Our District

Brooklyn Center Community Schools (BCCS) is an independent school district in Hennepin County serving over 2,000 students. The Brooklyn Center Wellness Committee is comprised of teachers, staff, administrators, local public health staff, and community members. This document describes progress on 2022-2023 wellness activities, organized by components of the CDC’s Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model to promote health in schools (CDC, 2023).

Community Involvement

The wellness committee has continued to offer wellness courses that are open to everyone – students over 14 years old, family members, community members, staff, and partner organizations. These include yoga, mindfulness, Zumba, and other workouts. Over the course of the school year, the committee tried different times of day and formats – a free class (supported by health insurance wellness credits), a course purchased through Community Education, a session recorded on YouTube, and a hybrid live & livestreaming class. It has been a balance trying to find the best times with the highest attendance. Most recently, classes were offered in the late afternoon with a hybrid format and were mostly attended by staff and senior citizens.

Social & Emotional Climate

With funding from the PrairieCare Fund grant to support student mental health, the district hired a contractor to facilitate Soup Group, which is a middle school mental health skills enrichment class. There was a Soup Group each semester, one with twelve students and one with three students.

The grant also funded two five-hour sessions of “The Adventures of Super Stretch”, which is a trauma-sensitive mindful movement program for students. Ten students attended the two sessions. The program is led by contractor Jessica Rosenberg. Additionally, the committee planned for Jessica to lead mindful movement trainings for staff, too. She led several sessions at staff professional development days and now is creating a video library of dozens of two-minute movement practices.

Wellness Committee Members

Tammy Albers, Michelle Auld, Mykella Auld, Jackie Billhymer, Kendrick Davies, Stacey Engelkes, Debbie Erickson, Julie Gloege, Kathleen Heider, Christina Jones, Marsha Jones, Julie Martin, Cathy Rude, Lydia Shields, Josh Smith, & Latisha Williams
Employee Wellness

Employee wellness was a major focus of the wellness committee this school year. The committee hosted chair massages for staff in October, December, March, & May. Staff could sign up for 10 minute sessions with a massage therapist. For the four events, over 300 staff participated in total.

As a collaboration with Hennepin County’s Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) worksite collaborative (SHIPMates), the wellness committee distributed nearly 400 wellness kits to staff. They included items with an explanation, such as an eye mask and ear plugs to help staff reduce sensory overload and take a break. The kit came in a tote bag and also included a branded insulated lunch bag, a mini journal, and a pen.

Along with the massages and wellness kits, the committee promoted a Rest & Restore campaign in February & March. This included a suite of four practices and activities that staff could access to promote sleep and rest breaks. Campaign materials described the importance of and the differences between active rest (such as walking), passive rest (such as meditating), sleep, and restorative breaks (short breaks during the day). Four classrooms participated in the campaign, spanning pre-kindergarten to high school. Students could use a log to track their rest breaks each day and how they felt before and after, and then be eligible for a prize drawing.

The district piloted a new initiative for staff: the Monthly Moment of Wellness. Staff can use one 30-minute period per month of paid time for self-care. This could include taking a walk on campus, going to a Staff Serenity Space, practicing mindfulness, etc. When it started in March, the period was available at any time during the month, but this caused confusion with staff and supervisors regarding when and how to ask for their time. In response, in May the district provided all staff two-and-a-half hours of paid time in the afternoon of First Friday Professional Development Day. This was a change to their typical ways of working: the superintendent let staff know ahead of time about the plan and the Human Resources department added the time to all staff’s timesheet. For months without a professional development day, the district also created a shared spreadsheet for staff teams to specify when their shared monthly time is (instead of each staff person choosing a time individually) to make sure staff remember and use their time and supervisors know when to avoid scheduling meetings to keep that time free. The district is clear that this initiative will not take care of all staff wellbeing concerns, and that is not the intent. Rather, the district includes this as one piece of many staff wellness efforts to show appreciation and honor staff for their work.

The Wellbeing Specialist led a two-part staff training series about mindfulness. About 60 staff attended an optional October training titled “The Interconnectedness of Mindful Movement and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for Anti-Racist Practices”, and more than 80 staff attended an optional January training titled “Building a Community of Care”. The specialist repeated the training series as a required training for all district educational assistants (about 40 staff). They also plan to present to district leadership in July. The training series aims to build knowledge regarding the connections of mindful movement, SEL, and anti-racism; build individual skills regarding self-reflection, classroom practices, responding to stressors, and adopting a thrive mindset; and promote group collaboration in reducing the impact of stress.
Health Education

Last school year, Brooklyn Center participated in a health education scope and sequence training series to create a K-12 roadmap. The team outlined healthy behavior outcomes covered across the district and worked on aligning content to developmentally appropriate grades, proactively planning for the transition of middle school health from 8th grade to 6th grade and infusing the recent purchase of the HealthSmart curriculum.

This school year, secondary teachers started transitioning content from 8th grade to 6th grade at the middle school level and implemented the high school plan while piloting the new curriculum. This summer, elementary team leads will participate in a full day training in June about using the HealthSmart curriculum and focusing on skills-based health education. They will then roll out the curriculum to their corresponding grade level teams this fall with a plan on implementing the approved plan for the coming school year.

Looking ahead, the 2023-2024 school year will be an initial pilot of the elementary plan which covers approximately 20 health lessons per year at each grade level. The full transition of the middle school health plan will occur in 2024-2025, with next year’s health lessons remaining to be taught in both 6th and 8th grade.

Additionally, the wellness committee added all wellness campaigns to date to the staff intranet. Teachers can then integrate the practices into their curriculum. This is not limited to Health classes – a Civics class for example could use activities that teach the environmental and social justice aspects of water access. The Wellbeing Specialist plans to work with the curriculum team in the future so that campaigns meet any desired state standards.

Wellness campaign materials posted on the staff intranet
Brooklyn Center Community Schools
District Wellness Committee Highlights 2022-2023

Health Services
The district previously updated the health emergency response plan in 2020-2021. Although not an initiative of the wellness committee directly, the principal on special assignment led a staff presentation in February about safety. The presentation covered many topics, including health emergencies.

In collaboration with the principal on special assignment, the wellness committee is working on assembling emergency preparedness kits. There will be at least one kit in each building, placed strategically at high-volume entrances, Health Services Offices, and front offices. They will be ready before next school year.

Physical Education & Physical Activity
BCCS continued their many years of supporting biking and walking to school. They launched a wellness campaign in the fall about accessible active transportation with three participating classrooms. In partnership with Hennepin County SHIP, the district hired a temporary Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator and created a SRTS Steering Committee to create plans and procedures. In January, the Steering Committee secured a Boost grant from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to purchase a fleet of bicycles, which is in process. The district also resumed Walk and Roll to School Days, which was a regular occurrence before the pandemic.

Nutrition Environment & Services
The committee led a ten day Add-A-Veggie campaign in April, which included weekly emails with tips and recipes and personal tracking logs of vegetables eaten. Six classrooms participated in the campaign. In collaboration with Food Services, participating classrooms received vegetable snacks such as pea pods and celery to sample. Three classrooms that submitted their results enjoyed a tour of the kitchen. Twelve adults participated on their own, and they received gardening seed packs.

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