

Whole Child Advisory Group

MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 26, 2024

WELCOME AND ICEBREAKER:

Jessica Horowitz-Moore opened the meeting with an icebreaker asking members about one thing personal or professional they are looking forward to in the coming months. Some of the professional things noted were:

- Jessica gave a shout out to Matt Bowen. Campbell City Schools was one of the recipients of the Appalachian grants. They received \$10.5 million to continue their work supporting the whole child and their wellness initiative. The Governor visited the district to announce the award.
- May 8 – new school-based health center opening in Blanchester.
- Community in Schools Ohio celebrated their 30th anniversary on April 25. Community In Schools provide wrap around services for students. Jessica and Director Dackin were able to attend the celebration.

WHOLE CHILD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS: MOVING FORWARD – WHOLE CHILD SUPPORTS IN OHIO

Valerie Kunze and Emily Eckert with the Office of Whole Child Supports talked about the future of whole child supports in Ohio with the changes to the department structure and the whole child work.

Valerie Kunze, Administrator, is the lead/director for the Office of Whole Child Supports. Jennifer Vargo was the last leader in the role.

Some of Valerie's background:

- Working with the office for close to 3 years
- Prior to becoming the Administrator, led the vulnerable youth team in the office. Still working with somewhat as that position is currently vacant but now can look at all the work comprehensively.
- Previously was a school leader/principal for an elementary school in the United Schools Network, a charter school network in Columbus. Was part of the founding of the school that each year added a grade.
- Public Defender for the State of Ohio-an attorney that serves those that can't afford one. Worked with those that were in juvenile system or adult system – had already been placed in some type of correctional facility, juvenile detention or correction facility.

- Wanted to be impactful and make a difference at a systemic level and working with schools does that.

Emily Eckert – Assistant Administrator in the Office of Whole Supports. One of the areas her team focuses on is school wellness. Some of the areas this work involves are physical health, prevention education and Medicaid in schools. Emily’s background:

- Came to the department in 2019
- Spent 13 years in prevention work at a Columbus partial hospitalization program - St. Vincent Family Center. Worked in both classroom and administrative programs there.

Emily wants to break down the classroom barriers between families and students so all students can reach their full potential.

A slide was shared that outlined the work of the department by the numbers served. There are 611 traditional school districts in Ohio and 337 community schools.

- Nationwide not many serving this large number of schools.
- Also serve a diverse subgroup of students. Those populations showing with a **green arrow were growing** (English Learners, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islanders, Multiracial, Homeless, Black, Non-Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged). The only subgroup not growing is White/Non-Hispanic.
 - Over 50% of students in Ohio schools are economically disadvantaged.

What do students bring with them that is not visible to the average person looking at them in the classroom? A visual cartoon that spoke to this was presented on the slide. Members were asked to share how this spoke to them.

- As a school counselor this is spot on. Wish they could share the students’ stories but can’t due to confidentiality. Sometimes making it to school is a huge success.
- Must dig deeper into the reasons for the lack of success – sometimes see how the parents are, which can be a problem.
- A podcast pointed out that the trauma we go through in life is carried 7 generations.
- Based on conversations from technical assistance for school-based health centers, it’s acknowledged that this is everyone’s problem. It’s common to sit around a table and discuss but all think it’s harder for them than in another district (an urban district will say it’s harder for them; a rural district thinks it’s harder for them).
- Seeing more families/kids signing up for their summer enrichment programs. Come to their community center all summer – feel safe there and are fed, participate in activities. Lack of resources in many areas to provide what students need.
- Need to increase capacity in mental health support- adult wellness can contribute to wellness of the whole school (hidden things for adults as well as the students).
 - Valerie noted: educators – especially new teachers - may not have signed up for this – should have empathy for this.

- Many students can't get to school for various reasons (teacher is being asked to help with this).

Ohio's Chronic Absence – one of the major ways we capture the problems/current state is through attendance data in the State of Ohio. (see chart included in the presentation)

- Even before the pandemic, there was a problem with absenteeism (16.7% of the 200,000 + students). Too many kids were missing 10% or more of the school year.
- In 2021-22, the number skyrocketed to 30.2% of students missing 10% or more of the school year.
- In school year 2022-23, there was some improvement.
- Numbers are incredibly high – Office of Whole Child Supports has done quite a lot of work on this.
 - This is a real indicator that something is going poorly with the school's ability to engage with students and families to make sure things are improving – they are accessing instruction and materials they need to be successful.

Ohio School-Based Mental Health Challenges – taking some information from the Ohio Healthy Youth Environment Survey (OHYES) and the Ohio Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS),

- The numbers showed that 1 in 3 Ohio students noted challenges with anxiety
- Also, 1 in 3 students stated feeling sad and hopeless (almost 115,00 high-school aged kids in Ohio have experienced depression)
 - The number of those feeling sad and hopeless has increased over the last decade.

These are just a few of the stats and some are from 2019. Not just a COVID problem – is ongoing. Could do a whole presentation on this (Nicole Kahler and Jared Cole in the Office of Whole Child Supports recently did a presentation on this). Ohio is unfortunately one of the states that leads with this problem.

Workforce shortages is one of the problems – need more mental health professionals in schools.

Students need interconnection to have all their needs met for them to learn and grow (between cognitive, social, and emotional) – need to have a trusted adult and feel safe in their environment to learn.

Health and Education – there is a strong link between the two. Health can affect life and thus education (better education can lead to better health; poor education can put education at risk)

This information was contained in the Whole Child Framework. The department launched the Framework before the pandemic. Since then, the department has had some changes in leadership, but the department was doing a lot with ESSR (Elementary and Secondary School

Emergency Relief Program) funding. There were certain **priorities** at the time for the department to focus on. Morphed into Future Forward Ohio. Now with a transition from a state board run agency to a cabinet agency directly under the Governor, looking at how we responded to the pandemic and how we are using the funds to meet the needs of students which haven't changed.

- Literacy a major focus currently (Science of Reading)
- Accelerated Learning (focusing on literacy and numeracy)
- Workforce Readiness
- Student Wellness (when we think of this, think of the whole child)

Current Department of Education and Workforce structure (see presentation slide for full details)

- Director (Steven Dackin) – lead for the entire agency as of December 2023
 - 2 Deputy Directors appointed and approved by the General Assembly (not yet appointed)
 - Career Tech and Workforce
 - Primary and Secondary Education
 - The sections within the Department were shown in **yellow** on the slide.
 - Student and Academic Supports (Whole Child Supports is under this section). Jessica Horowitz-Moore leads this section.

Student and Academic Supports – breakout (see slide for more details on the work/programs of each office)

- There are 4 offices under this section
 - Office for Exceptional Children (serves students with disabilities)
 - Office of Learning and Instructional Strategies (works with all instructional learning and curriculum except for literacy)
 - Office of Nutrition (works with the school food programs)
 - Office of Whole Child Supports

Office of Whole Child Supports – consists of 3 groups:

- Safe and Supportive Schools (school environment is safe and supported)
 - Safety
 - PBIS (positive behavioral intervention and supports)
 - School Climate
 - Attendance
 - Family and Community Engagement
 - Student Voice
- School Wellness (Emily Eckert's team)
 - Physical health
 - Mental health

- School-based health services
- Prevention
- Medicaid in schools (recently joined the office)
- Vulnerable Youth (federally required supports)
 - Justice involved students
 - Foster care students
 - Homeless students
 - Students in Military families
 - English Learners

Health instruction and physical education falls under the Office of Learning and Instructional Strategies (OLIS). Some work crosses over – i.e. Student and Violence Prevention is in Whole Child Supports and legislation related to this intersects with OLIS. The office also collaborates with the Department of Health in areas such as school-based health.

Overview of Ohio's Initiatives- some things that are happening in the Office of Whole Child Supports

- Family & Community Engagement –Partnership Liaison
- ESSR project with English Learners work
 - Will have a family roadmap on the Whole Child website this summer – interactive tool for educators to help make connections between family and school, especially related to failures because of English learning
 - Also have toolkits related to most vulnerable students – those who have come to this country with limited education or no formal schooling
- Homeless – will continue to support this area that had an influx of funding from ARP (American Rescue Plan) funds
- Attendance – rolling out recommendations from the task force (plug and play, professional development resources, data resources). Discussing how to make schools more engaging to drive better attendance rates (this includes family engagement, wrap around supports and student voice).
- Mental health and suicide prevention – Whole Child Supports has two individuals that work with mental health and there is also a certified preventionist. The work in this area is supporting schools to build a comprehensive mental health system within their school setting to support students.
 - Work with Miami University around our Center of Excellence Early Intervention
 - Worked with Sources of Strength to develop suicide prevention programming throughout Ohio schools

These projects are coming to an end, but we will continue to work directly with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to look at supports and services around mental health and suicide prevention.

- Also, there is a grant in Southeast Ohio to increase the number of mental health professionals to work with students.

- School-based health centers – various models throughout the state (some beautiful centers staff have been able to attend their grand opening). See video on the Whole Child Supports website (Jared will include link in his post-meeting email) – about 2 minutes.
 - Was a large focus of the Governor on his recent State of the State. With a collaboration with the Department of Health, have a toolkit available on Whole Child’s website to help schools and districts start navigating these.
 - Currently 135 – goal is for many more
- PBIS – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support – a training this fall under the Safe and Supportive Schools.
- Behavioral threat assessment training: CTAG (Comprehensive Threat Assessment Guidelines) – evidence based around safety in schools, working with your threat assessment team in your school on creating a safe environment and responding to threats.
 - Launching the regional model – received funds from BJA (Bureau of Justice Assistance)

Cell phones in schools (mentioned briefly by Jessica in her opening remarks), is another focus of the Governor regarding mental health. Will be rolling out a toolkit for how schools and districts can effectively fully ban or limit the use of cell phones in school settings (research supports this as helping academic outcomes and reducing mental health concerns, especially in the youngest adolescents).

WHOLE CHILD COLLABORATION: REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Recap: Whole Child Advisory Group – a multi-sector group of stakeholders who have been tasked with advising the department and the Office of Whole Child Supports. They contribute to the development of resources and tools, support dissemination of resources and promote a whole child approach to education across the state.

- Approximately 50 members
- Similar roster from start of advisory group until now
- Started working with the Whole Child Framework – was finalized and rolled out.

Now that work is completed and there are changes in the department, what does that mean for the Whole Child Advisory Group?

Tara Donahue – Region 8 Comprehensive Center would present the group with a challenge and related activity. She provided some background on the CCNetwork and herself.

- The **Comprehensive Center Network (CCNetwork)** is a collaborative initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education. It comprises 20 federally funded technical assistance centers, including the National Comprehensive Center and 19 Regional Comprehensive Centers.

- These Centers work in conjunction with various stakeholders, including state, district, and local leaders, as well as national organizations and community partners. Their primary goal is to address critical educational needs across the country by providing no-cost services and products to support capacity building in state and local educational agencies.
- Prior to joining the CCNetwork and Region 8, Tara worked with after school programs (21st Century data).
- Within the Department of Education and Workforce, Tara assists the Offices of Learning and Instructional Strategies and Whole Child Supports.

Question Burst activity- members were asked what questions they may have and where do they see themselves (their role) in the Advisory Group. *How* question (how can I as an advisory member continue to do this work; *Why* question – why do we want to do this work; Strategy question. Participants were then to look for common themes and find ways the Whole Child Advisory Group can support the whole child work and guide the format of the meetings going forward.

Ideas were to be jotted down on post-its and placed on the posted chart paper.

Share out: Tara will gather all thoughts after the meeting which will be shared with all. Here are some that were shared at the meeting and subsequent discussion.

- Prevention and education are key to long-term change.
- Funding is an issue – afraid good work will end (sustainability with fewer resources)
- A number of schools are using ESSR funds for mental health (Student Wellness and Success Funds are for this purpose)
 - Governor DeWine – strong commitment to student wellness – might be different but work will continue.
 - Federal funding can be used in this way – not usually thought of – is a local conversation
- Want to go back to pre-COVID/before ESSR. ESSR shouldn't be the reason this work stops. Were doing this before ESSR funds.
- Infrastructure for these wellness centers – important. Grants are a fraction of what's needed. In SE Ohio, money is spread around 33 counties.
- Community partnerships important
- Question raised –Is there still commitment in the department to support the WC Framework?
 - Jessica responded: Still looking at the Framework – need to integrate work – how to make it part of the school day. Model is still being referenced/used when at conferences.
- The goal of the group is to provide support across other state agencies. How can the group be used to evaluate the work?

- Valerie commented: We do collaborate quite a bit across state agencies. This is key/a strong commitment. Working with school-based health centers with Ohio Department of Health.
Evaluation – part of the vision for the Advisory Group. Don't have data on things like mental health (non-academic).
- Messaging across the department and state – how can it be consistent (communication piece be supported)? How can we be sure we can work together on our own priorities?
- Lot of Whole Child work being done in schools but not being identified as such. How do we remind (bring to their attention) those already doing Whole Child work (i.e. MTSS/multitiered system of support).
 - Group could collect best practices.
- As a new member, what is my role? How can my participation be more impactful aside from sharing what's going on in community schools?
- Could this group write action plans for the department's Whole Child work?
- Can we be used as a workgroup as had been done previously (had subgroups and brought back information).
 - Stakeholder toolkit – one of the products from this group.
- Aligning our goals is important.

Exemplar Whole Child Initiatives

The Office of Whole Child Supports, along with Region 8, is collecting best practices related to whole child work. An email invitation went out to several groups across the state (including the Whole Child Advisory Group). They were asked to nominate a program/initiative doing good work, which of the whole child framework priorities did it address and indicate why they were being nominated (do they have outcomes to share) – something about the program, sustainability, etc.

Nine initiatives have been submitted to date. Asked which of the framework priorities they addressed:

- 7 to 8 of the 9 programs addressed challenged, engaged, healthy and supported
- 6 programs addressed safe

Asked which academic programs were addressed:

- 8 of the 9 programs addressed attendance
- 7 addressed engagement
- 5 included accelerated learning
- 2 had college-career workforce readiness

Other things noted in the nominations were real life skills, belonging, family engagement, mental health, and physical support. Programs included prevention, MTSS, truancy and academic needs.

Most didn't target specific subgroups but those that did focused on homeless, impoverished, gifted and non-economically disadvantaged students.

Two of the programs that were nominated worked with community organizations and were highlighted at the meeting. They are:

Tiffin City Schools – Pay it Forward

The program meets the needs of basic items such as clothing and hygiene items. The students are involved with laundering, sorting, and stocking the clothing. Several community organizations partner with the school to provide for individuals in need. Items are free and donations are accepted.

Union Local Elementary – Success for All

Begun in August 2023, the program has already begun to see results. This program involving literacy improvement showed an increase in reading scores from 24% of students to 39% at the end of the 3rd quarter. They anticipate the number to increase to 50% by the end of the school year.

Lindsay Green with Greene county ESC was present at the meeting and *submitted 4 proposals* from Greene county. The programs were about the Pre-K program at the ESC and supporting family engagement. Another program she highlighted was the PBIS master trainers. Lindsay goes to the schools every other Monday to talk about mental health, family engagement, and attendance. It brings back the connection to the classroom.

Many programs focused on professional development.

Columbus City Schools submitted a program involving their school-based health center and how the lack of transportation affected the ability of students to access the center.

Nominations are still open for submission – don't need to be an Advisory Council member but need the contact information for the person submitting the nomination in case additional information is needed.

WRAP UP AND NEXT STEPS:

Jared was thanked for stepping in to coordinate the Whole Child Advisory Group meetings after Hilary Stoll's departure. It was a seamless transition.

Jared noted that the format of the post-meeting survey available for members' comments has changed to Mentimeter. You can find the survey @ www.menti.com Code 74798161.

Slides and additional feedback will be sent to all.