

10/02/16

Sean,

In the past, district administrators have sometimes accused PAT of having “grievance writing parties”. That certainly was never true, but there are times in the year when grievance timelines cluster to create a group of cases. This is one of those times. Knowledge of changes that occurred over the summer and at the start of the school year are now nearing the contractual timeline to initiate a grievance.

A set of those issues involves the implementation of the IBB Agreement Package that we ratified last spring. I have attached a copy of those agreements. I have attempted to bring concerns over this document to several district administrators, but never seem to have a group of PPS administrators in the room with the authority to resolve the issues at hand.

Therefore, I am asking for a meeting to discuss these concerns in the hope that PAT will not be forced to file a grievance over our first set of IBB consensus decisions. I am also asking to extend the grievance timelines to file a grievance over violations of this document until November 7th.

I know that we have talked about these concerns previously. As a result of our original conversation, I did meet with Tammy Jackson, Rick Kirschman and Mary Pearson about the rapid response team (RRT). We had a very productive meeting, but were unable to deal with funding decisions around staffing the team. I also have been in communications with Antonio Lopez around the implementation of the climate work in the buildings. We are having some useful exchanges of data around what we believe did and did not happen in schools.

I realize that many new and time-consuming events have occurred since last spring that have pulled district resources away from implementing this agreement packet. I want to give the district space and time to do the right thing. However, I remain deeply concerned about our lack of progress in implementing these agreements with fidelity.

Let me outline a summary of these concerns here. I will use the same numbering system in the agreement packet.

1.) Article 6/Administrative Directives/Student Discipline Handbook and Guide

Rick Kirschman, Catherine Cusimano and myself met in June to complete a revision of the Handbook. We did not get to the Guide. This will require significant work, and rightfully was delayed to a later date. The Guide contains significant information not in the Handbook. Those sections include a summary of the discipline levels, guidelines for suspensions and expulsions, and procedures for documenting student behavior violations when the student is a special needs student.

Our group completed a revision of the chart contained in the Guide/Handbook and the Administrative Directives. The stated goal was to have the documents ready by the start of the year for the PD days. Our group did discuss a more complete revision of the chart that would have a significant reduction in the number of student behavior violations choices. We decided to delay this work as well because of the timelines of getting the document printed.

Finally, we agreed that changes would occur with Synergy that would allow members to select any student behavior violation on the chart. (When the district moved discipline to Synergy, it apparently limited what the member was able to select to Stage 1 violations.) We agreed that this led to mis-information being recorded in Synergy (i.e. multiple stage 1 violation being entered into the system to replace what the real violation was). At some point over the summer this decision was reversed without notifying PAT. Currently the Synergy system still does not allow the member to select Stage 2 or 3 student behavior violations. I also discovered that referrals can be deleted from the system before the administrator issues discipline. In short, we left our meeting in June with a consensus decision that made the changes to the chart and administrative directives and also changed Synergy to address our concerns about not reporting/changing/losing referrals. In August only part of those agreements were implemented.

2.) Interim Discipline Plan

I believe that much work was done last spring to move buildings toward implementing the agreements in this section. Antonio Lopez should be given credit for directing much of this work to be done. We still have no report what has been implanted or not. For example, have all schools posted a discipline plan on the school's website? How has the district ensured that the school climate plans/interim discipline plans comply with the CBA, District Policy and law?

3.) Communicating Options for Interventions

This work has not been completed. Rick Kirschman said that he has a draft to share with PAT. Since the change in state law, it is also required that an intervention occur before returning students to class. This is also required by Article 6, Section C1j. This may take money to fund effective interventions that will help to avoid repeat violations and improve the safety for all. I realize that this is significant work that maybe should be considered by the committee that was outlined in 6B.

4.) Rapid Response Team

The Rapid Response Team (RRT) was to have been formulated within 30 days of ratification of this agreement. The workload committee voted to approve \$150,000 last spring for the team. This amount was matched by the Board as per Section B. Throughout the spring and summer, I inquired several times about the team. I asked who was on it, and how members could access the team. I was told that the team was being hired. As late as early August, I was told that 10 therapeutic intervention coaches, an administrator, and a TOSA had been/were being hired to compose the team. In late August that information was changed substantially. At that point, I was told that the team was given to Tammie Jackson to supervise and that no one was hired. I have asked several times what happened to the \$300,000 allocated to the team last spring. No one has been able to answer the question.

No information about the team has been communicated to all PAT members. It appears that the district is assigning this significant work to staff who already had fulltime jobs. Yet the need remains significant. Random members have found out about the hotline to the RRT even though there has been no formal training/information about its existence. Some members who have called the hotline have received no support because staff assigned do not have the resources to cover all cases. We simply are not meeting the need.

Section C calls for a packet of materials created by HR for members who experience a physical attack/harm at work. To my knowledge this has not been developed and shared with the RRT.

5.) Pre-Inclusion Classrooms

The district has established two pre-inclusion classrooms as per the agreement. I do not know if all of the requirements of Section A have been fulfilled, but I do know that the district made the decision not to honor #2. That requirement states that pre-inclusion classrooms must not be located in highly impacted schools. There was much discussion in the group what this meant. The notes reflect that PAT shared a list of schools with safety concerns. Vernon was on that list. We also used the story about a Vernon teacher's safety needs during our discussion. Another descriptor of highly impacted schools came from the matrix created by Chris Russo. That matrix used factors like staff turnover, principal turnover, and number of initiatives in the building. According to Vernon teacher Emy Markowitz, Vernon has experience significant staff turnover year after year, has a newer principal, has substantial new initiatives, and is already experiencing schoolwide behavior issues because of inconsistent enforcement of discipline. HR Rep Catherine Cusimano stated at our early August bargaining meeting that she would not have interpreted our agreement to allow placing the classroom at Vernon. Yet, other district administrators made a choice to replace the bargained criteria around these new classrooms with other criteria that was not included in our agreement.

6.) Culturally Responsive Tiered Fidelity Inventory (CRT-TFI)

It appears that much of the work relating to Section A: 2015-16 School Year has been completed. Antonio Lopez should be given credit for implementing this section. He provided us with a report that most schools completed this work. We conducted a survey of reps that showed that 70% or more of the responses indicated that school climate teams were formed and that each school develop a process to identify school wide expectations with students, teachers and families. I have been invited by Antonio to have a discussion to compare our data and review which buildings may need some follow up work.

The work outlined in Section B: 2016-17 School Year seems to have gotten off to a bad start. We have not created the workgroup outlined in this agreement. We should meet to get this work started.

7.) Article 6: Student Discipline/Safety

We did some good work in Article 6 with the definition of threat/causing fear of harm and physical attack/harm. Those changes were applied to the administrative directives and Handbook as described in number 1. What has not happened is the creation of intervention per state law, the second paragraph of Section J and number 2 of this agreement. Without that work, students will return to the same unsafe setting and behaviors will often escalate.

Another section of the new Article 6 that has not been implemented is Section C2. That section tried to address our issue that members, students and families did not know the discipline rules for the district or building. We created the following language to address this concern:

Copies of the specific building procedures shall be clearly communicated to all staff during the professional development (PD) before the start of each school year. Copies of specific building procedures shall be distributed to students and families by the end of the first week of school. Copies shall also be posted online on the school's website.

PAT was receiving multiple reports of this not happening. At the last representative assembly, we surveyed reps on this section as well. The results were disappointing. Around 70% of schools reported that they were not aware of staff PD on this topic before the school year, nor were they aware that building procedures had been communicated to families and students. Additionally, many members report that they had not yet seen the Student Rights and Responsibility rewrite.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intent of the IBB consensus is not being fully carried out. We had two major strategies to remedy our safety issues. One set of solutions was described as “arterial bleeding/acute safety needs now”. The second set was to address the long-term problem. I am worried that more needs to be done with both categories to make a difference.

I am looking forward to meeting with a district team to fix these implementation issues and to continue our good work on these issues. Please contact me at your earliest convenience to let me know if you are in agreement to extend the grievance timelines and to meet to address these issues.

Marty Pavlik