

Students, Parents, Schools, Community

Safe and Supportive

Live Honorably ~ Act Humbly ~ Model Dignity

*We understand that how we act, what we say, and what we display
reflect our character and the values of the Alamo Heights community.*

We will show integrity in all of these areas.

Alamo Heights Task Force Report

June 30, 2016

The Task Force

- Steve Allison, grandparent, former Trustee, and Chair of the Task Force
- Dr. Kristen Ascencao, District Testing Coordinator and Coordinator of AHISD Guidance and Counseling
- Mark Bond, AHJS teacher and coach
- Dr. Ruth Bujanda-Moore, parent and clinical psychologist
- Diana Cashion, Cambridge counselor
- Dr. Ann David, parent and professor of education
- Denise DeGeare, parent and personal technology consultant
- Kathryn Dehlinger, parent and teacher
- Dr. John Fitch, parent and pediatrician
- Dr. Cordell Jones, AHHS principal
- Tracy Maxwell, parent and AHISD Special Education parent liaison
- Angus McLeod, parent and AHHS teacher
- Courtney Patton, AHHS teacher and coach
- Dr. Stacey Rubin, parent, psychotherapist and psychoanalyst
- Amy Soupiset, parent and Woodridge teacher
- Courtney Storment, AHHS wellness counselor

The Charge

- “bold, effective and responsible recommendations”
- “specific to our community, parents, and schools”
- “including assessing the effectiveness of current campus practices related to:
 - character education,
 - social and emotional wellness, and
 - digital citizenship, and ”
- “recommend actions to increase effectiveness in these three areas in terms of parents/community, schools, and students”

The Task Force

- Integrity to the process: confidentiality, thoroughness, openness, consensus
- Engaged, focused, independent, responsibility to children and community
- No rubber stamp, no sacred cows, no witch hunts, no hidden agenda, and no simply checking off the list

Norms

- Display trust of each other and work to earn each other's trust.
- Build consensus by respecting others.
- Engage in the work with humility and discretion (e.g., maintain confidences).
- Set aside individual agenda.
- Communicate effectively toward the common cause.
- Speak and listen with good purpose
- Be open and honest when giving and when receiving input.
- Model leadership.

Survey Questions

- In terms of character education, digital citizenship, and social & emotional wellness, what does your child's campus do well?
- In terms of character education, digital citizenship, and social & emotional wellness, what does your child's campus need to improve or what is missing?
- In terms of character education, digital citizenship, and social & emotional wellness, what do parents do well?
- In terms of character education, digital citizenship, and social & emotional wellness, what do parents need to improve or add to the practice?
- In terms of character education, digital citizenship, and social & emotional wellness, on what does the task force need to focus?
- What else would you like us to consider?

19 Full and 12 Focus Groups Meetings

- Separate focus group meetings with students from Robbins Academy, the Junior School, and High School.
- Parents from a cross-section of the campuses
- Separate focus group meetings with groups of parents representing Spanish-speaking parents, special education parents, parents of graduates of the District, and parents who moved their children from District schools.
- Teachers representing a cross-section of the campuses
- Principals from each campus
- Counselors from each campus
- Instructional assistants from each campus
- Bus drivers
- Campus nurses
- Assistant Principals from the Junior School and High School
- Texas School Safety Center presentation on the dimensions of digital citizenship
- Clarity Child Guidance Center presentation on adolescent depression and suicide
- Legal presentation on existing policies and legal parameters and implications of bullying and cyber abuse
- Wellness counselor and discipline specialist presentation.

Existing Policies and Practices Review

- Pertinent Board policies
- AHISD Student Handbook
- AHISD Student Code of Conduct
- AHISD 24 Code of Leadership
- AHISD Profile of a Learner
- Eight Keys of Excellence
- Five Forms of Mistreatment
- Electronic Devices and Technology Resources (All Grade Levels)

Strengths

- Excellent academic and specials programs
- Athletic and other extra curricular programs are excelling with high student participation
- Elementary schools provide valuable foundations
- Envious strong parent and community support
- Programs, policies, and programs in place, including a comprehensive website
- Parents, on the whole, respect the administration, teachers, and staff
- Community recognizes the value of the district's high esteem

Strengths

- District staff are supportive of children
- Teachers care deeply about students
- District staff has positive relationships with students
- Most students feel supported at school
- Most students have at least one teacher or coach they can go to
- District staff make efforts to be responsive to student social and emotional needs
- AHISD is a great place for children, and many significant things are happening in character education, digital citizenship, and social/emotional wellness already

Themes

- Exclusion
- Vulnerability
- Modeling
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Communication

What We Heard and Found: Social & Emotional Wellness

- Exclusion
- Vulnerability
- Modeling
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Communication

Recommendations: Social & Emotional Wellness

Staff education and training

- Ensure that staff understands social and emotional wellness of students, recognizes students in need, and responds appropriately
- Implement a program for training and reporting mechanisms for District staff who regularly interact with students, to:
 1. Identify campus liaisons for this program;
 2. Develop a child-in-crisis response plan;
 3. Recognize students who are or may be the victims of or who engage in bullying or abusive conduct;
 4. Recognize students displaying early warning signs and a possible need for early mental health, substance abuse, or suicide prevention intervention, which warning signs may include declining academic performance, depression, anxiety, isolation, unexpected changes in sleep or eating habits, and destructive behavior towards self and others; and;
 5. Intervene effectively regarding students described in 3 or 4, above, by providing notice and counseling alternatives to the student's parent or guardian so appropriate action may be taken.

Student Education and Training

- Implement intentional small group conversations, at least weekly, for every student, built into the instructional day, to support their social and emotional wellness.
- Educate students about stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide using Youth Suicide Prevention Programs curriculum units in grades 5 – 12.

Services and Support

- Communicate to students, parents, staff, and community how to engage with and access AHISD counseling services.
- Designate a district employee to serve as the District Suicide Prevention Liaison who will connect community and staff to appropriate resources, including campus counselors, to support a child in crisis
- Hire additional nurses or nursing assistants to reduce health professional ratio to students.
- Restructure the physical design of nursing offices to increase student privacy.
- Hire additional counselors at the elementary level to focus on wellness issues.
- Hire additional counselors at the secondary level.
- Encourage communication between school counselors, parents, community medical professionals, and behavioral health professionals who work with the students.

Overscheduling

- Ensure that the AHISD Homework Guidelines are consistently implemented.
- Implement campus procedures so that students have evenly distributed due dates for projects and tests across subject areas.
- Educate parents on the impact that over scheduling and PreAP/AP course load have on their child's social and emotional well-being.
- Communicate to AHISD community that academics are important, but not at the expense of a student's healthy sense of self.

Lunch Issues

- Discourage the dropping off and/or the delivery of lunch to children at all campuses for reasons of safety, security, and exclusivity.

Parents and Community (applies to all 3 domains)

- Work with PTOs and other support groups to extend access to, information about, and involvement of all parents, including monolingual Spanish speaking parents
- Implement a program for parents and guardians offering knowledge and tools to nurture their children's character development, digital citizenship, and social and emotional wellness.
- Publish parent-focused guides of district procedures for student-to-student mistreatment, social media misuse, anxiety, depression, and other areas as needed.
- Improve the website layout and content to increase ease of navigation and access to information about character education, digital citizenship, and social and emotional wellness.
- Educate parents about how to navigate our website to find the information they need.
- Host discussion groups each semester to gather input from parents, students, staff, and all stakeholders about their AHISD experience.
- Engage community partnerships and sponsorships for character education, wellness, bullying, and digital citizenship, including assistance with character education initiatives, campus wellness centers and services, anti-bullying initiatives, and responsible digital citizenship.

What We Heard and Found: Character Education

- Exclusion
- Vulnerability
- Modeling
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Communication

11 Principles of Effective Character Education

- The school community promotes core ethical and performance values as the foundation of good character.
- The school defines “character” comprehensively to include thinking, feeling and doing.
- The school uses a comprehensive, intentional, and proactive approach to character development.
- The school creates a caring community.
- The school provides students with opportunities for moral action.
- The school offers a meaningful and challenging academic curriculum that respects all learners, develops their character, and helps them to succeed.
- The school fosters students’ self-motivation.
- The school staff is an ethical learning community that shares responsibility for character education and adheres to the same core values that guide the students.
- The school fosters shared leadership and long-range support of the character education initiative.
- The school engages families and community members as partners in the character-building effort.
- The school regularly assesses its culture and climate, the functioning of its staff as character educators, and the extent to which its students manifest good character.

Recommendations: Character Education

Character Education

- Partner with Character Education Partnership (character.org) for the purpose of character development for our schools, parents, and community, culminating in becoming a National District of Character.
- Implement the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education framework to ensure that our character development efforts are intentional, on-going, and consistently implemented across campuses, and in forms that students relate to.
- Implement intentional small group conversations, at least weekly, for every student, built into the instructional day, to support their social and emotional wellness.
- Regularly request feedback (e.g., surveys, focus groups, etc.) from students, parents, and staff to guide the character education program.
- Recognize student character and service at each campus to highlight the importance of compassionate citizenship and impeccable character.
- Encourage all students to participate in community service opportunities, recognizing that service is important for character development.

24 Hour Code of Leadership

- Educate the community about how to report violations of the 24-Hour Code of Leadership and that these reports cannot be anonymous.
- Revise the 24-Hour Code of Leadership to include mistreatment and mistreatment via digital technology
- Require every student and parent to sign the 24-hour Code of Leadership to establish higher expectations for our students and anticipate that all students will participate in extra-curricular activities during their secondary school career.
- Ensure that club sports that use the “Alamo Heights” name and/or AHISD facilities adhere to the 24-Hour Code of Leadership.

Policy

- Align the language about bullying in policy, Student Handbook, and Student Code of Conduct.
- Redefine bullying in FFI local policy to include the intent to humiliate and/or degrade.
- Revise FFI local policy to state that bullying occurs when a student or group of students engages in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, or in a vehicle operated by the District, “or any other manner that disrupts the educational environment.”

Discipline

- Train all staff, volunteers, and students on the Five Forms of Mistreatment and how to respond.
- Utilize the newly-developed flowchart of disciplinary protocol for mistreatment, includes timely communication with parents of all involved parties.
- Train all staff and volunteers to actively supervise students because unsupervised times can lead to mistreatment.
- Implement restorative justice as a disciplinary approach at all campuses.
- Communicate the purpose of Mule Tip line for parents, students, and staff annually.
- Publish parent-focused guides of district procedures for student-to-student mistreatment, social media misuse, anxiety, depression, and other areas as needed.
- Ensure that counseling services support students with persistent discipline challenges.
- Enforce behavioral consequences clearly and consistently based on the severity of the infraction, disciplinary history, and the student's ownership of the behavior.

MISTREATMENT AT SCHOOL

In Alamo Heights ISD we are committed to providing the students with a safe environment in which they are able to develop character through kindness, understanding, forgiveness, and resilience. It is for this reason all students are taught the five forms of mistreatment:

- Exclusion: The student feels left out
- Put-downs: The student feels bad or hurt
- Bullying: The student feels afraid
- Unwanted physical contact: The student's personal boundaries are violated
- Acts against everyone: The entire campus or large portions of it are affected

The counselors and/or teachers at each of the schools, elementary through high school, provide in-class instruction in these five areas. By identifying the specific ways in which students can be emotionally and or physically hurt, students can then be empowered with strategies for stopping and minimizing the mistreatment of themselves and others, developing resilience and self-advocacy skills along the way. Working with students to identify the five types of mistreatment and teaching them ways to peacefully resolve conflict takes them from being a bystander to being a problem solver.

WHAT TO DO

1 Report It

The child or parent should report the exclusion, put-down, or bullying behavior to the appropriate school staff (e.g., the classroom teacher, the coach, the assistant principal) immediately (no later than 24 hours).

2 Staff Confirms Information

The staff member confirms who, what, when, where, why, and how, as much as feasible, then refers this information to a campus administrator for investigation.

3 Parents are Called

The campus administrator calls the parents to inform them of the investigation and the process to follow.

4 Administrator Investigates

The campus administrator investigates the incident by getting information from all students involved, and documents the finds in the AHISD Bullying Report Form in Eduphoria. Additionally, coaches or sponsors are notified for the 24 hour Code of Leadership purposes.

5 Notification and Action

The campus administrator notifies all parents involved in the findings and the appropriate disciplinary and counseling actions taken. In all cases of mistreatment, both disciplinary consequences AND counseling treatment will take place.

6 Following-Up

The campus administrator will follow up with the child and the parent one week later, then a month later.

7 If it reoccurs...

If another incident occurs, the child or parent is to report it immediately (no later than 24 hours) to the immediate teacher and steps 1-4 are followed.

8 Repeated Patterns

Repeated incidents will be treated as a pattern rather than several isolated instances (i.e., discipline consequences may increase based on prior incidents).

9 Concerns About the Outcome

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome, call the campus principal.

MISTREATMENT OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

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PARENTS DEALING WITH PARENTS

Another child excluded, put-down or bullied my child on social media outside of the school day (Exclusion: the student feels left out; put-downs: the student feels bad or hurt; bullying: the target feels afraid)

1 Call the Parent

The parent should speak to the parent of that child to report it.

- If the one parent needs help with contact information, call a trusted school staff member to help you make the connection (e.g., teacher, counselor, assistant principal).
- Tips for parents to make this communication: *see pages following*

2 When To Contact Contact The School

After the communication between parents, if the situation looks as if it will spill over into the school, contact a trusted school staff member to let them know.

Discipline

- Train all staff, volunteers, and students on the Five Forms of Mistreatment and how to respond.
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- Train all staff and volunteers to actively supervise students because unsupervised times can lead to mistreatment.
- Implement restorative justice as a disciplinary approach at all campuses.
- Communicate the purpose of Mule Tip line for parents, students, and staff annually.
- Publish parent-focused guides of district procedures for student-to-student mistreatment, social media misuse, anxiety, depression, and other areas as needed.
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- Enforce behavioral consequences clearly and consistently based on the severity of the infraction, disciplinary history, and the student's ownership of the behavior.

Parents

- Create an Adult Code of Conduct for all AHISD athletic events.
- Formally request that parents eliminate girl's Senior Party and the Powder Puff football game.
- Reinstate the "drug and alcohol letter" that requests parents stop providing alcohol to students and intervene when they see students drinking alcohol.
- Educate the community about how to report violations of the 24-Hour Code of Leadership and that these reports cannot be anonymous.

Parents and Community (applies to all 3 domains)

- Work with PTOs and other support groups to extend access to, information about, and involvement of all parents, including monolingual Spanish speaking parents.
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What We Heard and Found: Digital Citizenship

- Exclusion
- Vulnerability
- Modeling
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Communication

Recommendations: Digital Citizenship

Cell Phones

- Recognizing that rules about cell phones are inconsistently enforced and that they can be a distraction to learning, at the beginning of the school year, have **AHHS** students, in collaboration with teachers, guided by education about digital citizenship, create parameters to improve a focus on learning in the classroom, as well as responsible and appropriate cell phone practices.
- Promote student learning and healthy social interaction by prohibiting the use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices at **AHJS** during regular school hours (including passing periods, lunch, assemblies, PE and athletics). Students may have cell phones, however they must be kept off and in the student's locker during regular school hours. Cell phones may be used before and after school.
- Promote student learning and healthy social interaction by prohibiting the use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices at **Howard, Cambridge, and Woodridge** during regular school hours (including passing periods, lunch, assemblies, Specials). Students may have cell phones, however they must be kept off, out of sight, and in the student's school bag during regular school hours. Cell phones may be used before and after school.

Policies

- Align and communicate district policies, Student Code of Conduct, Student Handbook, and Acceptable Use Policy, to include revisions regarding cell phones and other personal electronic devices.
- Train staff to ensure consistent implementation of District policies, Student Code of Conduct, Student Handbook, and Acceptable Use Policy, regarding possession and use of cell phones and other personal electronic devices.
- Educate students, parents, staff, and community that the recording of the voice or image of another without the prior consent of the individuals being recorded or in any way that disrupts the educational environment or invades the privacy of others is prohibited and may be unlawful.

Digital Citizenship

- Establish digital citizenship as part of character education at all campuses.
- Become a Common Sense Media Digital Citizenship Certified district.
- Implement intentional small group conversations, at least weekly, for every student, built into the instructional day, to support their social and emotional wellness.

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Tragedy



Legacy

