

Mark T. Sheehan High School

PTAC

Minutes of Meeting: February 28, 2017

In attendance: Mr. Corso (and parent members of the Lyman Hall PTAC), Mr. Dirkson, Ms. Duthie, Ms. Iles, Ms. Jorge, Mr. Loomis, Ms. Mansfield, Dr. Menzo, Ms. Palange, Ms. Raccio, Mr. Welch

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. The minutes from the January meeting were read and accepted by Ms. Palange and seconded by Ms. Raccio.

Presentation: Wallingford Health Survey

Celeste Jorge, CT Department of Public Health, provided an overview of the purpose, development, and use of the health survey for Wallingford students. Wallingford students took the survey in 2013 and then, given concerns of parents and the community, in 2015 to see where things had changed. For the 2015 survey, there were changes to get a better understanding of the students including information concerning the similarities of the students who were involved in "risky behavior." Over the past few years, there have been programs around destructive decisions regarding driving, since this is a major threat to our students as well. Taking part in the survey is voluntary, and typically there are specific populations of students who are asked to partake in the survey. Wallingford elected for all students, grades 9-12, to take the the survey. Also, Wallingford gives the survey in the Fall and will continue to give the survey on a two-year cycle to our students.

Ms. Mansfield praised the efforts of the school staff and support from the community and BOE to make this survey an important part of our students tenure in Wallingford. Dr. Menzo shared that this is also due to the work from the Coalition for a Better Wallingford. Mr. Welch explained the work of the coalition and how the survey is a work that solely represents our Wallingford students. Mr. Welch talked about the upcoming events that the Coalition is promoting such as "The Transitioning Teenager," which is being held on March 16 and "The Truth about Marijuana," a program for parents and students, on March 9.

Ms. Jorge shared the data from the survey through the lens of number of students in a classroom. For example, when looking at Motor Vehicle Safety, in a classroom of 30, about 5 students in that class had been in the car with someone who had been drinking alcohol. Compared to our administration of the survey in 2013, our rates have decreased. Students also improved on the rate of students who were talking on their cell phones while driving. Ms. Duthie shared that this will be the third year of the distracted driving seminar where the students listen to the presentation and then also use the driving simulators to be "distracted" while driving.

Ms. Jorge shared the results of alcohol use, drug use, and cigarette use of our students. The results for alcohol were similar to the state data and there were decreases in both alcohol use

and binge drinking. Mr. Welch shared that there was much work done with the tenth graders of 2013, who were the twelfth graders in 2015, from the community which led to the positive change in much of the specifics. Ms. Jorge shared other positive information that showed how more of our students recognized the risk of the behavior. There was also a decline in cigarette use for students. Regarding marijuana, our results were better than the state, but there was no improvement on the use of marijuana from 2013 to 2015. Ms. Mansfield asked how students are able to obtain marijuana and there are many places for students to obtain the drug. Mr. Corso explained that this is partly due to the movement that marijuana is now more acceptable in the country and the students pick up on this. He also shared that there is little connection made by our students that e-cigarettes and vapes are not seen as cigarettes.

Ms. Jorge shared the differences between over-the-counter drugs versus prescription drugs statistics and we are much lower than the state average for abuse. Dr. Menzo mentioned that offering a program to parents on prescribed drugs that are typically sold and used by students would be beneficial to helping the issue. Another possibility is to include information about safeguarding medications with the paperwork that is distributed at PPTs and 504 meetings to parents who have a child taking prescription medication. Ms. Mansfield thought that this would also be helpful for the community to take part in an initiative to provide information and help. Mr. Welch shared that there are different programs to help with this information. Additionally, Mr. Loomis spoke about the Health and Wellness Fair that will be held on April 4 at Sheehan for the community where much of this information will be shared. Dr. Menzo suggested that there also be a guide of some kind to help parents determine where and how to receive the information that they need. Ms. Jorge shared that in the future versions of the survey, there will be questions about obtaining opioids. This information will be helpful to know and understand.

Students who described themselves as feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for a period of time (characterized as depressive episode) were asked where they seek help from. The majority seek their friends and it was discussed that a large portion of students who experienced a depressive episode (21.5%) were “Not Sure” where to seek help. This data led to a conversation about programs and initiatives that will help students better support one another in the building. Mr. Corso shared that students seek support from similar students and/or groups and this can cause more problems. Ms. Jorge shared that providing students with more strategies to seek help (where/how) would be very beneficial since our rates of attempted suicides is high and has not changed since the last survey.

Ms. Jorge reviewed the “Family Factors” of the survey. The number one predictor of students who did not engage in the risky behaviors was connection to family. Many people expressed interest in establishing help for parents to provide necessary information for their children regarding risky behaviors. She then reviewed the results of the “School Environment” questions for students, which showed that the majority of students have had a positive experience at Lyman Hall and Sheehan.

Ms. Corso asked how we can provide more support for students who are struggling with mental health issues and the connections between these emotional problems and drug abuse, etc. Mr. Loomis shared the opportunity for QPR training for parents and that there are teachers and

community members who are offering help for students and parents to address these needs. This includes “mindfulness” which has already been implemented for students and staff.

The group thanked Ms. Jorge for sharing the results of the survey with them.

#### QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Gatekeeper Training

Mr. Loomis shared that there will be QPR training for up to 40 parents on March 23. This training teaches how to recognize and care for someone expressing suicidal thoughts. He reminded all in attendance that on April 4, the Wallingford Health and Wellness Fair will be held at Sheehan, with many booths and opportunities for parents and students to gain new information.

#### Door Prize Drawing

The members agreed to table the drawing for this evening.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Some members stayed after the meeting officially concluded to view the video Simon Sinek on Millennials in the Workplace, which addresses addictions to cell phone and technology.

NB: The results of the Health Surveys from 2013 and 2015 can be found on the district website, <http://www.wallingford.k12.ct.us/district-departments/food-services-wellness>.