

Leander ISD School Health Advisory Council's School Board Report and Recommendations 2012

SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL OVERVIEW

Texas Education Code 28.004 states that each school district will establish a school health advisory council (SHAC) and that it will meet on a regular basis. The duties of the SHAC are to provide advice on the district's coordinated school health program and its impact on student health and learning and to provide recommendations to specific changes to school's health education curriculum and instruction. SHAC is also required to submit to the board of trustees, annually, a written report. This current SHAC is composed of 23 members, in which 14 are parent or community members. The SHAC has met four times this year.

Throughout this year, the LISD SHAC has proceeded to work on improving the establishment of a "Culture of Wellness" by focusing on assisting our schools with a plan to help close the achievement gap. Following Dr. Champion's vision of leaving all doors open, SHAC explored the opportunities for student health and school health programs to influence academic achievement.

RESEARCH

The research that we followed was by Dr. Charles Basch who in 2010 released data from his study showing high correlations between healthier students and academic success. Our goal was to identify barriers, structures and supports and create strategies that would address "educationally relevant health disparities" in students who may lack motivation and readiness to learn. We worked from the premise that "healthier students make better learners". Our theory is that by making school health programs more effective and accessible, there should be a greater influence on academic achievement.

In studying Basch's research we came up with the following essential questions:

- What role does health play in schools?
- What are indicators of an effective and efficient school health program?
- How does leadership shape policy and contribute to supporting school health?
- How do accountability measures affect what a district knows and does relevant to school health?

In answering these questions, we reached a conclusion similar to the research. Our conclusion and commitment was demonstrated by using a consensogram where 100% of the members believed that healthier students do make better learners. We also believed to a great degree that school health programs do have influence on academic achievements.

THE KNOWING AND DOING GAP

Our next goal was to identify and define the barriers related to the “knowing and doing gap” when it comes to the effectiveness of school health programs. We identified the following areas as barriers:

- Parent education
- Community and outside influences
- Time
- School Systems
- Resources

Throughout the members, we saw parents as being a key piece to creating an effective comprehensive and coordinated school health program. It was particularly identified that parent support, positive relationships, buy-in, follow-through, time and resources must be established and available. This process allowed the SHAC members to stretch to the concept that there must be substantial parent engagement for a student to be healthy enough to propagate academic achievement. Upon drilling down to identify barriers to and solutions to parent engagement, the group began the process of looking for a systemic solution.

The members identified the following challenges and opportunities when exploring ways to increase parent engagement:

Challenges - Barriers

- Communication
- Buy in
- Knowledge/Education
- Fear
- Time/Schedule
- Opportunities/Connection
- Family/Ages of Children

- Economics/Resources
- Culture

Opportunities - Solutions

- Open Doors
- Create Value
- Constant and Consistent Communication
- Differentiate
- Increase Access
- Increase Opportunities

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Recent research released from the Centers of Disease Control (CDC), has focused on parent engagement and has targeted strategies for involving parents in school health. This document helped the SHAC to understand:

- What is parent engagement in school?
- Why is parent engagement important?
- How can schools increase parent engagement?

After much discussion, the SHAC narrowed our focus down to three objectives:

- To make a positive connection with parents
- To provide a variety of activities and frequent opportunities for parents to engage
- To sustain engagement by addressing common challenges

From this SHAC began the process of developing an action plan related to parent engagement in the three areas of focus: connection, engagement, and sustainability.

ACTION PLAN

The LISD SHAC will begin to formalize the process of creating a strategic action plan to give guidance to coordinated school health programs to assist the district with the goal of closing the achievement gap. Below is a sample of the first objective that is being developed in the area of parent engagement.

Objective: In order to enhance the establishment of a “culture of wellness”, all staff members will work to make a positive connection with parents.

Strategies/Action Steps (Raw Data)

- Identify target audiences
- Create an interest inventory
- Survey Parents
- Analyze data
- Parent and family education nights/health fairs
- Volunteers opportunities
- Customer Service