complete the work on recommendations to the Secretary of Education. Doodle Polls will be sent to the council for consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Suzanne Sprague.