

Belmont Wellness Coalition (BWC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 8, 2022 from 12:30 – 1:30 PM

BWC members present: Lisa Gibalerio (Wayside), Maeve Kennelly (Wayside), Wendy Conroy (BWC Chair, Sexuality Educator), Janice Darias (Assistant Superintendent), Sam Resnick (BHS Social Worker), Leah Lesser (Belmont parent, Emerson Health marketing), Portia Thompson (parent), Megan Palmer (parent), Rachel Bruno (BC Clinical psychologist, parent)

1. Welcome [Introductions, Check-Ins]

Those present introduced themselves.

2. Data Updates:

- **VOCAL survey data (climate survey of grades 4, 5, 8 and 10)**

Janice provided highlights of the VOCAL (Views On Climate And Learning) data survey which is administered to students in grades 4, 5, 8 and 10 in conjunction with the MCAS.

Janice noted that the response rate is pretty high, 75% for high school last year. The DESI dashboard was updated recently to be more user friendly. She noted that the School Dept. decided to put data out to the public so they can see how students experience school. Janice next discussed the three main categories: engagement, safety, and environment. She noted how it was important to view the data as not just the averages, but looking at specific identifiers as well (socioeconomically, ethnically, etc). She shared participation rates, overall school climate scores, engagement, safety, and environment scores. Elementary schools are generally scored higher than high school; this is not unusual compared to state numbers.

She discussed disparities in data relating to all students versus African American, Hispanic, and English Language Learners.

BWC comments and questions:

Rachel asked how many times this has been done; the answer was since 2018 (annually). Rachel noted how important it is for the schools to see where students are feeling disconnected in relation to discipline.

Megan shared that giving the data to the Principals and school staff will be incredibly useful. She then asked what resources do the school personnel have in terms of responding to/addressing this data? Janice said it depends on focus areas. PD has helped in the past and this will be tied to Project Based Learning, engaging the DEI Director (Chan'tel Washington), and individually supporting Principals in DEI work and curriculum.

Portia mentioned how exciting this sounds and followed up by asking how the VOCAL data could be shared with parents and caregivers to show that efforts are being made and inclusivity work is being done.

Wendy shared her thanks for sharing the data, and added that she's not surprised as this data reflects national data. She asked about the vaping diversionary program and how the district talks about discipline and consequences with a more restorative justice angle.

Janice agreed and added that at its foundation, it's important for all school leaders to understand that students making 'bad' choices are opportunities to learn, rather than applying only disciplinary consequences.

- **2022 YRBS from Concord/Carlisle**

Nadia provided some data highlights for the 2022 YRBS from Concord/Carlisle (CC).

Lisa noted that since Belmont was not scheduled to administer the survey in 2022, we thought it would be interesting to look at this data.

Nadia: CC focused on some interesting points, e.g., cyberbullying, sexting, self harm and medical care - some areas that Belmont does not ask about. CC has done similar work to BWC in terms of education for DEI. Suicide and overwhelming stress are asked about differently .

Belmont does ask about stress at home, CC did not. CC asked YRBS questions that Belmont can consider incorporating into its YRBS, e.g., sexual harassment.

Belmont's 2021 YRBS was given right at the end of COVID - which may be related to decrease in substance use in Belmont?

Wendy shared that sexual abuse and violations are a key trigger for substance misuse; she asked: how do we address this issue if we don't ask about it in our YRBS?

Lisa and Janice will discuss meeting with the Middlesex League to explore questions that may be added or adjusted.

3. **2023 Programming:** (Skipped this item due to time constraints - BWC members - please read:)

- The NAN Project -- **Suicide Prevention FACTS (Feelings, Actions, Changes, Threats, Situations)** – tentative date: Monday, March 6 at 7:00 PM
- “Straight Talk” with BHS Seniors (no date yet)
- *Having Difficult Conversations* – Parents of grades 7 – 12 (no date yet)
- BHS Seniors and Parents (Social Host, Substance Misuse strategies, etc.) usually held in April

4. **Student Ambassador Updates:**

- Where they want to focus - (mental health and response to hate speech)
- The NAN Project possibilities (e.g., peer mentorship, QPR)
- Note: BWC/SA meeting see next item

Maeve shared what the SA shared in their first meeting and what themes they see emerging which include overwhelming stress, mental health awareness, creating meaningful activities.

Maeve briefly discussed the NAN Project joining the Student Ambassadors to work to raise awareness for upcoming programs and suicide prevention.

5. **BWC and Student Ambassador Combined Meeting:**

WED., Nov. 16 at 7:00 PM - Fire Station on Trapelo Road (the NAN Project)

BWC - please try to attend to hear directly from students!

6. **Closing Thoughts and other Updates**

Maeve will send a doodle.