

Bernards Township School District  
Board of Education Committee Meeting: Wellness  
November 30, 2023

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**Minutes**

**In Attendance: Kristin Fox, Russ Lazovick, Nick Markarian, Keith Molinari, Jean O'Connell, Stephanie Orr, Sean Siet, Stephanie Smith. Jennifer White**

**1. WAMS Social Media Project:**

<https://www.halfthestoryproject.com/social-media-u>. Ms. Smith shared that WAMS is exploring a digital citizenship and Wellness program, Half the Story, which was created to combat the problems and pitfalls of social media that influence teenagers. The premise is that what students see on social media is half the story and the approach the program takes is to teach and make kids aware of what is dangerous and how to recognize that social media can be manipulative. Core offerings include "Social Media U", to learn about digital wellness skills and healthy practices through a series of lessons that can be offered to 11-18 year olds. Current conversations include the WAMS counseling team and they have been asked to review this program for potential use. We are just at the discovery part of the conversation and are engaging in interest meetings with the company, reviewing research and evidence based data that they have. Conversation also includes determining potential logistical rollout of the lessons within the school day. The company is creating a safe site for the team to explore that may be appropriate for our middle school age students.

**2. RHS Pathways Programs Update:** A goal of the board has been to expand the Pathways program and Dr. Lazovick was pleased to share the growth of the program. To review currently there are 3 different Pathways Programs available at Ridge. 1. School to Work, 2. Full Year Internship 3. Early Credit. The May - June Internship will also be available once again this spring.

● **2023-24**

School to Work - 8

Internship - 4 (full year)

Early Credit - 0

**2022-23**

School to Work - 2

Internship - 4

Early Credit - 1

May-June Internship - 8

**2021-22**

Only May-June - 3

There have been a few action items developed for the year. 1. Counselors present to students during Program of Studies Presentation about the program 2. Develop a career panel of potential hosts/site supervisors 3. Weave in Naviance career resources. The following goals have been set:

- Send letter to entire Basking Ridge Business Alliance inviting Partnerships and asking businesses to commit to our program.

- Create a catalog of contact information and descriptions of potential internship responsibilities. This will help students look into potential internship opportunities whereas in the past the onus of responsibilities fell on the students to find an internship.
  - Develop website page with this information that will be on the landing page of the Ridge Website.
3. **Counseling Update:** Ms Smith shared a brief update about the Junior Night Presentation that took place last week. She was very happy to report that she has received a great deal of feedback since the presentation. (377 feedback responses from students) There was high turnout to the presentation and information from the evening will be on the website. The counseling department is shifting gears to meeting with freshmen and seeking how they are doing and how the first semester has gone for them, checking on adjustment, support needed, and developing a relationship is a focus. Ms Smith will also be working on a brand new Sophomore presentation following the model of the junior one that will include 10 recommendations for the students. It will include a career interface which will be shared with parents and will be found in Naviance.
  4. **SEL Data: Board Goal Progress Update:** Ms. Fox shared that under consideration is the utilization of software to help have valid and reliable measures of student SEL competencies. Initial proposals from Aperture, Satchel Plus, and Panorama are being explored. Each proposal includes a variety of price options, sample student surveys, and are able to target grades or grade bands, discipline, and testing results. Training time would be needed to learn how to utilize it. Right now we are just at the stage of comparing the surveys each company offers. There are pros and cons for each and we will have to determine how we would want to utilize it and where we might want to pilot it. One suggestion is Health class may be a place to use the surveys. The goal of each company is to help streamline data so it is all in one place and a holistic view of each student can be readily available.
  5. **Professional Development:** Lifelines Training 3 part series which has been outlined and shared previously has been completed for K-12 staff. January and February planning is underway. Planning for academic planning and the course of study is underway. Currently Ms. Smith is putting together a college panel to have admission representatives speak of trends, choosing courses and rigor, a career panel and is hoping to have professionals speak about careers while as well as a campus fair where students can speak with teachers about courses and also meet with students currently enrolled in courses to ask questions prior to requesting courses for next fall. Staff Wellness will be the focus for February.
  6. **Big Sibling Mentoring Program:** Dr. Thorpe shared that there was a major shift as the original mentors graduated. Numbers grew last year to 240 Big/Little pairs (480 students from all schools in the district) Then last June 86 Seniors in the program graduated which meant having to find new pairings. Seniors were asked to be a part of the transition with their Littles and their new Bigs. A big recruitment campaign was started and as of to date, all Bigs and Littles have connected.

Currently, there are 182 Big/ Little Pairs. 364 students from all schools in the district are participating. About 90% of our Big/Little pairs are meeting in-person at least some of the time. There have also been a few Big Sibling events offered such as Field Day last spring and the Halloween party in October which had a great turnout. The club officers are gearing up for the Holiday Party this month which will involve craft activities and watching the original animated Grinch Movie. Outstanding members continue to be recognized monthly. New this year will be a mandatory meeting for all students participating in the program which will be offered at a variety of times to accommodate a variety of schedules. The program continues to be widely successful.

Our next meeting will be on December 21st.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer White