Bronx Charter School of the Arts - Wellness Meeting Minutes 2024

Date: 4/16/2024

Attendees: Geoffrey Ramsey, Tsedale Tomlinson, Patricia Rooney, Gloria Williams

Wellness Committee Members: Patricia Rooney, Gloria Williams, Grisel Pereira

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Agenda Topics:

Nutrition Education
Physical Activity
Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals
Wellness Promotion and Marketing

In Detail:
1) Nutrition Education

a. To satisfy Family & Community engagement, we discussed that there is nutrition information on the school website. The Wellness Policy will also be posted on the school website.

b. The school has something similar to a newsletter, through Parent Square, which sends out information to families every month. The menus for the month are always included, and we discussed periodically adding nutrition and health 'fun facts' going forward.

c. All students in all grades learn about healthy eating, mainly through the context of the hydroponic garden systems the school is in the process of setting up. This will occur in STEAM class this year. Students will learn about the importance of fresh fruits and vegetables in a diet, and how vegetables in particular are grown. There will be chances to taste test what is grown in the building, and make posters or slides presentations (depending on grade level) to share why vegetables are important in a healthy diet.

Although the STEAM class will be responsible for the upkeep, all students will pass by the unit in the hall, and therefore will have the opportunity to learn about hydroponic growing, and growing their own food, simply by observing day to day. There will also be another type of hydroponic unit downstairs near the cafeteria.

This unit has just started in this last quarter, and will continue in the fall of next school year 2024/2025. The students have successfully started the 1st hydroponic unit, with around 20 to 28 vegetables and herbs such as Rainbow Chard and Basil, and will continue on with the other hydroponic units.

Also, second graders have a particularly extensive unit on healthy eating, and even made smoothies for students in other grades to try, made of fruit and vegetables.

d. Teachers discuss lifelong lifestyle balance (healthy living, healthy eating, feeling better). This can come up in many ways, but also when teachers are distributing and talking to students about the fruits and vegetables provided for snacks through the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables program.

e. In terms of nutrition education outside the classroom, our school has taken field trips to places such as the The New York Botanical Garden, Green Meadow Farms, and a community garden that Grow NYC manages. At Green Meadow Farms, the students get to meet farm animals and even learn how to milk cows. These trips all help teach students about the origins of food they eat, among other things. There is also discussion about field trips to see hydroponic growing on a larger scale, now that students are directly involved with this at school.

2) Physical Activity

a. We discussed that students participate in dance class as their gym period, and that the type of dance changes depending on teachers available from year to year. Teachers are often from the Bronx Conservatory and the Bronx Ensemble. This year, Afro-Latin dance and Capoeira have been offered.

b. Go Noodle is used in many of the classrooms for Brain Breaks.

c. Students have 22 minutes of supervised exercise time every day, in recess.

d. Dance is twice a week, for 45 minutes. It is taught by a former professional dancer and students get a lot of physical exercise in this class. The teacher stresses the importance of proper form and keeps students moving and working hard.

e. Recess is before lunch for grades 1,3 and 5, and after lunch for grades K, 2, and 4.

f. Our school offers After School for the Dance Team. And depending on the school year partnerships, sometimes other activities such as Capoeira. Additionally, sometimes dance practice, as part of a school play, is held after school.

g. We talked about how students commute to school, and that our school cannot promote walking or biking or scooting to school because of the neighborhood. It is very dangerous for pedestrians, with construction, highway onramps, and heavy truck loading sites all in the neighborhood.

h. For staff Wellness tools, our school offers Talk Space, which is an online program. Also, Cigna, the school health insurance company, offers other programs that staff can sign up for, related to health and wellness. Omada, a weight loss program, is also offered.

3) Standards for USDA Child Nutrition Programs and School Meals

a. We discussed that BAB is mandatory, and our school already offers this to students. The students that come in late know that they can eat in the cafeteria, supervised, if they need to. Typically not more than 10 to 15 students come to school late on any given day.

b. Food Service Staff meets hiring requirements, receiving required annual training, and Food Protection certificates.

c. Our kitchen manager is very familiar with all of the students and what they will eat, what they can and can't eat, and how to encourage them to eat more. Through her individualized attention, the meal program continues to grow and has been a great success. Also, students at our school are given ample time to eat their meals in a way that is not rushed.

d. We talked about our participation in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, and how our students are exposed to many healthy foods this way, as well as local foods.

e. Free drinking water is always made available.

f. We also talked about the success of our Compost program, and how well it has been integrated into the meal process and adopted by students. Students take pride in using compost and recycling programs, and also learn about organic food waste this way.

4) Wellness Promotion and Marketing

a. Our school does not hold fundraising events involving food/bake sales.

b. As previously mentioned, the school has taken field trips to places such as the NY Botanical Gardens, a local community garden, and also the farm Green Meadow Farms.

There is talk for potential to visit larger-scale hydroponic growing farms in the future, now that the students are doing this themselves.

c. Our students get healthy meal choices. In addition to their regular meals, we participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Favors program.