

Wellness Committee Meeting
Monday, May 24, 2021



In Attendance:

Robyn Wiens
Mary Jo Gruber
Stacey Siwak
Julie Connor
Michelle Fohey
Heather Christman
Kim Sherony
Molly Troy
Cheryl Redohl

Christina Blankenship
Sarah Centeno
Jennifer Martin
Jennifer McDaniel
Tina Murtha
Debbie Reilly
Christine Schneiderhahn

The meeting began at 4:01 p.m. and was opened by Mary Jo Gruber. Everyone introduced themselves.

New member joining us today - Christine Schneiderhahn.

Robyn Wiens and Mary Jo Gruber sent everyone on the Committee the Wellness Assessment over the weekend. This assessment will be the focus of this meeting. The assessment is tri-annual (every 3 years) and is a requirement of the Free and Reduced lunch program. Due to Covid, the federal government gave the District a one-year extension.

Discussion today will be centered around reviewing the responses to the survey and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Schools Assessment Guide and how we can expand the Wellness program with an emphasis on mental and physical wellness, as the School Board has asked about mental wellness. Overall we are happy with our response rate, over 500 parents and staff responded. There was a great response from the middle school as about half of all students responded.

Robyn Wiens broke the group out into three groups - Student, Community and Wellness Assessment - to review the material and asked each group to find three strengths and three ways to improve. The three groups met separately for 30 minutes.

Responses from the Secondary Students Assessment: (Survey was given to students in grades 6-12.)

Strengths:

- Good response rate, consistent answers across the board.
- The District did a good job of listening to the students (with the caveat that there was a huge influx of surveys and information directed at students during the pandemic).
- Block scheduling was good, but Sarah Centeno thought that it would be good getting back to a normal schedule.
- Exercise rates looked good and students didn't eat out as much as anticipated, possibly due to the pandemic.

Opportunities to Improve:

- Anxiety reported at high levels.
- Fruit and vegetable consumption drops off the older the student is.
- While class time was cut in half, productivity was down and students waited to finish assignments and ready themselves for each day. With a 3.5 hour day, there wasn't as much learning happening.
- Overall communication of the Wellness Committee and their policies could be more robust. Perhaps partner with Communications for videos.

Responses from the Community Group Assessment (parents):

Strengths:

- Very excited about the response rate.
- Strongly agreed about promoting physical activity for students outside of school.

Opportunities to Improve:

- Growth - had no idea what the Wellness Committee was, did not know what it did. PE teachers know about it, however.
- Biggest concerns were nutrition at breakfast and lunch.
- School lunches and school breakfast, lack of nutrition, lack of parental concern. Delving into that deeper and figuring out what to do, what parents want to see on the menu. Another survey?
- Used to be taste testing during the transition from 5th to 6th grade, gets kids involved. Bring that back.
- More from stakeholders.
- COC - free membership at the Center when first hired, then never brought up again. More communication from the Center as we move into the fall.

Results of the Wellness Assessment:

Strengths:

- Assessment on our health and PE program was really great.
- Add COVID vaccines to page 8, perhaps All in Coalition, Prevent Ed speak to middle school and high - PE partners (COCA, Abra Cadabra).
- Page 6 - do we have vending machines at CHS...yes
- Page 17 - thought we did get feedback from families - we do but only if they reach out through email, just not formal solicitation.

Opportunities to Improve:

- Lack of communication.
- Stakeholders are not aware of the Wellness committee.
- We had some members disagree with some of the answers.
- Things that we do are good but not documented in handbooks.

A larger discussion centered around “nutritious meals”. Must weigh that with Federal guidelines, what we as a school district can and cannot do, due to following Federal and State guidelines. Covid created unique challenges this year. No child at school needs to miss a meal or go hungry. Every child is offered a meal. They may not choose to eat that meal. Michelle has the hope that once Covid restrictions are lifted that they can do more with food service.

Going forward:

- Form Mental Well-being sub-committee within the Wellness Committee
- School did a great job getting the Covid vaccine in the schools for students and staff. We should expand on that for meningitis, flu and other vaccines for students and staff.
- Partner with the Communications Department to develop wellness videos to targeted audiences (students, staff, parents, community members).
- Teen targeted program, partnering with the Center of Clayton for exercise or dance classes (yoga, hip-hop, etc.) for the 3-4 p.m. after school time slot. Create more after school programs that focus on exercise, healthy habits with socialization.
- More taste-testing from Chartwells to encourage students to try new things, provide feedback.
- Ask a District social worker to join the committee to speak to at-risk students, provide insight.
- Parents’ concern about PE and physical activity in middle school and high school - find more ways teachers can help students be active outside of the classroom. Professional development component for teachers.
- Farm to School program - better communication of that initiative.
- Psychologist for the District.
- Healthy initiatives for families, i.e., blood drive, Wellness fair.

Wellness Committee Members:

Mary Jo explained that members shift from one school to the next level. We ask everyone to serve for three years.

- Mary Jo thanked Sarah Centeno for her commitment to the committee over the past 4 years. It has been wonderful having a student voice.
- Tina Murtha - will no longer have an elementary student, so she will shift to be Wydown's representative and voting member.
- Christina Blankenship - will be the high school representative and voting member.
- Jennifer Todd - will be the Glenridge representative.
- Mina Nashan - will be the Captain representative.
- Jennifer Martin - will make a parent recommendation for Captain
- Debbie Reilly - will make a parent recommendation for the Family Center
- We have a vacancy at Meramec - we need a recommendation

Wellness Committee - Start of next year:

- Four meetings for next year
- Add a social worker to the Committee
- Perhaps add someone from the Communications Department to the Committee
- We will get schedules and agendas out for next year
- Monitor our progress
- It was voted that we would keep our virtual format; easier for most parents

The meeting ended at 5:29 p.m.

