

MS54 Wellness Meeting Summary

June 18, 2021 @ 7:30 AM

Attendance

Laura Adams, PTA Co-President

Dr. Elisabeth Cohen, Humanities Faculty

Dr. Elana Elster, Principal

Grace Gao, Student, 6th Grade Community Service Committee Member

Alison Gardy, Wellness Chair (Lead)

Emma Lapidos, Student, 6th Grade Community Service Committee Member

Lawrence Lee, PTA Co-President

Anne McIntosh Pejovich, Parent Coordinator

Naomi Redlener, Student, 6th Grade Community Service Committee Member

Ms. Maggie Weinreb, Math Faculty

Agenda

- I. MS54 Food Drive -- Assessment, Reflections, Next Steps
- II. "How to Manage Anxiety" Student Session with Dr. Vijayeta Sinh on June 11, 2021 -- Summary, Reflections, Next Steps
- III. One Lunch Program -- Next Steps
- IV. End-of-Year Get-Together for 8th Graders -- Planning for June 24, 2021
- V. 6th Grade Community Service Committee Presentation on June 13, 2021 Bake Sale to Raise Funds for West Side Campaign Against Hunger -- Assessment, Reflections on the Process, Next Steps

Summary

Check-in

During our check-in, we each shared experiences that made us feel well, relaxed, and happy over the past month and year. Dr. Elster, Laura, Anne, and Ms. Weinreb shared their joy over the 8th graders' outdoor graduation on Wednesday, June 16, 2021. The weather was perfect and the ceremony was beautiful and poignant. It was an amazing, truly ceremonious, dignified and joyful way to end an extraordinary year!

Laura said that she has been reflecting on how amazing it was that so many people in the MS54 community stepped forward to volunteer this year, including people who did not have formal positions. Lauren Parker had an interest in Instagram and ran with it, creating our visually beautiful MS54 Instagram account. Fabiola Diamond took on the MS54 School Store.

I. MS54 Food Drive -- Assessment, Reflections, Next Steps

- A. Dr. Elster mentioned that the year-long MS54 Food Drive (June 2020 through June 2021) was an important act of caring that helped bring our community together around an essential service to families.
- B. Anne expressed that she was “So thankful” for the experience and that the Food Drive enabled her to get to know families better. She said she hopes that they will continue to be engaged and involved with the school.
- C. Alison recommended that she and Anne codify the Food Drive process, especially because it could be useful to other schools. She noted that a parent in the Bronx Science Parents Association Facebook Group called out the MS54 Food Drive and asked how it could be replicated at The Bronx High School of Science. Anne and Alison plan on documenting their process ASAP.
- D. Laura mentioned that it would be very important to give the Food Drive documentation to current and incoming PA Co-President Larry Lee and incoming PA Co-President Lee Uehara to bring to the D3 Presidents Council meeting. MS54 has contributed process templates for the Turkey Trot and celebrating the Asian American Pacific Islander communities, and a process template for the Food Drive would be yet another contribution MS54 could make to D3 as a whole.
- E. Laura suggested using part of the remaining PA budget for supplies to buy metal shelves for Food Drive storage if we continue the Food Drive next year.
- F. Anne noted that it was amazing the way families stepped up to participate. “It just goes to show you that there’s gold in dirt!” She also noted that “It takes a pandemic” to propel this level of involvement. “How can we hold onto this feeling?” she asked.
- G. Dr. Elster said her ideas are percolating regarding next steps.

II. “How to Manage Anxiety” Student Session with Dr. Vijayeta Sinh on June 11, 2021 -- Summary, Reflections, Next Steps

- A. This session took place on Friday, June 11 at 11:30 am, during 6th grade students’ lunch hour.
 - 1. Dr. Sinh used menti.com so that students could share information anonymously.
- B. Ms. Weinreb used a Google form feedback survey and got 45 responses.
 - 1. Overall, students found the session helpful.
 - 2. One suggestion is to have smaller groups.
 - 3. It was challenging to go to math class with one’s head full of thoughts and feelings after this kind of session.
 - 4. Some students opened up to the presenter and wanted to connect directly with her. Others would have preferred a session taught by someone they know
 - 5. It’s important to have a speaker like this and a session like this more often.

6. Might there be programming on how to help teachers integrate sessions like this into the classroom?
7. In her math class, Ms. Weinreb had a “mental health talk” that enabled students to express their feelings with candor and connect.
8. Anne mentioned that Dr. Elster is looking for a full-time social worker for the coming year. There is a huge need for kids to reflect and have someone to talk to.
9. We discussed the “advisory” model. Ms. Weinreb noted that not all teachers can do it. Anne recalled a 6th grade Humanities teacher from years ago who led a “Girl Talk” session during lunchtime in her classroom on issues of interest to girls, with the understanding that what is said in Girl Talk stays in Girl Talk.
10. Dr. Elster and Ms. Weinreb agreed that Dr. Sinh was easy to relate to and we could call upon her again. She is eager to help both parents and students. In September, she could talk with both parents and children. Dr. Elster suggested that Dr. Sinh might present during the week after Labor Day before school starts. Alison offered to reach out to Dr. Sinh to connect her with Dr. Elster and Ms. Weinreb so that we can book Dr. Sinh’s time in advance.

III. One Lunch Program -- Next Steps

- A. One Lunch successfully brought 6th graders to the courtyard for lunch together in socially distanced groups over four Tuesdays and Thursdays after school.
- B. Next year, in the Fall, One Lunch will also serve 7th and 8th graders. May and June became very busy with other activities this Spring.

IV. End-of-Year Get-Together for 8th Graders -- Planning for June 24, 2021

- A. Laura asked if it would be possible to get the 8 graders together before the end of the school year, namely after they take the Regents on Thursday. The PA could rent a couple of ice cream trucks. It could take place with a street closing.
- B. Dr. Elster approved, and Anne and Laura plan on coordinating to make this event happen!

V. 6th Grade Community Service Committee Presentation on June 13, 2021 Bake Sale to Raise Funds for West Side Campaign Against Hunger -- Assessment, Reflections on the Process, Next Steps

- A. The 6th Grade Community Service bake sale raised \$308.17 for West Side Campaign Against Hunger -- a success! Participants sold cupcakes, mini-pies, and cookies.
- B. Grace Gao noted a couple of communication issues that prevented team members from attending on the day of the event. Overall, however, she said their bake sale went well despite mistakes.

- C. Naomi Redener mentioned that her grandmother knew a writer for the West Side Rag and told the writer about the upcoming bake sale. The story was covered [here](#).
- D. Emma Lapidos gave a slide presentation about the bake sale project.
- E. Quotations:
 - a. “It was very rewarding and also had a lot of challenges, such as date changes and then people not being able to make it. If you overcome the challenges, it will still be fun and very successful.” -- Grace Gao
 - b. “You can do much more when you work as a group and do it well.” -- Emma Lapidos.”
 - c. “Wellness is the months of planning behind it, how we stuck together and didn’t quit.”
 - d. “It was nice that we raised lots of money, but everyone was so cheerful at the end after all that we’d gone through.”
- F. We decided to end the meeting on the high note of the 6th graders’ student insights.
- G. Alison thanked everyone on the screen for their contributions to Wellness that year. We all expressed our gratitude to one another for making our school an amazing community to be in during a pandemic!