

Mental Health Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

March 28, 2014

The following were in attendance: Amanda Barnes, Peggy Bonk, Jen Condon, Sharon Foley, Laura Giusti, Lyn Hostetler, Nina Mackta, Carolyn Mark, Brad Wilson, Brenna Jones (student), Michael Guilfoyle (student), Stephanie Verducci, Cherie Cruz, Morgan Napolillo (student), Raquel Casanova

Agenda/Minutes

I. Creating a snapshot

- Data collection efforts are underway, but not everyone had time to work on this since the last meeting. More work to be done on- and off-line.**
- The subcommittee was joined by three youth representatives who shared their perspectives on mental health in the high school, and the supports that are available to them. Their perceptions and suggestions are summarized below:**

Perceptions/Challenges:

The instructional day is intense/fast paced. Stressors from home feed anxiety, stress and depression. Need to slow down. Need support from teachers rather than victim blaming. It's acknowledged that HS is a very difficult time in the lives of kids (transitioning from child to

adult), but that fact doesn't seem to be taken into consideration. Advisory is not working in terms of providing support to youth: teachers too busy to deal with individual kids. You don't get to pick your advisor and teachers/kids don't always connect. Cliques are a challenge. Pep rallies/lunch can be anxiety inducing. The guidance office is a fish bowl, so people aren't comfortable going in there. It is the perception of some students that staff doesn't always know how to help.

Suggestions/Opportunities:

- **Upperclassmen could mentor younger students**
- **Quiet Room (art therapy, punching bag, time limits, teacher monitoring?) - Other schools have tried this.**
- **Restructure advisory to make it more supportive (mentoring could happen during advisory)**
- **Every student needs to have at least one adult in the building he/she feels safe with. Maybe ask kids if they do and, if so, who, and create a process for connecting teachers/staff with students who need someone.**
- **Professional development for teachers and staff so they are better equipped to handle kids with mental health challenges**
- **Promote awareness during mental health month - assembly during advisory and/or displays with facts/stats**
- **Create events/programs to connect students with available supports.**

II. Review of building level efforts

The group ran out of time to discuss this, but Carolyn has received some input from staff already and is awaiting additional input.

III. Mental Health Awareness Month

The group ran out of time to discuss this, but there is general agreement that we should be exploring building specific and district wide opportunities, particularly with respect to engaging students in art-based projects and helping to promote the resources that are available to students. Discussions around this will continue in the schools and via email.

IV. Action items and next steps

- For those who have not yet done so, please send Carolyn a summary of building level activities that support mental health by April 17 (before school break so Carolyn can create a draft summary by our next meeting.)**
- Staff to work together to explore mental health awareness month opportunities. Carolyn to summarize and publicize district wide activity utilizing the district website and list serve.**
- Group to revisit data collection efforts and trend identification at next meeting, so everyone please bring data/info for discussion**

NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2014 in the EGHS Guidance Conference Room