

Leander ISD School Health Advisory Council's School Board Report and Recommendations 2015

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 46 members, in which 31 are parent or community members. The SHAC has met five times during the 2014-15 school year.

Throughout this year, the LISD SHAC has worked to support the district's coordinated school health program and district health services. The SHAC is committed to improving the opportunities for student health and school health programs which should influence a student's academic achievement. The focus was on developing the whole child particularly the areas of human sexuality, physical activity, nutrition and social-emotional and environmental wellness.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

Background:

According to the Texas Education Code Chapter 2800.4 (e) 1-5, any course materials and instruction relating to human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, or human immunodeficiency virus or acquired immune deficiency syndrome shall be selected by the board of trustees with the advice of the local school health advisory council and must:

- (1) present abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice of behavior in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried persons of school age;
- (2) devote more attention to abstinence from sexual activity than to any other behavior;
- (3) emphasize that abstinence from sexual activity, if used consistently and correctly, is the only method that is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, infection with human immunodeficiency virus or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and the emotional trauma associated with adolescent sexual activity;
- (4) direct adolescents to a standard of behavior in which abstinence from sexual activity before marriage is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and infection with human immunodeficiency virus or acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and
- (5) teach contraception and condom use in terms of human use reality rates instead of theoretical laboratory rates, if instruction on contraception and condoms is included in curriculum content.

Over the past 12 years Leander ISD has used the Austin Lifeguard (ALG) curriculum on character and human sexuality to be presented to students in grades 7-9. The ALG presented an overview to the SHAC and was approved to be renewed and recommended to the LISD School Board. The school board asked SHAC to go back and review recommendation of changing the 7th grade curriculum and stratify the definition of sex to a lesser degree in the 7th grade and building towards the ninth grade. They also asked SHAC to review the parent notification process and how materials would be previewed. SHAC did make changes to the letter and recommended that parent go to the school's library to review the contents of the curriculum. In addition, the district administration was asked to provide a comparison of the human sexuality curriculum options.

Recommendations:

The SHAC recommends that the LISD School Board continue to approve Austin Lifeguard Human Sexuality and Character presentations for grades 7-9 for three more years subject to be reviewed again in 2018.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Background:

The TEC also requires a SHAC to “consider and make policy recommendations to the district concerning the importance of daily recess for elementary school students” (TEC: Sec. 28.004, I). As a result of this requirement, recess continued to be an elementary focus area for the subcommittee.

As stated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in 2009, there is considerable research to suggest that recess has many benefits for children in the cognitive, social-emotional, and physical domains. Research (Minnesota Dept. of Education, 2013) also tells us many positive impacts of having a quality recess in the areas of:

- Bullying
- Behavior
- Readiness for Class Learning
- Instructional Time
- Safer School
- Satisfied Teachers
- Healthier Students

Based on recommendations from SHAC in 2014, the Physical Activity Subcommittee (parents and community members) and an LISD District Process Improvement Team (PIT) composed of administrators, teachers, and district staff came together to define recess in terms for Leander ISD and to make recommendations on how to improve it. To accomplish a recommendation made last year by the SHAC, the PIT distributed a campus survey which allowed the PIT to analyze the current state of recess in LISD.

Using continuous improvement tools, such as the campus survey, the PIT had the created the following process statement about recess and recommendations to be considered for next year. SHAC has approved these recommendations to move forward to the school board.

Recommendations:

The Elementary PIT created the following process statement to add more definition to what recess should be in LISD:

The process by which all children across the district participate in play and/or self-selected activities in a safe, actively monitored, outdoor environment (as weather permits) and provide opportunities for students to apply social skills and benefit academic performance.

1.

- a. Develop a process group consisting of representatives from the areas related to equipment, maintenance, and safety to develop a repository of information for staff that explains who to contact and the process for playground equipment, maintenance, and safety that is useful and accessible to campus staff and addresses the following questions:
 - Who to contact for maintenance playground structures?
 - Funding of replacement equipment - who is responsible?
 - Safety inspections of playgrounds - who is responsible?
 - Playground templates expanded to include tracks (decomposed granite) and sunshades.
 - Standards for what elementary playgrounds should have? (# of swings, playscapes, tracks, etc.)
 - Outdoor water fountain

- b. Create a task force to develop a published district resource that identifies administrative practices and policies relating to recess in the following areas:
 - Adoption of definition elementary recess process statement
 - Rules and expectations for recess
 - Procedures for weather and recess
 - Expectations regarding exclusion of students from reason for academic or behavior issues.
 - Active supervision during recess

- c. Determine district ownership of recess at a sustainable level. Who is in charge of the process of recess?

2.

The Physical Activity subcommittee would like the district to also consider establishing scaled criteria in order to create to optimal standards for recess improvement. See below:

ELEMENTARY - RECESS

Rationale	Evaluation of Effectiveness: Gold, Silver, and Bronze Status
Offering quality recess as one opportunity to be physically active during the school day will... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide all children a chance to be physically active during the day, beyond physical education class (i.e., two recesses or one brain break and one recess) • Reduce discipline issues • Minimize disparities and inequities related to access to physical activity opportunities • Ensure that children are attentive and ready to learn • Enact standards of best practice across all LISD elementary schools 	Gold <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a campus physical activity champion • All students in grades K-5 are offered daily recess • Eliminate loss of recess for discipline, academic work, or other reasons • Recess is offered before lunch in grades K-5 • Each grade level has an active indoor recess plan that involves physical activity engagement • Provide structured options for physical activity at recess (e.g., painted playgrounds, activity zones, equipment, or recess curriculum) • Active supervision of all students participating in physical activity (e.g., signage identifying the rules for safe play on the playground, supervisors who encourage fair play and participation by all) • Schedule recess and physical education at difference times of the day • Establish district-wide weather specific guidelines for recess
	Silver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have at least 75% of these criteria
	Bronze <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have at least 50% of these criteria

NUTRITION

Background:

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Act (HHFA) of 2010 has established standards for all foods and beverages sold in schools. The “competitive foods” portion of the law went into effect July 1, 2014. Competitive foods are defined as all food and beverages sold to students on a school campus during a school day, other than those meals reimbursable under the school meal program. These standards would apply to all areas of the property under the jurisdiction of the school that are accessible to students during the school day. Competitive foods are now regulated under the Smart Snacks provision in the HHFA 2010 which requires competitive foods to follow nutritional standards.

In light of this change, the Texas Department of Agriculture repealed the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy (TPSNP) except in the areas of prohibiting deep-fat fryers and soft drinks (sodas). In the past, the TPSNP addressed both competitive foods (foods sold) and foods given away or provided at school. This policy regulated fundraisers, nutritional policy exemptions and foods of minimal nutritional value (FMNV). Currently, with the repeal of TPSNP and the new federal Smart Snack requirements, the areas of fundraisers, nutritional policy exemptions and FMNV lack regulation. This does not affect elementary classroom birthday parties because they are covered under Texas State Statute, Lauren’s Law.

Recommendations:

Because of changes in both the Federal nutrition law, Healthy, Hunger-Free Act and the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy, the following areas will need to be addressed through local guidelines.

FUNDRAISERS

Food and beverages that meet Smart Snacks standards may be sold to raise funds for school sponsored events, clubs and activities. Food and beverages that do not meet Smart Snacks standards may not be sold anytime during the school day. All competitive foods must meet time and place restrictions.

EXEMPTIONS

Each campus is allowed to establish up to 3 exemption days in which foods given away are not subject to Smart Snacks requirements, so long as they are not served in areas when reimbursable meals are served and/or consumed.

FOODS PROVIDED OR GIVEN AWAY

Smart Snacks nutrition requirements apply to foods and beverages served, sold and/or provided access during the school day. Parents or a child’s guardian may bring otherwise restricted items for classroom birthday parties to be held after the lunch period. Because of dietary restrictions, all outside food must have a nutrition label and an ingredients list.

FMNV AND OTHER FORMS OF CANDY

Foods of Minimum Nutritional Value (FMNV) are not allowed to be provided to students any time anywhere on school premises by anyone (including guest speakers) until after the end of the school day or if the day is declared exemption by the school. FMNV consist of soda water, water ice, candy, chewing gum, etc.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Background:

Social-Emotional Wellness is at the root of educating and developing the whole child. Social emotional learning can be defined as the process through which we learn to identify, recognize and manage emotions, empathize and care about others, make good decisions and healthy choices, behave in ethical, responsible, and assertive manners, develop and maintain positive relationships and avoid negative or risky behaviors. It is the process by which students boost their capability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to accomplish important life tasks. The tenets of the whole child initiative, identified as schools that create an environment that is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged, are valuable in maintaining student success. The whole child approach to education will assist young people in being prepared for college, career and citizenship in the 21st century. For schools to create this environment, related to healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged students, they will have to address social and emotional wellness.

Social-Emotional Wellness can be achieved if schools create intentional opportunities for students to develop as individuals, classmates, community members, and citizens. A layered approach is often used to promote social-emotional learning in schools which can include skills lessons, infusion into the daily curricula, classroom practices, and school-wide activities along with establishing and maintaining an environment of safety, respect, tolerance, and caring. Those opportunities revolve around teaching skills in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships and responsible decision making. In order to understand those skill areas more fully, social-emotional learning (SEL) can be defined using the Chicago-based Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies (2013):

- Self-awareness – the ability to recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes being aware of how one’s body space, words and emotion can affect other people.
- Self-management – the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes self-motivation and self-control.
- Social awareness – the ability to take perspective of and empathize with others. This includes embracing diversity.
- Relationship skills – The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.
- Responsible decision making – The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interaction. This includes understanding the consequences of one’s actions and caring for one’s self and others.

(Definitions excerpted from NASBE, “From Practice to Policy, Vol. 1 No. 1, Oct. 2013)

Research has shown us that when schools systematically focus on improving students’ social and emotional skills, then the students’ academic achievement increases, the incidence of problem behaviors decreases, and the quality of relationships enveloping each child improves.

This year SHAC investigated further into social-emotional learning and wellness and looked at how and what the school district was offering to promote social-emotional wellness at the campus level. A social emotional wellness campus survey was created by Ray Langlois and Mary Ann Kluga with feedback from the SHAC SEL sub-committee to ascertain the need for and extent of social-emotional wellness activities that are taking place at the campus level.

The results of that survey identified that 89.7% of campus principals perceived the need of social emotional wellness activities on campus as moderate to extremely high. While the perceived need for social emotional wellness activities was high, it was also identified that teachers lack the skill sets to teach social-emotional learning or wellness and that resources were not available to keep up with the demand. Campuses are facilitating a wide variety of activities and events throughout the year which focus on community, school, and student groups, assistance, charity, learning and social opportunities. There are several programs where parents could be even more involved as well. The tools used to evaluate these events are mostly related to campus climate assessment versus for evaluation of individual programs. Technology is being used to highlight the positive happenings on the campuses. The level of communication and knowledge-sharing concerning the availability of social-emotional wellness programs from the district to the campuses was split evenly as either somewhat or enough; whereas, the level of communication and knowledge-sharing from other campuses was thought to be too little or somewhat by 74% and enough or very much by 26%.

Recommendations:

1. In order to build protective factors and reduce risk factors for our students, a systems approach to meeting the social-emotional needs of the whole child would be beneficial.
2. Create a district committee to develop a focused, comprehensive approach to social-emotional wellness and to ensure continuity and consistency with a guaranteed and viable curriculum/approach to social-emotional wellness across the district.

The focus of the committee could be to:

- a. encourage campuses to further identify their mental health needs,
- b. have a focused preventative approach to matching the needs of students to the programs that are offered at each campus,
- c. upgrade content to include more social-emotional wellness at all levels of instruction,
- d. identify teacher/staff development needs and resources to be allocated,
- e. conduct a cost-benefit analysis of programs in use,
- f. identify how technology could be used to to engage students and disseminate information regarding social-emotional wellness and campus activities,
- g. develop evaluation criteria and methods to specifically measure the results of campus activities and events specifically focusing on the social-emotional wellness piece of each activity/event.

ENVIRONMENT WELLNESS

Background:

The Environmental Wellness Subcommittee came from a recommendation of SHAC in 2014. The formation of this committee was to address environmental issues related to products, behaviors, and illnesses found to affect our students. Early in the year, the subcommittee met to establish a focus and set some priorities. The group recognized that the environment can have an effect on a student's attendance and their academic success. Focusing on the environmental not only could establish a set of protective factors but could give students the opportunity to take ownership over improving the quality of the environment in which they live. The group decided the topics the Environmental Sub-committee should explore would be related to energy, gardens, air quality, social responsibility, and immunizations.

In researching illnesses related indoor and outdoor air quality, the group decided to focus on asthma awareness, education and prevention could have a great impact on the school district. The group found that asthma played a significant role in school absences in Leander ISD, as it does nationally. With that focus, the group started to explore the asthma awareness education program in North East ISD (NEISD).

The NEISD Asthma Awareness Education program was launched in 2006 and has been nationally recognized as improving student health. It focuses on the areas of awareness, environment, medication, and education/management. It is a comprehensive approach to control asthma to reduce reoccurring absenteeism. It is designed to bring awareness of strategies to staff, students and parents through developing guidelines, tools and educational best practices. NEISD has developed a framework that could easily be explored for implementation in Leander ISD.

Recommendations:

SHAC environmental group proposes that the district explore the following as first steps towards creating its own Asthma Awareness Education Program:

DATA:

1. Collect initial data
 - a. Number of students and teachers/staff that are affected by asthma
 - b. Financial cost of asthma related school absences
 - c. Number of rescue inhaler used district wide
 - d. Number of EMS asthma related visits/transport from school
 - e. Number of visits to the clinic for students with asthma related issues
2. Create a reporting system to collect related asthma data annually

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS:

Reduce asthma triggers

- a. Allergies - pollens, molds, dust, animal dander, insects
- b. Irritants – tobacco smoke, exhaust, strong odors, perfumes/fragrances, chemicals, ozone, weather changes
- c. Infections – colds, viruses, flu, infections (such as sinus)

AWARENESS:

1. Build knowledge through educating faculty, staff, students and parents
2. Partner with medical experts
3. Establish an air quality expert in the district