

**ALBANY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD AGENDA Staff Report**

Regular Meeting of April 6, 2010

ITEM: **Report on School Climate**

PREPARED BY: Lynda Hornada, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Ted Barone, Principal AHS; Tami Benau, Assistant Principal, AHS; Susan Charlip, Assistant Principal, AHS; Robin Davis, Principal, AMS; Dori King, Assistant Principal AMS; Shelly Ball, AUSD Mental Health Coordinator; and the AHS IHS and Renewal program teachers

TYPE OF ITEM: **Staff Report**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

To address community concerns about student to student bullying, cyber-bullying, and harassment, Albany Unified School District is providing a staff report outlining the ongoing efforts to ensure that sites at the secondary level continue to nurture safe and positive school environments for all students.

The following documents are included in this report:

1. Albany Middle School – Bullying and Safety Report- March 23, 2010
 2. Albany High School – Safety Report for April 6, 2010
 3. Albany High School - Identity, Health, and Society Course Review
 4. Report on the work of the Wellness Committee
 5. Report on the work of the Mental Health Committee
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**Albany Middle School Bullying and Safety Report March 23, 2010
Compiled by AMS Administration and Staff**

Overview

Albany Middle School currently has several programs in place to promote the school's safety vision:

“We believe that feeling and being safe are necessary for students to succeed. We believe in working actively in growing a caring community of teachers and learners in which each member is valued and acknowledged. We believe that connected relationships are key to ensuring that every student receives support and motivation to achieve his/her highest potential.”

The safety plan outlines the following programs, strategies, policies, and procedures:

- Conflict resolution – Students are required to participate in problem-solving Conferences to resolve interpersonal conflicts.
- Anger management – Staff work individually with students as needed. Students are trained to give “I messages” and other positive options. When available, the

school organizes small anger management groups who meet with an intern counselor on a regular basis.

- Probation or law enforcement support – The district and schools cooperate closely with local law enforcement, i.e. School Attendance Review Board, Child Protective Services report, vehicle/pedestrian traffic management, crossing guards, etc.
- Guidance Counselors – We have two full-time counselors this year available to students throughout the school day.
- Bullying Prevention
- Shelly Ball's team has also provided mental health services through licensed clinician and interns. Services are available daily.
- Groups led by counselors this year have addressed topics including, anger management, friendship, motivation, divorce, and attention. Counseling staff run a girl's group and a boy's group.
- Parent volunteers-Parents volunteer during lunch to help serve lunch to students as well as provide general supervision during lunch.
- Gang awareness-Staff are alert to any signs of gang or "wanna be" behavior/ attire. We also consult with the Albany Police Department around gang-related issues and concerns.
- Writer Coach Connection-Parents volunteer to offer individual writing support to 8th graders

Policies and Procedures

- District and school suspension, expulsion and mandatory expulsion guidelines - AUSD Board Policy and AR
- Procedures to notify teachers of dangerous pupils
- Sexual harassment policy - AUSD Board Policy and AR
- School-wide dress code relating to gang-related apparel (gang-related apparel is not considered protected speech). Regulations are in place to address the wearing of inappropriate, suggestive, or revealing clothing. No sagging requirement for boys, etc.
- Procedure for safe ingress and egress of pupils, parents, and staff to and from school – At each school signs posted at all entries directing visitors to sign in at the office. Staff members are alert to direct strangers to the office to sign in. We operate a closed campus. Once students arrive on campus they are not allowed to leave until the school day is over.
- A safe and orderly school environment is conducive to learning. School discipline rules and procedures - AUSD Board Policy and AR, School Rules, Classroom Rules, rewards and consequences.
 - Student Handbook – an insert in the Student Planner that all students purchase
 - School Rules – Covered in Student Handbook
 - Classroom behavior rules – posted in classrooms
 - Grade Level Team Meetings – formal and informal
 - Staff and Principal– school-wide behavior management resources
 - Individual consultation with administration, school counselors, and mental health professionals
 - Behavior intervention plans (for specific students as needed)
 - Student medication administration policies
 - Child abuse policy
 - School faculty meetings, grade level meetings.
 - Attendance Clerk – Auto dialer reports absences

- Fire and disaster drill regulation and procedures – reviewed with staff Yearly
- Policies related to disciplinary action regarding special education students

In addition, organizations such as the Parent Education Committee, Student Voices, and a subcommittee of staff have worked on bullying and harassment issues. Below is a summary of activities and events that have taken place:

Mix-It Up Day

Mix-up Day is an event that encourages students to mix with people they do not know. This encourages relationship building and mutual acceptance.

Staff Meeting ---- Viewing of *Let's Get Real* In December 2009 the staff viewed the documentary "Let's Get Real." During this same month students were surveyed using the "Let's Get Real" climate survey tool. This data was tabulated and has been used by the staff in working towards a bullying plan.

Staff Meeting --- Analysis of Healthy Kids Survey Data 2007

In January 2010 the staff reviewed the 2007 Healthy Kids Survey Data and several areas of concern were cited.

Bullying Work Group Meetings and Professional Development

A group of teachers conducted three Wednesday meetings on March 3rd, March 10th, and March 17th completing an initial analysis of data and best practices to create a professional development that was delivered on March 19th to the middle school teaching staff. This professional development allowed us to establish a definition of bullying, to obtain baseline data on staff approaches to bullying, and to work on a collective view of bullying as a multifaceted behavior that needs to be mitigated.

Parent Education Presentation – Cyber-bullying

The parent-teacher association held a cyber-bullying education night on March 17, 2010.

Teacher Generated Action - Hall Presence

In February 2010 teachers coordinated an effort to have a stronger teacher presence in the hallways at AMS. Teachers volunteered to be in the halls during passing periods.

Future Actions

Based on the best practices outlined in the report Social Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention the school will continue or take the following steps:

Best Practice	AMS Action
Assessment of how often bullying occurs and its forms	Completed in December 2009 Healthy Kids Survey conducted March 2010
Awareness and training for all adult staff members	Staff conducted a baseline assessment and wants to receive specific training on how to intercede in bullying 2010-11 training to include all classified staff
Establish and communicate rules and reporting procedures	Rules exist and need to be reviewed with teachers and students regularly
Discipline policy should include remediation and	This is established informally but needs to be

rather than punitive consequences	expanded to include peer mediators and teachers need to be trained in mediation techniques
Adults model respectful and caring behavior towards students	This is an ongoing process of providing teachers and students opportunities to interact outside of the classroom
Promote positive peer interactions that are inclusive	Student Council Garden Club DJ Club Student Voices Mix It Up Day Talent Show Dances Noontime Sports After School Sports 8 th Period Leadership AMS staff will establish more formal and informal ways for students to have more positive peer interactions
Establish a respectful classroom climate with clear standards of acceptable conduct	Teacher training and teacher agreements on behavior expectations will be established
Provide instructional time to address social-emotional development	Schedule specific time to address these issues outside the advisory time
Interventions established by school psychologist and/or counselors	The availability of counselors at all grade levels
Parent education and involvement	Integrate parents into activities at the site and communicate the school's policies and objectives around bullying/harassment

Short Term Actions for the Remainder of the 2009-2010 School Year

- Staff will complete pledges to intervene in bullying and will place them in a public location
- An advisory lesson will be given on what bullying is and the AMS policies on bullying
- The use of respectful language will be discussed during advisory using the short film "Sticks and Stones..."
- A standing committee to address bullying/harassment will be established for next year
- A new web-based security system that can be accessed on or off site by administration will be installed at the school this year
(All AMS security cameras are currently in the process now of being cleaned, refocused, rewired, and replaced (where needed) in order to be prepared to operate fully with the web-based security system.)

Long Term Investments to Mediate Bullying/Cyber-bullying and Harassment

- Invest in a program/system for mitigating bullying and cyber-bullying
 - Provide appropriate training so teachers are comfortable addressing bullying/cyber-bullying and harassment in their rooms and as a school community
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**Safety at Albany High School
Board Presentation April 6, 2010
Compiled by AHS Administration and Staff**

Strengths:

Site Supervision

- Security Aide (3 hours per day) - A roving set of eyes, interactions with students, increases feelings of security
- Security cameras - new web-based security camera system that can be accessed by administration on or off site has been installed, the Technology staff is working with AHS administration to determine the need for additional cameras for more extensive facilities monitoring.
- Administrator open door and visibility - Administrators have an open door policy with students, parents, and teachers able to drop in most any time (and they do) with a quick turnaround on all phone calls and emails. Administrators are out in the halls and walking the campus at all passing periods and breaks. This enables quick recognition of non-students, keeps conflicts from developing, and increases feeling of safety.
- Discipline grid published in the Daily Planner and online- Consequences for student behavior clearly described, consistently applied by administrators to determine response to disciplinary infractions.
- Police cooperation - strong relationships with the Albany and El Cerrito police departments are critical for timely and caring assistance and problem solution.
- Monthly lockdown, fire, or earthquake drills reminds students and staff of safety procedures during a crisis.

Mental Health/Counseling

- Mental health counseling and interns - Provides confidential consult services for students experiencing crisis' to help them get through it in a healthful fashion
- Challenge Day - Opportunity for 100 students and staff in each session to experience connections with each other through "the celebration of diversity, truth, and full expression.
- Peer Helpers Advisory - a diverse group of students who are responsible for learning about and speaking to classes about issues of importance to teens at both the high school and middle school such as peer pressure, cyber-bullying, drug use, etc.
- Parent liaison works with families of at-risk students - provides support to families who may not know how to navigate the school system, to support the academic success of their students. Generally, the more parents are engaged with their child's education, the fewer problems the students experience.

Curriculum

- Identity, Health, and Society class for freshmen - Curriculum focus on physical, emotional, and society implications of choices students make, particularly with regards to drugs, alcohol, sex, nutrition, identity, bullying, and relationships.
- Renewal, Connect, EDSET - provides alternatives for students who are disaffected by traditional structure. Increased personalization, academic focus, community-based learning
- Essential Standards work - more explicit curricular expectations and multiple opportunities to achieve them and opportunities for targeted intervention increases

student commitment to their success, which improves engagement in school and learning.

School Climate

- Student commitment to justice and safety - there is a strong sense of what is fair and right at Albany High School. Students know they are part of the solution and frequently help solve problems.
- Relaxed, trusting attitude on campus - students can be themselves, they care about each other, they know they will be treated fairly, due process is paramount, and trust begets trust.
- Schoolloop enhanced communication - provides multiple opportunities for all stakeholders to interact, express concerns, learn about what is happening at the school, and engage with the educational process.
- International Foods Day and Diversity Assembly - an opportunity for different cultures to showcase and celebrate that which makes them unique in a supportive, respectful environment

Areas of Concern:

- Unauthorized visitors - people can walk onto campus (especially exterior) and lack of supervisory staff impedes identification. Doors are unlocked, easy access.
- Shortage of staff for supervision - need full-time Security Aide
- Open campus at lunch - unable to supervise
- Unverified absences and tardies - we cannot assure safety when students are not in class. Calls made to homes, SART/SARB procedures followed, lack of data clerk makes it hard to keep contact records current, parents often don't get messages or respond.
- Large Counselor/Student ratio - counselor ability to meet social/emotional needs of students, guide career and college choices, hampered by large number of students each is responsible for.

Albany High School - Identity, Health, and Society (IHS) Review for the April 6, 2010 Board of Education Meeting

Compiled by Lynda Hornada, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mariflo Hudson AHS teacher and Sandy Hsiao-Frates, AHS teacher in conjunction with the AHS Instructional Improvement Council, Parents, Students, and the Freshmen Renewal program teachers

The 2009-10 school year marks the fourth year for Identity, Health and Society as a required course for all freshmen at Albany High School. The Identity, Health and Society course was created by the Albany Board of Education in response to a difficult period at AHS where the high school experienced one suicide, an unprecedented number of student suspensions and arrests for intoxication at school and at school activities. The precipitating factor was an after- hours unsupervised party that resulted in a former AHS students' death. The year long course was designed to educate students in the areas of identity exploration and community building; sexuality; physical health; alcohol; tobacco and drugs; mental health; nutrition; violence and conflict resolution; internet safety and multicultural studies.

1. Benefits of the IHS course to Albany High School students

- a. Students know how and do seek help for mental or physical health issues for themselves and/or their friends because of what they have learned in IHS
- b. The freshmen class seems more unified as students have common teachers with common expectations, easing the transition to high school.
- c. Students feel they have an adult at AHS (in their IHS teacher) to go to for information or support throughout their four years of high school.
- d. Students are aware of the consequences both in terms of discipline and health when making choices about drugs, alcohol, dating, sexual relations, violence, etc.
- e. The issues explored in IHS are ones students will deal with – even at a life or death level – for all four years of high school and beyond.
- f. IHS is the only class at AHS that tackles the issue of being a consumer in a media saturated society with the goal of thinking critically about marketing in all facets of life.
- g. The design of IHS with an emphasis on in-class reading and discussion and project-based learning allows students to cover a lot of material without adding a lot of homework.
- h. Having the full year allows students to be fully comfortable with their teacher and classmates before the drug/alcohol and sexuality units.
- i. The IHS teachers work with the English teachers to tie English units to relevant social issues. Below are some examples:
 - Sound of Waves - Body Image, Cultural Identity
 - Catcher in the Rye - Mental Health, Mental Disorders, Defense Mechanisms, combined effort for culminating essay
 - Renewal Debate Project - slide show, advertising/rhetorical strategies
 - Media Literacy & Symbolism
 - Race & Identity - To Kill a Mockingbird
 - Romeo and Juliet: Healthy Sexually

In general, the main benefits to IHS-English tandem:

- a) sharing students
- b) consistency with discipline, expectations
- c) staff collaboration to work with individual students
- d) interdisciplinary studies, connection between literary text and current events/real world

Relevancy and Timeliness of IHS topics

Teachers regularly bring in new articles or data into their IHS classroom. One of the best parts of IHS is that the local and national media on an almost daily basis covers many of our topics. For example in the last unit on Drugs and Alcohol Use and Abuse, we read an article from last week's SF Chronicle about the rise of teenage drug use, especially marijuana use. We read the article in class, and discussed what could be causing this trend.

Similarly the NIH published a study last summer about the relationship of the age of initial alcohol consumption and the likelihood of becoming alcohol dependent over a lifetime. These new statistics were used in HIS lectures, and several students sought out for the source to use in their debate project.

We also used the beer ads from the 2010 Super Bowl to look at how the alcohol industry does or doesn't market to consumers under the age of 21. The feedback we

get most often from students is that they like IHS because they can quickly and easily apply what they have learned in class to their lives. This is incredibly rewarding and inspiring feedback. It is our intention to keep the IHS curriculum as relevant and timely for AHS students as possible.

John Bailes; Bob Lent; Shannon Edson; Johnny Selvin; Sandy Hsiao-Frates; Corinne Berletti; Jack Gann; Sara Oremland, Mariflo Hudson – Renewal Teachers

Wellness in Albany Unified School District
Presented by Shelly Ball, AUSD Mental Health Coordinator.

District Mental Health Committee

Superintendent Marla Stephenson chairs the AUSD Mental Health Committee. The members include Lynda Hornada, Director of Curriculum and Instruction; Diane Marie, Director of Special Services; Shelly Ball, AUSD Mental Health Coordinator; Joanne Wile, Social Worker and Mayor of Albany; Marge Atkinson, Albany City Council and former AHS teacher; Allan Maris, Albany community member; Julie Dawson, AUSD Behavior Specialist; and Rebecca Charkin, School Psychologist.

The mental health committee began meeting during the 2009-10 school year. We meet on a biweekly basis to discuss and make recommendations for the improvement of the availability of mental health services for AUSD students in need. The committee is working closely with Albany-Berkeley Mental Health to ensure appropriate levels of funding are allotted to Albany. In addition, the committee will put forth recommendations to the Board of Education for increasing mental health services at sites.

The committee is also currently reviewing Positive Behavior Support (PBS) programs for school sites. PBS programs are intended for all students on Tier 1 of a Response to Intervention (RTI) Behavior model. The committee has reviewed two programs so far and will continue to examine more in order to make a recommendation to staff for a program pilot at the elementary levels in 2010-11. One component of the PBS programs is instruction for students in bullying and harassment prevention. The adoption of a PBS program for AUSD will provide students consistent instruction over the course of several years in these areas and will help to enhance the work of the Wellness and Community of Respect committees already in place in our schools.
