

PATCHOGUE-MEDFORD UFSD



Wellness Committee

**Attendance:** Diana Andrade, Katy Forman, Anthony Cracco, Haley Wood, Annette Mroczkowski, Carolyn Walsh, Daniel Erwin, Cailyn Rose-Freaney, Emily Wernau, Lori Cannetti, Bernadette Smith, Hollyann Ficco, Tracy Warrington, Jessica Guerra

**Note taker:** Danielle Steinberg

Discussion	NOTES
<b>Welcome/Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasized the importance of establishing healthy habits at a young age.</li><li>• Discussed the <i>Farm-to-Table</i> initiative at Tremont Elementary, where students begin learning how to grow and eat healthy foods starting in Kindergarten.</li><li>• A \$500,000 grant is being pursued to support upgrades to the kitchen and develop outdoor spaces. A site visit occurred on Monday; hoping for approval.</li><li>• Once implemented at Tremont, the goal is to expand the program to all elementary schools.</li><li>• Envisions strong community involvement (local restaurants, cooking classes).</li><li>• Suggested that the Wellness Committee use this initiative as a springboard for additional elementary-level wellness opportunities.</li><li>• Program naturally aligns with curriculum—writing, math, and project-based learning connected to <i>Portrait of a Graduate</i>, starting in Kindergarten and continuing upward.</li><li>• Noted existing tower gardens in the ACES program at the high school.</li><li>• Reported positive feedback from the Lions Club, who are excited about the Wellness Committee and plan to stay involved.</li><li>• Mentioned Dominic Thorn’s \$3,000 grant, available every February for each school via an application process.</li><li>• Highlighted the presence of tower gardens at Tremont.</li><li>• On pizza Fridays, lettuce from the tower gardens is used in the cafeteria, and produce is also donated to the soup kitchen.</li><li>• Most elementary schools have tower gardens—some are older, while others are more active and productive.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested low-cost entry points for schools, such as sprouting seeds and seeking donations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Review Wellness Policy</b></p>	
<p><b>Committee Goals 2025-2026</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaping Prevention &amp; Education Initiatives</li> <li>• Healthy Vending Machine Implementation</li> <li>• Mental Health Awareness Run/Event</li> <li>• Update and Revise the Wellness Policy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initiatives</b></p>	<p><b>Recent PM Additions</b></p> <p><b>Youth Sport Series</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Update from Anthony Cracco:</i> The goal is to introduce younger students to a variety of activities. Looking ahead to next year, the program hopes to expand by running some sessions in the high school fitness center and utilizing that space more fully.</li> </ul> <p><b>Using Our Voices 5K</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Started four years ago and gives students meaningful leadership opportunities.</li> <li>○ Partners with <b>P.S. I Love You Day</b>.</li> <li>○ Includes vendors; all activities are free on event day, and registration is pre-paid.</li> <li>○ Encourages students to use physical activity as a coping skill.</li> <li>○ Students seek donations in the community and visit elementary schools to promote the event.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lions Club and Kiwanis Club are involved.</li> <li>• Important to ensure all departments—especially guidance—are fully aware and updated.</li> <li>• Student Council involvement at the middle school and elementary levels is key for promotion and leadership. Publicity should begin in February/March. Include PTA Council and SEPTA in communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>New High School PE Classes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Update from Anthony Cracco:</i> Introduction of <b>Group Fitness</b> and <b>Strength Training</b> classes at the high school.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Potential Initiatives</b></p> <p><b>Vape Out / Vaping &amp; Cannabis Initiative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mrs. Cannetti met with Inspector Doherty (5th Precinct) regarding concerns about vape shops on Route 112 and their accessibility to students.</li> </ul>

- Suggested adding resources to the district website (Escape the Vape, statistics, support links) and sending a community message addressing the issue.
- Emphasized the need for both disciplinary hearings and supportive resources for students.
- In communication with Catholic Health and Outreach—students may return to school sooner when engaging in support programs.
- Parents need a clearer understanding of the seriousness of vaping and cannabis use, especially the link to anxiety and depression.
- Curriculum on vaping/cannabis needs to be strengthened in elementary and middle school.
- *Student Representative Suggestion:* Students could teach small groups based on assembly content related to vaping.
- Meeting with students directly will bring their voices into the solution; students should feel ownership of change.
- Education must start earlier—many students are already experimenting by middle school.
- Highlighted the **SAMHSA “Catch My Breath”** curriculum.
  - Uses student-led delivery.
  - All guidance counselors, social workers, and psychologists have received training.
  - Provides community presentation resources as well.

**Farmer’s Fridge (Healthy Vending Machine Initiative)**

- Refrigerated machines located outside gym areas in other high schools offer healthy meal options for students staying late.
- Meals are under \$10; students can reserve items through an app and scan to pick up.
- Minimal financial risk: unused items are the only potential loss, and many schools report difficulty keeping machines stocked due to high demand.
- No additional cost to install; schools must maintain ordering, provide electricity, and ensure Wi-Fi access.
- Suggestion for exploring a pilot and inviting company representatives to the next committee meeting. Considered a strong goal for the year.
- Need to consider student food preferences, allergy concerns, trial period logistics, and payment options.