

ACT 29 Working Group

Feedback from School Leaders

Pros/Cons/Suggestions

- Given the informal nature of our survey with an open comment box; this seemed like the best way to share information.

Pros of current system according to school leaders

- We have a streamlined process that works well
- Many of the templates are very good and easy to use
- We have high quality training on legal requirements
- Toolkits
- Heather Lynn trainings and documents

Cons of current system according to school leaders – Major Themes

- One size fits all policies don't work, especially for elementary schools
- We need more educational and restorative options for younger kids and less of a punitive approach
- Takes way too much time, major time burden
- Language isn't developmentally appropriate
- Need to use common sense and not have a "report" for every little thing that happens
- The whole process is overwhelming to educators who do not enter the profession to be investigators and judges

Cons of current system according to School Leaders cont.

- Complaints from parents that VSBIT letters are hard to understand
- Administrators are trying to be lawyers and investigators and just have too much to do to do this well
- Many students and parents use the terms harassment and bullying for any behavior from others that they don't like
- Private schools just kick kids out without any due process and they come back to public schools
- We protect from lawsuits but do little to change the behavior
- Confidentiality is a barrier

Suggestions

- Smaller schools need someone on staff to do these investigations – larger schools need dedicated staff to focus on just this. Means hiring more staff (**this sentiment was repeated in some way or form dozens of times**)
- Curriculum and intervention materials that are self-paced modules for families/children to complete as restoration/education when they cause harm (**at least a dozen times**)
- Table Talk trainings/discussions/scenarios that are more pragmatic and less legalistic in nature (**several times**)
- Menu of developmentally appropriate educational “consequences” that offenders could be required to complete (**Dozens of times including request for flow charts & if/then processes**)

Suggestions cont.

- Lack of mental health support for schools, staff, students, families is at root of much of this – address that systematically across the state and many of these problems will go away (numerous times)
- Need developmentally appropriate consequences/educational options for younger children (numerous times)
- Time consumption issue (dozens of times – some potential “solutions” are in other suggestions)
- Lawyers or trained independent investigators should do the investigations (Numerous times)

Suggestions from Field cont.

- Parent Resources (*Numerous, what HHB is and isn't, repository of info. Forms, etc*)
- AOE position to support/review investigations (*several*)

Summary Thoughts Jay Nichols

- Principals are caught in the middle
- Consequences to kids colleges and military prospects
- Principals can't lead and can't focus on culture if they are simply investigators and adjudicators.
- If you want real improvement focus on improvement and prevention
- If you want to continue on the more investigations path than have one person at each school that is paid to do all of that work and take school leadership out of it and let school leaders actually lead instead of serving as mini police officers and private investigators