

WELLNESS COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES MAY 23, 2018

Agenda included 3 topics anticipated to take up the entire meeting:

- 1) Implementation of the Wellness Policy
- 2) Food Service Program Update: Performance of Program and Debt of Students,
- 3) Food Service Program: Lunch Price increase and options for School Committee consideration

Attendance

MaryEllen Dunn
Matt Gillis
Gus Travassos
Tricia Laham
Gloria Rudisch
June Harris
Lynne Karsten
Swannie Jett
Paul Harris
Blanka Bogdanovic
Donna Pertel
Bettina Neufeind
John P.
A Rengel
Margaret Bruin
Helen Delichatsios
Elvira Perez
Kim Smith
Chris Chanyasulkit
Lisi Lisi
Guests:
Dann Perry
Katherine Ingraham
Craig Haller
Will Slotnick

Introductions

Lynne Karsten: Shared June 21st Yoga in the Park flyer

MaryEllen Dunn explained the role of Wellness Committee Meeting members of solution finding, recommending process and direction for committee, and offering guidance to staff, as well as reporting back how things are working.

Also described that the protocol at meetings is that all WC members have opportunity to speak and then open up to guests as time allows.

Food Service Program:

Shared document: "Frequently Asked Questions"

MaryEllen discussed the issue of schools running out of food, which had been discussed by many parents on social media, as well as one parent having conversations with food service director, Gus Travassos. Schools have 9 offerings: main meal, 3 salads, 3 sandwiches, bagel and vegetarian option.

Brookline teachers do not currently do lunch count and pre-order (same day). Food service guesses how many meals to make, and on occasion have guessed wrong. Gus explained that kitchen managers are very helpful and will make something if asked. This sparked discussion as parents and likely students didn't

know this and it doesn't seem efficient. What is process and training for managers about how to respond to students.

Discussion continued on production records. Did we really run out? Register and sales records have raised awareness of not over-producing, Some inconsistencies in records -- missing food, are production records wrong?

Goal is to re-establish district-based website for food service. Include FA questions. Whitson's focus is on preparing and serving good nutritious food. District focus is on policy, practice, communication, and understanding of food service expectations.

Discussion:

Bettina recommended pursuing pre-order option at elementary level. More discussion re: the idea that a student could have "food to order request." Parents and students not aware of this, nor would it be efficient in busy cafeteria.

Time to eat after waiting in line is only around 12 minutes. MED explained that schedule is Principals' responsibility. Difficult due to size of cafeterias which were built for smaller populations.

Blanka: Where did running out of food happen? Why ran out of 1-2 choices? Learning opportunity if this a rare happening. However at BHS, 3rd lunch consistently has spare choices.

Concern by one parent if we run out of food for student on meal program or with food restrictions: Matt Gillis stated that kids with dietary restrictions are accommodated.

Gloria: Questions about logistics of pre-order. MED: need to consult with Teacher's Union. Consult with other schools re: "how to" to make it a simple task. Lower Devo does pre-order already.

Gus is going to all schools, to BHS for 3rd lunch. He explained that recently at Lawrence on a Friday, they threw out 3 pizzas. Food waste is more common than running out and is a concern. Parents voiced concern about this. Board of Health has input on reality of what can be shared rather than wasted.

"Share table" discussion, pros and cons.

Guests: Concern re shortage of food discussed by parent guests: issues at Lawrence with 3rd lunch, very limited hot lunch options. One of 7 salads never available at Lawrence. Asked why central office was not aware of issues until Facebook posts erupted, why service management didn't know.

MED: the issues were communication, production record variances and some operations issues.

Survey was done. Parents would like to see survey results. Matt stated it will be posted on website once tabulated. Issues at BHS 3rd lunch discussed, admitted mistakes. Last lunch has been a challenge.

Moving forward:

Suggestions to have pre-orders at elementary level. Sense of urgency., but not likely not to happen before September. Other suggestions: listening sessions, tasting sessions. Matt, MED and Gus agreed to these suggestions.

School lunch DEBT problem discussed by MaryEllen Dunn: many students owe a significant amount of money: past due lunch accounts. The USDA doesn't require that schools serve every kid a meal.

"Alternative meal" option? School Committee has said no, this is not an option for Brookline. Brookline must decide what our values are concerning collection of money owed.

To Whitson's from WC member: I want to see your plan. You were supposed to increase participation. What have you done? Gus: increased participation at some schools, decreased at other. Learning curve to know what will work in Brookline. Need to increase communication to parents about what's going on in food service program.

Implementation of New Wellness Policy:

July 1, 2018 the new Wellness Policy goes into effect. Discussion:

Some aspects of policy are long term goals such as having only certified health educators to teach health class: now hiring only certified health educators to teach health class.

Concern that there continues to be proliferation of food rewards. School committee and principals want to hear about concerns, challenges.

Teachers should work with nurse, admin, food service if doing food related activity: such as ordering basket of granola bars or apples during MCAS testing.

Parent discussion:

Adverse effect of sugar on her son.

“Family shares” without food are more common now and less stressful for many families.

Pencil or hot wheel car presented as example of non-food rewards

At Lincoln: all breakfast shares have stopped. Meet and see kids work without food. Still a concern that middle school teachers/staff continue to use food as reward. Adults are motivated by desire to not be the bad guy. Our district wide policy takes this out of teachers’ hands, nobody has to be the “bad guy”.

Need to promote policy well: big deal. A positive change. Not suggestions anymore, this is what we’re doing. Marketing and roll out August and September.

Class projects which include food must fall within nutrition guidelines

No bake sales before school. Must not start until 30 minutes after the end of school day.

Lunch price increase. Handouts and discussion

Losing \$375,000 in revenue

Reviewed 3 options

75 cents increase

50 cent increase with more ala cart options

25 cent increase include chocolate milk on menu

Discussion: kids will buy what they’re excited to eat. Suggestion: Offer seasonings, topping bar.

It’s not the number of options offered but the quality.

Have fewer options, better quality. Strong sentiment of WC not to backslide on nutrition standards to sell more food. Concern about dramatic price increase.

Many questions about information presented on food service financial numbers. Participation in district 36-37% las year, same this year with Whitson’s. Health benefits, labor costs etc. contribute to loss in this area.

Group recommended that Matt create a table format for food service budget to make more clear the issues that affect loss in revenue for food service.

Other thoughts:

Can we see breakdown of lunch purchases by lunch period? Compare 1st,2nd,3rd lunch periods

Kids like to know schedule and plan. ie: “Pizza Fridays”

Chef Ken Orringer came a few years ago and taught kids. Very popular

Opportunity for back to school nights to serve a school lunch...need to discuss and coordinate with principals

MaryEllen wanted to make clear that Brookline has a great group of cafeteria employees who want to do what’s best for kids. They are not part of the problem.

Wellness Committee message for School Committee:

Stay the course regarding nutrition standards

Offer listening sessions for parents. Important factors nutrition, satisfaction, taste, value

Address education and training of food service staff. Improved communication, feedback loop.

NEXT YEAR’S MEETING DATES

10/3

12/12

3/6

5/22