

Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)

Meeting Minutes (Virtual)

Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 1:00 – 2:00 PM

BWC Members Present:

Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Wendy Conroy (BWC Chair, Sexuality Educator), Sophia Suarez-Friedman (Wayside), Rachel Bruno (PTSO), Anne Wang (EDC, Grant Evaluator), Melissa O'Connor (BHS SRO), Leah Lesser (parent), Corinne Jackman (BHS Nurse), Kim Raubenheimer (parent, nutritionist), Julie Crockett (TMM, parent), Portia Thompson (Parent), Jonathan Mack (Fitness Director, Waverley Oaks), Elizabeth Dionne (Warrant Committee member, parent), Amy Kirsch (Belmont Helps, parent)

BWC Members Absent:

Janice Darius (Assistant Superintendent), Mike Crowley (School Committee, parent, Belmont Media Center), Veera Mylapore (parent), Jennifer Gillette (The Loved Child, parent), Elizabeth Brown (parent, Public Health Evaluator), Sue Morris (Chair of the Youth Commission), Traci Doherty (parent, nurse), Rev. Joe Zarro (Clergy, parent), Beth Rumley (Nursing Director), Annie Gladfelter (BASEC), Pam Eagar (Town Meeting Member), Sara Masucci (Teacher), Jonna Logan (Nurse, parent), Jane Fox (Public Health Professional, parent), 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), Michelle Drolsbaugh (Minding Your Mind)

1. Welcome and Check-Ins

Lisa thanked attendees for being there and turned to the next item on the agenda.

2. BWC Updates:

a.) Youth Mental Health First Aid (Zoom)

Saturday, May 22 – Time: 9am-3pm

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/weve-been-there-mental-health-first-aid-working-with-youth-via-zoom-tickets-151325934945>

b.) Monthly Parenting Group

Next

Group Meets: **Tuesday, May 11, 7:00 – 8:00 PM**

How Much Sass is Too Much? Instilling Respect with Tweens/Teens

c.) Student Ambassadors

Mental Health Stories: students have shared on Instagram their successes and challenges with mental health experiences.

Summary of PTSO Event ~ May 6 - With students, we reviewed the SEL data highlights and the students shared useful information concerning sources of stress, what is helpful, and how adults can better support them. Three students attended and the PTSO took notes. The slides are on the [BWC website](#). Rachel added that it was a great event and the students provided helpful information on what they need from adults.

d.) Recreation Dept./BWC Summer Event

Kim noted the Rec Dept and the BWC are working together on an event this summer: Biathlon (running and swimming) to be held the 2nd weekend in August. Becca Pizzi and Kim will train with the kids throughout July. About 20 kids can participate in grades - 7th-12th. Students helpers can also volunteer and receive community service hours. Registration information will be posted to the Belmont Rec Department website and linked to BWC's website.

e.) SAPC Instagram Stress Campaign

Sophia noted that there is messaging going up on [BWC Instagram](#) centered around coping skills and stress. The messages will be put up in different languages.

f.) Follow up from BHS Administration

Melissa noted that she and Corinne met with Principal Taylor and assistant Principal (Ms. Ruane). They discussed the 9th grade concerns about feeling disconnected and isolated (similar feedback has been provided directly from Ellie Lesser, 9th grade BWC member). They also explored ways to offer support to this class. Principal Taylor felt like some of the ideas had already been incorporated. Leah noted that Ellie still hasn't heard from anyone in the administration about implementation of ideas, and encourages that the school speak directly with Ellie. Melissa and Corinne will reach out directly to Ellie, as well. Rachel and the PTSO are meeting with Ellie tomorrow.

3. 2021 YRBS Concerns

Summary of Parent Concerns:

Middle School parents felt like they weren't properly notified about YRBS and what it entailed as the email notification was embedded within the weekly newsletter. Parents heard from their kids about the content of the survey, and felt blindsided by the topics and were upset that they did not have an opportunity to talk with their kids about the topics ahead of time. Parents raised the

concerns to Janice Darias, who said parents were notified in the newsletter and that the YRBS involves “passive consent”, i.e., parents fill out and sign a form to decline.

Lisa and Portia requested (via email) of the Administration that in the future it would be helpful if the School Dept. is more clear when notifying parents about the YRBS. The notification should have its own email making it clear in the subject line that the YRBS is being administered and when. Also helpful would be to provide more information about the survey, and how to talk with kids about the topics.

Portia added that transparency and collaboration between schools and parents is important - also important to build on the strengths learned about in the YRBS with kids. Elizabeth added that it's important for kids to know that they are not alone in *not* engaging in risky behaviors. Anne agreed and said that students expect that their peers are engaging in more risky behaviors than they are. Wendy added that there is research saying that just asking questions about risky behaviors doesn't make a child engage in them.

Information about YRBS

BWC's role is to assess the data and to offer a School Committee and community presentation on the highlights of the data. (In addition to articles in the local paper and Belmont Media Center video segments). The YRBS is a national survey administered across the US; every school has the option to administer the survey and Belmont partners with the Middlesex League - who administers the survey - and is allowed to add up to 5 questions to the survey (but we cannot remove any questions). Data is compared to the state and national data and can be compared to neighboring communities. Leah works with Emerson hospital which administers the YRBS in nearby communities. She offered that if people want to know more, they can reach out to her.

Next Steps YRBS

We are hoping to be able to look at data from the YRBS during the late summer when the data is available. We will host several community events highlighting the data. We can put out Instagram messaging about the data (for example, 75% of students don't drink). We hope to compare with pre-pandemic YRBS from 2019 and also compare with the questions on the SEL Survey that were identical.

Updates - Continued:

- **Belmont Helps**

[The Children's Room](#) in Arlington is a support group for children and families coping with grief. Belmont Helps is transferring to a new home with the Belmont Food Collaborative.

- **Belmont Against Racism**

The next BAR meeting will have some excellent speakers on environmental justice. Link here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83317872953?pwd=SEdaeFhEakhXNThRdzQ0eFR4ajFMZz09>

4. Summer Sub-Committees (possibilities)

Lisa suggested that we select subcommittees in order to move forward with work this summer. Possible subcommittees include:

- ❖ Next Steps on SEL Data
- ❖ Planning for YRBS data rollout
- ❖ Planning for BWC programming for 2021/2022
- ❖ Ideas for website, Instagram, Social Media
- ❖ Student Ambassador Planning
- ❖ Summer Intern Project Ideas (Tip Sheets for Parents; workshop creations)

Please email Lisa or Sophia to join any of the above subcommittees. We expect to hold just a few meetings over the summer. We'd love to hear from you!

5. Closing Thoughts: The past year & looking ahead to the next

Thank you all for a great year under challenging circumstances! The Coalition succeeded in organizing and executing several outreach events and educational workshops throughout the year. We increased our visibility and our engagement within the Belmont community. We made several new connections in the community, started the monthly Parenting Group, launched the Student Ambassadors, provided dozens of educational video segments, created several new Tip Sheets, uploaded resources to our website, developed and implemented an Instagram social media campaign, and conducted and assessed the SEL survey -- all in the context of a global pandemic and in a virtual world. Sophia and I thank you all - we rely on our Coalition members to have the impact that we have.

I do hope it is possible to meet in person in the not too distant future - and, we will continue to adhere to state and CDC guidelines.

This is our last full BWC Meeting until Fall.