

Bernards Township Board of Education
Wellness Committee Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2024

Administrators in Attendance: Kristin Fox, Karen Hudock, Russ Lazovick, Nick Markarian, Jean O'Connell, Sean Siet, Stephanie Smith

Board Members in Attendance: Janice Corrado, Csilla Csipak, Tim Salmon, Jennifer White

- 1. Communicating Unified Course Offerings:** Unified Champion Schools are affiliated with Special Olympics; their goal is to promote meaningful social inclusion by bringing together students with and without intellectual disabilities through sports, clubs, and leadership programs. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools currently offer programs in 8,358 schools in 49 states. Ridge and William Annin schools have participated in Unified Sports programs, including basketball and swimming, for several years.

This Fall, the district is offering a new Unified Leadership course which would pair students in selected high school elective classes. One board member asked if the district has plans to share information about the program with the larger community. Mr. Markarian noted that administrators are monitoring the number of course requests for the class and will have a better idea of the number of students involved this Spring.

- 2. Panorama Education Surveys:** Ms. Fox provided an update on surveys being developed as part of the district's goal to utilize data to measure student social-emotional learning competencies, in much the same way as we monitor progress in reading and math. Ms. Fox shared drafts of surveys for students in grades 3-5, 6-12, and for teachers of students in grades K-2. Initial drafts of the surveys are linked here. The administrative team will meet on Tuesday, February 27th, to fine-tune the survey questions and determine the grade levels at which they would like to administer the survey. This topic will continue to be discussed at the next Curriculum Committee meeting on March 1st. The drafts that were reviewed at this meeting are linked here: [Grades 3-5 SEL Survey Questions](#), [Grades 6-12 SEL Survey Questions](#), [K-2 Teacher Perceptions](#), and [Grades 6-12 Equity and Inclusion Questions](#).

Panorama provides a dashboard that allows the district to look at multiple measures related to CASEL social-emotional competencies. Ms. Fox shared that the dashboard can be used to help identify which specific interventions are most effective.

The Panorama dashboard will be piloted first at William Annin School. A brief additional survey on the topic of equity and inclusion is planned for students in grades 6-12; the responses to this survey will help guide the writing of the Character Education curriculum for William Annin. One board member suggested including questions regarding disability awareness, which the administrative team will consider.

3. Ridge Wellness Days

- **January 31, 2024:** The January Student Wellness Day focused on Academic Advisement. Dr. Lazovick shared that he was happy to see that attendance for this Wellness Day was higher than in the past, including for the Senior Update session. Students had the opportunity to attend showcase performances by Forensics and Band members. As has been done in the past, the administration and teachers will utilize student feedback and meet to discuss what they feel worked well and what they would like to change for the next session.
 - Eight members of the Bernards Township community participated in a Career Panel representing a variety of occupations. This session was particularly well received, and students requested additional real-world experiences for future Wellness Day sessions. [Flyer](#)
 - Also extremely popular was the Academic Course Fair, where students had the opportunity to ask questions of more than 40 Ridge teachers representing all departments. In preparation for the Fair, Dr. Lazovick had sent home a worksheet for parents and students to complete together; this helped to generate pertinent questions about specific course offerings, levels, and time management considerations. Counselors reported that more students completed their schedules in Genesis and were better prepared with specific questions for their course selection meetings following the Fair.
 - Teacher response to the Academic Fair was also overwhelmingly positive, despite the additional work required to prepare for the event. Staff is already considering ways to better plan for 2025.

- **February 28, 2024:** Ms. Smith provided a preview of the upcoming Staff Wellness Day, entitled “Winter Reboot.” ([Brochure here](#)). A committee of administrators and instructional coaches organized this event. The content of these sessions was informed by professional development committee members from all six schools, from staff requests, and is aligned with district goals.

- All staff members will attend a keynote address by John Mopper, LPC, a well-known expert who will speak on “Being an Educator in 2024,” providing information on developing gratitude and resilience in students following the pandemic.
- In addition to the keynote speaker, 7 out-of-district guest speakers and the entire administrative team will present and facilitate 16 breakout sessions. Staff will select two breakout sessions of their choice from the 16 offerings provided.

- 4. Effective School Solutions [Presentation](#):** Duncan Young, CEO, and Melissa DeLucia, Regional Director, presented a midyear update on the success of the ESS program. ESS counselors work with students and families when all other school-provided resources have been exhausted. ESS counselors and case managers are currently seeing 27 Bernards Township students. In addition to meeting weekly with students in individual and group sessions, ESS staff provide support group meetings for parents one to two times per month; about 5 parents attended these sessions this past year. ESS also has held three parent presentations this year, available to any parent in the district; the attendance has varied from 6 at in person meetings to 15 when the presentation was virtual.
- a. As a follow up to December’s Wellness Committee report, ESS provided updated student data on three indicators: academic grades, attendance, and discipline. Students must be enrolled for at least six weeks in the ESS program to be included in the reports; on slide 4 of the presentation, the bar graphs included all students for their entirety of length in the program.
 - b. ESS will provide anonymous reports on an individual student basis showing progress for each student on each of the three indicators, as had been requested by committee members.
 - c. Beginning in March 2024, ESS plans to pilot a commercial healthcare insurance program with five school districts in an effort to help defray costs for the program. If Bernards Township chooses to participate at some point in the future, letters would be sent to parents with students in the ESS program asking them to opt in to the insurance plan. Parents would be required to cover copay costs, and a family would have to have met their healthcare deductible for the ESS copay to kick in.

The next Wellness Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 27th. For the remainder of this year, most meetings will be held on the fourth Thursday of each month except in March and April when meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday,

and in November and December when the committee will meet on the third Thursday due to Thanksgiving and Winter Break.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Corrado