

**CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WELLNESS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2012
4:00 P.M.
Briggs Building (Reed Conference Room)
845 Park Avenue**

MINUTES

A meeting of the Wellness Sub-committee was held on the above date at 4:00 p.m. with the following members present: Janice Ruggieri, Chairperson, Deborah Greifer, Deb Svitil, Audrey Guttin, Aaron Lenart, Karin Wetherill, Cheryl Rogers and Joanne Valk.

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that there were some new people here tonight and she asked them to introduce themselves. They were as follows: Adrienne D'Arconte, parent at Edgewood Highland, Liz Hanke, parent at Edgewood Highland, and Cheryl DelPadre, parent at Edgewood Highland.

At this time, Mrs. Ruggieri noted that at the last meeting, the committee went over the Bus Advertising Policy. She noted that the changes were made, i.e. adding on to it the "privatization". So to not re-read over the entire policy, Mrs. Ruggieri read to the committee what change/addition was made to the policy.

Mrs. Ruggieri continued to explain the additions she included on the

policy.

The addition came down to the fact that if they did end up privatizing, whatever company would not put advertising on our buses that do not adhere to all aspects of the School Bus Advertising Policy as adopted. It was reiterated that Mr. Zisseron will come into one of our meetings to talk about what he felt was appropriate as far as sizes, etc.

Mrs. Ruggieri commented on the “Classroom Party and Birthday Celebration” policy stating that the one submitted seems to be a go and all members agreed on the policy. She will look to add this policy to the agenda of a future school committee meeting; to add into the actual Wellness Policy.

We will wait to put the Bus Advertising Policy in until we talk to Mr. Zisseron so that we have as much information as we need for that policy before we move forward.

The next item on the Agenda tonight will be the discussion of meeting with the Food Advisory Sub-Committee. They met and discussed the “Breakfast in the Classroom” program because there was some confusion and some issues within the program. The Food Advisory Board and the Wellness Committee do overlap in a lot of issues, i.e. what they will be talking about. Their focus is food, which comes under one of the items we talk about. There was a lot of mis-communication and that caused a lot of issues. One of the

things that we set up from this meeting was that every school was going to be running it the same. We have 17 elementary schools and there are different start times; different make-up of the buildings; all of our buildings are individual. However, in order for this program to work and work right we need everybody to be doing the same thing. A communication needed to go out to all the building principals to let them know how the program is supposed to actually work. Because it's a pilot program and it was only at one school, other schools were getting bits and pieces of information and it turned into a problem before the program even gets off its feet. Another issue is communication with the teachers and the parents because, once again, a pilot program running in a school; the parents weren't really sure what was going on. The principals will be making sure that the parents are getting the information as needed and letting them know how the program is actually going to be run and answering any questions that may arise. The onus is really on each principal to handle their faculty and parents in the way that they have been handling their faculty and parents.

In addition, there were concerns regarding nutrition in the items that were being actually served in the classroom; Sodexo has provided to all of the schools, the nutritional facts for each item that is available. It was a pilot program at one school so the roll out is a little slower because they want to get everybody settled into the routine and then they will start introducing some of the other menu items. The nutritional guidelines are met.

A parent asked what the reasoning was for changing the breakfast program from what it was outside the classroom to now inside the classroom. Mrs. Ruggieri answered that it was an initiative and perhaps Mr. Lenart of Sodexo can explain it to the parents. Mr. Lenart introduced himself and noted that it was his job to set this program up and the reason why they chose the program is....this is not the first district that this is being done. Other places around the U.S., specifically Providence has worked very well. Some of the reasons why we bring Breakfast in the Classroom are:

- 1. Financial issues in the district and it generates more money to the schools for updating the equipment and other things within the kitchens. It does generate more money.**
- 2. For the students that don't have the opportunity to have a healthy breakfast.**
- 3. Breakfast in the Classroom reaches more kids and a lot of times in the elementary level the kids are outside playing and they just don't come in to eat. For this, they are in the classroom and they are all doing it together. They don't have to do it if they don't want to. There are many children who don't do it. There is no pressure from the teachers.**
- 4. It's a teaching moment for kids to learn manners. Kids are better behaved because they ate something. It's a settle down period for when they arrive at school.**
- 5. It helps the district, the students and the teachers.**

Mrs. Chapman asked if, country-wide, there is any data to show that changing the transition of the breakfast program in classrooms isa discussion ensued.

Mr. Lenart reported that he just went on line to USDA and different web sites and they didn't have specific numbers; however, there were suggestions that in a research study these kids were better behaved in school, etc. There was something from the CBC that Breakfast in the Classroom is encouraged because the kids did better in school. It is also up to parents to educate their child in regards to where they will eat in the morning. Some children eat at home. A discussion ensued.

Parent: Are you doing a pre-evaluation and post-evaluation to evaluate the success of the Program or are you only counting the number of trays. Mrs. Ruggieri answered that it doesn't run like that. The parent replied that this is again the lack of information which causes a lot of miscommunication and a lot of misinformation; she was told that the marker of success was the increase in trays; increase in children served and that was the only marker.

Mrs. Ruggieri replied that this is just the marker of how many children we're reaching to serve breakfast to; it certainly is not an indicator for us that the program is working. We're looking at a host of things and there is going to be a survey that will be going out to the teachers, to the administrators and eventually to the parents. It's not going out

this year because we have one school running right now. Mrs. Ruggieri commented that they are looking at the entire picture. They've spoken to a number of teachers and their response has been overwhelmingly positive. Some of the teachers have been using this, not only as an opportunity to have more classroom time; one teacher said that what she normally does in the afternoon would be a read aloud; what she's done is turn it into having breakfast together and she reads during that time and now she can spend time up until the bell, teaching. It has given her more time; more educational value for her time. Also, children who go to itinerants in the morning, the itinerants have noticed that the children seem a lot more settled and a lot more able to get right into whatever the activity is rather than spending that transition time.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the above topic.

Mrs. D'Arconte noted that she would like to encourage and try to advocate for this pilot program for the district to utilize the parents and their availability, their interest and their knowledge about this program so that they can have input, especially since it will be put out to other schools, it's going to be a big problem. They have resources and if they can meet as collective, outside of this, that there would be interest and there would be participation.

Mrs. Ruggieri answered that this is similar to the lunch program when we switched over to Sodexo for our lunch room program. We did

have a breakfast program and a lot of people don't even know that we offer breakfast every day. Prior to this when we had the Food Advisory Board, a couple of high school students were on the board and one of the students said, "I didn't know we served breakfast here." She was a junior.

Other parent concerns were:

- In a New York School System it was noted that some of the students were having breakfast twice.**
- Concerned about the food.**
- This food is something that a parent would give occasionally to a child for a snack.**
- Does not feel that they can ask their young children to avoid the temptation that she would have trouble doing.**
- Just meeting the nutritional guidelines is not enough.**
- Fresh fruit would be fine.**
- It's the packaging and the processed foods.**
- There's such limited nutritional value.**
- What about the children who will be sitting without a meal because they already ate at home. Mrs. Ruggieri explained how the students are placed during breakfast.**

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that she was looking at the nutrition information that was in the schools; in Edgewood Highland right now and as the program moves forward and they discuss this, it is going on the menu; it's going to be sent home like the regular menu; this is

available in the schools. At this time Mrs. Ruggieri read from this information for all to hear. She then passed it around the table. Trying to bring the focus back to what they are trying to do with food, Mrs. Ruggieri stated that similar to our lunch program; you may not like everything that's on that menu. This issue was discussed at length.

At this time, Mrs. Ruggieri asked the parents what their expectations would be for the "In the Classroom Breakfast" program. One parent answered that, first, is to include parents in the whole process. Letting them know what's happening along the way and why things are happening. They agree with the importance of breakfast but being involved in the process; being involved with the choices is just one piece; the second piece is how it's put out in the classroom.

Mrs. Ruggieri explained that the way it is designed to work is that it is brought into the classroom; it's set up in front of the classroom; the children, depending on how the teacher wants to run it; they're encouraging the older students to come up and do their own thing; it could be an assigned job which gives them that little responsibility in the classroom. Those are the options of how it runs; depending on the age level of the student and the teacher and how she wants to run her classroom. Mrs. Ruggieri also noted that they can't meet every single child's specific dietary needs and that's why they have the nutritional guidelines. Cranston actually does take a step and tries to exceed those guidelines.

Ms. Wetherill from Kids First noted that she thinks the suggestions are good; to start a committee that includes parents and maybe trying to work together in a working group to improve things. She noted that having participated in a lot of national web-n-r's on school breakfast, a lot of the larger cities are doing it. We all do believe that starting a day with breakfast is good and I do believe that we should be doing better for our kids, there's no question. Many in Chicago have modified their standards to say no pastry products. What we're also doing is teaching kids healthy eating habits and patterns of eating and she feels that there's a lot of marketing going on here – packaging. The companies are smart and they know exactly what the minimum standards are to meet so that they can get them through and pushing out Breakfast in the Classroom is going to be a huge money maker for not just school districts; we know that money is needed in this program to do all the things that you've been trying to do to improve the lunch program which you have done here and will continue to do. But the companies are making a ton of money off of school districts by now getting all these products into the classrooms. Providence is trying to look into the cut fruit into the baggies. A lengthy discussion regarding this issue ensued. The question is to Sodexo, "Are you looking at minimizing this kind of stuff and maximizing more whole food items or if you work with people to try to develop and implement the plan that would start to shift that balance so you'd reduce those process foods.

Mrs. Chapman stated that she wants to highlight that we should be

raising the standards and we should not feel hostage to any standards that we feel are not appropriate. She noted that there is opportunity to work around what might make sense to have it in the classroom, either sending a letter home to the parents asking if they want to opt in/opt out. One of the first things would be getting the juice completely off; is an option. Mrs. Ruggieri reported that the problem is that we have children that are lactose intolerant and so that is their option for drinking. It was noted that water is another solution.

Mr. Lenart stated that all of these things that the folks here are saying are things that they didn't get in Providence. In researching on line, in Cranston he didn't think that they were putting out a product that will make kids eat something that you wouldn't want to serve at home. He noted that he really didn't see this coming. He knows that the information hasn't really been put out there for parents; starting next year when they figure out what's best for this program, they will have information from parents. It was noted that there were similar problems in Providence that they were able to take care of. He noted that when it comes to the nutrition they wanted to roll out the program and they wanted to meet the standards and go from there. This is a new program and listening here tonight, they are going to strive to make better choices. Five years ago this program would have been rolled out; these things take time. Mr. Lenart also reported that as far as the education on this program at Edgewood, they sat down with the principals; they brought principals into Providence;

they brought Superintendents to Providence; the principals had meetings with all the teachers about how the program was going to work and that's where they put a lot of the effort into starting the program. A parent noted that the feed back she received from the principals was, "I don't know; talk to Sodexo". She asked a number of times and that was still her answer. When she talked to her daughter's teacher she said that they didn't have any information about this; it was brought up briefly. Mr. Lenart commented that they had a meeting for all teachers about how the program was going to work and he thinks it was based less on nutrition for the teachers and most on how the program was going to work. The group discussed, at length, on how they can make changes over the summer for the new school year; or some small changes now that they can afford. Mrs. Ruggieri commented that Sodexo really does understand what Cranston's vision of a food program is; however, they do have limitations. We have to be aware of those limitations. She reiterated that they really can't set a time where they can say that they can be at a certain place. It's not realistic for a public school system to be providing every single person their specific need as far as what they're looking for. She just wants to say that a time-line of 6 months might not work for Sodexo. There are changes to make and there will be on-going things that we continue to push for.

Mrs. Chapman added that we should be setting our expectations the way they should be for the rest of the country and the rest of the school systems, that basic, healthy, balanced, good nutrition are

what we should be modeling and that's not what we're modeling. Mrs. Greifer added that Cranston has been.....the Wellness Committee has changed its name from the "Nutrition Committee" when the State Law was passed. The Nutrition Committee's been going on for about 10 years now; her kids were in school; she is a Charter Member as is current; they were way out ahead of the other districts in the State as far as trying to improve the food offerings and we've come a long way. When we had complete control over our food program, obviously we can dictate more but there are financial constraints. We are now not in control of the food as completely and Sodexo is doing what it can within its company framework and its contract to improve; they seem to be flexible and willing to work with what we consider our standards to be. Mrs. Ruggieri added that she was one of the people who voted "no" to privatize our food service because she was unsure of a lot of the things that were going to happen. She noted that the experience that we've had with Sodexo; they have never told us "no". We have come to them with issues or to ask them if we could try something different, etc. and they have been very accommodating and they have worked with us every single time. She doesn't want the parents to feel that they are walking out of here and nothing is going to happen. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that she doesn't work like that and from what she has seen Sodexo doesn't work like that either. She is just trying to get a picture of what the parents feel would be an outcome that would be acceptable and realistic. She would like to work from that frame and move along from that. They have a separate group that meets the Food Advisory

Board that is a Rhode Island Department of Education mandate that came down and we're working on the information piece for parents, teachers and administrators as far as communicating better because a pilot program is going to set itself up for issues if its not communicated within the community. That's what we found with this so it was good that the feed back was quick because we can fix that. We know where we need to communicate; we know where it broke down; we know how to fix it. It's the same thing with providing the nutrition. The program that Sodexo has with their menus can only give the average because that's how the program works. There is a nutritional average for the week and that's how the lunch program works as well. The menu will be available and sent home to parents. Once it's rolled out in more than one school (not cost effective to do only one school) the plan will be to have a menu similar to the lunch menu going home the way that it normally does. The same thing with the Nutrition Fact Sheet; it's posted in the schools; we will try and get it posted in different areas of the school. You can certainly ask for a copy of it. At this time, we should be moving ahead successfully; by successfully we mean that it's a win for everyone. The children are getting a decent breakfast; teachers are finding improvements in their classrooms with direct relation to it; Sodexo is seeing an increase in breakfast numbers. Again, we will be doing surveys for feedback. We did something similar with the lunch program last year.

Mr. Lenart commented that Sodexo, as the company, tries to meet the needs of their customers. There's a lot of individual questions and a

lot of specifics that go into how we serve things; what we can serve; how we do things and we want feedback whether it's positive or negative so that we can make our program better. We made this program based on what other programs were doing. We didn't make this up. We took best practices from everyone and we researched and this is what we came up with and if it doesn't meet with what the parents want, then we will make changes. He's not saying that they can meet everything right now, but we will eventually. This is how school lunch changes. It starts in a room like this and it goes on from there. Sodexo is not here to bully anyone and he doesn't want any parent to feel that and hopefully they will feel better after this meeting that things are open for discussion and they want everyone to be happy. They want the school lunch program to survive also and not be a burden on the schools but they also want everyone to be happy with nutrition and know that it's safe to eat at school. Some changes can be made right away and some will take time; some will take a lot longer than they think; it may not be an easy thing to change. If we can make the time shorter, then we will do it.

Mrs. Chapman stated that this is the first time she has heard from someone that changes were possible and her question to this committee is how they can be involved or how can they see when changes are happening. She noted that she would like to help as they try to make changes.

Another parent stated that she appreciates all the nutrition work that

has been done in Cranston and that the committee has done a great job of inspiring them to ask for more. The parents also wanted to thank the committee for inviting them to be part of this process. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that the committee tries to meet every other month. She added that the committee is required to meet four times a year. We used to meet every month but schedules are so crazy and sometimes we would find ourselves meeting for ½ hour and it's not productive; that's why we started to do every other month. Mrs. Ruggieri reiterated to the parents to please let other people know that they are invited to come to our meetings to share their thoughts and if this schedule isn't convenient, she would be happy to come to the parents and then bring the information back to the committee. They will be having their Food Advisory Board meeting sometime in June and they will discuss this issue. Mrs. Ruggieri asked if everyone could please make sure their e-mail addresses are on the sign-up sheet.

A discussion still ensued in regards to the Breakfast in the Classroom Program.

Also brought up was a comment made by Sodexo in regards to when we make up a list of changes and what we have to consider:

1. Time Restraints – to prepare the breakfast
2. Storage – There has to be a place to put it
3. Staff – Need the staff

Mr. Lenart noted that they have meetings with other districts and he is friends with all of their managers and if there is something that works well, they e-mail each other; Providence is doing something that works well.

Moving forward, Mrs. Ruggieri had mentioned at the last meeting that there are new requirements for the school districts for the Wellness Policies. The Healthy Free Kids Act document is actually 80 pages long so she did not copy it but if you are on the list serve you should have received it as an attachment. She noted that we are actually doing most of the things that are required of districts; there are a few things that we are going to need to add on. Some of them including Phys. Ed. teachers and School Health Professionals to participate in the development in the wellness policy. In the past, they've definitely included the health professionals but she doesn't believe that they have included our Physical Education teachers; that's going to be a change for us. Our Wellness Policy is on the CPS website; there's a requirement to inform and update the public about a content and implementation of the Wellness Policy. It is on-line; it's public; it's available for anyone to read so we're already doing that.

Mrs. Ruggieri reported that we don't have this measuring implementation. It's looking for the LEA to measure periodically and make available to the public an assessment on the implementation of our Wellness Policy. That's something that we have to do. We

actually already have our school official to insure that the school complies with it. We consider our Wellness Committee and the School Committee person who chairs it, as being the school official who is ensuring that the schools are complying and we do do that.

As far as the goals for nutrition promotion, that's something that we can work on and it's something that we're going to use as part of this "Breakfast in the Classroom" program and as part of what we're doing with the lunch program to continue to add on more fresh produce, etc.

Mrs. Greifer asked about the section: The Physical Education teachers. It says that we are now required to permit teachers of Phys. Ed. and it doesn't mean that we have to have Phys. Ed. teachers. This issue was discussed.

Ms. Wetherill commented that in 2005 when the USDA had the Child's Re-Authorization at that time, it required the development of a Wellness Policy. That was it. That could have been done by School Committee; In Rhode Island the legislature passed a law requiring districts to have Wellness Committees. By virtue of that, here are parents at an open meeting and what this is saying in most other parts of the State, there isn't a committee so there's no real mechanism for parents to be involved in the implementation and developments of the policy. We have that in Rhode Island. She added that we may want to include the PE teachers in on these

meetings.

Mrs. Greifer noted that the inclusion of a PE teacher would be helpful because, how many times over the years have we discussed physical activity, recess, etc. and they're the people that are right there. They know time constraints; they are there; they know what they can do; what's possible and what's not possible.

Ms. Wetherill commented on the Evaluation and Assessment, she doesn't know whether Cranston has ever done it but a number of years ago at Kid's First, they developed a self-assessment tool and it's a check list that's done on a rubric but it really covers all the issues in school about wellness like how effectively does the administration communicate to the building principal. How effectively do the building principals communicate to parents and what's going on and are you adhering to all the laws and regulations that we have.

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that we will try to schedule something prior to school opening. We will give those of you in attendance the notice and the minutes of the meetings so you will still know what went on. Kiersten Marek is working on the Recess Policy and we will discuss that and the issues that surround that policy.

It was announced that Rhodes School is having "Working with Urban Greens" which is a food coop on the West side of Providence. Ms.

Wetherill noted that she was contacted by one of the board members there and he was talking about working with some parents from Rhodes School. They had asked her to do (next Tuesday) a 45 minute nutrition presentation for the Kindergarten through 3rd graders – 107 students. They will talk about making healthy choices and having....gave an example. Ms. Wetherill also reported that Kids First is actually closing. Also discussed was Farm to School bank.

Ms. Wetherill also reported that they are working with Brown University doing a research study at Arlington on Physical Education and Physical Activity and offering coaches in the schools. This will go into next fall as well. They wanted her to bring to the attention of the committee that there are discrepancies in working in the schools that there isn't the same amount of PE that's happening at different schools. She gave an example of this issue. Mrs. Ruggieri pointed out that there are different regulations for different grades. A discussion ensued in regards to the funding for PE teachers and meeting the standard of the BEP.

The next meeting of the Wellness Committee will be held sometime before the new school year begins.

There being no further business to discuss before this committee, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Leone

Gail Leone

Recording Secretary