



East Greenwich School Committee

Health and Wellness Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 18, 2024 10:30am

Hybrid meeting

In Person at: East Greenwich High School - Guidance Conf. Room

300 Avenger Drive, East Greenwich, RI

Virtual attendance via Zoom

Attendees:

Lisa Perry: Psychologist, Wendy Fachon: Environmental Educator, Kevin Murphy: EGSC, Rob Mahoney: DHS CP3, Dr. Brian Ricca: EG Superintendent, Emily Kendall: EGHS Student Rep, Dr. Matt Willis, MD: Co-Director Hasbro PHP, Karin Wetherill: Rhode Island Healthy Schools, Amanda Wallace: EGHS Student Rep, President of ASAPP, Molly Sylvia: Assistant Principal EGHS, Melissa Centraccio: Principal Cole Middle School, Clare Cecil-Karb, EGSC HWS Chair, Neil Marcaccio: EGSD Student Services Director

Zoom: Andrea Coehlo: District Social Worker, Salina Mohanty: Prevention Coalition, Caroline Bradshaw: School Counselor Cole Middle School.

Agenda: Minutes

1. Welcome, introductions
(Specific introductions for High School Students joining Wellness committee.)

Introduced committee - new members Emily Kendall and Amanda Wallace- 11th graders at EGHS. Ms. Kendall is affiliated with Sandy Hook Promise and Ms. Wallace is president of ASAPP. Ms. Wallace had worked closely with the late Mr. Bob Houghtaling.

2. Updates from past meeting agenda topics. ‘
Sexual health survey is ready to roll out, pending time/space from building administrators.
Other topics from previous meetings were embedded in the agenda.

3. Discussion and potential consensus regarding request for increased staffing of mental health/wellness staff in district- to be provided for budget discussion.
After the presentation and discussion from previous meeting which identified the need for increased social work staff as part of the need for increased mental health staff overall, the social work department has been working on a time-capture report to more accurately reflect the ways in which Social Workers interact with the school communities.
Mr. Marcaccio states that Social Workers are not regularly added into IEP direct service plans in the Aspen system so the department appears to have less contact with students with IEPs vs. Psychologists who are often written into the plans. This belies the actual interaction that Social Workers have with these students as they are available to students during unplanned (or previously undocumented) emergencies or episodes of need. Social Workers also work directly



with families in need and coordinate wraparound services, not all of which are captured in our current data system. School Psychologist Lisa Perry was consulted on the topic of specifically requesting an additional Social Worker vs. an additional Psychologist. Ms. Perry indicated that she was in favor of adding another SWer who would be able to provide direct services to students and families in need. Mr. Marcaccio stated that the district has been well served by a second Psychologist who will be retained for another year (2024-25) and also endorsed adding another SW position. Asked whether the committee wanted to take a (non-binding) vote in favor of requesting another Social Worker, Dr. Willis reflected that if best practices would indicate that the district would need an additional 5 social workers, perhaps the committee should make that the official request. Dr. Ricca explained that the district leadership is in complete agreement regarding the need but that the budget constraints - including the percent cap on budget increases - suggest that the district would not be able to hire/fund more than one. The committee suggested that the request for an additional staff also contain information regarding the need for multiple additional staff to properly serve the district.

The committee voted unanimously (non-binding) to endorse a request for an additional social work staff.

4. Report and discussion regarding adolescent vaping and interventions (Molly Sylvia)

Ms. Sylvia and student Ms. Wallace reported updates from a conference regarding middle and upper-level school vaping in Kent and South County. Ms. Sylvia identifies that vaping is a daily challenge within the high school and that students have been identified vaping in bathrooms and in outside spaces at the high school. The HS leadership has implemented a plan to strategically close bathrooms so that staff can monitor for vaping. The students, Ms. Sylvia stated, always have access to bathrooms and students who are concerned about using a bathroom where someone could be vaping are able to use single-occupancy restrooms like the nurse office facilities.

Ms. Sylvia introduced the “Media Ready” program to the group - indicating that the latest research suggests that young people are less deterred by health-risk information and respond better to information that uncovers the messages and advertising that encourages them to participate in vaping and other dangerous behaviors.

Consequences at the high school level include diversion programs, parent meetings and potential suspension from school.

Ms. Perry inquired about whether students are making a cognitive connection between use and addiction and Ms. Sylvia indicated that students do not seem to be cognizant of the fact that use leads to true addiction and the high level of addictive chemicals in vapes.

Dr. Willis initiated a discussion about supporting students who are physically addicted to nicotine and the committee talked about possibilities of nurse-supervised nicotine replacement therapies if prescribed by a physician.

Dr. Willis suggested that students’ primary care pediatricians may be able to consult with THRIVE clinicians if the PCPs need guidance on nicotine replacement titration schedules. Suggestions for reducing vape use included campaigns to identify unappealing effects of addiction and to use “selfish subjective reasoning” to appeal to young people. Posters or fliers on the back of bathroom stalls may be a way to reach students with vape information and resources if students want to quit.



Per Ms. Centraccio, vaping is a less consistent but still present challenge in middle school. The committee discussed incorporating anti-vape information into elementary and middle school curriculum as a potential avenue to divert students from early vape use.

Mr. Mahoney reported that DHS (Department of Homeland Security) has funding opportunities through grants that might be available to augment the district resources. He will be in touch with the committee when those are published.

5. Update from Karin W. Regarding adolescent sexual health survey.

Survey is ready to be rolled out pending administration provision of time/space and scheduling with staff.

6. Review and discussion of progress and goals regarding initiatives related to disordered eating and related subject matter.

The committee continued an ongoing discussion of the impacts of internal and external academic pressure on students. Ms. Kendall stated that anxiety about academic performance in the form of grades begins as early as middle school and reflected worry that students may “burn out” earlier than graduation. Concerns about the privileging of “honors” classes and identities such as “student-athlete” were reflected. Students suggested that the school community delivers a message about what kind of classes/students are deserving of honor or recognition. It was highlighted that some students are identified as “student-athlete” but none are called “student-robotics enthusiast” or “student-actor” and “honors student” but not “college prep student.”

7. Update - progress and needs in continuing Mr. Bob’s work with district students.

The next ASAPP cafe is scheduled for 3/21/24. Ms. Mohanty and Christine King are continuing some of the work that Mr. Bob had been doing. Ms. Mohanty also serves as the Municipal coordinator with the Prevention Coalition.

8. Discussion/planning for next meeting including future topics and meeting dates (proposed dates announcement).

Next meeting scheduled. There will be further discussion of vaping and intervention.

Minutes submitted by Clare Cecil-Karb, Health & Wellness Sub-Committee Chair