

Agency of Education
219 North Main Street, Suite 306
September 30, 2019

Present: Tim Vincent, VSBIT; Jeff Francis, VSA; Henri Sparks, Burlington Schools; Melissa Horwitz, Human Rights Commission; Jay Nichols, VPA; Jeff Fannon, VT NEA; Curtiss Reed, Vermont Partnership for Fairness & Diversity (via Phone); Sue Ceglowski, VSBA (via phone); Lucy Garand, Government Relations Manager, Downs Rachlin Martin PLLC (via phone); Daniel M. French, Agency of Education

AOE: Suzanne Sprague

Agenda:

1. Finalizing listening tours
2. Finalizing the HHB Model Policies one-page document
3. Other?

The meeting convened at 2:33 p.m.

Chair Vincent began with agenda item 2 which is the layman's version of the HHB Model Policies. He identified the two edits that were discussed at the previous meeting which included the removal of some phrasing on page 1 and the addition of the definition of "hostile environment". Chair Vincent said there should be input regarding the languages in which the new document should be translated. Discussion followed regarding additional edits to spelling and punctuation, definition of hostile environment to be severe or pervasive, updates to semantics and flow, and consulting school districts' definition and policies. Chair Vincent said he will share the document via Google documents and via email for final edits and approval. All changes should be sent to the chair by October 11th as the final date for modifications.

Chair Vincent changed the discussion to the listening tours and shared the 2019 Recommended Plan of Action prepared by Sparks, Horwitz and Iverson. He thought the completion timeline for the end of October was aggressive. He said important things to consider are how interested and dedicated members are to the project and how the information gathered will be disseminated and utilized. Discussion followed regarding the completion date of the tours, communicating the results of the tours to all schools, including the results in the Legislative Report, purpose of the listening tours, using the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the School Climate Survey instead, representation of the state, first hand feedback from students, results guiding and informing the HHB, Secretary contextualizing the process for the HHB and the difference between adult and student definitions of school climate.

Francis suggested holding two focus forums in a centralized location, one with students and one with principals in advance of the listening tour with the intent that the Council members are current with today's environment before holding the listening tours. He added that any endeavor by the HHB should inform the work of the Secretary. Discussion followed regarding commitment to the listening tours and ramification of delaying the listening tours. Secretary French said there is value to doing the listening tours and raising visibility of the issue. He is waiting for the Act 1 group to form and is anxious to see how their work and the HHB work come together. Discussion followed regarding Act 1, anecdotal results, delay in climate survey, demographic pressures, outdated approach and Act 264. Chair Vincent asked if the HHB would like to hold the focus forums. Discussion followed on changing dynamics, students speaking openly and honest, being well-prepared and the legislative process.

Secretary French suggested doing a convening, such as a day-long summit, instead of a listening tour and bringing students in at the beginning of the process. He said student-leaders would attend and bring their stories. Inviting legislators to the event and identifying themes may be a more effective and efficient method. Discussion followed regarding Up for Learning, attendance, identifying student-leaders, informal leadership and attracting students who have been suspended, marginalized and expelled. Chair Vincent asked for the will of the Council. Further discussion followed regarding interventions, trauma-informed decisions, positive behavior supports, student members and students designing the questions. Chair Vincent asked Sparks to reach out to Up for Learning and invite them to the next HHB meeting to inform the process of the listening tours. Chair Vincent asked the Council members to hold the last two weeks in January 2020 for the listening tours.

Reed asked about the harassment of athletes at away games and which school has jurisdiction over the investigation when one of the students belongs to a different school district. The VPA has authority over sports. Discussion followed regarding clarity for parents, uniform approach to policy and issues, assumption students belong to the same school community, weaving specific topic into a new updated HHB policy and student safety risk and injury.

The remaining meetings are below.

November 25th

January 25th

March 30th

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Suzanne Sprague.