

QUINCY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

HEALTH, TRANSPORTATION & SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING ~ February 26, 2016

A meeting of the Health, Transportation & Safety Subcommittee was held on Wednesday, February 26, 2016 at 5:30 pm at the Coddington Building. Present were Mr. Paul Bregoli, Ms. Barbara Isola, Mrs. Emily Lebo, Mrs. Anne Mahoney, and Mr. James DeAmicis, Chair. Also attending were Superintendent DeCristofaro, Deputy Superintendent Kevin Mulvey, Mrs. Rita Bailey, Mrs. Caitlyn Plaskasovitis, Mrs. Maura Papile; and Ms. Laura Owens, Clerk.

Mrs. Papile and Mrs. Plaskasovitas, team leader for Health teachers at the middle schools presented on the new Life Skills curriculum introduced this year at all five middle schools. Beginning last April, the Health Educators team researched available curriculum to support substance abuse education. A curriculum map was developed to utilize the curriculum across grades 6 through 8 and language and scenarios are customized to reflect the age of students in the classes. Focus is on preparing students to make healthy choices, also supported by lessons on Internet safety, anti-bullying awareness, and awareness of anxiety and managing anger. Developing strong social skills, plus conflict resolution and changing social norms are the goals of the health educators.

On March 24, Health educators, Physical Educators, and Health Interventionists are hosting a parent and student night with different presenters. Parents will see the "Hidden in Plain Sight" presentation to assist with parent awareness. Again, the focus is on awareness as a tool for making choices. Dr. DeCristofaro said the team model of the Physical Education and Health Educators working together has presented many opportunities for collaboration and consistent messaging.

Ms. Isola said that she likes the Communication and Assertiveness units in the curriculum, this is an important topic especially for adolescent girls.

Mrs. Papile then reviewed the Quincy Public School partnership with DOVE. Mrs. Plaskasovitas said that the teaching on healthy relationships presents these as an extension of a healthy self. Scenarios are presented and students debate whether the situation; students have the opportunity to think about relationships and form opinions in advance of having these relationships themselves. On April 26, middle school health educators will meet for a professional development opportunity with Jen Bolton from DOVE. Two Grade 8 students at Central are working on their Girl Scout Silver Medal and they will be starting a social media campaign that will include PSAs and bulletin board messaging on healthy relationships.

Through Attorney General Maura Healy's Office, Health Interventionists and High School nurses will receive "Game Changer" training through Northeastern University. DOVE is not part of this project, but QPS is looking to connect DOVE to SADD and their school-wide social media campaign Youth Speak. DOVE has been involved at the high school level with the "Yellow Dress" presentation in

previous years. Dr. DeCristofaro said that the Professional Development opportunity with DOVE is a really unique experience for our educators. Dr. DeCristofaro said that the Girl Scouts were inspiring and the hope is this initiative at Central will spread to peer leaders at other middle schools.

Mr. DeAmicis said this is great to hear about the evolution of the DOVE experience for students beginning in middle school. Mrs. Lebo said that DOVE reached out to School Committee to thank them for the opportunity following the initial meeting with Dr. DeCristofaro and Mrs. Papile.

Mr. Bregoli asked if students come forward to discuss their own experiences. Mrs. Plaskasovitis said that she works in partnership with Guidance to be sure that students in sensitive situations feel comfortable. Anyone who surfaced a new issue would be referred to Guidance and the school nurse. Mrs. Papile said sexual or physical assault is a crime and would be reported. We do not see a lot of dating violence per se, but there are instances of imbalances of social power. Mrs. Papile said often events occur outside of school and sometime involve a party who is not a student.

Mrs. Plaskasovitas said sexting is discussed is a topic beginning in Grade 6, it is often a peer pressure situation. Again, situational role playing is important to help give students the confidence to say no and shut down someone who is pressuring them. It also relates to alcohol and other substance abuse awareness. Coersion is a key topic in healthy relationship development.

Mrs. Papile said that through a recent training with Dr. Englander from MARCC, it is clear that students often don't understand what it is socially unacceptable or realize the possibility of criminal charges. Health teachers are also collaborating with the librarians on media awareness. Ms. Isola asked to be sure Snapchat is covered as a topic, students think the pictures vanish, but they don't. Ms. Isola said many District Attorney's offices provide education so parents and students understand the potential for criminal liability.

Mrs. Mahoney said that this is such an important topic, and this is now an issue for elementary parents. Students are exposed to content online without the maturity to process what they are seeing. Mrs. Plaskasovitis said that parents have to constantly shift to meet the changing technology. Mrs. Mahoney said the classroom conversations are so important, reinforces students' instinct to do the right thing. Mrs. Mahoney would like to see how these educational opportunities can be made available for elementary school students.

Mrs. Lebo likes the idea of the parent/child evening event coming up, not all parents have the resources to understand the dangers. Mrs. Lebo asked if the topics are shared in curriculum newsletters so parents are aware and Mrs. Plaskasovitas said they are. Mrs. Plaskasovitas suggested watching *#beingthirteen*, a CNN profile of 200 students and their phone usage, very interesting.

Mrs. Lebo made a motion to adjourn the Health, Transportation, and Safety Subcommittee meeting at 6:30 pm. Mrs. Mahoney seconded the motion and on a voice vote, the ayes have it.