

9/15 @ 8 AM Wellness@54 Meeting

Contents

Attendance
Next Action Steps
Summary Notes
Postscript

Attendance

Parents/Guardians: Marni Aarlev, Yonghung Deng, Fabiola Diamond, Joshua Kane, Abigail Kane, Vina Lillvis, Lauren Parker, Nildania Perez, Elizabeth B. Stein, Kim Watkins, Celine [Last Name?], Sharon [Last Name?]

Teachers: Elisabeth Cohen, Deirdre McEvoy

Parent Co-Hosts: Laura Adams, Alison Gardy

Next Action Steps

5 champions for 5 projects emerged from our meeting. Champions, who expressed an interest in leading a project, are **in bold** along with other participants interested in assisting :

- *Fun, social interactions to connect students in sub-cohorts, cohorts, grades and schoolwide* -- **Lauren Parker**, Alison Gardy
- *Physical fitness fun* -- **Marni Aarlev**, **Kim Watkins**, Lauren Parker, Elizabeth B. Stein, Alison Gardy
- *Sleep hygiene [teacher-and-student-driven ideas]* -- **Fabiola Diamond**, Celine [Last Name], Alison Gardy
- *Sub-cohort parent/guardian communication groups to be coordinated by class parents* -- **Marni Aarlev**, Fabiola Diamond, Nildania Perez, Josh Kane, Alison Gardy
- *Community Service building on existing MS54 activities such as the food drive, which has distributed over 400 bags of groceries over the ten weeks of summer and will continue in the Fall* -- **Alison Gardy**, Marni Aarlev, Joshua Kane,

Each project group will decide when/how to convene to carry their project forward.

Summary Notes

We began our meeting with a question from Alison to the group: *Why did you come to the Wellness Meeting this morning? Why now?*

Ms. McEvoy shared that teachers had received training in trauma-informed instruction and have been asked to be mindful that “we don’t know what situations and illnesses children have been coming from.” She expressed her interest that, on remote days, we find ways to incorporate movement into students’ lives, perhaps an observation scavenger hunt to find objects in one’s home. She is excited about The Well as a resource place, and hopes it will have a space in the PTA newsletter.

Ms. Cohen shared that “coming together as a community is an absolute imperative if we are to have hope.” She sees it as vital “to support our students’ well-being and learning. We need active collaboration between parents and students.” She noted that it is critical to students’ “minds, bodies, souls, and social connections.... Cooperation makes *all* the difference... The key will be figuring out the details to ensure clear chains of communication between parents and teachers.”

Fabiola and Josh discussed the need to support kids and to help parents manage their post-work hours with family in the best possible way. Lauren talked about the importance of fun and social interaction.

In the discussion of the sub-cohort parent text group, the following ideas emerged:

- Pros: inclusivity, ensuring that everyone in class has resources and not just those who are well-connected and well-resourced; a potential equalizer; additional support to the class parent structure; great for providing information that is reasonably available and not overwhelming
- Caveats: “the devil is in the details,” teachers should not organize these text groups; having an app instead of an open text group will protect people’s confidential information and enable participants to receive texts in digest or daily format; ensure ground rules, such as avoiding 50 thank you’s and not using the text group to complain, as often happens on social media
- Recommendations: Marni suggested that we use the MS54 PTA Facebook group instead of creating a separate Facebook group for these kinds of conversations so as not to invest in another layer of bureaucracy.
- Please see the **Postscript** after the conclusion of these meeting notes to see what next action steps were decided as a result of further discussion after the meeting.

Kim Watkins [president of CEC3] talked about her interest as a running coach and her keen interest in Wellness @ 54 in terms of physical exercise and how to move our bodies.

Lauren Parker, drawing on her own memories of middle school as both rigorous *and* fun, wants to encourage social interaction so that middle school produces positive associations and memories of “fun.” She mentioned her husband’s work with team-building. How can we bring team-building to MS54 during remote learning? Could we have an Escape Room for a cohort? Fitness ideas?

Fabiola Diamond zoomed in on sleep hygiene issues: sleep patterns, mental fitness, the need for sunlight, self-care, discussions about sleep. She thinks it is most important what teachers message to students in this regard. We also discussed student-driven brainstorming around sleep hygiene.

We agreed that, for our next Wellness Meeting, we review the MS54 calendar Marni put up on our website and work around Dr. Elster’s Friday coffees and other MS54 events.

Places to grow The Well @ 54:

- Highlights on the MS54.org website
- Resources shared on the MS54 PTA Facebook group
- Section in weekly newsletter

Postscript

Further discussion after the meeting regarding the most inclusive yet private way to link parents/guardians in sub-cohorts for resource sharing and support resulted in the following next action steps:

- Develop the Class Parent role to include setting up communication options for sub-cohorts of parents/guardians according to their communication preferences.
- Class Parent spreadsheet idea from NYCDOE's Dorothy Sanabria -- create a Google doc that collects parents'/guardians' names, addresses, phone numbers, emails, and *how they would like to be contacted*. Make sure the spreadsheet lists specific choices for how to be contacted, including: email, phone call, text, FaceTime, WhatsApp, and Google Meet. Since Google Meet is the way nearly all parents/guardians meet with teachers, it is the most "democratic" way of meeting visually. It also has closed caption services for the hard-of-hearing, which Zoom does not automatically have. WhatsApp is perfect for those who might want only phone or text contact and no visuals. Anyway, it's great to give parents choices! The Class Parent spreadsheet is also a great opportunity to ask fellow parents/guardians what kinds of activities they'd like their children to engage in together out of school -- outings, exercise, online games, etc.

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