

Agency of Education
219 North Main Street, Suite 424
May 22, 2017

Present: Ken Page, Vermont Principals' Association; Kathy Johnson, Self & Anti-Defamation League; Bor Yang, Human Rights Commission; Tim Vincent, VSBIT; Chris Killoran, student; Lucie Garand, parent/DRM; Emily Simmons, VSBA; Curtiss Reed, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity (via phone); Mike Dreiblatt, Stand Up to Bullying (via phone)
AOE: Rebecca Holcombe, Suzanne Sprague

Agenda:

1. Best Practices Model Cut Sheet – Outright Vermont, Dana Kaplan
2. Resources for the prevention of hazing, harassment and bullying
3. Legislative Update
4. Review draft of HHB Annual Report
5. Issue Statement regarding current events in the U.S.
6. Other?

The meeting convened at 2:40 p.m.

Ken Page, VPA, began the meeting asking for introductions.

Page said that since Dana Kaplan from Outright was unable to attend the meeting that agenda item 1 will be saved for the next meeting.

Page said that since Bernice Garnett was unable to attend the meeting that agenda item 2 will be saved for the next meeting. Secretary Holcombe said that the Agency of Education will push out the mandatory reporting list to schools in June so it is in school administrators' inboxes well in advance of the start of the school year. She continued that if it is requested in June there is a higher probability that schools will plan their in-service days around this topic.

Emily Simmons from the Vermont School Boards Association gave a brief legislative update and said that S.18 is the only bill that comes to mind. She added that S.18 was folded into the big education bill. Simmons explained that it ensures freedom of expression of students in both K-12 as well as students in higher education. She added that the bill includes a provision that protects investigations surrounding harassment, hazing and bullying from the category of speech. Secretary Holcombe said that this will be part of the Agency of Education's Legislative Report that will be sent to schools in June.

Page said that since Bernice Garnett was unable to attend the meeting that agenda items 4 and 5 will be saved for the next meeting.

Chris Killoran announced that he is a senior and that this meeting will be his last. Secretary Holcombe said that the Agency of Education will reach out to the Governor's office about recruiting a new student member.

Page asked for any updates from the council members. Kathy Johnson, Anti-Defamation League, shared that there will be an Educators Institute on July 25th, 26th and 27th at the Capital Plaza. The Anti-Defamation League's Youth Congress was March 30th and 1,500 students attended. The Anti-Defamation League has had a large increase in complaints regarding bias, hate, bullying, religious bigotry and antisemitism. The Vermont Association of Middle Level Educators hosted the 4th Annual Beyond Bullying 4th Conference. The Middle Grades Institute is coming up at Champlain College.

Emily Simmons has been meeting with the Vermont NEA's Racial Task Force. The group consists of educators, Simmons and people from the Attorney General's Office. The group has been working on racial justice on a state-wide criminal justice level. Simmons said there is definite over-lap with this group and she will keep the council informed of its progress. She added it is a five-year project. Her group is focusing on policy and looking at school district policies and student handbook procedures to try and weed out any unintended racial bias. Simmons said the group plans on incorporating the HHB Best Practices and expects all schools to adopt this content.

Curtiss Reed, Vermont Partnership for Fairness and Diversity, said the Vision Conference will take place on November 2nd and 3rd at the Putney School. Reed said that he was a judge at the Hildene Essay Competition in May. He said the topic was climate change. Secretary Holcombe asked for the information and said the Agency of Education will tweet about the competition to give it more exposure. Reed asked for the group to visit <http://iamavermonter.org/>. He explained that this is a tool for persons of color to use when relocating to Vermont. Reed said the site has been running for a couple of weeks.

Mike Dreiblatt, Stand Up to Bullying, said that he and Bernice Garnett were interviewed on Vermont Public Radio. He said that the purpose was to get the word out on what the task force is doing and also, advise the listeners that the task force exists.

Bor Yang, Human Rights Commission, said she has been busy with Implicit Bias trainings throughout the state. Secretary Holcombe said that the trainings have been well received at the Agency of Education with about 70 employees participating to date.

Lucie Garand, parent/DRM, said she attended a funeral service for a young girl which was attended by legislators. She said that the mother gave the eulogy and spoke that her daughter had been bullied. Garand said she doesn't think the group is doing enough for the kids. She said that the group has been meeting for 5 years and doesn't feel that anything concrete has been accomplished.

Tim Vincent, VSBIT, said they held HHB training for coaches at three sites through-out the state before each sport season to assure that most coaches have the opportunity to attend. He said that this included procedures on how to identify what is happening and what to do to protect kids. Vincent said that these trainings will continue in the coming year in Central Vermont, Chittenden County and Killington. He will supply the dates as soon as they are set.

Page said the VPA Summer Leadership Academy is August 1st – 3rd. He said that the VPA has been working with the Center for Creative Leadership in North Carolina. Page announced that the training will now include students. Page said they are working on a pilot program with the goal to develop a K-12 leadership continuum for students.

Secretary Holcombe said that there is upraised anxiety around some of the state's more vulnerable populations. The Agency has worked with several people including the Governor to get messaging to communities in both English and Spanish around undocumented students. She continued that the intent was to try to reassure and clarify the students' rights as well as the obligations and responsibilities of the schools with respect to protecting children. Secretary Holcombe said the Agency has been invited to convene a group of Vermonters in Oakland, California, to focus on helping school systems learn how to promote equity, diversity and personalized learning.

Discussion followed on the group's purpose.

Upcoming meeting dates are July 31st, September 25th and November 27th.

Adjourn:

Page moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Minutes recorded and prepared by Suzanne Sprague.