

Recommendations and Plan for Response following April Incident

Following a student-to-student physical attack that occurred at Lyons Township High School's South Campus on April 27, 2022, the Board of Education retained its counsel, Franczek, to investigate the incident and the District's response. The goal was to review and strengthen existing policies and practices to help prevent and appropriately address any future acts of aggression and physical conflict among students. The investigation included interviews with staff members, a review of student and staff witness statements, notes from the interviews of all students involved, and a review of available video footage.

The report summarizing the investigation was provided to the Board in executive session on July 6, 2022. While the complete report will remain confidential to meet student confidentiality requirements under state and federal law, the document summarizes (1) the findings of the investigation, (2) recommendations for strengthening and improving District practices, and (3) the response undertaken by the District to implement such recommendations.

Findings

Franczek reviewed current Board policies on student conduct, bullying, and harassment; the firm also reviewed policies addressing student social-emotional growth, as well as identification of students at-risk and who may qualify for accommodations and support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other programs under the District's multi-tiered system of support. The firm determined that these policies are up-to-date and compliant with state and federal law. In regard to practice and implementation, the report identified three areas where the District should review and strengthen its practice and processes: (1) identification and referral of students at risk of engaging in behaviors that are harmful to the school community; (2) investigation and documentation of student misconduct; and (3) student monitoring and supervision.

Recommendations and Plan for Response

Recommendation 1: Review the process for identifying and addressing students in crisis or who are at high risk of engaging in behaviors that are harmful to the school community.

The District has initiated a review of existing practices for identifying students who need additional support. This includes a review of the District's child find procedures under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as well as a review of the district's current multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). For reference, MTSS is a framework that supports all students who are struggling in any aspect of the District's educational programming, regardless of whether they are eligible for accommodations and services under IDEA or Section 504, and can be implemented through whole class instruction, small group instruction, or an intervention provided to an individual student.

Recommendation 2: Review current practice for investigation of student misconduct, including specific review of procedures related to internal communication and follow-through.

The District has begun to review existing procedures, documentations, and checklists to ensure that adequate information is gathered about students who are escalated or engaged in conflicts with others. This includes a review of standardized intake questions when complaints of bullying are raised, as well as using the District's established threat assessment procedure. This process can be used in cases of generalized threats against the school community and also to address individual threats made against students or staff members. This also includes a protocol for contacting parents of students who are escalated and may pose a danger to themselves or others.

Recommendation 3: Increase student monitoring and supervision through both video surveillance and increased staffing.

The District has adjusted staffing levels and its use of video surveillance to increase supervision in hallways, cafeterias, and other common areas.

The District is committed to maintaining a safe and welcoming school environment for all students and families. We are confident that taking steps to refine and improve existing practices in these three areas, along with our ongoing efforts to foster a culture where all students belong, will provide the basis for such an environment and assist our administrators and teachers in delivering support and services to students in need and at-risk.