



DASA Task Force Meeting Notes
June 1, 2017 (1:00-4:00)
New York State Education Department
89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY (Room 216 A/B)

Members present in Albany: Khin Mai Aung, David Cantaffa, Becky Carman, John D’Agati, Cynthia Gallagher, Mary Grenz Jalloh, Gloria Jean, Mary Jane Karger, Agatha Kelly, Shauna Maynard, Terry McSweeney, Elizabeth Payne, Eòghann Renfroe, Terry Reynolds, Renee Rider, Michael Rosenberg, Shirley Sommers, Ron Woo, Trish Zupan

Members on WebEx: Claire Comerford, Laura Geraci, Trace Lahey, Jeffrey Mongelli, Mara Sapon-Shevin, Christy Smith, Kathleen Hayes Sugarman

1. Introduction

- Co-chairs John D’Agati and Renee Rider welcomed the task force members.

2. Review information related to the DASA training (e.g., the law, regulation, syllabus)

- The Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) requires that candidates who apply for educator certification as a classroom teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, school administrator or supervisor, or superintendent must complete DASA training on topics outlined in the law.
- The Regulations of the Commissioner of Education specifies that the DASA training is at least six hours in length and has at least three of the hours delivered through face-to-face instruction.
- The original DASA Task Force – Certification Work Group made recommendations to the Commissioner on the format of the training and developed a syllabus.
- The syllabus includes six objectives and a set of elements, several of which must be delivered in person.

3. Discuss the DASA Task Force charge

- The Commissioner reconvened the DASA Task Force in response to a recommendation from the Legislature to replace the DASA training with a multicultural education course.
- The task force will focus on the DASA training for pre-service educators that is completed during their preparation program or as a separate course (e.g., out-of-state candidates, individual evaluation pathway to certification).
- Five outcomes are listed in the charge, including determining if changes are needed in the DASA training, the amount of time that candidates need to learn the topics, the most effective format(s) for implementing the DASA training.
- The task force will submit recommendations with a rationale to the Commissioner by December 31, 2017.

4. Small group and whole group discussion of specific gaps in the DASA training and the reasons for the gaps, considering the issues raised in the charge (e.g., syllabus, time, assessment, format)

Group 1 (Eòghann, Khin, Mary, Michael)

- DASA training has become an “add-on” that is more about compliance than meaningful inclusion of all topics due to the requirement of covering certain number of topics in a certain number of hours.
 - Might be more effective to have as modules incorporated into existing classes instead of an add-on.
 - Inherent assumption not being taught, and would argue it is being included already – perhaps we can create DASA waiver for schools that already integrate the content in their existing other coursework.
- Training curriculum is hard to find.

- Transgender included as protected class in DASA law, but not required to be meaningfully included in the DASA training.
 - Should we address group by group characteristics?
- Lack of knowledge by field on transgender issues, disability status and accommodations, language access, and immigration status.
 - Is it knowledge of or operationalizing procedures?
 - Or the gap to go beyond teaching/changing attitudes, and on skills and behaviors (what you do, not what you think)?
 - Gaps seem to be in system of accountability/back end verification and what happens after complaint.
 - Training not anchored to cases that staff see in the field later – not connecting dots.
 - Including investigation protocols, procedures and best practices.
- Knowledge gap with national origin, language access issues.
 - We have seen gaps in the field as far as understanding DASA and related laws on national origin, religious discrimination, transgender issues.
 - Issues with both knowledge gap and lack of operationalization.
 - Need to go beyond “holidays and food” for cultural exposure/competencies but how can you meaningfully do this in a 6-hour training – training doesn’t go deep enough.
 - Add more case studies – practical, implementation related content to the DASA training syllabus.
- Need specific DASA coordinator duty list and training for implementation purposes, as well as clearer list of qualifications and possibly higher pay for DASA coordinators.
 - Including investigation protocols, procedures and best practices.

Group 2 (David, Elizabeth, Renee, Terry R., Trish)

- 2015 study and report on the implementation of DASA findings
 1. Dignity Act Coordinators typically train the school faculty and staff.
 2. DAC were likely trained for DASA by the district’s attorneys which was essentially “how not to get sued”, must intercede immediately in bullying situations and the use of zero tolerance language.
- Intent of DASA is to be proactive, not reactive. However, with the exception of a few schools in Long Island, no one is doing this.
- A gap in knowledge as it relates to race, religion, sexual orientation....
- It’s an unfunded mandate. There is a need for quality inservice trainings that don’t cost a tremendous amount of money.
- Doesn’t explore and teach to an individual’s knowledge of self and their own internal biases.
- Need to educate pre-service teachers. Six hour training is not enough time to cover and fully educate on matters such as race, religion and sexual orientation. Post DASA training, research indicates that there is a significant lack of recall in terms of the content taught through training. If there is recall, it relates to the language of zero tolerance. Those surveyed were unable to tell stories, personal experiences in terms of the application, and usefulness of the DASA legislation.
- Majority of educators are white, middle class females. It’s uncertain as to college requirements for multicultural education. Mostly just an elective course.
- Many districts still “sweeping it under the rug.” An administrator's belief system can dictate the implementation of DASA.
- A need for language that encourages teachers to discuss matter of race, religion and sexual orientation.
- Hazing needs to be addressed.
- Issues around the implementation of policies related to transgender students in the school environment.
- Not all protected classes are covered in the current DASA training.
- Lack of knowledge and strategies for addressing institutional racism and cultural competency.

Group 3 (Agatha, John, Ron, Shauna, Terry M.)

- What can schools do (in addition to teachers) do to address bullying? We need strategies (curriculum, parental, school climate).
- Education learning trust - NYSUT- have heard that bullying is the main focus of the course. More strategies for dealing with relationship building, LGBTQ, institutional racism, religious, newcomer (increased immigrant population) are warranted.
- Gaps in two of the areas - teaching strategies within the classroom that builds community in the classroom (understanding of others, supporting each other) and building administrators support.
- Broaden this beyond pre-service - educating school board members (if you don't have a supportive school board, it is challenging for districts/superintendents).
- Identifying the needs of the students - educational methods in training programs.
- Strategies need to be identified in the in-service training - veteran teachers need professional development in working with different populations.
- If parents aren't happy, they go to the school board members (who are not aware there are standards that districts need to abide by). Code of Conduct serves as the point of reference. Board members need to be educated so they have a working knowledge.
- Social-emotional learning, culturally responsive strategies, restorative justice practices all need to be embedded in training programs.
- How do teachers deal with parents/administrators - family engagement? How do you get families engaged in ways that are meaningful?
- How do you deal with the adults in the building? Paraprofessionals? Co-teachers? Developing classroom climate? How do you collaborate on a common curriculum?
- Bystander activities - what do bystanders do? If they are not a part of the solution, they are a part of the problem. Kids need to be taught on how to be a bystander. How do we get them to be empathetic and caring?
- Creating a school community - custodians, cafeteria workers, secretaries, bus drivers: how to speak to students: who else do we need to bring into this - how do we get everyone on board?
- Teachers set the tones in the classrooms (conduct and behavior). Which groups get the in-service training? Conflict resolution made a huge difference - restorative practices - teaching people how to talk to the issues when the conflicts occur.
- There's another task force on student teaching - competencies on what the student has to demonstrate (conflict resolution, interacting with parents). However, the pre-service teacher has to have those strategies in order to demonstrate competencies prior to their student teaching.
- Part of the coursework: what would you do? What kind of behavior management program do you have in the classroom? Establishing school climate as the primary source is important.
- What is the make-up of the school? What are the community resources? Cultural competency - school leaders need to be responsive to ever-changing populations. In-service teachers are reporting that they need more tools/strategies.
- School building culture is tough to change with seasoned staff. Discussion regarding how to be a transformational leader and how principals and school leaders create dynamics that lead to change. We are dealing with people - each environment is different depending on individual characteristics of staff. Class sizes in New York City are large (average is 34 for primary grade levels).

Group 4 (Becky, Cynthia, Gloria, Mary Jane, Shirley)

- How to communicate and work with families of victims and aggressors (teachers, counselors, admin).
- On the job issues - how to deal with situations - ineffective communication (teachers, counselors, administrators).

- Personal biases not changed by the 3 hour in person component; lack of “buy-in” to what bullying is vs. “kids will be kids”.
- Wide variance in how DASA coordinator role is implemented (administrator? counselor?).
- Inconsistency in identification of “what is bullying?” or any of the other reportable incidents (administrator).
- Managing the data, the number of reports - not enough training on how to do this.
- Implementation issues (3 hour in person not enough); need local follow-through?
- Parents lack understanding of the concepts, definitions, impact, policies, etc. (education needed).
- Lack of cultural competence to communicate effectively with parents, students and community.
- Six hours is not enough, need expectations, follow-up, assessment (students enter at many different levels, complete a non-credit workshop).
- What’s the reporting back to faculty/staff? Do they see the district stats?
- Tiered workshop curriculum based on role (e.g., administrator, counselor/social worker, teacher aide, dignity act coordinator). DIFFERENTIATE undergraduate and graduate.
- Training not comprehensive enough.
- Parent education?
- Annual DASA coordinator training availability?
- Dealing with current events (e.g., immigration and bullying).
- Combine the SAVE requirement with DASA?

WebEx Comments (Christy, Mara)

- I think there is insufficient time to cover all of the important topics. This lack of time leads to a focus on compliance and regulatory issues and neglects content about diversity and oppression.
- The number one "complaint" that I get from students is that 6 hours is a long time to pay attention and retain the information. So, this goes to a formatting issue - if it could be done online, it could be self-paced and when the candidate has hit their limit, they could step away. Allowing it to be fully online also allows more opportunity for assessment of knowledge gained with real time results/feedback for the candidate. Our training is 6 hours face to face. But, even three hours is a long time to retain information.
- Another gap is that many elements that should be covered, change based on the environment. Cyberbullying looked different three years ago than it does today. With one-time training, candidates do not keep up to date with DASA issues. As research emerges, ways to address harassing behaviors will also change.
- There is an assumption that the person (faculty) teaching the DASA course has done their own work about racism, homophobia, Islamophobia, etc. How do we monitor the beliefs/knowledge/bias of those who are supposed to be shaping students and other professionals through the course?

5. Small group and whole group discussion about the information that needs to be collected to identify and address the specific gaps in the DASA training (e.g., survey responses, readings)

Group 1 (Eòghann, Khin, Mary, Michael)

- Information on implementation – how best to do it? Data collection? Survey? Other methods?
- Increasing frequency with which DASA complaints reported to NYSED are analyzed.
- Review higher education syllabi (across a number of courses in a range of related topics) to see if/how addressed, and crosswalk the content of teacher education program components with affirmation from IHEs for verification in accreditation review.
- Find out if anyone who takes the training does not get approved (or is it just sitting in the training).

- Review of NYSED approved provider list - so that we can have a more rigorous reapplication and recertification process.

Group 2 (David, Elizabethe, Renee, Terry R., Trish)

- Review and analyze existing research as to best practices and current trends in providing DASA education by actual researchers.
- Review the survey/memo completed by the AG's office last year.
- Is there any content on DASA issues included in the Educating All Students test that can help to measure DASA related knowledge?
- There needs to be a way to give weight/value to the DASA legislation and trainings, not just have it be seen as hoop to jump through.
- Scan of curricular requirements across the state's universities and colleges.
- What would the impact be on higher education and teacher studies if a 3-credit hour course was to be implemented?
- To know if there is governance, telling faculty "you will teach this subject and that subject?"
- Where are the Clinical Practice Work Group and Principal Preparation Advisory Team in terms of their DASA thoughts and recommendations?
- What would a required 3 credit course mean for staff not receiving a teaching degree (e.g., school psychologist, social workers, counselors).

Group 3 (Agatha, John, Ron, Shauna, Terry M.)

- Evaluation forms from the DASA Training Course to see what people think: Department could ask the trainers to submit results of the evaluation forms.
- Building this into teacher rubrics (i.e., standards of behavior/what strategies are used)?
- Systems change - incorporating restorative practices.
- How do we embed this teaching into the teacher preparation programs?
- What can we do in schools to welcome different cultures? It goes back to school leadership.

Group 4 (Becky, Cynthia, Gloria, Mary Jane, Shirley)

- Need "use these" resources list/bank.
- Survey? Needs of different groups (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, aides, administrators).
- Survey of approved workshop teachers: What resources did you use to develop your workshop? How are you and your workshop evaluated?
- Higher Ed: what is the reality of imposing a 3 credit or 1 credit course?
- Need integrated approach - need a way to monitor how its working (or not).
- DASA needs to fit with calls to update Codes of Conduct, use Restorative Justice practices, use Trauma Informed school practices, reduce suspensions, use PBIS, etc.

WebEx Comments (Christy, Mara, Trace)

- We need to survey inservice teachers as to what gaps they feel they have. We should also survey building leaders as their DASA gaps may be different than teachers as they deal with the students at a different level. Maybe there needs to be a teacher DASA and a more advanced leader DASA...
- I would like to interview/survey teachers who are now teaching (or counseling, etc.) about the DASA training they received. What did they find useful? What was a waste of time? And, most importantly, what do they WISH they had learned? Now that they are in the field, what do they WISH they knew or had been trained about? What are the issues that arise that they don't know how to handle? What things trouble them in the field that they want more training/discussion/follow-up about?
- Testing (maybe EAS?) is another way to identify areas of weakness (maybe make them zero point questions but the student is not aware). But, changing the exam and getting data could take a while.

- I still support an option for a fully online option with multiple required assessments.
- If surveys are to be done, I recommend asking what types of harassing behaviors the respondents have encountered, did they feel prepared to handle it, what gaps do they feel they have, do they feel their DASA training prepared them and what were the weakness of their training. It is important to see what kinds of harassing behaviors are going on. I think this type of survey should be done every few years so the DASA training stays up to date and relevant.
- Like other teacher education programs, our program is currently engaged in curriculum mapping as we prepare for our CAEP review. One of the themes we are highlighting as we work is the theme of “diversity,” but I’m curious to know where in our teacher education courses we address the DASA components. This seems important to do if we are considering adding a 3 hour course.
- It would be interesting to interview program completers (who are currently teaching) to learn the extent to which they lean on their DASA training when they design their curricula and/or encounter issues that connect to this training. And to what extent do they discuss topics related to the DASA components with their colleagues/parents/students in schools?