



May 10, 2019

Dear Dr. Young,

The Abilene ISD School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) has met regularly during the 2018-2019 school year and looked at different programs and policies. As the district designee supporting the SHAC this year, I am submitting the 2018-2019 recommendations on behalf of the Abilene ISD SHAC. I am also providing a summary of the membership and meeting dates. Teresa Bentle has served as the SHAC Chair for the 2018-2019 school year and Linda Langston has served as the facilitator for the SHAC.

A list of the 2018-2019 Abilene ISD SHAC membership is attached. The following are the dates that the SHAC have met and discussed topics pertaining to the health and wellness of our children.

- September 24, 2018
- November 26, 2018
- February 24, 2019
- April 22, 2019

Topics that were discussed this school year are:

- Texas spends the largest amount of money on abstinence programs while still achieving one of the highest teen birth rates in the country. Recent analysis shows that Taylor County is a “hot Spot” for teen births, meaning the county has a high total number of teen births. Almost 4% of teens in Taylor County gave birth in 2016, compared to the statewide rate of 3%.

SHAC has made the recommendation to bring sexuality education back into the curriculum over the past years. The SHAC has recommended the sexual education be based on an “abstinence-plus” program. It was felt that the “abstinence-plus” program highly encourages abstinence but also discusses accurate information on other forms of contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STI) would be the most meaningful curriculum for the students.

In the Fall of 2017, sexuality classes were presented during PE class periods to the sixth and eighth graders over a 5 day period. These classes were taught by the PE teachers at each campus. These classes were not done in the 2018-2019 school year. The *Aim for Success* program was presented to the seventh and ninth graders this school year. The SHAC had not recommended the *AIM for Success*, because it is an “abstinence only” program, and we felt that some of the information was medically incorrect about contraceptives and STI transmission.

In the Spring of 2019, the *Aim for Success* one hour program was presented to the seventh and ninth graders. Abstinence-only programs, also known as sexual risk avoidance programs, teach that abstinence from sex is the only morally acceptable option for youth and the only safe and effective way to prevent unintended pregnancy and STDs. They generally do not discuss contraceptive methods or condoms unless to emphasize the failure rates. The 7th graders program focused on sexual activity, abstinence, STIs, reality of the effectiveness of contraceptives and emotional scars. The ninth grade program focus was on technology, sexting, pornography, and healthy relationships.

- The SHAC would like to re-emphasize the importance of recess in elementary grades. The SHAC continues to recommend that all elementary students are offered recess at least once a day and that a balance of structured and unstructured activities be provided to benefit the child in optimal child development. The SHAC highly encourages campuses to follow the *AISD Wellness Plan* that states, “the district will prohibit the use of physical activity as a form of discipline or punishment and ensure that physical education will not be withheld as a form of punishment.”
- Discussion on the importance of mental health screening and the impact that mental health has on the overall health of the child. Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life. SHAC was informed that school-based mental health professionals often conduct assessments and provide interventions on an individual basis to students with significant needs. Information shared indicated that good mental health is a large factor in how a student will perform academically. School climate, classroom behavior, on-task learning, and student’s sense of connectedness and well-being will all be influenced by their mental health. According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their school years. Examples include stress, anxiety, bullying, family problems, depression, a learning disability, and alcohol and substance abuse. Serious mental health problems, such as self-injurious behavior and suicide, are on the rise. Estimates of up to 60% of students do not receive the treatment they need due to stigma and lack of access and funding for treatment.

Some of the questions that the SHAC had were:

- Which students should be screened?
- What age(s) should be screened?
- How do we choose a screening tool?
- What about consent?
- What about staff readiness?
- What will the parent population say?
- How is testing funded?
- What are they screened for?
- What do we do with the information if student needs professional help?

SHAC would like more information on how other districts in Texas are attempting to help students struggling with untreated mental health issues. The committee discussed that mass screenings could uncover mental health problems that school district would lack resources to treat.

We hope that the information provided will be useful to the AISD School Board. Members of the SHAC appreciate the opportunity to serve the students and parents in AISD. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Linda Langston, RN