

IDEA COALITION TASK FORCE *MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION*

Islip Public Schools ♦ 215 Main Street ♦ Islip, NY 11751 ♦ (631) 650-8300

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The Islip Elks Lodge #2533

Youth Enrichment Services

IDEA COALITION TASK FORCE

Minutes – December 4, 2018

7:00 p.m., Islip High School Community Room

ATTENDEES: See sign-in sheet (copy attached)

7:07 p.m. Meeting opened by Mrs. Paehr and all welcomed. No new attendees were present, so she asked all to review the minutes from the November 6, 2018 meeting.

7:12 p.m. The minutes from the November 6th meeting were accepted as written.

At Mrs. Paehr's request, Mr. Austin shared that he had recently received feedback from the Booster Club, who were very impressed with the involvement, attendance, and minutes of the IDEA.

7:15 p.m. Mrs. Carr reported on the coalition's financials and grant expenditures. No grant funds have been expensed since the November meeting, and only one encumbrance for \$131 has been placed on the funds. This is for 7 Habits books from Barnes & Noble. The financials were accepted.

REPORTS:

Mrs. Paehr noted that we have been having issues getting a COPE officer to attend our meetings. Mr. Flynn has reached out to SCPD, but they will not allocate overtime hours to send someone to our meetings. Ideally, we would want our SRO to participate. Mr. Flynn will continue to reach out to SCPD to see if someone will be able to attend a future meeting.

PROJECT DIRECTOR – Mrs. Vouris provided a number of resources in her report this month. All of these are hyperlinked within the document, and many were shared on the Promethean. Some of these resources include: (*NOTE: A pdf of this report was emailed to the IDEA distribution list on Tuesday, December 5th*)

- CADCA website – the membership number to access this site's resources was included in the report so the full coalition may have access to them. Mrs. Vouris noted that the number is all numerals, except for the last character, which is the letter "O."

Among other resources, there are a number of webinars on the CADCA site that are available to do 'at your own pace.' These have bookmark ability so you can start it and come back later to pick up where you left it.

Mrs. Paehr asked that everyone do some homework and visit the site to see what the value of this is. She would like us to consider if this site and our membership number would be worth sharing on the IDEA website for others to access. We can revisit this in January and make a decision at that time.

- LIPRC (Long Island Prevention Resource Center) website – they offer more visibility for us. We can post our events to their calendar, and, if we share photos from our programs, events, and activities, they will post these on their site, as well.
- News stories – these include a channel 7 video story on Suffolk County's crack down on vape shops selling to minors. The other was a CNN story reporting that vape use in high schools has jumped 80%. Mrs. Vouris noted that she has done some research, discovering that there are over 800 vape shops in the Town of Islip alone, and she suspects there may be more.
- Another website was the Surgeon General's site that offers information on vaping and e-cigarette usage in youth and young adults, the health risks associated with it, and what we can do to protect future generations.

Mrs. Vouris also shared a no cost kit from the FDA, promoting "This Is Our Watch." The kit includes posters, a letter to retailers, and other information. The posters announce "We ID for tobacco products." She thinks we may want to consider distributing these to local businesses through our youth members and Community Connectors, perhaps targeting businesses we suspect/know are selling to minors, or being lax in checking identifications. This could be done in groups of two or three, with a student being included.

Matt Marano questioned the fact that the posters state that the legal age for purchase of tobacco products is 18, but in Suffolk County that age is actually 21. We need to make sure the information is correct before distributing it. Paul Austin added that, by law, all retailers must post signs stating the legal age of purchase, so the poster may be redundant. Dr. Semel expressed concerns about trying to push this on retailers. The gas stations and convenience stores that are issues are not going to jump at the chance to put up these posters, and IDEA members may be putting themselves at risk trying to convince them to post them. Mrs. Vouris noted that approaching retailers would need to be done simply and non-confrontationally. Perhaps asking them if they are willing to work with their staff on identification procedures. Since the information kits are free, Mrs. Paehr suggested we get them and then work on the strategies on how to get the information to the retailers.

Mr. Modica added that students are not getting their vapes and materials at vape shops. They are getting them from gas stations and convenience stores, and likely even

more frequently, each other. Mrs. Whitehouse concurred, saying most of them are getting the materials from peers. Her experience has shown that one or two students are buying items in bulk and selling them to other kids. The bigger issue is that there is a perception that vaping is safe.

MaryEllen Adams from LIPRC added that we need to start building partnerships with vape shops now, as it is likely inevitable that marijuana will be legalized soon. When it is legalized, vape shops are the most likely dispensary locations. By creating bonds now, we may help prevent them from selling marijuana to minors down the line.

There are, of course, penalties for those who sell tobacco products (including vapes and e-cigarettes) to minors. Dr. Martin did some research during the meeting and found that the charges are misdemeanors, and could result in up to three months in jail and a \$500 for second-degree unlawfully dealing with a child. The sale of e-cigarettes to people under the age of 21 could also mean 15 days to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. It was noted that these fines may not be prohibitive enough, as the amount of money they potentially make in sales far outweighs the loss if caught. Mr. Henning asked if we should be advocating for legislative change with stiffer penalties, perhaps even jail time. However, it may be the clerk, not the business owner, who suffers these penalties. Dr. Martin did add that there is a definite link between mental health and vape/substance abuse.

- **PROJECT COORDINATOR** – Mrs. Whitehouse reported that Mrs. Pennington has visited all of the eighth grade health classes to discuss mental health, focusing on anxiety, depression, and stress management. She has also counseled an additional middle school student on the dangers of vaping.

Mrs. Whitehouse has a designated IDEA bulletin board at the middle school. She will change the board monthly, focusing on different related topics. This month's topic is vaping, so the board contains a lot of information on the health effects and dangers of vaping for those students who read it. A second bulletin board, which is a permanent mural containing a positive affirmation for students, was put together by Mrs. Pennington in conjunction with Laura Vogelsberg and Kim Striplin.

IDEA also had a table at last Friday's PTSA Shopping Night with lots of holiday-themed games for kids to draw people to the table. Photos of the bulletin boards and the table for the shopping night were displayed on the Promethean board.

- **YOUTH COORDINATOR** – Mr. Modica reported that the IDEA presence at last Saturday's Holiday Parade was a great success. Nearly 40 student volunteers marched with the group, handing out information cards and flyers for the vaping presentation. This was a marked improvement over last year's group of three! Mrs. Paehr asked that Mr. Modica and Ms. Hall share a list of the volunteers so thank yous may be sent to the students.

The website has been updated with a link to the new gmail address, as well as all of our social media pages (Instagram and Twitter). Mr. Modica also added a sponsors'

page to thank those local businesses who supported our Red Ribbon Week initiative by displaying the sign we created. It was suggested that Dang! BBQ be added to the page as a thank you for their support of the Post Prom through the give-back fundraiser.

Mr. Modica's Restorative Justice program has only seen one repeat offender so far this year, which is good news. Both the Open Gym and YMCA programs have seen a decline in attendance, possibly because of the recent holiday. He did send out a Remind text about the YMCA program this week and also handed out more permission slips this week, so he is hopeful more students will go this week.

Mrs. Stevens is returning from leave on December 15th, so Mr. Modica and Ms. Hall should have more information about the Teacher Prep class visits to our the elementary buildings at our January meeting.

Game Night is still in the early planning stages. Mr. Modica noted that he would love to add a parent component – perhaps something like the vaping presentation held Monday evening – to Game Night. He believes that parents need to see this, and he was disappointed in the low turnout last night despite all of our promotion efforts.

Mr. Modica suggested that students see the vaping presentation, as well, to give them a better understanding of the dangers of vaping. Dr. Semel proposed that we include a presentation on this as part of freshmen orientation. She will speak with Ms. Ward to arrange for its inclusion that day. It was also suggested that a similar, perhaps slightly modified, version of the program be included as part of the transition from elementary to middle school. Mrs. Whitehouse feels that it should be the same program, not modified at all. Dr. Semel asked the students in attendance, and they agreed with Mrs. Whitehouse, noting that sixth graders are with eighth graders, who in turn may be friends with high school students, when they enter middle school. As a result, the younger students are likely to be exposed to vaping at that level.

It was noted that it is not the traditionally 'trouble' kids who are now vaping. It crosses all social groups – honor students, band kids, athletes, etc. They are doing it for a variety of reasons: curiosity, peer pressure, the glamorization of it (similar to cigarettes in the 50s and 60s), etc. Mr. Henning expressed that the students of today will legally be able to use the vapes in just a few years. Mr. Sparacio noted, however, that the longer you delay teens from starting use, the less likely they are to start the behavior as an adult.

The issue of parents adopting a "not my kid" mentality was raised. Mr. Modica noted that when a student is caught with a vape at the high school, many parents refuse to believe that their child was using. Mrs. Paehr commented that it is easier to complain than to help create change. It was also noted that it is not only the nicotine in these products that is the danger, but the chemicals that are in them to add 'flavor.' In many ways, these are even worse than the nicotine.

Dr. Martin and Mr. Modica also shared data slides from their presentation at the vaping program. At the middle school, the past five years of data do not show any set

trends. Dr. Martin noted that students make silly decisions, and at this level, they are generally caught easily. With vapes, however, they are getting smaller and harder to find. Mr. Miltenberg, the assistant principal at IMS, does a similar program to Mr. Modica's Restorative Justice program at the high school to help deter vape usage and educate offenders. Ultimately, the middle school knows the issue is there, and they are looking into it. The staff uses their eyes and ears to help, and they still have students who are willing to come to their teachers or the administration to share knowledge they have. In general, students want their school to be safe and healthy.

At the high school, Mr. Modica shared that there were 31 out of school suspensions during the first quarter this year, 23 of which were vape or drug related. By comparison, there were only three during the same time period last year. He noted that the students are getting smarter, hiding devices in ceiling tiles or plumbing, and girls are hiding them in their bras to prevent detection when searched.

The question was raised if the rise in suspensions was a result of more security presence. Mr. Modica said that this could be part of it, but he believes it likely the result of more student addiction to the products, as well as more students from all social groups using them. He noted that the most recent suspension related to wax pens/THC liquid were students that have never been in trouble before and not the kind of kids you would expect would engage in this behavior. Nonetheless, parents do not attend informative programs like last night's. Dr. Marin suggested that this may be a result that they are getting their answers through Google instead.

Dr. Semel added another dimension to the increase in suspension, namely, the cost to the school district. While this is, of course, secondary to the dangers to student health, it is a very real issue. When students are placed on out of school suspension, the district must provide at home tutoring services, and, in the case of long-term suspensions, there are also legal costs related to hearings for the impartial hearing officer and attorneys.

Mr. Henning asked if there are other deterrents for these violations that can be implemented. If suspensions are not working, should be looking at the loss of privileges, such as clubs, sports or prom? Mr. Modica stated that he has spoken with Mr. Mosca about this, but he and Mrs. Whitehouse both agreed that punishments like this become complicated. Mr. Modica added that second offenses do result in a superintendent's hearing and stiffer penalties.

Ms. Hall added that second drug-related offenses carry stipulations that students may come back sooner (when they are issued a quarter, semester, or even year-long suspensions) if they complete a program and are deemed to no longer be at risk for this type of behavior. She works with families and their insurance carriers to find programs that will be covered and also coordinates with the students' program counselors to check their progress.

Ms. Adams suggested we consider the Teen Intervene program, which requires three meetings with students, with the third meeting involving parents, as well. This is an

evidence-based curriculum. LIPRC can provide free training in the program, with the only cost to the District/IDEA being for the curriculum itself (approximately \$375).

Mr. Henning asked that given the percentage of kids believed to be vaping, is our whole population at risk? Mrs. Whitehouse responded that the school is doing what it can do, but this is a parent issue, as well. MaryAnn Pfeiffer from YES explained that vaping has become a rite of passage, and that offering programs like Teen Intervene as an option to suspension may help. She noted that many parents are very concerned about a suspension being on a student's permanent record. Mr. Modica shared that last year, we did a five day in-school suspension in the alternative learning center for these issues, but parents were not showing up to the meetings. This year's two days out/three days in combination REQUIRES that parents to come to the meetings. Dr. Semel also added that by law, we are not allowed to mandate counseling as part of a suspension, or any other disciplinary action. Ms. Pfeiffer suggested we offer Teen Intervene as an option, not a requirement.

- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE SPECIALIST** – Ms. Hall has found a number of bilingual resources on a variety of topics, including teen driving and alcohol; preparing for college; prom; and graduation. She has shared these with Mrs. Dengeles and Mrs. Zarate. She also used these resources to present to the STAR Club at the high school, which is largely made of ENL students. The STAR Club advisor translated for the students as Ms. Hall presented. She will be doing more of these in the future as the club's schedule allows.

The permission slips for the Holiday Parade included the IDEA logo, mission, and other information on the back. Mrs. Whitehouse suggested that we do this again when creating the permission slips for Game Night and flyers for other events. Mr. Sparacio said he could add the IDEA logo to the slide presentation that runs on the television outside of the athletic office. Mrs. Carr will email him the slide from the presentation given on Monday evening with a few alterations so he can use that.

Given the lack of attendance at the vaping presentation, it was suggested we look at alternate ways to get information out to parents. Perhaps even consider doing Facebook live videos of our events like this. Ms. Pfeiffer noted that we have to meet parents where they are to get the information to them. Social media may be the way to go to do this. Mrs. Dengeles asked if IDEA could create these kinds of presentations in short (5-7 minute) videos. These could be posted on our website, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook so people can get the information on their own time, whether on a computer or even their phones. Most people are way more comfortable accessing information in this way.

Mr. Henning suggested also utilizing the robo-call system with information on suspensions and other issues, as a means to scare parents into caring more. Many questioned if these scare tactics would work, however. Mr. Sparacio also noted that doom and gloom may not be the answer, as Islip is generally a great place and calls such as these may give the wrong impression. It is often a small percentage of the

population causing a large percentage of the problems. Dr. Martin added sharing the vaping/drugs discipline numbers may cloud things with negativity. The option may be to flip it, e.g. 78% of students are not vaping, but we are concerned for those who are.

Ms. Pfeiffer suggested that we also post 'self-assessment' surveys on social media. These could be quick, five question surveys that identify warning signs – "If you answered yes to any of these..." – kinds of things.

In response to the conversation, Ms. Hall volunteered to create an IDEA Facebook page that will also link to Instagram.

- **POST PROM** – The Dang! BBQ fundraiser is happening right now (while we are at the meeting). Mr. Austin will have the numbers from this, as well as the two raffles they are running today at our next meeting. The raffles include a 50/50 and a hibachi s'mores kit. He did take advantage of a Black Friday sale and purchased black LED lights for the event's "Glow in the Dark" theme. The next Post Prom committee meeting will be in January, with the exact date waiting to be confirmed by the approval of the building use request.
- **CULTURAL LIAISON** – Mrs. Dengeles is waiting to meet with Mrs. Zarate, the District's ENL Coordinator. They are looking at better ways to communicate with parents and are considering vlogs as a possible way to get more information out to them.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Website and Email** – Mrs. Carr set up a Gmail account (islipideacoalition@gmail.com) and, as stated earlier, this is now on the website under the "Contact" tab. We also received word that our domain name – islipideacoalition.org – has been fully registered and is ours for ten years (expires October 9, 2028).
- **7 Habits Training** – Dr. Semel shared that Plainview-Old Bethpage is hosting a training session on this initiative on December 6th and 7th. She spoke with them, and they have graciously allowed us to send 20 staff members (teachers, social workers, and IHS principal Mike Mosca) to the training free of charge. They are also not charging us for the training materials, which generally cost \$200-250. Dr. Semel also noted that at the last Board of Education meeting, March 18th was approved as a staff training day. There will be no school for students, and that day will be set aside for social-emotional training for teachers.

- **Heroin Drug Kits** – Mr. Flynn looked into the report at our last meeting about heroin ‘starter kits’ being left in public places for anyone to access. This did occur in about half a dozen public bus stops in a couple of areas, but they have all been dismantled.
- **Fundraising** – Mrs. Vouris is continuing to look into being designated a 501(c)3. She has the material from the IRS and the checklist, but needs more information to move forward. She has a call into a CPA who should be able to help, but has not yet heard back from him.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Challenge Day** – Ms. Adams mentioned this program as a possible alternative to events such as the Chris Herren program. While it is expensive, she has heard wonderful feedback about it. Ms. Hall noted that we did have the program here in the summer of 2017, and all that were there agreed that it was wonderful. Mrs. Whitehouse has used some of the exercises (Crossing the Line) in other programs she has instituted at the middle school.

QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

No questions or concerns were shared

CLOSING REMARKS/ADJOURNMENT

Reminder that the next meeting will be in the new year, on Tuesday, January 15th. Mrs. Paehr noted that the Core Team will be notified after recess if there will be a pre-meeting prior to the full coalition meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mrs. Paehr thanked everyone for attending and all of their work this year. She wished all a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES

Tuesday, January 15th

Tuesday, February 5th

Tuesday, March 5th

Tuesday, April 9th

Tuesday, May 14th