

UPPER PERKIOMEN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Education Center
2229 E. Buck Road
Pennsburg, PA 18073
Pupil Service & Special Education Committee
October 26, 2020

CHAIR: Judy Maginnis

Ex-Officio: Dr. Kerry Drake, President

MEMBERS: Melanie Cunningham

Superintendent: Dr. Allyn Roche

Assistant Superintendent: Dr. Andrea Farina

Assistant Director of Special Education: Carol Giblin

Supervisor of Special Education: Amy Coyle

CALL TO ORDER

Motion to approve September 28, 2020 meeting minutes made by Melanie Cunningham and seconded by Dr. Drake.

PAYS Survey Update and Data Review:

PAYS is a survey intended to provide communities and schools data to address root causes of problem behaviors. The survey is given every 2 years to students in 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades. Questions are asked across four domains: community, school, family, and peer/individual. These domains include ATOD (alcohol, tobacco, other drug trends), community and school climate, antisocial behavior, social and emotional health and systemic factors.

Results were compared between the 2017 and 2019 surveys. In the ATOD area, one of the most significant increases from 2017 to 2019 was seen in vaping nicotine and marijuana and alcohol consumption. Being offered illegal drugs at school has also increased significantly, particularly at the high school. The team prioritized the areas of concern with vaping of marijuana and distribution of drugs the two most significant areas and vaping of nicotine and access to alcohol following.

In the community and school climate area, suicide risk has decreased within the last 12 months and related areas are trending in a positive way. As a district, our mental health services have been a focus. Implementation of Tier 3 counselors, Second Step at the elementary level, and counseling services at the Tier 2 level have been some of the additional supports added. The survey has shown that student hurt and abuse has shown an increase, especially in grades 10-12. Another significant need in our community is food security. We have the backpack program which serves a small population in our district and our Food Services Department has been providing meals since the pandemic began, but this remains a significant issue which impacts families. Bullying and inappropriate sexual content via technology has also shown an increase. The team prioritized the areas of concern and focus on bullying and its relation to depression, suicide ideation and substance use and food insecurity.

Community and related data: We saw a significant uptick in students reporting a lack of school value to their future, understanding the importance of the work in school and the enjoyment of school. Not feeling safe in school and not feeling like a part of class discussions has also increased. Research shows that the more students are involved in pro-social activities and have connections to others, the less likely they will turn to drugs, substance abuse and have mental health needs. Our middle level students, especially 6th graders, are less involved in activities, especially in school. The survey has shown that students do continue to participate in community activities. The team prioritized 3 categories: involvement and connections with staff, pro social activities that are offered at each level, the reasons why students are not feeling connected to school and understanding the importance of being connected in relation to their futures.

The survey results are compared to the county and the state. The first main category, risk factor, has 3 subcategories. These are: family, school and peer/individual views. In the family subcategory, our kids have reported higher than the state and/or county in: low neighborhood attachment, perceived availability of handguns, and laws and norms favorable to drug use. In the family subcategory, our kids have reported higher in

history of antisocial behavior. In the school category: academic failure and low commitment to school. In the peers/individual views category: perceived risk of drug use and attitudes favorable to anti-social behaviors (drug use, skipping school). Based on the data, our 6th graders present as having the highest percentage of risk factors out of the 4 grades surveyed.

The second category is Protective Factors. There are 4 subcategories: community, family, school and peer/individual views. The areas in the subcategories with percentages lower than the state and/or county are: school opportunities for prosocial involvement, community reward for prosocial involvement and religiosity. Based on the data, our 6th graders present as the lowest percentage out of the 4 grades surveyed.

Students at the middle level are facing many changes, especially in development and peer relations, so the data isn't necessarily surprising. A strong positive is that there is a high percentage of students who feel a strong family attachment and involvement. This will help provide that support that is needed to help middle students navigate the changes during this time. As a district, we provide parent trainings that can help families if needed.

The next step is to identify 5 problem areas that we need to address based upon the data from the survey and develop an action plan. Vaping nicotine and marijuana, perceived access to alcohol and drugs in the home and at school, students commitment and engagement to school, students connection to school staff and school outcomes, and access to consistent and reliable food stability will be the focus. The team (Dr. Farina, Mrs. Seigfried, Dr. Roche, and our 3 Student Assistance Counselors, Mrs. Harman, Mrs. Jaeger and Mrs. Kelly) will develop goals and outcomes based upon the areas of concern in conjunction with Penn State and a county representative. In January we hope to present the big picture goals and the resources that we hope to utilize.

Discussion followed in regards to implementation of programs to assist with school connection and engagement and food stability. COVID and the reduction of in-person learning impacted these areas.

There were no comments or questions from the public.

Mrs. Giblin presented reminders of the upcoming parent trainings, Secondary Transition and Grief, Loss, and Coping During the Holiday Season.

After the holiday season, we will have additional trainings offered.

Motion by Dr. Drake to conclude the meeting, seconded by Melanie Cunningham.