

BOE Social Emotional Health & Wellness Committee Minutes

Friday, March 4, 2022, 10:30am

BOE Conference Room

3 Primrose St., Newtown, CT 06470

Present: Janet Kuzma (chair), Jennifer Larkin (member), Deborra Zukowski (member), Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue (superintendent), Anne Dalton (Health and Wellness Coordinator) and one member of the public.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:33 by Ms. Kuzma.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion & review of Committee goals with Anne Dalton

Ms. Dalton shared that she was familiar with the role, as she had supported Ms. Blanchard in the role prior to Ms. Blanchard's retirement. She will be advocating for the district both within the schools and for the schools within the context of the larger community. Her initial focus will be to gather information, including administering and reviewing the tri-annual Health and Wellness survey and receiving data from PEAC-sponsored surveys.

The committee then reviewed the following goals that were agreed to in their previous meeting. There was followup discussion on the "Audit current programming related to social-emotional health and wellness" goal. The group agreed that "assess" was a more appropriate word to describe the goal. This modification is shown in the goals below.

Social Emotional Health and Wellness Committee Goals:

- Acclimate the new Health and Wellness Coordinator to the committee
- Understand and support the coordinator's efforts including district-level services as well as partnerships with town and community service providers.
- Understand the current status of the social-emotional health of students and staff within the context of school programming and how that status is ascertained.
- Better define what "social-emotional" entails and how it is symbiotic with the district's Social Emotional Learning efforts.
- Assess (*was Audit*) current programming related to social-emotional health and wellness
- Listen, support, and communicate related programming, resources, and impact.

Ms. Dalton will start creating a list of available services in both overall health and wellness and in social emotional support along with an initial assessment of the needs of the school community. The committee plans on doing a "gap analysis" with Ms. Dalton to ensure that the resources available are sufficient to address the needs of the school community. It will also support Ms. Dalton's efforts to build awareness of available services.

The committee also talked about the scope of the committee and the need to prioritize efforts. This discussion will continue as more information becomes available.

2. HOPE squad & Community partnerships

- Ms. Dalton will be coordinating with Town departments including the Community Center, Department of Public Health, and Social Services.

- Ms. Kuzma mentioned being contacted by a student associated with the HOPE Squad program and the committee discussed how best to partner with the squad. The committee agreed that the first step is to learn more about the squad's efforts.
- Ms. Kuzma mentioned that the Community Center is hosting a social-emotional program on Thursday, April 7.
- Ms. Zukowski asked about connecting with Parent Connection.
- Dr. Rodrigue added that the Newtown High School is canvassing community members to provide mentors and internship opportunities to students for Capstone projects related to disease prevention.

3. Approve minutes from January 28, 2022

Ms. Larkin moved to approve the minutes of January 28, 2022. Ms. Kuzma seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE

Dr. Rodrigue shared that PEAC planned to survey members of the community about their awareness of organizations related to mental health care and barriers to that care that they believe may need to be addressed. The results and understanding gained from the survey will be shared with both district and Town departments.

Dr. Rodrigue also mentioned that the Drug and Alcohol Prevention Council was being reinvigorated, and its annual full-scale survey will be resuming as well as related programming.

In addition, she talked about the Link Crew, a student program available at Newtown High School that partners high school students with incoming freshmen to help them acclimate to the high school environment.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kate McGrady, 26 Philo Curtis, suggested the substance abuse program Smart Recovery to complement prevention strategies. She added that there should be a focus on anxiety and other social and psychological conditions, and mentioned support for two Sandy Hook Promise programs, SOS and Say Something.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms Larkin moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:25 am, seconded by Ms. Zukowski. Motion passed unanimously.