



**Task Force on Equitable and Inclusive School Environments –  
Subcommittee #1 - Best practices, defining behaviors, other  
states and services for students under age 8  
December 15, 2021, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting  
Call In: 1-802-828-7667  
Conference ID: 285 368 730#  
1 National Life Drive, David 5, Room #532  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

**Present (bold):** Marianna Donnally, Department of Mental Health; Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Boards Association; Steve Perrin, Vermont Principals' Association; Meaghan Morgan-Puglisi, Vermont-National Education Association; Marilyn Mahusky, Legal Aid Disability Law Project; Karen Price, Vermont Family Network; Amy Wheeler-Sutton, Building Effective Strategies for Teaching Students Project at the University of Vermont; Lindsey Halman, Vermont Restorative Approaches Collaborative; Chris Sheehan, teacher, appointed by the Vermont-National Education Association; Ana Lindert-Boyes, Twinfield Union High School, UP for Learning; and Justin Picard, Vermont School Counselor Association.

**Members of the public/others:** Susan Aranoff, Charles Becker (will be replacing Marilyn Mahusky), Sue Ceglowski

**AOE:** Chris Case, Kate Rogers, Emily Simmons, Maureen Gaidys

**Call to Order/Roll Call/Amendments to Agenda**

The meeting was called to order at 11:34 a.m.

**Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes from December 1, 2021**

Chris made a motion, Amy seconded, all approved.

**Public to be Heard** – no public wished to be heard.

**Legal Review**

Amy and Marilyn gave an overview of the work for Emily. Emily explained that because of federal law (Gun Free Schools Act), exclusionary discipline needs to be on the table for weapons. There are certain criteria that would cause a district to expel a student. A district has to go through the analysis to determine whether an expulsion should happen.

Emily asks - is there anything else we want to recommend to the General Assembly that exclusion should stay in the toolbox?

There are complications around sharing disciplinary decisions with the victims of any behaviors.

Harassment behaviors – should these still be eligible?

Steve asked about school board model policies. If the legislature says you can't suspend for a certain behavior, the school board policies need to follow this.

Emily explained that we will make recommendations to the legislature, they will take testimony, and down the road, could make it illegal to suspend a student for certain lower-level behaviors.

Knives are in a different category than firearms. The Gun Free schools act has very specific language.

Marilyn explained that in situations of assault, the perpetrator also has rights (they might not have been found guilty of the crime, and this may take a great deal of time).

### **Discussion/Working Session**

Marilyn shared an example of a young child being suspended for 10 days for running around with children's scissors.

Chris asked - how much latitude does an administrator get to determine when the health and safety of a student is at risk? Right now, they get a lot of latitude. How much do we want to limit that?

Is there an appeal process?

Charlie discussed that there are lots of vague terms – "harmful to the welfare of the school" and that something also needs to be done about informal removals – what about when it's not called a "suspension" – (i.e., you can't come back until you get a risk assessment).

Steve explained that there is variability among administrators about their approach to discipline – many really try to avoid exclusionary practices.

Amy described the need for families to understand a restorative approach and have an understanding of what actually changes behavior.

Amy mentioned that the lack of digestible data makes this work challenging – what is the scope of the issue? There are some districts/schools that rely more heavily on exclusionary discipline than others.

Lindsey recommended looking at Delaware – schools are held accountable tied to the continuous improvement process (CIP).

Marianna mentioned that in times of stress, people gravitate toward punitive responses.

Meaghan reminded that exclusionary discipline doesn't work to change behavior.

Lindsey suggested that we define the behaviors that should NOT result in exclusionary discipline (i.e., Chris mentioned bad language, dress code, noncompliance (of non-safety issues), skipping class, personal amount of a controlled substance without intent to distribute; continue to discuss if someone has a controlled substance that is confiscated is no longer a threat)? There would be a lot of loopholes in this. Could we help tighten up some of these loopholes to prevent this with definitions?

Marilyn recommended that where we can, we should make specific recommendations.

Justin named that language is so important and powerful and asked what about impact, intent, and context?

Kheya reminded that ongoing training is needed in so many of these areas – one off training is not successful and that unless we mandate that this gets built in, we won't see change because it doesn't stay at the top of people's plates if it doesn't affect them directly.

For next meeting (Jan. 5 11:30-12:30)– start defining the behaviors that should NOT result in exclusionary discipline.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

Meeting minutes submitted by: Amy Wheeler-Sutton