



Whole Child Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2023

Welcome and Meeting Overview– Jessica Horowitz Moore

Jessica Horowitz-Moore, the Senior Executive Director for the Center of Student Supports, welcomed new attendees. Jessica oversees the Office of Whole Child Supports as well as the offices of Nutrition, Early Learning and School Readiness and Exceptional Children. Jessica also introduced the five student representatives who serve on the Whole Child Advisory Group.

A presentation on attendance supports and chronic absenteeism was on the agenda. Thursday, September 14 district report cards were released. Chronic absenteeism numbers did go down but still a lot of work is needed.

Future Forward Ohio

[Future Forward Ohio](#) encompasses the state's strategic priorities for helping students recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategies include:

- Obstacles to Learning – involves work of this advisory group/barriers to students' learning;
- Accelerated Learning –gaps in education that widened during the pandemic; and
- Preparing students for future success – involves all the things students are doing (graduate high school and go on to college, pursue technical education, be an entrepreneur). This is also big part of the advisory group –do they have all skills to integrate into the workplace (how to self-advocate, work as a team).

Future Forward Ohio focuses on four key priority areas to address these areas impacted during pandemic:

- 1) Literacy – involves the **science of reading** – will have literacy teams and coaches throughout the state;
- 2) Accelerated learning – focus on both literacy and mathematics;
- 3) Workforce readiness; and
- 4) Student wellness.

Changes to the Department

Jessica talked about the changes to the department. As of October 3, the department was to become the Department of Education and Workforce, a cabinet level Governor's agency. The whole child work will remain in this agency.

The State Board of Education will be separating off and become a separate entity.

The Early Learning team will be part of the new Department of Children and Youth – initiative focused on children birth through age 5. Will help to put interventions in place for Ohio's youngest children to be ready to come to Kindergarten and become successful learners.

Icebreaker



Discussion at tables: How does your work address student wellness or help students overcome obstacles to learning.

Coordinating School Wellness – Lorain County

Think of this work as “Teamwork Makes the Dream Work – A Wellness Coordinator Tale”

Kat Evers Solove – with the Lorain County Health Department for about 8 years, involved with school health with school districts and on-site with ESCs, as well as other agencies that service the school district.

Cathy Papp – Wellness and Prevention Program Coordinator for Lorain County ESC, social worker for over 20 years. Started her career with FEMA working with victims of 9/11 and has also worked with incarcerated children.

The presentation covered how Lorain County started their Wellness Coordinator, how ESCs, public health agencies, etc. came together to collaborate, the funding story past and present and quality assurance of this work.

Looking at how health and education go hand in hand (link between health and academics): healthier student = better learner, value of prevention, environmental changes impact student learning.

Think Tank/Collaborative – started in Lorain County in 2014 by United Way:

- Focused on middle school/grades 5 – 8;
- Experiment to bring together players that are currently involved (Lorain Co ESC, Lorain Co Public Health, local businesses);
- Brought together 3 schools around whole child impact;
 - Looked at physical activity, nutrition, school climate, social emotional health;
- Kat is coordinator of this collaborative and Lorain County Public Health is the fiscal agent;
- Offered food pantries, comprehensive social emotional opportunities; and
- Consulted with experts – ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) and American School Health Association on how best to do this work.

Intervention is needed to prevent an uncoordinated system of student support supports. Suggested a coordinated approach model with a district wellness coordinator to assist.

District Wellness Coordinator Position:

- Needed a special position to help coordinate this work. Wanted public health and mental health prevention included in the job description;
- Would be within the district themselves with strong support from the ESC;
- Wanted to be sure no duplication of efforts and was implemented with fidelity; and
- Wanted an evidence base practice approach – multi-tier system of support model – both proactive and preventative.

Rationale:

- School district was trying to do wellness without support. Staff are already doing dual roles and may not have the expertise in mental health needed.



- Bringing in wellness coordinator takes pressure off staff. Looks at county as well as district. Builds trust and relationships.
- Has the time and expertise to ensure programs are implemented to fidelity, can monitor progress and evaluation outcomes
- Value trust and rapport that coordinator build becomes ingrained

Implementation/Funding

- 2017-18 Application was made to get this implemented
- Nord Family Foundation – approached them to provide funding for this initiative. Had consultation meetings with them to get this position up and running. To provide funding Foundation wanted:
 - prevention in schools – wanted to be sure all was coordinated with ESC
 - unified voice
- Looked at the Prevention Matters (Richard Fairbanks Foundation) model to replicate for the Lorain County program
- 2018-19 school year
 - met with stakeholders
 - discussed the vision
 - decided how to use the ESC
 - A slide showing responsibilities of technical assistance providers was shared (see PowerPoint).

Case Study – talked with Beech Grove Middle School and what they had done. How are they sustaining their program and how they used surveys to collect data.

Lorain County – 2018 school data collection. ESC Superintendent consulted with school districts contacts in social emotional learning to take an inventory of what was already happening. Responses varied – talked about PBIS but wanted to be sure it was implemented K -12.

Were ghosted by their funding so had to reroute. Received a planning grant from Nord Foundation and community grant from United Way, CDC and NACCHO so were able to work with existing partners.

Partners Involved:

- Lorain County Public Health ;
- Educational Service Center of Lorain County; and
- Mental Health, Addiction, and Recovery Services Board of Lorain County.

OG Pilot:

- 2 districts on board early on (Elyria and North Ridgeville);
- Year 1 application period 11/19 – 3/20;
- Liz Wolanski – North Ridgeville City SD – took the time to build trust. Was able to dive in doing assessment/finding gaps and was able to tie into existing relationships;
- Both districts took on cost of Liz's position; and
- Currently in CHIP mental health priority as a strategy. Schools able to look at measures.

Moving Forward

- 14 districts currently in program



- Discussing how to grow and expand
- Liz got her two districts to work with Elyria and look at their PBIS – how to focus on all their elementaries K – 5.
- Cathy was initially loaned to Lorain from the ESC she was working for at the time.
 - Was able to interview lots of people, heard of needs, where barriers were.
 - Applied for Lorain Wellness Coordinator and started developing the wellness department in her 2nd year.
- This year, focus is at Elyria.
- Hired Liz full-time (from Wellington at North Ridgeville -using in dual role also as social worker
- Slides shared with highlights of both Elyria, North Ridgeville, and Wellington’s work in this collaborative approach with the wellness coordinator

ESC of Lorain County’s Wellness and Prevention Coordinators – mission is to help create the most well-rounded students/take a whole child approach. Highlights of the past year include:

- Improved community pathways and collaborations
- Professional learning opportunities for staff
- Strengthened multi-tiered system of supports/PBIS
- Threat assessment protocols and trainings
- Suicide prevention protocols and trainings

Started a wellness coordinator network. Many in Lorain county serving a dual role and feeling overwhelmed so supported the wellness coordinator/became and advocate for this position.

How they got the network off the ground:

- formed relationships with the superintendents, social workers, curriculum directors, etc.
- heard their needs and created these trainings such as threat assessment and suicide prevention
- majority of districts didn’t have evidence-based programs – now have relationship with Family & Children First Council. They provided funding for them to go into every district and provide training

Professional development training still being offered to help with PBIS foundation needed

- Trauma
- Mindfulness
- Social emotional resources

Extensive list of current partners (refer to PowerPoint slide).

Future:

- Lorain County found gaps in service and created the Lorain County Youth Collaborative.
- Created an MOU – all got together and talked about who is doing what.
- Creating a pathway flow chart
- Need more funds
 - Watch for grants coming. Have a proposal ready when they see a grant available.



- Going after foundations as well as state and federal grants

Member Questions

Is it difficult to find those to fit the Wellness Coordinator position? Been fortunate with applicants they've had. The specifics of the job are:

- Position usually around \$70K range – more if covering whole district
- Needs school experience but also supervisory experience (or have potential for that)
- Try to get as many of the skills/areas needed
- Be specific in job description so you get the best candidates

School Wellness and Success Funds – do they check into that?

- Had multiple conversations with their districts
- Reason some hired social workers
- Wellness Coordinator position – districts have left to the ESCs to hire
 - Wellness Coordinator can be with the ESC or the district
- Jessica Horowitz Moore noted the change in SWSF and now 50% needs to be for mental health services
 - Campbell City Schools – seeing bills now from outside partners. How to find 50% balance. Having conversations on how to diversify – use community partners (MARS board)
 - Jared Cole in the Office of Whole Child Supports works with the Student Wellness and Success Funds and could answer any questions about the funds.

Chris Woolard – Interim State Superintendent

Dr. Chris Woolard spoke to the group about where the state is focused. Some gaps are larger than prior to the pandemic - 26% of all students last year were chronically absent (1 in 4). This led to the presentation on attendance.

Attendance Supports – Patrick Hickman, Whole Child Supports Attendance Advisor

Patrick spoke on chronic absenteeism and the importance of early intervention and prevention. He shared graphs depicting chronic absence rate in Ohio, rate by grade level and by student group (race and economically disadvantaged).

- Chronic absenteeism rate - was 30.2% in 2021-2022 and is currently 26.8% (still worse than it was in 2020-2021)
- Kindergarten – highest grade level to be chronically absent (reasons and rationale for this)
- Chronic absence gets better in elementary, but then falls back again. Saw the same trend this last school year.
- 2% improvement statewide (4% improvement in grades 2 – 7 and a 3% improvement in remaining grades)
- Is now on the report card so more in the light than was previously (talked about in media, etc.).

Chronic Absence - defined as missing 10% of school for **any reason** (excuse, un-excused, suspension, medical excuse). They take the total number of hours the student is supposed to be



in school and the total number hours the student was in school and then divide and when the number is 10% or more by the end of the school year, that student is considered chronically absent.

- Chronic Absence – not the same as truancy. **Truancy is only un-excused absences.**
- Average Daily Attendance – how many students show up to school every day. This has been looked at for many decades but not the same as chronic absenteeism. Look at this and see a good score 93- 95% average but different kids show up every day so can't really use this as a measurement. This can easily mean there is a 15 – 30% absenteeism rate.
- If only count using average daily attendance, missing a lot of students who need help.

Ask – why do we count students with health/mental health/chronic issues and medically-related excused absences as chronically absent? Schools are not going after parents whose children are chronically absent (unlike truant). We care very much about students missing instruction – when they do, they are less likely to read at grade level; less likely to graduate on time.

- Absences add up- sporadic absences (missing 2 days a month) will lead to chronic absenteeism. Schools should catch students that have already missed 2 or more days at the beginning of the school year or by the end of the school year if this trend continues– will be chronically absent. Need early prevention/early intervention.

The Department contracts with Attendance Works (a national organization). Categories to attendance issues identified:

- Barriers to attendance (i.e., transportation problem) - generally real things we can solve easily to remove the barrier
- Aversion – unwelcome school climate or parents with negative educational experiences (have aversion to going to school so don't support child going to school)
- Disengagement – students bored at school/lack of enrichment opportunities, no meaningful relationships to adults in the school
- Misconceptions – sporadic absences don't matter; attendance matters less in high school (our older students were used to learning virtually but not able to learn the same way as surrounded by peers)

Table discussion – what stood out to you so far on this topic?

Ohio's Attendance Guide- PDF document on the website (about 30 pages). Broken up into sections.

- Chronic Absence
- Ohio Attendance Laws
- Early Intervention and Prevention
 - For districts do to improve attendance. Can help lead a conversation with your district and leadership teams about examining your attendance data at the district level. Who is looking at it, how often? About 40 questions the district answers with graphs, etc. to help lead them through this.
 - School buildings – at the building level (principal and leadership teams). What can you do to improve attendance (not the same questions but similar format).



- Helpful for district to look at so they know how the district policies impact what is happening at the building level.
- Resources – links to resources to support addressing chronic absenteeism

Attendance Pledge – ODE in partnership with Harvard Proving Ground and the Cleveland Browns Foundation are moving into more of a community and personal level awareness (much like the work of the Whole Child Advisory Group). This was week three of Attendance Awareness month and you can sign the Attendance Pledge (one for students, one for adults) that states you care about attendance.

Member posed question: Concern about this at the student level, if for instance, a first grader would sign the pledge to come to school every day and not be fulfill the expectation. Not their responsibility at that age but might feel enormous guilt.

Patrick noted there are lots of resources for use at the school building level to help with those conversations. It's the job of our leaders to build the interest and desire to be in school, educate parents and build supports.

Table discussion – What can you do to support attendance? Patrick was available for questions as needed.

Report out – takeaways

Lexi talked about it being a fine line to walk – how a student needs balance. Sometimes need a mental health day. Patrick asked the group what they would be a reasonable amount of time for that. Once a month was a response. Patrick stated if you miss once/month – would put you under the 5% satisfactory attendance rate.

A member noted policies vary by schools – some have early release policy, but attendance still calculated the same.

Can these mental health days needed as students and adults be factored into the calendar hours for days of the year? Is there a discussion that can be opened up about this – poll the community.

Landon - need to build a community at your school from teachers to bus drivers. Important for students to be part of this community and they want to show up for school every day. They need an example of what to do (teachers engaging with each other).

Patrick's contact information was on the presentation for anyone with questions.

Wrap up and Next Steps

Dates for the future Advisory Group meetings:

- December 15 – State Library of Ohio
- February 23
- April 26 – this is planned as a special meeting (field trip, site visit) – contact Hilary with any ideas

Meetings are 10 AM – 12 PM.