

Bronx Charter School For Excellence - Wellness Meeting Minutes 2024

Date: 4/17/2024

Attendees: Geoffrey Ramsey, Tsedale Tomlinson, Aya Wakamatsu Taylor, James Kusi-Appouh, Jasmine Mansell, Rachel Walker, Winsome Nevins-Warden, Jermal Wilson, Waldemar Forbes, Chenny Jose, Andrew McKinley, Carlos Figueroa

Wellness Committee Members: Aya Wakamatsu Taylor, James Kusi-Appouh, Jasmine Mansell, Rachel Walker, Winsome Nevins-Warden, Jermal Wilson, Waldemar Forbes, Chenny Jose, Andrew McKinley, Carlos Figueroa

Agenda Topics:

Nutrition Education

Physical Activity

Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals

Wellness Promotion and Marketing

In Detail:

1) Nutrition Education:

a. To satisfy Family & Community engagement, we discussed that the Wellness Policy will be posted on the school website.

b. The Operations Leaders send a weekly newsletter which includes the menu. We discussed adding nutrition and health Fun Facts to this periodically, which we plan to start this year.

c. Nutrition education begins in Kindergarten. In the past, students have been taught through the My Health curriculum. Usually this is taught all year as its own subject, with students taking a mid-term and final exam to measure progress. The length of each class varies by grade, with the idea that each grade goes deeper into content and builds upon previous knowledge. Although My Health has tapered off in recent years, we talked about the possibility of resuming this program.

Nutrition is also taught during breakfast and lunch blocks by discussing healthy and balanced meal choices.

d. Lifelong lifestyle balance is reinforced by linking nutrition and physical activity, and students learn about this connection in gym class, and also in their daily activities.

e. In terms of nutrition education outside the classroom, we discussed how our school takes field trips to places such as the The New York Botanical Garden. We also visit The Museum of Natural History, which can sometimes have current relevant information in relation to nutrition and health.

Bronx Excellence 1 has hydroponic kits from pre-pandemic, and we hope to be able to resume this program. They had participated in the NYC Grows hydroponic program, and students had been growing food successfully.

This location also has a terrace, and leadership has talked about turning it into an Urban Garden growing area, to take teaching the Farm-To-Table concept to the next hands-on level.

2) Physical Activity:

a. Students take gym class twice a week, for hour-long periods. Fifth grade gym is 45 minutes.

b. Students have opportunities for Physical Activity throughout the day, called Shake Breaks. For example, teachers can put on a You Tube video for students to follow along with and move their bodies.

c. We discussed that students have about 30 minutes of supervised recess daily. 30 min for recess, 30 minutes for lunch.

d. Our school offers After School activities and sports such as soccer, basketball, volleyball, Step, and Cheerleading.

e. In terms of promoting active ways of getting to school, the students are pretty young, and the areas around the schools are not necessarily conducive to safe biking or scooting to school. However if students have the need, the schools do provide a way to store their items.

f. In terms of community partnership programs related to physical activity, our schools offer a Family Fitness Night once or twice a year, where parents come to do things like Zumba, as a family. The school communicates these events with families through multiple sources: flyers sent in backpacks, emailed in newsletter, and also texted through the School Messenger system directly to cell phones.

There is also an annual event called Field Day. This is held every June, without parents, and occurs during the school day. It is a very active, all-day event. There is variation on location and details, from campus to campus, but one example is Field Day at Pelham Park.

We had an event called Carnival Day, which was held in the school gym. We also noted that, although not specifically for activity, trips taken to the Bronx Zoo and to the NY Botanical Garden require extensive walking.

g. Stress Management and Mental Health tools were offered, for the first time, during the annual Professional Development session this past August 2023. Meditation, breathing, visualization, and gratitude were all discussed as tools for both staff and students.

There is also staff wellness support through their health insurance, which sends out emails reminding them of benefits such as: Emotional Support Line, Virtual Medical Visits, and an App specifically for Wellness.

HR also sends staff emails further reminding them of resources mentioned above, etc.

A masseuse has been brought in for Teacher Appreciation Day, as another example of Wellness tools made available for staff.

Our school is currently looking into a new program called Digital Detox as a potential tool to offer to students and staff.

3) Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals

a. We discussed that BAB is mandatory, and our schools already offer this to students. Depending on the school building and individual school rules, students that come in late know that they can eat in a classroom with a late pass, at the Nurse station, or in the Operations office. However, not many students come late for breakfast overall.

b. Food Service Staff meets hiring requirements, receiving required annual training, and Food Protection certificates.

c. The kitchen staff pay attention to what the students like to eat. Middle school students often communicate with them about their likes and dislikes. This makes it easier to learn what menus are working for students and which ones are not. In addition, some staff have children that attend the schools, and get inside feedback that way.

The schools have Student Council and we discussed the possibility of forming a student body to be in charge of menu feedback and representing the voice of the students,

giving them the opportunity to actively participating in the meal program and its ongoing success.

All school leaders scrutinize menus and meal counts, working to regularly adjust the menu to best fit the needs of their students and minimize waste. They use an elaborate and detailed network spreadsheet which helps them track results and plan for future goals.

4) Wellness Promotion and Marketing

a. Some of the schools (not all) hold fundraising events/bake sales about once or twice a year. Parents send in things they think will sell, and these items are not always healthy. Our schools frequently remind families to send in healthy choices, sometimes through our newsletters as one example, and this is also in our Family Handbook. At the meeting we discussed how to effectively remind families about this. We will bring this subject up with the PA.

b. For Farm to School activities, as previously mentioned, the schools take field trips to places such as The NY Botanical Gardens, and Bronx Excellence 1 has the terrace as a potential location for urban growing, and will also look into resuming work with the hydroponic growing kits.

c. The students get healthy meal choices through their food vendor, with freshly made food, fresh fruits and vegetables, and exposure to a variety of offerings.