

Highlights from the September 30th Wellness Committee meeting, the first of the 2020-21 school year. We discussed efforts across the district to ensure students' emotional and physical well-being.

Erik Wright - BCSD Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Over the summer, we discussed how to support students returning to school, having dealt with Covid-19 and racial tensions across the country. We want to understand how our students feel and let them express it, with a support system in place that makes them feel comfortable and heard. The district geared up on **social-emotional reports and culturally responsive practices** for teachers. We've also had circles with student leaders to understand how they feel in school and what changes they'd like, including in the curriculum. We'll expand those conversations into larger student groups, with questions developed by teachers and students, to see how we can better support students and create a more well-rounded experience.

We continue **responsive classroom work at the elementary level**, with ~50 teachers trained across the schools. It's helping teachers engage students so they feel like they're all part of the team. **Restorative practices**, which builds that same sense of community at the middle and high school levels, have been in place for about 2½ years, and most secondary teachers went through initial overview training. We've also had more in-depth, multi-day training for some of our BHS/RMS social workers, psychologists and teachers this year. This approach helps us look at different ways to meet student needs, including in adversarial situations. Instead of just punitive discipline, we can use circle practices to bring together students to talk about issues they're facing.

Dr. Hunter, a SUNY Buffalo professor who does work around culturally responsive pedagogy, is also helping us **incorporate social justice projects into our English and Social Studies curricula**. We're working on implementing this at the secondary level this year.

We're also working with [Ramapo for Children](#) on **trauma-informed practices**. They can help us identify what trauma looks like in students and how to respond. This Friday, I'm meeting with one of the consultants on a plan for the social workers and psychologists to facilitate sessions with faculty and staff. We're also working with administrators, so they're not quick to judge or administer consequences, but approach it from a trauma-informed perspective.

Karen Pagano - BCSD Food Services Director

We've had to morph in many ways to meet the needs of students this year. We currently have 5 distribution sites and 6 programs for families to pick up meals for days they missed in schools. **We're partnering with the bus garage to do home delivery of meals on Wednesdays at no charge to parents, starting Oct. 21.** Fill out the form here: <https://bit.ly/3iw5i2l>. Additionally, we're working with Common Ground Farm on creative programming around the district's Farm to School grant.

John Giametta - BCSD Physical Education & Athletics Director

In terms of equity, our goal has been to unify physical education curriculum across the elementary schools. Our teachers are doing a great job of creating equitable programming and following the same curriculums. We also **began approved Varsity and Junior Varsity sports this week**, and things have gone well, with protocols in place.

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

Since last spring, we've donated over 200 lbs of produce from the gardens, and some members have worked with Mutual Aid to help with food insecurity in the community. The teen internship program was able to happen this summer, and we're **about to launch outdoor learning at the schools**. That will continue as the weather permits, and then we'll switch to a virtual format. As a reminder, the gardens are available to use as an outdoor space, even when the Land to Learn program isn't in there. We encourage teachers to please use them!

Sember Weiman - Acting Director & Education Director, [Common Ground Farm](#))

Since the spring, we've pivoted **more to food access work and growing our food donation program**. We typically donate 10,000 lbs of produce a season, but it'll be much more this year (already at 11,500 lbs). There will be less educational programming, but we worked with Rombout Middle School this summer to get the garden going, and we're working to continue the backpack program at elementary level. We're also considering strategies for educational programming through the schools.

Elisa Soto - Principal, Beacon High School

This year, we've worked on bringing **more integration into Google classrooms and more interactive elements and collaboration in learning**. We're talking about critical thinking skills and good decision-making and goal setting. We're also utilizing the Safety First drug addiction curriculum for teens and teaching personal and social strategies around drug/alcohol use.

Cathryn Biordi - Assistant Principal, Rombout Middle School

Advisors have been appointed for the recently established **Environmental Club**, and the garden has been growing since summer. Outdoor eating has been successful, with 7 picnic tables added outside the cafeteria. Outdoor classrooms have also been established with portable seating.

Elizabeth Botero - Social Worker, Glenham Elementary

We've been checking in with kids and parents, assessing needs and helping to manage expectations. We've also created a **student counseling assessment form** so a teacher can learn if a student is struggling and then refer them to us. We're also anticipating economic issues for families, and want to be prepared to look for signs of kids who don't have permanent homes.

Crystal Sessoms - Principal, JV Forrestal Elementary

Our social worker and psychologist have been offering **proactive support for both students and staff**. They've made themselves available for teachers and students. We've also had professional development around meditation for staff, and the teachers have been using tents for classes and lunch. Distancing has not been a problem because of reduced class sizes and outdoor use.

Brian Archer - Principal, Sargent Elementary

Small classes and routines have been successful. Some students have expressed anxiety and the school social worker and psychologist have reached out to families. In terms of community-building, practices from the responsive classroom training over the summer are being used, and we'll start morning announcements soon. **Equity team activities will also begin soon.**

Laura Cahill - Principal, South Avenue Elementary

We continue to use responsive classroom practices to help students feel like they're part of the school community, and we're making efforts to bring connection and continuity between the different cohorts of learners. We will conduct **home visits** when there is a concern with attendance, work productivity, loss of communication (contact info needed), or to just check in. We've already conducted a few home visits this year to work with families who needed translation in their native language, material/technology support, and support in starting the virtual learning path. We are also keeping a close eye on student attendance in Google Meets, so we can support student learning needs in the virtual setting.