

Highlights from the January 27<sup>th</sup> Wellness Committee meeting.

Karen Pagano - BCSD Food Services Director

**We now have approval from the USDA to expand meal distribution to 7 days a week. We want staff/faculty/community members to know this is available to anyone who comes,** we're an open site. We can only deliver on buses to BCSD students, but we have 4 sites for pickup. It's been frightening to see families reaching out and saying they have no food because their school is closed. This is morphing now into an immediate need, so we're ramping up. On the policy side, the USDA requires we assess and revise the Wellness Policy every 3 years, but that was delayed last year due to Covid. A subcommittee is looking at the questionnaire created by another district to see if we want to use that and if there are any missing pieces in terms of requirements. I think we need more concretely identified initiatives in the policy, and we should address this so there are ongoing requirements and recognition. Next steps are to gather and review diagnostics.

**On a side note:** Congratulations to Karen for the Dutchess County Frontline Workers Award!

John Giametta - BCSD Physical Education & Athletics Director

Sports are coming back! This means that **wrestling, basketball, and cheer can start in February. And football is scheduled to start March 15th**, with new bleachers and a new pressbox. We hope the community will bundle up and get out there! We're working on developing the right safety protocols, in collaboration with the state, section, county and Health Department. Coaches have been extremely helpful and are stepping up.

Julisa Rincon-Tomizawa - Asst. Director of Pupil Personnel Services (PPS)

**We're working to support students/families who are facing Covid-related hardships.** We've been collaborating with all principals and Director of PPS Dawn Condello to make sure social workers are reaching out, along with teachers, who are a first line of defense. We're taking a team approach. Students with disabilities and families of students with special needs are also receiving support. During a November workshop on how to support your remote learner, there was a presentation about how to support students. The workshop is posted here: <https://bit.ly/3mzYYtx>. Social workers and psychologists have also provided resources to families that are easy to access and implement at home. We're doing more sessions at the building level, as well as more workshops. We're holding another workshop in February to discuss speech therapy. We're working to ensure more timely notifications of workshops, and to ensure confidentiality on email threads.

Nicole Porto - Education Director & Garden Educator, [Land to Learn](#)

**Land to Learn is co-hosting a veggie art contest with Compass Arts.** Kids can use vegetables to make any kind of art, including visual arts, music, dance, & theater. Everyone who enters the contest will receive their own garden kit, and 4 finalists will win the Grand Prize, an EarthBox Grow Kit. To enter, share a photo/video of your child's vegetable-inspired art on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#), using the hashtag #HomeGrownArtContest and tagging @LandToLearn and @CompassArtsOrg. Make sure to DM both accounts to ensure your entry is recorded. Entries are due February 15, with Grand Prize winners announced on March 1.

Cathryn Biordi - Assistant Principal, Rombout Middle School

**Rombout has been focusing on mental health more now that the weather has gotten worse.** We're connecting with remote students to encourage more engagement, having 1-on-1 meetings with them and the guidance counselor. Every Wednesday, we also have a round of home visits, mainly with kids who aren't attending Google meets. We've also been delivering a lot of items. Two weeks ago, we ran a report to see who was failing 2 or more classes, and we've reached out to those kids, focusing on remote students first. We've been doing individual Google meets, and will next focus on hybrid students who aren't doing well. These are not punitive, but student support meetings to figure out what would make them more successful.

Elisa Soto - Principal, Beacon High School

We've also been focusing on mental health and student support. We surveyed students to ask what can we do better to support them, and it was a little shocking to read. We forget the long-lasting effects of this situation, so we want to address the mental health needs that are coming. We've been doing a lot of home visits, and that has brought kids back. After seeing the survey, teachers also changed their mindset and thought, What can I do differently? **Kids are asking for more student-led activities, time to interact with friends, and engagement.** We're now shifting gears on Wednesday to figure out how we can address these concerns, along with guidance counselors and social workers doing outreach. We also do circle meetings for staff on Wednesdays, run by the social worker, and we had 25 teachers last week.

Diane Tanzi - Health Teacher, Beacon High School

**Starting in February, I'll be teaching ADL (Activities of Daily Living) students in class.** This is the first time we'll have these students physically in a health setting, and this will be a kind of pilot program to see what can be developed as a curriculum, to get to know the students, and to delve into what we can do.

Cassandra Orser - Principal, Glenham Elementary

Glenham is also going case by case, looking at attendance, Google meets participation, and work completion. There's a problem with students submitting work and not completing it, so

we're looking at that. We're also checking in on days that there isn't full instruction, making sure students have supplies, and ensuring there are strategic aids to support students while they're at home. A handful of students are going from remote to hybrid, and we're trying to balance the different levels of participation. Transportation has been a huge help with delivering materials. **We're also talking with Mr. Giametta about using Wednesdays differently, and incorporating specials time that day, between PE, music, and art.**