

Bernards Township School District
Board of Education Committee Meeting: Wellness
June 21, 2023

In Attendance: Csilla Csipak, Kristin Fox, Ruchika Hira, Karen Hudock, Russ Lazovick, Robin McKeon, Sean Siet, Stephanie Smith, Jennifer White

1. **Lifelines Suicide Prevention Program Update:** Earlier in the year, Ms. Smith shared information on the Lifelines Suicide Program that guidance, counselors, administrators, child study team members were all involved. The administrators who attended are all part of their own school crisis team. The trainings for this program occur in three phases: Postvention, Intervention, and Prevention. So far there have been three highly attended training sessions, April 11, May 31, and June 7, for the Postvention and Intervention series. At the most recent training, the room was filled with staff. Post response means, how do we respond after something has happened. Each training began with a pretest to determine working knowledge and concluded with a post test. Each training concluded with discussion about what was liked about the training, what else would be helpful to include in training and takeaways. There was tremendous feedback that more is needed in terms of time devoted to this training. The training was run by Marney Rhoda from Lifelines, in partnership with Empower Somerset. She ran through a number of scenarios of varying crises, but primarily how to respond to the loss of someone which the community could need support handling. The training was discussion based but we have access to a comprehensive manual. Feedback has been extremely positive from appreciating being provided specific verbiage on how to speak with students and parents on tough subjects, to actual concrete ideas and statements to use, and activities to use to practice skills. It also reiterated the importance of a detailed safety plan which our district does have. Questions such as what are the most effective ways to provide resources were also reviewed. Staff reported coming out of the training feeling better prepared, aware of what ifs, why do we do this, and why don't we do that. Ms. Smith will be meeting with small groups to review the recommendations. The third part of this program will be Prevention, which includes classroom lessons. Over the summer a curriculum team will be looking at the health curriculum as there are two lessons that must be implemented on this topic. However, we have the choice to determine which grade level it is most appropriate to include each lesson.

2. **RHS Tea Time/Brew Panel Discussion:** Dr. Lazovick discussed and provided feedback on the recent Brew student panel held on June 8th. It was highly attended and the students who participated would like to have more conversations such as the ones that took place. They want more students to be involved and reported being surprised but pleased that they were allowed to speak freely, openly and honestly. Some of the feedback students shared: 1. feeling academic pressure, (including taking honors, AP courses that they might not be suited to take) 2. competition with peers, (rather than supporting a peer accomplishment, peers are seen as those who may take something from them) 3. growing anxiety, 4. concern for peers in crisis and what to do for them, 5. too much emphasis on grades, test scores etc. which included the frequent Genesis review that causes angst. They like the rotating drop schedule as it does offer time and a breather from a full schedule. Students are asking for relief. They are not asking for

added rigor. This evening was the culmination of two years of work that includes a full program of lessons to be utilized Freshman through Senior year. While the teachers involved have completed creating the lessons, they will still be needed to coordinate wellness days and manage the teacup recognition that students and staff are part of as well as being involved in any other Brew panels. A takeaway from the night was that students do not fully understand the role of SACS and may not be aware of all resources available to them. They have their ideas for exploring non academic passions that can be brought to life through the already existing lunch opportunity period. It was suggested to have Brews earlier in the year in order to start conversations with students immediately and students share that they thought now that their peers have seen they were able to talk freely, they would likely want to participate too. We discussed possible ideas of what else can be done to facilitate communication and what other types of panel discussions might be beneficial for students. Some ideas are to bring parents, graduates, and current students together or perhaps ask other schools' students and staff to join in and discuss what is similar or different among student perceptions. The panel discussion was an excellent opportunity for those who participated and attended. The committee discussed the ongoing issue of poor attendance at presentations/ workshops as while freshman orientation may be highly attended, the same cannot be said for other events.

3. **Review of Meeting Dates:** Lastly Ms. Smith reviewed the dates for the remaining meetings of the school year.

Thursday September 28, 2023, 9:00-11:00am, BOE Conference Room

Thursday October 26, 2023, 9:00-11:00am, BOE Conference Room

Thursday November 30, 2023, 9:00-11:00am, BOE Conference Room

Thursday December 21, 2023, 9:00-11:00am, BOE Conference Room

Thursday January 25, 2024, 9:00-11:00am, BOE Conference Room

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer White