

FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS IN OUR SCHOOLS: ROLES FOR GOVERNMENTAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

[9519]

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Forum Summary

Perceptions of difference, pre-judgments, and actions based on bias all contribute to an educational climate that can place students, parents, and school personnel at risk academically, emotionally, and physically. Not all expressions are constitutionally protected and some expressions of bias violate civil rights and/or criminal laws.

This forum session is designed to stimulate dialogue and idea generation from all forum participants concerning potentially effective models for preventing and responding to expressions of bias in educational settings. Although K-12 public schools will be emphasized, post-secondary settings will be referenced as well.

Presenters Glassman and Welliver will draw from experiences in Pennsylvania over the past decade to provide a series of brief presentations. Some will be informational in nature. Others will consist of scenarios based on actual experiences, accounts of legislative initiatives, and descriptions of interagency organizational strategies. These brief presentations will include:

A first-hand account of the legislative advocacy that led to the expansion of the definition of Pennsylvania's bias crime offense to become one of the most comprehensive and inclusive in the nation. The definition now includes "actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity." This new expanded definition has profound implications for enforcement in educational settings.

A description and illustration of the work of the Pennsylvania Inter-Agency Task Force on Civil Tension. This task force is one statewide model for multiple-stakeholder coordination of prevention and response to bias-related incidents in schools and communities.

An overview of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission with an emphasis on its jurisdiction with respect to unlawful discrimination in educational settings. Discrimination may present itself in the form of different treatment or in the form of a hostile, intimidating, or offensive educational environment.

Accounts of several "best practice" programmatic interventions, including Student Unity Groups and the Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (SPIRIT) program. The latter is a program of the U. S. Justice Department's Community Relations Service; Pennsylvania has been a leading implementer of the program in recent years.

Numerous scenarios of hate/bias crimes, organized hate group activity, and unlawful discrimination in education settings, based on actual incidents in Pennsylvania in recent years.

Immediately following each of these brief presentations, presenters Glassman and Welliver will facilitate discussion and dialogue. In some cases, participants will simply be asked for reactions, questions, comments, and/or ideas. In other instances, they will be challenged to generate action plans that would be effective responses to the incident scenarios presented. The action plans they generate will then be compared to actual response plans that were designed and implemented in Pennsylvania.

Sample resources including training curricula, response protocol guides, and various reporting formats for bias-related incidents, bias crimes, organized hate group activity, and unlawful discrimination will be displayed. Informational literature, media articles, and resource lists will be available as handouts.

The forum will conclude with summary remarks from the presenters, followed by the administration of an effectiveness assessment instrument.

Forum Goals

1. Participants will gain a clear understanding of common legal constructions for local and state statutes concerning unlawful discrimination and certain criminal offences (e.g., harassment, terroristic threats, criminal mischief, institutional vandalism, and hate/bias crimes) and their applicability to school settings.
2. Participants will be able to articulate a number of appropriate and effective roles for governmental and law enforcement agencies in addressing unlawful discrimination, organized hate group activity, hate crimes, bullying, and other manifestations of bias in schools.
3. Participants will be able to identify key stakeholder groups (e.g., legislators, police, issue advocates, community based organizations, and school district officials and personnel) that have responsibility, resources, and interests in protecting students, teachers, parents, and school personnel from bias crime, discrimination, and other manifestations of bias in school settings. Participants will be able to articulate organizational tactics for engaging these stakeholder groups in collective, coordinated prevention and response activities.
4. Participants will engage in dialogue and idea generation on additional best practices after they have been stimulated by presentations on Pennsylvania's experiences with law enforcement and programmatic interventions intended to create safe, respectful, unbiased educational environments in schools.

Forum Objectives

1. To complete a minimum of five presentations of the type described in the Forum Summary above.
2. To generate and record at least five comments, reactions, or ideas generated in the facilitated discussion following each brief presentation.
3. To use a variety of presentational modes, including verbal narrative, written scenario presentation, PowerPoint, and secondary data distribution (e.g. bias incident reports, media articles).
4. To use a variety of facilitation technologies to stimulate discussion, dialogue, and idea generation (e.g., small group discussion process and brainstorming).

Forum Activities

1. Welcome, Introductions and Overview by Stephen Glassman (SAG)
2. Five five-minute presentations, with each followed by a ten-minute discussion
 - a. Presentation #1 by SAG; participant discussion facilitated by Daniel Welliver (DMW)
 - b. Presentation #2 by DMW; participant discussion facilitated by SAG

- c. Three more presentation and participant discussion sessions (#3, #4, and #5), with alternating presenter-facilitator assignments
- d. Additional presentation and discussion sessions (time permitting)
3. Summary by SAG
4. Administration of effectiveness assessment

Assessment

Presenters will generate and submit a joint, written narrative reflection based on the Forum Objectives indicated above.

At the end of the Forum Session, an "Effectiveness Instrument" will be administered. This instrument will include a series of Lickert scale items based on the goals and objectives indicated above. It will also include several open-ended questions relating to what, if any, new knowledge was gained, what tactical or strategic ideas surfaced that participants intend to implement, and what participants found to be the least and the most useful aspects of the session.

Resources

Presentation materials.

References

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[Editor's note: The editor could not verify the content at <http://www.evnetwork.net/>.]
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- Van Dyke, A. and Welliver, D. (1999, October). The state of hate in Pennsylvania. In H. Snively (Ed.), *The Susquehanna Conference. Region of diversity: Respecting differences and finding common ground* (pp. 5-12). Harrisburg, PA: The Susquehanna Conference.
- Welliver, D. M. (2003). Finding and fighting hate where it lives: Reflections of a Pennsylvania practitioner. In C. Flint (Ed.), *Spaces of hate: Geographies of discrimination and intolerance in the U.S.A.* (pp. 245-254). New York: Routledge.

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