

Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)

Meeting Minutes (Virtual)

Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 10:00 – 11:00 AM

BWC Members Present:

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Sophia Suarez-Friedman (Wayside), Wendy Conroy (Chair, Sexuality Educator), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Melissa O'Connor (BHS SRO), Corinne Jackman (BHS Nurse), Amy Kirsch (Belmont Helps, parent), Michelle Drolsbaugh (Minding Your Mind), Kim Raubenheimer (parent, nutritionist), Mike Crowley (School Committee, parent, Belmont Media Center), Portia Thompson (Parent)

BWC Members Absent:

Leah Lesser (parent), Veera Mylapore (parent), Jennifer Gillette, (The Loved Child, parent), Elizabeth Dionne (Warrant Committee member, parent), Elizabeth Brown (parent, Public Health Evaluator), Sue Morris (Chair of the Youth Commission), Traci Doherty (parent, nurse), Stephanie Sunderland (Wayside), Rev. Joe Zarro (Clergy, parent), Beth Rumley (Nursing Director), Annie Gladfelter (BASEC), Pam Eagar (Town Meeting Member), Sara Masucci (Teacher), Julie Crockett (TMM, parent), Jonna Logan (Nurse, parent), Jane Fox (Public Health Professional, parent), Janice Darius (Assistant Superintendent), Wesley Chin (Director, Health Department), Diana Ekman (Assistant Director, Health Department), Jeff Hansell (Media Specialist), Patti Forte (parent), Kate Bowen (School Committee member, parent), Kristine Pugliese (CMS SRO), Julia Patriciu (parent), Analia Barrantes Karma (parent), Michael Patti (Youth Coordinator)

1. Welcome, Introductions, Check-Ins

Lisa Gibalerio - MPH, Wayside, Program Coordinator for BWC

Sophia Suarez-Friedman - LCSW Wayside, Program Assistant for BWC

Anne Wang - Grant Evaluator, EDC

Melissa O'Connor - School Resource Officer at the High School

Kim Raubenheimer - Nutritionist and Fitness Coach, parent, Business Sector Representative

Wendy Conroy - Chair, MPH and background in healthcare policy and education, sex education

Mike Crowley - School Committee and Belmont Media Center

Corinne Jackman - School Nurse at Belmont High School

Michelle Drolsbaugh - Minding your Mind for Mental Health education

Portia Thompson - Parent

Amy Kirsch - Belmont Helps, BWC's Representative for Belmont Against Racism

2. **BWC Updates:**

a.) *Monthly Parenting Group*

We have had a successful 3 monthly PGs - with about 10-15 parents present. Parents share with each other and Lisa and Sophia offer insights/strategies.

Next Parenting Group Meets: **Tuesday, Feb. 9, 6:00 – 7:00 PM to talk about children's bodies changing.** Please invite people.

b.) *Upcoming McLean Programming*

Wendy has been talking with McLean about programming for Middle/High School parents for tips on working with kids related to mental health, isolation, the pandemic's impact. Stay tuned!

c.) *YRBS 2021*

Belmont will be administering the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to students in grades 7-12 with the Middlesex League this Spring. It will be great to have this data and compare it to the 2019 data. Anne has reached out to Janice to discuss the 2021 YRBS survey.

d.) *Student Ambassadors*

Sophia met with the students in December to do a focus group for the SAPC grant on social media images around stress and coping skills. They also discussed potential programming for the spring. Ideas were: 1) peer mentoring of high school students for middle school students; 2) storytelling around mental health experience to show that it is a common experience (could be podcast, panel, instagram posts, Instagram, in person with sticky notes, etc.). Will meet again soon to start planning.

e.) *Library*

Lisa is on the Library committee for One Book, One Belmont. This year's focus is two-fold: exploring systemic racism and healing/hope for Belmont.

3. **SEL student survey**

Anne, Wendy, Sophia, and Lisa created an SEL Survey based on other surveys with questions on stress (from YRBS), social emotional learning, and the pandemic's impact. Survey went out in December to students in grades 7 - 12 and then it was re-sent in January. So far, we have received about 700 responses. Anne has done some initial data analysis and Anne already shared slides with Janice. Still need to disaggregate on gender and race. Sophia will pull out themes from the open-ended questions.

There are other questions we haven't done analysis on because this data was what seemed the most pertinent.

Anne shared her screen with the data highlights, and Committee members shared their observations.

Observations:

- Melissa - not surprised about school, future/college, and schedule stress. Good to see that school pressures from peers is fairly low.
- Corinne - focused on 9th grade students. It makes sense they don't feel connected, think teachers expect too much, higher on overwhelming stress, bored and not excited. She thinks we should focus on them specifically on any actions we take. Stress levels are higher and tolerance is lower.
- Mike - strongest impression was also on 9th graders.
- Kim - strongest impression was lack of connection that students seem to feel with adults and the school staff.
- Wendy - looked at it from the lens of McLean's programming and isolation, but Wendy is noticing that the social isolation isn't the biggest worry - it's stress, schedule, future, and parent's demands. The parents seem to be more focused on youth isolation than kids. The fact that Belmont High is still challenging and competitive is still a big issue.
- Portia - Has a 9th and 11th grader and feels like the data is very accurate based on her personal concerns for her kids.
- Amy - concerned that kids say there is too much work because at the School Committee meetings parents say their kids aren't getting enough work. Feeling sad about the disconnection and therefore caring of adults in the community.
- Michelle - When talking about positive emotions - the biggest one was "safety" (what type of safety is this - physical and emotional) - and shows that the kids in the community feel safe regardless of the pandemic which is a huge protective factor. 7th graders are the ones struggling most to wake up and have difficulty getting enough sleep, it must be developmental.
- Sophia - Middle schoolers tend to be doing better with feelings, school, and stress. Interesting that students feel equally connected to family as friends - is this always true or just during the pandemic?
- Lisa - paid attention to 9th graders and wishing for data on 5th graders because they are also experiencing a major transition (to middle school). Wants to understand if they are really stressed about the schoolwork itself or if it's about pandemic anxiety that casts a dark cloud over them. (Concerning school work, students are technically doing slightly less than is typical.)

Root Causes:

- Pandemic
 - Feeling connected means extracurriculars which are not happening as they normally would
 - Feeling equally close to family as friends
 - Technically there is a bit less work, but they feel like there is too much
- Development (sleep for 7th grade)
- Transitions (9th graders)

- Grade 9 is more academically rigorous for the first time (see this reflected in sources of negative stress)

BWC Actions:

- Presentation at a School Committee meeting to be discussed (Mike)
 - Anne already shared data highlights with Janice.
- Work with parents
 - How to help kids be more social and feel more connected (Amy)
- Work with students
 - 9th grade programming, events, groups (Amy)
 - Student ambassadors want mentorship and mental health - could they offer mentorship to 9th graders? (Lisa)
 - Corrine - they just created an underclassman mentorship program
 - X Blocks (High school)/Community Blocks (Middle School) was supposed to be about support and has now become a study hall/teacher support. Is there a way to leverage the X blocks in person or virtually for more connection? (Wendy) You can opt your kids out, so many aren't attending.
 - Corinne - need to involve both students and teachers to make the connections. Teachers need the support too.
- Outside of school
 - Are there activities that BWC can collaborate with town rec to do? (Wendy)
 - Work with Youth Coordinator (he is invited to BWC, his focus is younger than high school)
 - Have reached out to Rec Department in the past but haven't lately (Lisa)
 - Kim will reach out to Rec Department (Thank you, Kim!)
 - Can BWC support clubs at school for connection in a non-academic way? (Wendy)

4. Closing Thoughts, New Business, etc.

Programming Ideas?

- Pandemic Outreach and/or Pandemic's Impact on Kids
 - Minding your Mind has been holding trainings incorporating mindfulness and SEL into parenting during the pandemic when stress is higher and tolerance is lower.
- Screen Time Impacts (managing screen time/cell phone use)
 - Wendy shared Screenagers and Common Sense Media have parent resources and Screenagers are letting people rent the documentary at home.
 - Michelle will send resources to Lisa, and will look into resources for screen time.

Links to *weekly video segments* can be found on BWC website: www.belmontwellness.org

Next BWC Meeting: Lisa will send a doodle.