

Social Emotional Health & Wellness Subcommittee Minutes
Wednesday February 1, 2023
BOE Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER: 1:07pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Janet Kuzma, Don Ramsey, Chris Melillo, Anne Dalton

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Wellness Week Update -

Anne Dalton let the committee know that the wellness committee had met this morning and they discussed wellness week and how to pull it together for the entire district. The suggestion was made to connect with all of the safe climate committees at each school. The committee discussed having themed days throughout the week and to have coordinating activities. They would like to have some type of “screen free” pledge and have an incentive for kids. Mr. Melillo mentioned maybe doing some type of letters to veterans/seniors for Thankful Thursday. Mr. Ramsey also suggested letters of gratitude for the staff from students. Mrs. Kuzma noted that the PTA’s would be a great resource for helping schools organize the planned activities. There was lots of discussion over “Farmer Market Friday” and how we could hold some type of farmers market type event. Mr. Ramsey suggested possibly doing an “adopt-a-farm” at each school. Mrs. Kuzma suggested a possible seed planting type activity. Mrs. Dalton also stated how this could lead to other events throughout the school year and they would like to put a little more emphasis on local farms/foods.

Discussion over Anonymous Alert App -

Mrs. Kuzma asked Mr. Melillo to give an update on the Anonymous Alert App. He stated that all alerts go to principals & superintendent. They address issues as they come. Most of the alerts are “mean behavior” but there have been a few reports related to other issues (race, harm to self, worried about others, and misconduct). Mrs. Kuzma asked where most of the reports are coming from. Mr. Melillo said mostly high school but middle school is a close second. Not many in elementary. Mr Ramsey asked if they see any mischievous reports or misuse of the app? Mr. Melillo said not really and that overall it’s been a good program and very helpful. Mrs. Kuzma asked if there has ever been discussion over changing to a new program or if they have looked into any other. Mr. Melillo said not really because it has worked well. He did note that one of the downfalls could be the anonymity because sometimes it’s hard to track down serious claims and where they are coming from. Mrs. Kuzma stated that the committee would like to see the data in the near future so we can see if there are trends in the reports.

Future Presentations/Topics for Committee-

Mrs. Kuzma asked the committee what topics or presentations they would like to see in the committee. Mr. Melillo said to let him know when we would like to see the Anonymous alert app data and he will present it to the committee.

Mrs. Kuzma stated she would like to hear more about the Hope Squad at the High School and how they have expanded to the middle school.

Anne Dalton said that she would like to hear a little follow up on the Project Adventure presentation and more from Reed & the High School.

Mr. Ramsey asked that we get some updates from school guidance counselors and social workers. He would like to hear more about what they are seeing in the schools. He also asked that we have a discussion about technology/social media and how it's impacting our students.

Mr. Melillo said they have had some discussions and that the middle school has a not phone usage in class but they did receive some pushback from parents. The safety committee has said twice that kids are actually safer in the classroom without phones during emergencies for various reasons. Mrs. Kuzma reminded the committee that we had previously discussed a technology/internet safety presentation. Anne Dalton said that the Center for Empowerment & Education does offer an internet safety course.

Approve minutes from December 5, 2022 - Mr. Ramsey makes the motion, Mrs. Kuzma seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Committee Calendar Meeting Dates - Mr. Ramsey made a motion to approve the committee calendar. Mrs. Kuzma seconded the motion. Motion passes unanimously.

HEALTH & WELLNESS COORDINATOR UPDATE:

Anne Dalton discussed the wellness classes taking place throughout the district by The Center for Empowerment and Education. She attended a few, one at Reed which was on Empathy vs. Sympathy and one at Sandy Hook for the younger grades done using a puppet show. She also spoke about the ongoing vaping concerns in the district, mostly at the high school. She expressed a need to educate kids earlier and have more education around vaping and addiction. Tricia Dahl has continued to come present to health 1 classes and that have another young college student coming in to Health 1 for a "vaping awareness" game in April. She also noted that she has a scheduled meeting with the prevention council coming up.

SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE: Mr. Mellilo stated that the Teen Talk program had been cut from the budget this year from Newtown Middle School due to lack of students using the services. However, they have applied for the Borough grant which could provide funds to cover this. He noted that the Teen Talk program is still running at the High School and has many more students taking advantage of it.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Kuzma seconded. Motion approved unanimously at 2:04pm.