

6th Annual Missouri Safe Schools and Colleges Conference July 18-20, 2012

Attendees: Dr. Travis Hux, Chief Jim Lynch

Overall, this was once again a great conference. It is exciting to get to sit in on sessions discussing the latest and greatest methods related to safety. The best part of setting in on the sessions is when topics come up that Raytown has already addressed, which is comforting to know that the District has plans in place to mitigate problems and proactively promote a positive learning environment. The sessions attended are noted below.

Mental Health First Aid

Dr. Patsy Carter, Director of Children's Clinical Services at the Missouri Department of Mental Health

Mental Health First Aid is a groundbreaking public education program that helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The Missouri Department of Mental Health has been nationally recognized as being pioneers in developing this course.

This was a presentation an overview of a larger 8 hour course that is offered by the department of mental health.

Bullying - "Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment for All"

Dr. Nicole Yetter, Educational Consultant, Certified School Counselor North Penn High School, Lansdale, PA

A safe, peaceful and respectful learning environment for schools is an intangible asset to all stakeholders. Students and teachers who demonstrate bullying or harassing behaviors negatively affect the school climate. Bullying has been linked to poor academic achievement, self-esteem issues, and anti-social behaviors.

This presentation described current trends in bullying and the importance of having programming in schools was noted. PBS and PLC, which have been implemented in Raytown, are great examples of programming.

Positive Behavior Support program - An Overview

Dr. Tim Lewis, University of Missouri, Center for the Prevention of School Violence

Positive Behavior Support is a process for creating safer and more effective schools by structuring the learning environment to support the academic and social success of all students. The process supports the adoption and long-term implementation of efficient and effective discipline throughout the school environment. Positive Behavior Support methods are research-based and proven to significantly reduce the occurrence of problem behaviors in school.

This session was an overview of PBS and how it is used for creating safer and more effective schools by structuring the learning environment to support the academic and social success of all students.

Dr. Lewis noted the following:

Schools cannot make kids behave but can increase the likelihood that they do behave.

The program must be implemented with consistency and fidelity.

Punishing without proactive measures is associated with increases in negative behavior. Focus should be on what kids should be able to do regarding social skills just like a course may have a list of skills students should know at the end of the class.

The Fundamentals of Classrooms and School Safety from Nontraditional Threats

Dr. Annette Sobel, Adjunct Professor, University of Missouri

This presentation focused on a practical guideline for schoolroom preparedness that will enhance the confidence of teachers, students, and parents. The fundamentals of prevent, prepare, and respond we're studied through a table-top exercise.

Schools have vulnerabilities in both the interior and exterior.

An example might be visitors to the building, building close to an interstate, high crime rate in a neighborhood.

How do we respond to these situations? In Raytown we use the OODA loop: Observe, Orient, Decide, Act. This allows for response to all hazards.

School Climate - Who's Minding the Thermostat?

Lynne Lang, Director of School Climate for the Catholic Education Center in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

This was a look at the impact of school climate on learning. Homes, schools, and workplaces can be pieces of the puzzle that fit together to create safe and healthy communities for everyone. Assessing the needs and addressing problem areas effectively can close the gap for learners of all ages. There is a need for schools to learn strategies for creating a kinder, more positive climate.

School climate is very important and a variety of programs have been implemented in an attempt to maintain a safe learning environment. This would include programs mentioned above such as PLC, BIST, PBS, CPI along with other efforts such as the Safety Task Force and Safety Campaign.

Building Crisis Intervention Teams in Education

Corporal Steve Taylor, Clay County Sheriff's Department

This session discussed the creation of crisis intervention teams in schools and colleges in an effort to be ready when a crisis strikes. The session included identification of different stakeholder community members that should be included on the team, as well as training and exercises.

Schools are microcosms of society. The things that happen in homes and towns will happen in our schools. Those things affect the school climate. An example might be mental illness. 7.5 million students under the age of 18 have a mental illness.

The Raytown School District has been making use of Crisis Response Teams for years. In Raytown our crisis teams also facilitate CPI.

Bullying on Buses and the Peaceful School Bus Initiative

Gary Moore, Missouri State Highway Patrol, Retired

Bullying on school buses continues to be on the increase. There are many programs offered to help those in the field of school bus transportation. One program that is evidence-based and appears to work well is the “Peaceful School Bus” program.

Discipline records for the district mentioned in the presentation note a drop from 58 per year to an average of 9 per year.

At the start of last school year, the Raytown Transportation Department altered a driver trainer position to become a driver coach. This coach focuses on intervention and PBS training for drivers. The District will continue to implement these efforts in the coming year.

Disasters – The Recovery and Healing Process (The Joplin Missouri Tornado Disaster – One Year Later)

Dr. C. J. Huff, Superintendent of Joplin Public Schools; Aaron Lewis, Assistant Athletic Director, Facilities and Business Operations, Missouri Southern State University; Stephen Jones, Principal of St. Mary’s School, Joplin, Missouri

This session involved presentations from four individuals who were involved in not only the initial response to the catastrophic tornado of May 22, 2011, at Joplin, Missouri, but also the recovery by this resilient community over the past year.

Each presenter provided a 30 minute description of their perspective of the initial hours after the tornado struck, as well as the recovery process over the past year, and the lessons learned.

The Safety Task Force has implemented a variety of actions based on the Joplin tornado disaster. Many additional changes occurred following the safety assessment of 2009. This includes the use of Incident Command Systems, which is an all hazards approach that was developed by Homeland Security.