

Bernards Township Board of Education

September 28, 2023
Wellness Committee Minutes

In Attendance: Csilla Csipak, Kristin Fox, Karen Hudock, Russ Lazovick, Robin McKeon, Nick Markarian, Jean O'Connell, Stephanie Smith, Jennifer White

1. **Meeting Dates:** We reviewed the dates/times for the remaining meetings. They are as follows:
October 26
November 30
December 21
January 25
2. **School Counseling - School Opening Update:** Ms. Smith shared that the goal is for students to all be in the classes that they best fit. The counseling department continues to process requests which can be made until the 10th day of school to either level up or level down. The requests are slowing down and are on par with what is expected.

Ms. O'Connell gave a brief overview of how the start of the school year has gone for special education students. It was very helpful having CST's come in early this year in order to make sure students are where they need to be. Services are being provided to students that are on the counselors' radar but it is too soon to tell what new issues may arise or to determine what the trends may be this year.

At Ridge, High School events such as a Senior Night presentation have taken place. There was a great turnout to this presentation which has been recorded. Since the evening, there have been 100 views of the presentation and parents have reached out with follow up questions as well as to offer feedback. The checklist document that is provided to seniors as they ready themselves for submitting college applications was revised to empower students. The final product is easy to read and clearly outlines the steps needed to properly complete and submit the applications.

The first RHS Counseling Newsletter of the year was sent out which highlights important information for seniors, links and resources as well as includes information on college representative visits. There are already over 100 college representatives scheduled to come to the college fair and meet with students. A

list of events planned for the year are as follows: College Fair on October 12th, Junior Year Post-Secondary Planning Presentation on November 29th, Financial Aid Information Night on December 6th, Sophomore Year Post-Secondary Planning Presentation on January 4th, and Transitioning to College with an IEP/504 Plan on April 4th.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Spd9s4RXuBrELRgWycgD8FIJKNonzkkX/view>

Dr. Lazovick shared that there will be some counselor workshops offered during unit lunch opportunity periods for students on topics such as essay writing and completing the common application to name a few. The idea is to select topics that will be appealing and helpful to students. Feedback will be collected in order to make the workshops as beneficial as possible. About 10 students attended the first essay writing workshop which just took place this week.

Effective School Solutions will be offering parent workshops which will run in December - June. The workshops will be Depression in Children and Adolescence, Supporting Students with Stress and Worries, How to talk to Kids and Survive, Social Media Strengthening Care Giver Connectivity and Mental Health Survival Guide Surviving Summer Break. An Internet Safety Parent Academy is also being planned. The dates for the workshops will be listed on the website.

- 3. Professional Development: In Services & Plans:** October 4th will be the first Inservice Day this year. The staff is also planning for an upcoming K-12 wellness day in February. The vision is to plan a professional development day focused on teacher/staff wellness for educator's well being. Investing in staff wellness has an impact on student experience. The mission is to coordinate with community resources for volunteers to help our staff through various sessions, create choices for staff and enjoy the experience together.

For October, Ridge students will also have a Wellness day in the morning. Each grade will have a class meeting devoted to Wellness. The PTO is sponsoring a guest speaker presentation by Andrew Michinard who has been extremely well received by our students on past visits when he shared his experience with drugs and alcohol. It is a serious topic and his perspective really impacts students. He was an athlete who made a poor decision and he didn't get help because no one thought a student such as himself would need it. He will share his experience with all grade levels from what happened to him to how he has gotten to where he

is. The seniors will have a session devoted to the college piece and there will be a time for students to gather and spend time with their grade level.

4. **Lifelines Suicide Prevention Program Update:** This is a continuation of a 3 year partnership that was secured through a county grant and it has been very well received by staff. As reported previously, crisis training took place in April and May. Intervention Training took place in June and September where SACs and counselors from all schools were provided up to date information on youth suicidality with a focus on a conversation approach to supporting youth in crisis. Prevention Training continued in September with PE and Health teachers from the middle school and high school as well as counselors from all schools on implementing a comprehensive Suicide Prevention program. The program includes adult components for school faculty and staff and parents and guardians. The student portion of the Suicide Prevention program is evidence-based and will be taught in grades 6,7,9 and 12 through their health classes this year. Lifelines spent a day with teachers this summer to help best determine where this content should be placed. On-Going Consultation and Support from Empower Somerset and our Lifelines Trainer will continue this year. Parent/Guardian Workshop on Prevention on October 18th. Full Faculty and Staff Trainings will be held at every building this fall.
5. **Parent Academy Series:** There is now a tab on the Bernardsboe website that lists by month all upcoming events for parents. They are organized into two categories: Core Events and all other Educational Opportunities. The Parent Academy includes all meetings, events and educational opportunities that are designed to provide parents with the information and tools to maximize the educational outcomes for their children. Core Events are typically key experiences that apply to all parents and they should attend these at least once at appropriate times throughout their child's K-12 experience. Other Educational Opportunities may be aimed toward specific topics or specific to the needs of individual students. The first of these parent academies was held September 26th, Navigating District Resources which was extremely helpful to those who came but unfortunately there was a small turnout. Following this presentation, the Resources for Parent/Students was launched on the district website and all information can be found easily.

Our next meeting will be October 26th.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer White