

**Anoka-Hennepin School District
Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Task Force
2012-2013 Report**

The Anoka-Hennepin School District is committed to creating an inclusive and positive climate in all of our schools, where all students feel welcome, safe, and ready to learn. The Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Task Force was assembled in September 2012 to advise the District regarding how best to foster a positive educational climate free of harassment.

The Task Force met monthly throughout the 2012-2013 school year. The meetings were held at the District offices. They were scheduled for the last Thursday evening of each month, October through May, excluding December. Each meeting was one and one-half to two hours long.

The Task Force included 25 representatives¹ including students, parents, teachers, principals, district administrators, and additional community members. Jennifer Cherry, Title IX/Equity Coordinator, coordinated and scheduled the Task Force meetings and work. Meeting activities varied and were responsive to the particular objectives of each meeting. Group norms and ground rules were established at the first meeting and reviewed at every meeting. External professional facilitators, Paula Forbes and Dawn Ellison, hosted the meetings.

A steering committee² was formed after the first meeting to plan the meeting agendas and co-write the final Task Force Report. The steering committee met each month, at least one week prior to each Task Force meeting to review meeting notes and drive the objectives for the next meeting.

The Task Force invested considerable time this year generating group tone and trust. The underlying intention of every meeting was to create an inclusive and participatory space that honored diverse perspectives. The group acknowledged that members would not agree on everything and all perspectives would be heard. The group agreed to the following ground rules for all meetings: *listen with attention and speak with intention; no fixing or advice; when you find yourself in judgment, seek to understand; all are responsible for the well-being of the group; no stories should be attributed or shared without the express permission of the storyteller.*

The Task Force was driven by the following charge:

1. Bring forth concerns of students and parents related to harassment incidents and the District's overall climate.
2. Recommend strategies to prevent harassment and improve the educational climate.
3. Outreach strategies to parents and families to build awareness around, address concerns related to, and gain feedback regarding the District's anti-harassment efforts.

¹ See Appendix A for list of Task Force members.

² Steering committee members identified with * in Appendix A.

Driven by the charge, the Task Force developed nine recommendations for the Board's consideration. We recognize that some of the design of the following recommendations may be tasks that the School Board will direct a future task force to develop, and some may be internal tasks. Appendix B lists brainstormed ideas generated through inclusive, participatory processes used throughout the year. Ideas listed in Appendix B are not recommendations. They are ideas for the Task Force to explore in partnership with the Anoka-Hennepin Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Leadership Team.

Recommendation 1: Framework for Continuance of Task Force

We recommend the School Board consider the following framework for future Task Force membership and work:

- Currently appointed members should be invited to continue on the Task Force for the upcoming year. Task Force members who choose not to return should be replaced to keep the Task Force membership to 25-30 members.
- Student members should include five high school students.
- Future Task Force activities should incorporate student and parent panels or listening sessions.
- The Task Force should continue to meet for two hours once per month during the academic year.
- Subcommittees should be formed to research specific topics of interest. Subcommittee work should be shared with the Task Force at regular Task Force meetings.
- Increase the diversity of members of the Task Force.
- Trained, external facilitators should continue to be used to facilitate the meetings.

Recommendation 1 addresses Charge 1.

Recommendation 2: Student Education

We recommend the District provide developmentally appropriate social and emotional learning opportunities for all students. We recommend including anti-bullying/cyberbullying and anti-harassment education and bystander empowerment education across the District for every student at every grade level throughout the school year. Peer mediation should continue to be promoted and supported to help students resolve conflict early.

Recommendation 2 addresses Charge 2.

Recommendation 3: Employee Professional Development

We recommend that the District continue to provide ongoing professional development, specifically cultural competency and anti-bullying/anti-harassment training that involves all staff who interact with students. We also recommend that teachers and administrators be knowledgeable of all anti-bullying/anti-harassment student programming.

Recommendation 3 addresses Charge 2.

Recommendation 4: Leverage External Resources

We recommend that the District create a clearinghouse for anti-bullying/anti-harassment resources. The District should explore utilizing a grant writer to obtain additional funding for anti-bullying/anti-harassment efforts.

Recommendation 3 addresses Charge 2.

Recommendation 5: Site Implementation

We recommend that the District ensure a consistently safe and welcoming environment in all of our schools. We recommend the Anoka-Hennepin Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Leadership Team work in partnership with the Task Force to further explore the many ideas outlined in Appendix B.

Recommendation 5 addresses Charge 2.

Recommendation 6: Improve and Support Mental Wellness

We recommend improving support regarding student mental wellness and increasing education and awareness of mental health issues.

Recommendation 6 addresses Charge 2.

Recommendation 7: Promote Positive Culture³

We recommend the District and Task Force continue to explore specific programs and strategies that promote a positive culture that include student leaders, families, community

³ Identified by the Task Force as a priority recommendation to explore next year

members and organizations, curriculum, training of all school staff members, and measures of effectiveness.

Recommendation 7 addresses Charge 2.

Recommendation 8: Engage Families⁴

We recommend the District partner with families to achieve safe and welcoming schools and communities.

Recommendation 8 addresses Charge 3.

Recommendation 9: Comprehensive, Effective Communications

We recommend the District develop a comprehensive communication plan to gather input and provide consistent information about safety and inclusiveness for **ALL** people in our schools. Audiences for the communications include students, staff, families, community agencies, and members of the public. We recommend the Anoka-Hennepin Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Leadership Team consider the communication elements in partnership with the Task Force and implement the plan as soon as possible.

Recommendation 9 addresses Charge 3.

Summary

The Anoka-Hennepin School District's Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Task Force developed nine recommendations intended to meet the District's commitment to create a school climate where all students feel welcome, safe, and ready to learn. The recommendations are broad-based and will serve as a framework for continued work of the Task Force in the coming years. Additional information regarding the work of the Task Force may be found at: www.anoka.k12.mn.us/antibullytf

⁴ Identified by the Task Force as a priority recommendation to explore next year

Appendix A

The 2012-2013 Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Task Force included the following members:

- Amy Anderson, high school teacher (Crossroads)
- Alyssa Beddoe, high school student (Andover)
- Mark Bryant, parent (Blaine)
- * Jennifer Cherry, Title IX/equity coordinator (Anoka-Hennepin School District)
- Michael Chmiel, attorney (Anoka County)
- Angela Diep, middle school student (Northdale)
- Jacob Ericson, middle school student (Oak View)
- Mike Farley, high school principal (Anoka)
- * Jinger Gustafson, EdD, associate superintendent of middle schools (Anoka-Hennepin School District)
- Tim Hale, high school paraprofessional (Anoka)
- * Beth Hentges, parent (Champlin Park, Oxbow Creek)
- Leslie Houghtaling, analyst (Hennepin County Human Services)
- Annie Ideker, MD, family physician (Blaine)
- Nita Kumar, PhD, mental health consultant (Anoka-Hennepin School District)
- Bryan Lindquist, parent (Anoka)
- Donna McDonald, violence prevention coordinator (Anoka County)
- Sara Messerli, parent (Blaine)
- Ekow Nana-Kweson, high school student (Coon Rapids)
- * Mary Olson, director of communication and public relations (Anoka-Hennepin School District)
- * Judi Orland, parent (Oak View, Rum River)
- Kathy Riddle, parent (Andover, Oak View)
- * Linda Rodgers, parent involvement coordinator (Anoka-Hennepin School District)
- Simone Simon, middle school teacher (Coon Rapids)
- John Swisher, middle school teacher (Anoka)
- Jeremy Tammi, elementary principal (Adams)

Facilitators:

- * Dawn Ellison, MD
- * Paula Forbes, JD

Recorder:

Laurie Rasmusson, assistant to general counsel (Anoka-Hennepin School District)

- * Steering committee member

Appendix B

The 2012-2013 Task Force discussions produced a multitude of ideas that should be examined further. Following are items that members of the Task Force would like the school district to explore in relation to corresponding recommendations. Bulleted items were generated in a brainstorming workshop; items do not necessarily reflect majority opinion of Task Force members.

1: Framework for Continuance of Task Force

- Each school has a representative, teacher or student on Task Force to be the voice of everyone else
- Same people for all five years (of Consent Decree)
- Meet during the summer
- Meet more often
- Continue on with Task Force members
- Include more LGBT students and parents on the Task Force
- Include more persons of color on the Task Force
- Increase the religious diversity of the members of the Task Force

2: Student Education

- Teach bystander empowerment skills
- Teach anti-cyber bullying skills
- Teach anti-bullying skills
- Assign and train mediators
- Social/emotional curriculum with training
- Require anti-bullying education across our district: every student-every level-every day

3: Employee Professional Development

- Really train all faculty/staff: cultural competence; positive messages
- Develop and implement more staff training

4: Leverage External Resources

- Develop and implement vetting process for vendors
- Devote a grant writer to finding anti-bullying resources
- Maximize use of community resources
- Consistency across schools and funding

5: Site Specific Implementation

- Create universally accessible/gender neutral bathrooms
- Hotline or drop box for anonymous reporting
- Hire staff to increase staff presence
- Culture – uniforms
- Position(s) overseeing building “teams” around the work
- Create teams at school level
- Hallway monitors; locker room monitors; recess monitors
- Include trained volunteers in school monitoring situations
- More late starts / early release days for staff development
- School specific data for school specific strategies
- Identify trouble spots
- Shift resources to address trouble spots
- Schools respond to school-specific Anti-Bullying Survey results

6: Improve and Support Mental Wellness

- Social-emotional learning K-12; e.g. AMAZE, Respect for All
- Promote and teach resilience
- Provide resources for the bullied, the bully, and the bystander
- Increase staffing support for each building for mental health support
- Improve counselor to student ratio
- More staff development on mental wellness for all staff
- Expand mental health screening

7: Promote Positive Culture

- Develop a Student Code of Conduct with positive student-friendly language (“We *will* be . . .”)
- Define and give examples of what “respect” means
- Anti-bullying program for all extra-curricular and co-curricular activities
- “Everybody Matters” campaign
- Elementary and middle schools – make a friend / be a friend
- Let the teachers have a voice without feeling like they could lose their jobs because of it
- Update / refine peer mediation
- Encourage youth leaders in schools to lead bystander training
- Provide leadership opportunities for Gay Straight Alliance students
- Develop and offer more support programs for both students and staff
- Define and measure success
- Survey every student every year
- Set up evaluation program after implementation of new program

- Comprehensive, inclusive health and human development education K-12
- Identify and train “anti-bullying ambassadors” and everyone knows who they are
- Increase student involvement in processes and programs
- Create district recognition program
- Create community partnerships to foster safe school climate; bullying is not just a school issue
- Deep focus on learning (Professional Learning Communities among staff)
- After-school education/detention program
- Create student / staff / community projects
- High school pay it forward program
- Encourage or provide incentives for bystanders to speak up
- Empower bystanders
- Support restorative justice
- Provide lens for students to see themselves as part of the solution
- Include parents in the target groups to be involved in promoting positive culture

8: Engage Families

- Provide parent anti-bullying education at beginning of the school year
- Develop and disseminate “tools” for parents / community
- Standardize parent notification process
- Community and parent oriented programming
- Survey parents about bullying and harassment

9: Comprehensive, Effective Communications

- Obtain more feedback from teachers on their needs to create safe schools
- Communicate survey results
- Define and publicize “success”
- Consistent messaging/communication across all schools; “Theme of the week”
- Identify Go-To adults – every students knows who to tell/who to rely on
- Signage that clearly identifies the building go-to adult regarding bullying and harassment concerns
- School Board should have monthly discussions with the public
- Develop methods for schools to share best practices
- Visual reminders of positive behavior
- Create clear student-friendly definition of bullying
- Easier communications between schools and law enforcement and medical community