**School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)**

Meeting Minutes – 3/4/13

**I.  Introductions**   
  
Gwen Wang, Emily Lavine, Norma Wyse (notes), Ann Redmon, Megan Baldwin, Jennifer Wolfrum, Mary Ellen Dunn, Rita Goldberg, Jill Gasperini, Julie Fenn, Lisa Gualtieri, Leslie Zales, Marsha Lazar, Eamonn Sheehan, Sharon Kendall, Lori Tambone, Eileen Jay, Lorelle Yee, BJ Rudman, Elyse Simon, Alessandro Alessandrini, Sharon Kendall, Sion Kim Harris  
  
**II. Updates**

* The YRBS was administered 2/26; it went very smoothly and was administered during a double extended homeroom.  Everyone was working quietly when Jennifer checked around the buildings.
* There is a new high school health education teacher.  Debbie Holmen retired at the end of January after 20+ years.  Krista Gainty is the new teacher and she has been working with the other health teachers seamlessly.  She ‘s very personable and students are already starting to come in to talk with her.
* The Improbable Players, a theater group that addresses addictions and substance abuse, are donating a production to benefit Lexington Youth and Family Services.  The benefit will be 3/22/13 at 7:30 P.M. at the First Parish Church on the green.  The show is appropriate for children 10 and up.  This is a good thing to do as a family to stimulate discussion about these issues.
* Lisa Gualtieri has students in her classes who are available to work on a project for 14 weeks for their masters’ thesis programs at Tufts University.  Her students know how to use social media and web design.  People can contact her with ideas for students for the fall (lisa.gualtieri@tufts.edu).
* Marsha Lazar said that Lexington Youth and Family Services is looking into focusing on mental health for Asian teens (Asians make up 30% of the student body at the high school) who are reluctant to talk to their parents about what their concerns.  She’s not sure what services are needed but knows that talking about stress and depression is not part of the culture.  Marsha met with CAAL (Chinese American Association of Lexington) today and is looking for ideas and input.  Jennifer suggested she speak with Jerry Fu, an Asian therapist, who practices here in Lexington.  It was also suggested that students might benefit from group sessions with other Asian students to talk with each other.

As part of this discussion other issues that were brought up/discussed included: “Asian F is an A-minus”.  Some Korean students are not living with their families, but are instead living with others, and their parents are living in Korea. Some families have a parent in Lexington with their children and the other parent is working back in Asia. Focus group of students would be the best place to start.  Julie Fenn said that the new food service worked very hard to break up the traditions of where kids segregate during lunch.  Commons II is much more attractive now, with soup available, better salad bar.  Little things like this make it less isolating.  Used to be that only Asians ate there.

**III.  Lexington Health Communities Project** (Megan Baldwin)   
  
The goal of the Lexington Healthy Communities Project is to engage the entire community to identify ways to improve the quality of life in Lexington.  
  
Gerald Cody, the Health Division Director oversees the Executive committee that meets monthly and guides the process and evaluates the data.  The project defines “health” as physical, mental, and spiritual well being.  The community consists of all members, residents, businesses, visitors, etc.  Some of the health influences include culture, housing and the environment.  Key components of the healthy community project include a strong planning process that is not top down and pooling resources in new ways.  
  
They are asking people two basic questions:  What do you like about Lexington?    What aspects of the community do you feel influence  your health or quality of life in a positive way? And, What could be done to make Lexington better?  What could be done to improve your health of quality of life for you, your friends, or your family?  
  
The survey is available online ([www.lexingtonma.gov/health/communityhealth.cfm](http://www.lexingtonma.gov/health/communityhealth.cfm)) and has been administered at the Senior Center, tables at the Farmers Market and at the Flu Clinics.  Four focus group discussions have been conducted at Avalon, Katahdin Woods, the Senior Center and Cary Hall.  They are also drawing on data from the Lexington Health Assessment from 2001, the CHNA 15 Community Health Assessment and the Lexington Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) from 2011.  
  
Preliminary Results:  Broad range of priority areas identified  
 Community connectivity:  community center or programs that link people  
 Diversity challenges: language and cultural barriers to service  
 Mental health services:  Lacking modes for early intervention, youth and adults  
 Sidewalk and bike path improvements  
 Zoning issues:  mansionization, business diversity downtown  
  
Youth related priority areas:  
 Student academic stress  
 Improvements to school nutrition  
 Alcohol and drug use  
 Harassment  
 Mental health and suicide  
 Financial stress  
 Abuse and neglect  
 Expand community awareness on special education  
  
Lack of places in town for teens to drop in and have fun—Cary Library is the place for this now.  Orange Leaf and Panera are providing some of this function.  Community center would be a good place to hang out in a safe place.  Adult supervision in school buildings on weekend might be possibilities.  Parks and recreation is discussing how to serve this teen group, too.  They are also discussing how to integrate special needs kids and families.  We need to encourage cultural integration as town demographics are changing.  Multicultural events and potlucks are one way to do this.    
  
How will the Healthy Communities Project determine top priorities?  The Executive Committee will evaluate data collected using an analysis tool.  Some of the analysis tool questions include:  
  
 Does this area of concern impact a variety of ages?  
 Does this area of concern impact a variety of cultural and ethnic groups?  
 Is there additional data available to support this area of concern?  
  
The planning process results will be presented at a public meeting in May, 2013 at which point the committee will integrate feedback into the analysis.  The plan is to apply for another round of CHNA funding in September to address the priority concern areas.  
  
Advice from SHAC members:  consider coordinating with the Parks and Recreation Department and make this presentation at Town Meeting.   Some one asked if there are questions about connectedness in the YRBS, about “do you have an adult you can talk to about things that concern you?”  Answer: yes.  Some one else asked about Hayden Center.  They don’t service the older adolescent group; they only provide programs for kids up to 6th grade and they have not been interested in expanding their services to older students.  
Someone else suggested considering a mentoring program in a community center, to pair up a youth with an adult who can help them stay on course.  
  
  
**IV. Citizens for Safety** (Rita Goldberg)  
  
Are you concerned about what happened in Newtown?  Are you interested in doing what you can to change things for urban families who deal with this sort of thing every day?    
  
Nancy Robinson and Rita Goldberg met just after the Columbine shootings and they were part of the national movement, “A Million Moms”.  Since then, Citizens for Safety has formed to address gun violence in Dorchester and Roxbury.  In 2010, there were 17, 000 gun-related homicides and 83 lives a day lost to gun violence in the U.S.  There are 310 million guns in this country; we are on par with the least-developed countries in the world in relation to gun violence.  The group, Citizens for Safety (CS), asks one question:  Where did the gun come from?  CS stays away from assault weapons and focuses on crooked gun dealers.  They have found that someone with a criminal record asks a young person, (often women of color) to buy them a gun at a gun show.  CS argues for stronger background checks.    
  
Rita feels that this is a golden opportunity for us to get involved as suburban parents, to open our eyes a bit, and see it as a public health issue.  We need to educate ourselves as to what goes on.  Rita acknowledged that this campaign may not be within the purview of the school system.  CS has speakers who can present about what a public health problem this is.  Most of the suicides and homicides occur in the age of 13 to 22.     
  
Someone stated that we should be asking on the YRBS about “is there a gun at home?”  Jennifer Wolfrum says students know they can get suspended just for bringing in a knife.  This is a school advisory council and we need to be careful at the scope we can deal with.   
  
Rita thinks that this is the right moment to address this as a civil rights issue.  Where is the right venue to discuss this?  Rita does not want this to fizzle out.   Someone asked, does this issue get addressed in health classes?  Jennifer pointed out that the classes meet twice a week for one semester and that is too short a time for including everything.  Perhaps there could be a PTA forum about violence and video games.    The PTA could have a panel with multiple voices from the community about violence in video games.    
  
CS wants background checks.  NRA thinks all this comes from violent video games.  It’s a mental health issue, not an issue of full background checks and women who buy guns for others at gun shows.  LIPSTICK: ladies involved in putting a stop to intercity killing could be on such a panel.  If you look at all the science, it’s hard to pin the violence on violent video games.    
  
From a mental health standpoint—how is anger dealt with in schools?  How are people expressing their anger, for example, anger management over a breakup?.  The Open Circle program and Rachel’s Challenge address feelings and how to handle them in elementary and middle school.  In the high school, students are encouraged to find healthier coping strategies as part of the extended homerooms as well as in health classes and guidance seminars.  
  
How would making background checks more strict change things?  Straw purchasing would still go on.  Rita Goldberg says there are education programs to help women say no when approached to buy guns for someone else.  Gun shows do not require background checks.  To carry mace, you had to get a pistol permit.  So the unintended consequence was that the pistol ownership skyrocketed in MA, since if you had to go through all the training just to carry mace, you might as well go on to get a pistol.    
  
If anyone has any ideas for a venue where CS could present and begin this discussion about background checks and gun violence please contact Rita Goldberg at goldberg@ fas.harvard.edu  
  
**V. Subcommittee Reports**

* Stress Reduction Subcommittee: Update on School Committee presentation 2/26

BJ Rudman reported on the recent presentation to the School Committee by the Collaborative to Reduce Student Stress.  He pointed out that a number of people were involved in the presentation (Sion Kim Harris, Lorelle Yee, Eileen Jay).  The Collaborative is trying to reduce student stress, build resiliency and increase communication between school and community about what the schools are doing.  The research that the Collaborative has reviewed recommends making explicit the social and emotional competencies expected at each grade level.  Elements of this are represented on the new K-5 report card.    
  
 The presentation was well received by the School Committee. (The Power point presentation is attached to these minutes).  Dr. Ash says that stress reduction is a long-term project, and can’t be accomplished only by the schools.  Jessie Steigerwald suggested creating an ad hoc subcommittee of the School Committee to continue to work on this.  BJ pointed out that over 1000 people came to the Race to Nowhere showings last year reflecting the level of community interest.  More people came to Cary Hall to hear about AP courses and college admissions than could fit into Cary Hall so people were turned away.    
  
How will a School Committee subcommittee and the SHAC subcommittee work together?  Do we need both?  SHAC has a broader focus.  This new subcommittee from the School Committee would have a short life span and would work only on reducing school stress and developing resiliency.  A parallel model is the committee on transportation safety that oversees transportation to school, bike safety at school, and buses.  The transportation committee includes a representative from the Selectman.  It is important for SHAC to be part of this possible subcommittee, so that there is no duplication.  We will need to wait to see what the school committee decides.  Meanwhile, Dr. Ash has already sent out the SC presentation to all of the principals.  

* LPS Wellness Policy Subcommittee

The DESE came in and reviewed our menu and food offerings.  We did okay.  The nutrition regulations have pulled back on the grain limitation and they are not enforcing the 12 ounces of protein per week for high school students.  Participation in the lunch program is up.  Not too many people are taking our survey asking about school lunches.  The next battle will be chocolate milk.  No-fat chocolate milk is what we have on the menu.  
  
Jill Gasperini explained that the LPS wellness guidelines will have to revised to reflect the changes in the state and national guidelines..  Bake sales are supposed to follow those guidelines if sold 30 minutes before or after school.  At least the cupcakes are getting smaller.  We will probably have a problem with having “healthy” bake sales for several years, but we want to try to enforce the guidelines.

* Decrease student alcohol and substance use subcommittee

We need to train police officers about the social host liability law.  Julie Fenn and Emily Lavine are working on developing a training session for them, as many police have not been trained yet.  We’ll be working with them more about community policing so they know what to do when they knock on someone’s door when a tip is sent them about underage drinking.  
 Tip line—is there a mechanism for parents to report things they have heard from their children?  Currently there is not a tip line so people should call the police and they will follow up.  Julie Fenn would also like to collaborate with the town health department about underage drinking and marijuana use.    
 Biology initiative funded by LEF: Sion Harris and Julie Fenn collaborated with LHS biology teachers to provide a presentation about the teenage brain and addiction.  There was a presentation to 300 sophomores about the effect of alcohol on the developing adolescent brain.  Peer leaders then led discussions with the students.  Parents of these biology students were invited to go to a website and participate in a similar presentation.  Many emailed back and said thank you for doing this and were glad for the discussion opportunity they had had with their children.  
  
  
**VI. Wrap up**  
  
Next meeting: May 13, 2013  
  
Need for new co-chair to work with Ann