

**CRANSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WELLNESS SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2013

4:00 P.M.

Briggs Building (Reed Conference Room)

845 Park Avenue, Cranston

MINUTES

A meeting of the Wellness Subcommittee was held on the above date at 4:00 p.m. with the following members present: Janice Ruggieri, Chairperson, Ashley Coulter, Cranston YMCA, Aaron Lenart, Sodexo, Lynne Conca, Sodexo, Deborah Svitil, CPS Nursing, Jeannine Nota-Masse, CPS Assistant Superintendent, Tammy Eaton, parent, and Audrey Guttin, CPS Teacher/Program Supervisor-Family & Consumer Science.

Mrs. Ruggieri reported that Mrs. Greifer could not make this evening's meeting.

Mrs. Ruggieri reported that since we met a while ago, they sent out a survey for "Breakfast in the Classroom" which went home to all of the schools that are currently participating in the program. A separate survey went out to the teachers; we wanted to hear how it was working from their perspective. Both surveys were done anonymously.

We received an overwhelming response. Mrs. Eaton and Mrs. Ruggieri sat down one evening and went through the surveys and there were close to 800 parent surveys that were received. A few days later, Mr. Votto had received some in his office; Mrs. Ruggieri went in and there were another 250 surveys. In total they received over 1000 responses from parents and over 89 responses from teachers. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that she feels that they got a good response overall. At this time, they went through all of the surveys, which took a couple of hours.

They focused on, as far as what they looked at when these were done, food choices, i.e. least favorite, most favorite, what kind of changes people were looking for, other food choices, and what were some of the actual issues that seemed to be recurring. Mrs. Ruggieri handed out a copy of the Parent Survey (Hand Out #1 on file in the Assist. Superintendent's Office). Mrs. Ruggieri, at this time, explained the survey to everyone at the table. They looked at what the larger issues were. She noted that some of the things that they didn't like were the muffins while at the same time; the thing that they liked most was muffins. Mrs. Ruggieri pointed out that it was interesting to see what the public thinks. The biggest suggestions as far as changes were more variety; which also was a complaint that there were too many choices. They wanted more fresh fruit, other drink choices and dry cereal; they had talked about the reason that they don't do the dry cereal because of the mess it made.

Overwhelmingly parents really want a menu and the nutrition information similar to what they are getting for the lunch. It is available; she is not sure where the breakdown is because some parents said they've never seen a menu; some parents said that they didn't even know there was Breakfast in the Classroom and they would like more information about it.

Some of the larger issues that people would like addressed are:

- Allergy Blanket**
- Lactose Intolerant**
- Be nice to have choices besides milk and water**
- Giving them the nutrition information would help them make the choice.**
- Same thing for gluten/nut free**
- Complaints that there was not enough food (some were that the portion size was too small and some of the complaints were that there was not enough food (more the teachers' perspective) being given to them to hand out to every child in the classroom**
- Improving the quality of food (a few examples were given)**
- Opt out option – kids eating breakfast twice**
- Late bus – if bus was late for a reason, they're not given breakfast**
- Not enough time to eat**

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that there were also quite a few positive responses and quite a few non-negative or positive responses. They were just filled out. There were a number of people who were grateful

for the program and really liked it. For what they were trying to get done for this meeting, they did focus on the negative piece of it; the things that needed to be looked at as far as issues just because we're in the midst of this and we know that if we're looking to add on more schools we need to get this piece dealt with. Please note that there was appreciation for this program as well, too.

At this time, Mrs. Ruggieri spoke on the Teacher Survey Results (See Hand Out #2), what their concerns were and what may be some of their suggestions to improve the program. They did basically the same thing with the teachers. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that they received 89 responses; 21 of them were positive and/or they just didn't have any comments on them. The largest issues that were the most recurring and the things that we need to address are:

- The no opting out – we need to come up with a system where parents can say that their children eat at home; does not need to eat at school and I don't want my child to eat at school.
- There will probably be only one Opt In/Opt Out option during the year
- We cannot place the burden of who's in and who's out on the classroom teachers

Mrs. Ruggieri discussed the Teacher Survey results at this time.

There were complaints about the cleaning supplies noting that they weren't adequate enough to get all of the cleaning done. There

wasn't anything that the kids could use to wipe their hands as well.

Kitchen workers are asking students to bring back food cases; kids are away from classrooms. This is not supposed to happen.

Portable classrooms are difficult for this process.

A discussion ensued in regards to mixing up the Breakfast Program with the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in regards to students bringing food cases back. This did happen at Arlington School, per Mr. Lenart.

When it came to waste, etc. a lot of teachers were saying that their sinks were getting clogged. Mrs. Ruggieri wasn't sure what the cause of this is.

Also discussed was the problem with students coming in late and expecting a breakfast; that's a communication issue with parents from us. Inclement weather can cause a child to be late too; but they are not too sure how that would work. Mr. Lenart pointed out that at Gladstone, if kids are late, they will go down to the cafeteria (normally there are a few extras) and eat there so as not to disrupt the classroom. They would stop at the office and get a special pass before they go down. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that we have too many elementary schools to be doing things differently in every school. This is something that we need to run exactly the same in every

single school. We need to communicate that to all the other schools that have the Breakfast in the classroom and then we need to communicate that to the parents to let them know what the policy is for kids coming in late. If we don't communicate to people, this program is never going to work.

Mrs. Ruggieri felt from the Teacher Surveys that most teachers feel that the program ran better in the cafeteria. They feel that the classroom is not a place for students to be eating and that it is not designed for that; it may not be working out the way that it was envisioned to work out. Mrs. Ruggieri would be very curious to know how this program is working in Providence and how those teachers feel about the program. It's been there longer and they're in their routine. The majority of the teachers that completed the survey had some real legitimate concerns about the program; they did not complain; just had some concerns and they were well reasoned and well thought out. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that as we look at how we're going to run this program, we should take into account what our teachers are telling us. We can't downplay what they're saying or not legitimize what they are saying; they are ultimately the ones who are doing this and we're asking them to help us make this program successful. They totally understand why we're trying to run this program this way; but they're not seeing this working the way it should be.

Mrs. Conca pointed out that they also have concerns. They do audits

on the bags when they come down vs. what they sent out to the kids and quite often they are not accurate. They feel that they can't accurately account for some of the checks.

Mrs. Ruggieri noted that as a district we really strive hard to remain in the forefront with Wellness and all the initiatives; to look at this as a whole and then come back and say, "Maybe this just isn't working for this district". Maybe on both ends and we need to go back to the table and look at what was working for us in the cafeteria and what wasn't working for us in the cafeteria and how we can change that. The impact is also a financial impact on the district and an impact on the district as far as what we're trying to make sure that we're meeting the needs of all of our kids. The point of this program was to make sure that we were getting to all of those children. This may be the issue. Mrs. Ruggieri noted that this is her concern; before we go into next year and looking at what we're going to do, this gives us a window.

State Collaborative – New Regulations and Guidelines for what your Wellness Policy needs to look like.

Karin Weatherall had sent out an e-mail and said if your district would be interested in being a part of this, they're going to pick some districts and of the 30 districts that we have she received 13 responses. All thirteen of the districts made it, including Cranston. What they are now trying to do as group is to write a policy that's comprehensive throughout the State. There's a lot of new guidelines

and some of them are very different because even if you have it somewhere else in your policy; they want the anti-bullying policy to be part of your Wellness Policy as well, even if it's just referenced. There are certain requirements that have to be met in the policy. We're pretty close as far as what we have in our policy; we do need stronger language and there are some specific things that we are missing. Every district was going to go through their policy and fill out something like a score card and there was an online test that they had to take to show what's in our policy now; what does the language read; do we have certain items in our policy. In some areas we were really strong but in some areas we didn't have anything, i.e. access to bottled water. Lynne Conca and Mrs. Ruggieri attended one meeting so far and they have another one coming up in the beginning of April. It may be that every district is going to use the same policy language and then just put in what is specific to their district.

Mrs. Ruggieri reported that the other thing we need to start looking at is creating a Website and/or Newsletter to communicate better with our community that we do have a Wellness Policy; we do have a Wellness Subcommittee; and here's what we're doing. A discussion ensued at this time in regards to Wellness Initiatives, etc. and to make sure that Wellness information is easy and available to all.

Mrs. Ruggieri also reported that the Food Advisory Board hasn't met in a while. Mr. Cowart will be scheduling something soon.

There being no further business to discuss before this committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail A. Leone

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Recording Secretary