
Issue Date: October 23, 2023

Act 29, Sec. 4 Stakeholder Meeting 4

October 17, 2023, 10am

Facilitator: Education Lindsey Hedges, Agency of Education (AOE)

Note Taker: Ted Fisher, AOE

1) Introductions

2) Overview of the Role of a Model Policy

- Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA)
 - Policy is one area of responsibility for school districts.
 - Describes what should be done, broad statement.
 - School Boards usually have a standing policy committee, continually reviewing.
 - VSBA recommendation to review all policies every 3 years.
 - Provide direction, articulate goals, essential to risk management.
 - Outline objectives, and accountability metrics to identify if objectives are met.
 - Policy often requires superintendent to develop procedures.
 - More specific statements, how district will implement policies.
 - Procedures not usually adopted by board.
 - VSBA has three categories.
 - Required (per state / federal law)
 - Recommended
 - For consideration
 - Times when General Assembly requires AOE to develop model policies.
 - Harassing, Hazing and Bullying (HHB) Prevention policy is an example, AOE also issued procedures.
 - VSBA includes AOE model policies in model policy manual.
- Ted Fisher, Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs, AOE
 - AOE will issue both policy and procedures in this instance.
 - When we issue policies, we can also issue supporting guidance, and/or training, and will do so as required by law in this case.
 - Finding conversation really valuable not only for development of the model policy, but for development of the other areas (training, guidance, etc.) as well.



3) Review Progress to Date and Debrief Additional Themes/Next Steps

4) Group Policy Discussion – this section needs formatting – hard to do in track changes.

1. Importance of initial and ongoing training:

- It was noted that having a one-off training is not usually enough, need for meaningful activities to put training into practice, as well as refresher.
- Note that we should describe what training should be, particularly restorative practices, reducing bias, and what Behavioral Threat Assessment (BTA) should be, and what it should not be.
- Request to spell out very specifically the requirements and cadence.
- Request to spell out hours and what would be covered in each training.
- Noted that we need a way to learn from practice and use it to update ongoing training, practice, evaluation. Also need a succession plan.
- Suggestion, synthesizing the comments being made lay out different levels of training requirements for different groups (for example, one level of training for teachers and staff who may report threats to BTATs but are not BTAT members, a different level of training for members of BTATs). by level, I mean depth of training, number of hours of training, possibly different contents of trainings.
- Suggestion to addendum to model policies on bias training, etc.
 - Clarification that it will be data driven, use it to update guidance, training, etc.
- Suggestion that we should explain which kinds of bias we're trying to avoid (disability bias, racial bias), and then clarify what kinds of training.
- Note in the chat that we should be looking for quality and comprehensiveness of instruction instead of number of hours. This relates to our previous guidance mentioned that multiple touchpoints are more effective, because we're not treating it like a minimum number of hours, but as a syllabus instead.

1. Integration into pre-existing systems for student support:

- Noted the need for an offramp to shift according to the student's real needs. For marginalized students, maybe this is retaliation:
- Request to specify that we are pulling students into a safe space, not sending home, isolating, etc.
- Request to be specific, spelling out all the systems of support that exist, link to those policies?

2. “Downstream” impacts of BTA process:

- Request for a separate category of records for BTAs, that when normal requests for educational records are made, they aren't provided. And that when there is a need for BTA records, there is a process for providing them. Need to define what the need is but want separate record. Less is more in terms of records.
- Question of use of term “downstream” – alternatives proposed.
- Request that BTA records should not be shared when SPED, for example, or some other purpose. BTA records only when investigating threat. Don't want childhood threat to be part of school to prison pipeline.

- Suggestion for a legislative recommendation for children who have history of making threats, around expungement of BTA records.
3. **Confidentiality:**
 - Noted that much of this was covered in previous conversation.
 4. **Interaction between BTA process and law enforcement, particularly School Resource Officers (SROs):**
 - Noted that the policy is neutral on question of SRO. Not a recommendation one way or the other.
 - Pointed out that it is currently not neutral, document mentions them, also interview of students.
 - Suggestion that policy neither recommends nor discourages in this instance. Being silent, plus the template SRO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the VSSC website might imply endorsement.
 - Noted that Vermont School Safety Center (VSSC) does not want to be interpreted as endorsing SROs, providing documents to support implementation if the school chooses to do so, it's a resource and a tool. The decision is for local leaders.
 - Noted that an update of guidance is planned.
 5. **Relationship between BTA process and exclusionary discipline**
 - None given.
 6. **(from risks): Disproportionate impact on historically marginalized students, including Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) students, students with disabilities, and poor students.**
 - (Note to provide Vermont Legal Aid's recommendations for students with disabilities)
 - Office of Racial Equity (ORE) and American Psychological language use guide. BIPOC no longer a good term, as prioritizes black and indigenous folks.
 - Disagreement, black students suffer most, important to have them reflected.
 - Concern raised that there are too many terms of art, need to balance so folks are included but not use too much jargon that shifts.
 - Request to be very specific about what those disproportionate impacts look like: overrepresentation in discipline, arrests, etc. Can we flag what risks are so that school districts can better address / prevent them?
 - Suggestion to use "people or communities of color" and specify which racial or ethnic groups have been particularly harmed.
 - Question is how to go from; Is it part of the training, part of the data, guidance? Or need more?
 - Noted that we need to make sure we aren't targeting students, not profiling, outcomes are not disproportionate. Another risk is ostracizing the students. What is need? Articulation of how this process puts marginalized students at risk so folks can be mindful.
 - Shared [VLA Dispelling the Myth Police in Schools Factsheet](#) Good briefing from Vermont Legal Aid, see especially the "Resources" list on the last page.

- **5) Open Debrief**

- Question on what is next in the process?
 - Wrap up next week, issue of policy, cover memo, public comment process.
- Question of if we intend to translate model policy?
 - Work with ORE to obtain funds available.
- Suggestion to use plain language summary
 - Definitely plan to do plain language summary.

General Commentary from Chat:

- Somewhere along the line we need to address the resources required to implement this program with fidelity. As Dr. Reeves stated in her presentation, effective BTA requires release time for personnel to focus on this work. We have utilized federal grant money for much of this work but are we tracking the additional costs school districts will incur to implement these new systems?