PATCHOGUE-MEDFORD UFSD
WELLNESS COMMITTEE MEETING

MEETING AGENDA

October 28, 2026

Present: Katy Forman, Anthony Cracco, Danielle Steinberg, Theresa Deleva, Jennifer Krieger, Dr. Harrigan, Tracy Warrington, Raymond Butler, Holly Ficco, Wil Dortonne, Annette Mroczkowski, Carolyn Candela, Emily Warneau

Note taker: Danielle Steinberg

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION
1.	**Wellness Policy Review**	Committee members were invited to recommend changes to the district's wellness policy regarding nutrition and physical activity. A former Board of Education trustee's efforts to advocate for mandated recess at the state level were discussed, along with a website, Facebook page, and petition supporting this initiative. Members discussed differences in outdoor recess practices across elementary buildings, including temperature guidelines and related parent concerns. The discussion highlighted the need for consistent procedures across buildings. Members emphasized encouraging outdoor recess when conditions permit, noting that students do not need to remain outside for the entire recess period. The importance of reminding families to provide coats and appropriate clothing for colder weather was also discussed. Committee members were asked to review the current wellness policy and

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION
		return with suggested revisions.
2.	**Vaping Initiatives – Dr. Harrigan**	The committee discussed ongoing challenges in vaping prevention and the importance of understanding students' perspectives to identify effective programs and messaging. Members emphasized reaching students before middle school to build awareness and establish healthy habits. Ms. Mroczkowski shared that vaping is addressed through conversations in the high school health classes. An evening presentation for parents and guardians had limited attendance but was recorded and posted online. Additional resources are available on the district website. Mr. Cracco discussed plans to reimagine elementary health education beginning next school year, including brief lessons in earlier grades to reach students before fifth grade. Members discussed existing use of CATCH My Breath lessons and the availability of age-appropriate prevention materials. Members emphasized the importance of repeated instruction and follow-up throughout the school year. The committee explored peer-led education, including training Student-Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) representatives to share prevention messages with elementary students. Members noted that younger students may be more receptive to relatable high school student leaders. Members discussed resources to support prevention initiatives and student leadership development. Dr. Harrigan shared examples of resources he has used successfully in school communities. Members also discussed how parental vaping, normalization of vaping at home, and accessibility may influence student attitudes. Questions were raised about the effectiveness of posters, reminders, and vape shop closures, reinforcing the

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION
		need to continue evaluating prevention approaches and student engagement.
3.	**Mental Health Hispanic Counseling Center – Dr. Harrigan**	The committee discussed the district's work with the Hispanic Counseling Center, including referrals and efforts to strengthen the partnership. A meeting with the organization's CEO is scheduled at Saxton Middle School next week. Members also discussed partnerships involving the Office of Mental Health and the RiseWell satellite program.
4.	**Bullying – Dr. Harrigan - LICAB**	The committee discussed training opportunities for staff and parents, along with student programs addressing bullying at younger ages. Available resources included free programming through John Martin at the Suffolk County Department of Health. Members also referenced a presentation on hate crimes provided by the District Attorney's Office last year. The discussion included programs that promote empathy and help students understand prejudice, discrimination, and the impact of hate. Members highlighted Amanda Pizzuto's work at Canaan Elementary School involving the book *Wonder* and discussed a Holocaust museum's Clothespin Project as a potential learning opportunity. Members also discussed 3GNY programming for middle school students, through which grandchildren of Holocaust survivors share their grandparents' experiences in a manner appropriate for students in grades 6–8.
5.	**Using Our Voices 5k – D. Steinberg and K. Forman**	The 2027 Using Our Voices Mental Health Run is scheduled for Sunday, May 23, at 8:30 a.m. The event will include a one-mile Fun Run and a 5K, providing opportunities for participants of varying interests and abilities. Approximately 500 participants attended last year, and the goal is to maintain a similar level of participation while continuing consistent promotion across district schools. A planning meeting was held last week with Patchogue-Medford staff members interested in supporting the event. Staff discussed opportunities to contribute

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION
		through subcommittees focused on sponsorships and vendors, event-day logistics, promotion, and peer education. A priority for this year is strengthening peer leadership and increasing student ownership of the event. Students will be encouraged to take an active role in planning, promoting, and leading the run, reinforcing its focus on mental health awareness and community connection. The event will continue to emphasize inclusion, including opportunities for ACES students to participate alongside student buddies. Members also discussed building on activities such as last year's preparation of energy bites by ACES students in the high school kitchen. Updated sponsorship forms are expected to be available at the next committee meeting, following confirmation of the North Babylon run date. These materials will support outreach to local businesses and community organizations.
6.	**Update: Healthy Vending Machines**	The committee discussed sales and operation of the healthy vending machine. Some items sell out quickly, while others remain available longer. Early connectivity issues appear to have improved, although the machine's reliance on cellular service can present challenges within the building. Members discussed the monthly cost and the value of providing students with convenient access to healthier food options. The committee discussed reviewing six months of operation to better understand purchasing trends, sales, and overall effectiveness before determining whether a second machine should be added at the high school. Requests for vending machines at the middle schools were also discussed.

	TOPIC	DISCUSSION
		Members noted that fewer students, fewer evening events, and students' limited access to personal payment methods could affect sales. An additional location would also require a designated person to oversee operations and coordinate service needs.