

**Needham Public Schools
School Wellness Advisory Committee (SWAC)
2014- 2015
Annual Report**

Submitted by SWAC Leadership Team
Director of School Health Services - Mimi Stamer
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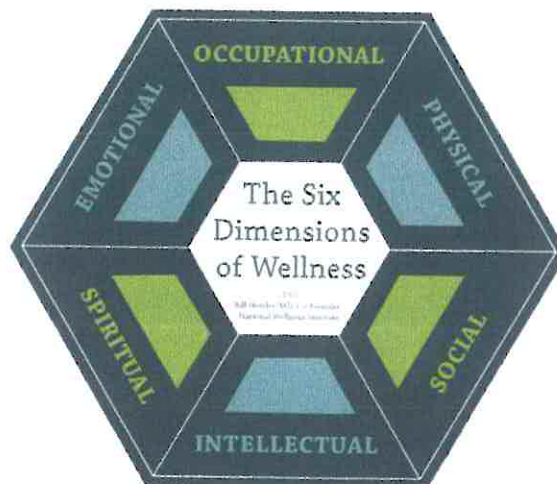
Membership and Participants:

SWAC membership and meeting participation included: Administrators, Teachers, Nurses, Guidance Counselors, Wellness Teachers, Nutrition Service Nutrition Outreach Coordinator, Parents, School Physician, Clergy, Community representatives from: Health Department, Park & Recreation, Youth Services, YMCA, and Needham School Committee

Goals for 2014-2015:

- Align our work with district goal #2 regarding Wellness: "Develop social, emotional, wellness, and citizenship skills"
- Explore ways to address the concept of wellness as a goal for the Needham Public Schools

The majority of our work this year focused on exploring the definition of wellness for our district. To guide our work, we studied the definition and model presented by the National Wellness Institute. This model presents six different dimensions of wellness (physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and occupational). It states that wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence, developing each of these dimensions, and living a life that continually seeks balance among them.



(Six Dimensions of Wellness Model ©1976 by Bill Hettler, MD, National Wellness Institute, Inc.)

Action Plan:

Held three public meetings focused on exploring the six dimensions of wellness and developing working definitions that could be used to talk about students' well-being in the public school setting.

December 8, 2014

- Shared the National Wellness Institute Definition of Wellness
- Presented each of the six dimensions of wellness
- Discussed what is going well in relation to each of these dimensions and what needs improvement

April 8, 2015

Invited a panel of experts to discuss each of the dimensions of wellness (see major points under meeting highlights below)

- Physical: Kate Ward, Director of Charles River YMCA
- Social: Katy Colhart, Social Worker - Needham Youth Services
- Emotional: Beth Pinals, Psychologist/Advisor - Own Your Peace
- Spiritual: Reverend Jennifer Hitt, Pastor - Grace Lutheran Church
- Intellectual: Daniel Gutekanst, Superintendent - Needham Public Schools
- Occupational: Mitzi Wenman, President - TimeFinder/Parent

June 2, 2015

- Discussion about conditions needed to support students in each of the six dimensions

Accomplishments:

Summary from Dec. 8, 2014 SWAC meeting:

Explored What is Going Well in each area of Wellness and what needs improvement in NPS?

Things that are Going Well in NPS in the 6 Dimensions of Wellness:

Physical Wellness:

Needham students are less obese than in other cities; food is out of the classroom and emphasis is on other ways to celebrate; healthy food options in school cafeterias; kids are eating lots of fruits & vegetables; expanded athletic programs and clubs in middle through high school; BOKS (a before school physical activity program) at Hillside; walk-to-school events; PE is required in all grades K-12; lots of activities in Wellness classes.

Social Wellness:

STA Day (Students Take Action) annually at Pollard; food and coat drives; social skills groups at school w/ guidance; promoting school groups and clubs; overall low level of school bullying at HS and accepting of students out of mainstream; lunch groups; morning mingle; active SEL (social emotional learning) initiatives.

Emotional Wellness:

Good and active counselor support; collaboration with youth commission to help students in need; Second Step and Responsive Classroom taught at elementary schools; NEF grant to advise TCL (define) Needham.

Spiritual Wellness:

Increased service learning; respecting individual beliefs; mindfulness grant.

Intellectual Wellness:

High intellectual standards; interdisciplinary learning; differentiated learning opportunities; varying opportunities for club participation; high percentage of students going to college; low drop-out rates; nutrition outreach happening.

Occupational Wellness:

Variety of essential classes to promote all interests/skills; curriculum & activities that are appropriate and appeal to adolescents; community service, freshmen and sophomore academy designed to teach skills.

Things that Need Attention in NPS in the 6 Dimensions of Wellness:

Physical:

Need for more breakfast programs; less processed items in cafe; encourage more middle school students to select veggies; Need more consistent nutrition education, especially at elementary level; Do more education in cafeteria - partner with classroom education; Do a better job relating healthy food choices with better performance; Students are not getting enough sleep (early start time is tough for adolescent sleep patterns). Increase physical movement opportunities throughout the day for most students; HS students need movement opportunities during common planning time on Friday mornings; More after school activities; Physical Education every day; Need more physical space for movement.

Social:

Do more to help social outliers, avoid cliques and reduce focus on fitting in; Peer support groups; Understanding cultural proficiency; Continue with 5th quarter / coffee house concept to open school on occasion for social events for students-- or other

venues

Emotional:

Needham students are stressed more than others and many struggle with emotional issues at a young age; Too much stress over grades and workload; Review /revise implementation of Responsive Classroom with more commitment to evaluation and training; Raise awareness of hidden issues; Continue work on building resiliency skills in middle school and high school: low level of "emotional intelligence" among many students

Spiritual:

Need to develop a school-appropriate definition for Spiritual Wellness; Honor participation in youth faith-based groups; honor spirituality / religious backgrounds; Need to support more time to unplug.

Intellectual:

Peer tutoring; look at leveling at the high school to avoid the stigma of standard classes; find exciting alternatives for those students who are not choosing college; find ways to honor different learning styles; too much attention on academic performance as opposed to intellectual growth.

Occupational:

Students are too over-scheduled, with little to no leisure/"down" time; Need to learn to manage manageable homework expectations; Need help finding individual students' strengths and directing their development in that area; need a focus on worksite wellness for staff

Summary from the April 8, 2014 Panel Discussion / Presentation:

Each panelist addressed the question....*"How can we work with kids to help them become well in each of the 6 dimensions of wellness?"*:

Physical - Kate Ward, Director of Charles River YMCA

Exercise, sleep, nutrition; balance to maintain quality of life; how can we get kids to participate in physical activity as part of their everyday life?; role modeling is essential. How can we work together to reach the benefits of physical wellness?

Social- Katy Colthart, Social Worker Needham Youth Services

Building healthy interpersonal connections with one another, beyond electronic socialization; kids need to learn to adjust to different social situations, communicate effectively, and practice empathy and active listening. We can encourage kids to unplug a little, practice interacting and

making connections by joining a club, volunteering, being around supportive people, and talking to new people.

Emotional - Dr. Beth Pinals, Psychologist / Advisor- Own Your Peace

Kids and adults need to OWN their own peace. Kids need an adult who checks in with them. Kids just need an avenue to express themselves emotionally. How can emotional wellness skills be infused into the curriculum? Courage doesn't always roar...sometimes it is just a little voice that says, "I'll try again tomorrow".

Spiritual - Rev. Jennifer Hitt, Pastor Grace Lutheran Church

Spirituality and religion are not the same thing. It is important to address spirituality in the "public square". Kids need to engage in the conversation about "Who am I?", and "Why am I here?". Consider: Me in relation to myself; me in relation to the community; and me in relation to the universe. Mindfulness and meditation are huge gifts, and totally secular.

Intellectual - Dan Gutekanst. Superintendent of NPS

Students' questions are the core of real learning. We need to allow young people opportunities to be curious, and teach curiosity at the core.

Three rules on Intellectual wellness:

1. Curiosity comes first
2. Embrace the messiness of learning
3. Practice reflection

Occupational - Mitzi Weinman, President TimeFinder / Parent

Students have a job (school: tests, projects, and avocations) which is their structured time. They also need leisure (unstructured) time. Parents and other adults can help by teaching students how to take a step back and look at all the things they are involved in, be honest about what is doable, then make realistic choices about how to spend their time. They may need help organizationally, blocking out time, or breaking assignments into smaller tasks. Teach kids how to sequence, plan projects, and target dates for completing long-term projects. Life skills need to become habits; such as learning to plan, prioritize, and deal with interruptions. We all need to plan so we can devote time to the other areas of wellness.

Summary from June 2, 2015 large group discussion:

What conditions need to exist to support student wellness in each of the 6 Wellness dimensions?

Physical Wellness:

Conditions or factors that support student physical wellness include opportunities for physical activity, free play, competitive sports, and a healthy diet. Promotion of physical wellness is enhanced by preventing illegal substance use and addressing emotional issues through fitness

and physical activity. Factors that enhance physical wellness also include awareness about the importance of adequate rest and sleep habits, stress management, education about nutrition, risky behaviors, sexuality, and alcohol and drug use.

Social Wellness:

Conditions or factors that support student social wellness include having social skills groups, mentoring programs, and volunteer opportunities. Fostering social connections of students who are “non-connecting” and offering peer support groups that promote diversity, cultural proficiency, and peer leadership. Team sports and teamwork cultivates a culture of kindness, caring, compassion, inclusion, working towards common goals and acceptance of differences. Programs in place include sports, clubs, “challenge days”, 5th quarter, own your peace, and day of silence.

Emotional Wellness:

Conditions and factors that support the development of emotional wellness are varied. Our focus on Social Emotional Learning is one of our district goals and is a part of each of our school’s improvement plan. One condition that supports emotional wellness is our teachers providing both structured social emotional learning opportunities through Responsive Classroom and Second Step at the elementary level, Advisory at the middle school level and Mentor Homeroom at the high school level. Throughout the school day students are encouraged to develop peer relationships and friendships. An additional conditions are our efforts throughout the district to value and develop compassion through a wide variety of “helping” initiatives at each of the schools. Students are provided with a wide range of activities where they are able to practice and develop their emotional wellness such as clubs, sports, project based learning and student leadership. At the each level, efforts are made to engage and support students in reaching out to each other to help those who are struggling in life.

Our administrative leadership team is working to measure our success in the area of emotional wellness through surveys, focus groups and ongoing conversations with students, staff and parents. These efforts are an essential condition that ensures that the school district evaluates our practice and makes changes when needed.

Spiritual Wellness:

Conditions or factors that foster spiritual wellness through creating an inclusive environment where the definition of spiritual wellness is broad and able to be defined by each student and family. We ensure that conditions exist that provide support to students who have suffered different types of losses such as the loss of a family member or friend, illness, loss of a pet and other major life challenges. An additional condition is the demonstration of respect for the students and families spiritual values and honor the impact of the life event on the student and their family.

At each school we honor a range of religious holidays and invite learning and discussion of a wide range of religions and spiritual practices. We recognize that due to the demographics of

our community, Christianity and Judaism are the best understood. The district is making efforts to increase the level of understanding of and interest in other religions and spiritual practices. Our understanding of fostering resilience in our students means that we support their development of a sense of purpose. This sense of purpose often connects to spiritual endeavors for students and their families.

Intellectual Wellness:

Conditions or factors that support intellectual wellness focuses on the core of learning and include curiosity, innovation, creativity, messiness and all other forms of intrinsic intellectual stimulation. It celebrates all forms of learning and helps students to understand and capitalize on their own individual learning styles. Intellectual wellness is dependent on the condition that learning pushes beyond the school walls and beyond the traditional school years toward a lifestyle that embraces lifelong learning.

Occupational Wellness:

Conditions or factors that support students' occupational wellness are those that teach and support skills and behaviors that lead to success in school and work. Examples of occupational skills include, but are not limited to basic executive functioning skills (e.g., impulse control, emotional control, flexible thinking, working memory, self-monitoring, planning & prioritizing, task initiation, and organization), communication, problem-solving, perseverance and motivation. Examples of behaviors that support students' work include getting enough sleep, eating properly, getting to work on time, asking for help and support, and realistically challenging one's abilities. By looking at schools and learning through the lens of occupational wellness – we help students better understand the relationship between their skills and behaviors and their academic success. It also helps teachers and administrators to work to create a school workplace that teaches these skills, supports healthy behaviors, and creates a supportive "working" environment for all.

Recommendations / Future Action Plans:

- Collaborate with other district initiatives and groups to respond to student data about mental health issues.
- Promote a district-wide employee wellness initiative
- Utilizing the Six Dimensions of Wellness and our definitions of each dimension:
(See attached Six Dimensions of Wellness wheel, and definitions for NPS- a result of our SWAC work this year)
 - Communicate this wellness wheel and definition of wellness to the Needham Public School community (DLT, SLT, PTC Presidents, Health & Safety Committees, Coaches, Counselors, parents) to ensure a shared understanding of the Six Dimensions of Wellness
 - Advance student wellness through district and school-based initiatives, aligning with District Goals and values

- Explore ways that teachers and staff can use this tool for talking about student growth and learning.
- Advance parent education regarding the Six Dimensions of Wellness
- Apply the Six Dimensions of Wellness as a framework for evaluating and developing district programs and services.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Director of Wellness - Kathy Pinkham Kathy Pinkham

Director of Nutrition Services - Ruth Griffin Ruth Griffin

Director of Guidance - Tom Denton Tom Denton

Date: 10/26/15

(DRAFT)

The Six Dimensions of Wellness in Needham Public Schools, SWAC 2015



Physical Wellness:

Being active and physically fit; following a healthy diet; getting adequate sleep; avoiding tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs; participating in medical self-care.

Social Wellness:

Living in harmony with others and with your environment; maintaining meaningful relationships with people of all ages; learning to play well and work well with others; participating in social events with family, friends, and peers; contributing to the well-being of others and your community. Having a respectful relationship with your environment.

Emotional Wellness:

Recognizing, accepting and managing your own feelings; ability to express one's feelings to others; learning to respond to life's situations rather than react; developing skills to cope with stress; commitment to developing a positive outlook towards life; Ability to live and work independently while realizing the importance of seeking and appreciating the support and assistance of others; participating in emotional self-care.

Spiritual Wellness:

Searching for meaning and purpose in your own human existence; developing individual values and beliefs that guide your actions; finding harmony between your own personal emotions and life's ups and downs; being true to yourself; respecting the beliefs of others.

Intellectual Wellness:

Expanding one's knowledge and skills, being curious; creating; sharing ideas and solving problems; applying knowledge and skills to real life situations.

Occupational Wellness:

Finding a balance between work and play; finding work or an avocation that is meaningful and rewarding; contributing your unique gifts, skills and talents to your work (school) or avocation; balancing work-life and leisure.

