



Bancroft School  
110 Shore Drive  
Worcester, MA 01605

The Bancroft School Parent Faculty Association (PFA)

Date: 10/09/2025

Time: 8 AM

Location: Bancroft School Dining Hall

**Meeting Date:** October 9, 2025

**I. Refreshments and Social:**

Bancroft families and school staff had time to mingle and enjoy light refreshments before the meeting started.

**II. Welcome from PFA President, Jennifer Vuona:**

Ms. Vuona welcomed members to the monthly meeting of the PFA and introduced the guest speaker of the month, Mrs. Wendy O'Leary.

**III. Introduction of Wendy O'Leary, M.Ed.:**

Mrs. Wendy O'Leary, M.Ed., is an award-winning author with three children's books and a recent book for adults on self-compassion in families. She is an international speaker, certified mindfulness teacher, and parent educator. Mrs. O'Leary has expertise in teaching skills for emotional awareness and resiliency and has worked with children and caregivers in hundreds of settings. Mrs. O'Leary is also a former Bancroft parent.

**III. Growing Self-Compassionate Children**

Mrs. O'Leary shared that emotional resilience for our children starts with us. To quiet our inner chatter, Mrs. O'Leary started with a brief mindfulness exercise. She prompted members to close their eyes as she rang the mindfulness bell, encouraging attendees to focus on the sound until they could no longer hear it. *"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn how to surf" (Jon Kabat-Zinn)*

In her work, Mrs. O'Leary has found that children and parents said they lacked the capacity to handle the waves of life. She has also heard from numerous colleges that their students are finding it difficult to handle adversity. Mrs. O'Leary has set out to help children and parents by developing tools that will help us learn to surf and help our children.

According to Mrs. O'Leary, for adults to model how to ride the waves of life, we must first learn how to do so ourselves. To do this, we need to deal with our own nervous

systems before we can help our children with theirs. Having self-compassion allows us to ride the waves of life and helps our children be happy and well-adjusted. Real happiness comes when you know you can handle hard situations and hard times.

Self-compassion helps us recognize that our self-worth is not tied to every little thing we do. We recognize that challenges, mistakes, and mishaps happen to all of us. Self-compassion does not change what is happening, but rather how we manage it.

When a child scrapes their knee, we pick them up, kiss their head, and hold them. This does not fix their knee, but it makes them feel safe and cared for.

Research shows that self-compassion decreases depression and anxiety, increases happiness and life satisfaction, and allows us to be better friends and better partners.

- When we have high levels of self-compassion and then experience something very difficult or traumatic, we are less likely to develop PTSD.
- The more self-compassion we have, the greater our resilience becomes.
- People with high levels of self-compassion are still very motivated to succeed, but do so not because they are afraid of failure, but because they are doing it for themselves.
- If we place blame and shame on ourselves (or others), we are less likely to learn and grow.

Mrs. O' Leary shared that instead of "Blame and Shame," try to "Tend and Befriend."

- Most people will notice that they are kinder to their friends than they are to themselves. We "tend and befriend" others. When we do this for others, they feel better because they know they are cared for. It's time that we all "tend and befriend" ourselves!

Components of self-compassion in action include mindfulness through gentle acknowledgment of the situation, a reminder of common humanity, self-kindness, and kind touch (which can be given to yourself or someone else).

Some common ways parents can respond when children are struggling:

- Minimize the situation (it's not that bad, it's no big deal)
- Fix
- Snowplow (removing all obstacles in advance)
- Diversion/distraction
- Tap out

- Blame ourselves

Tools to more effectively respond:

- Settle back and soften – lean back and soften your body. This gives you and your child some space.
- Stop and take a deep breath before responding.
- If you are sitting, uncross your legs and place both feet on the floor. Take a moment to feel your feet on the ground and your body in the chair. Repeat this three times.
- “Reset” if needed

Mrs. O’Leary shared a closing take-home activity: reflect each day on your ‘glimmer moments’ – those moments when you feel safe, seen, and connected.

Meeting minutes provided by Mrs. Stacey Auger and respectfully prepared and submitted by Mrs. Zaina Rivett.