

# **Annual Wellness Report**

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2022

**Downingtown Area School District**

# Downingtown Area School District Annual Report 2021-2022

## SUMMARY

In 2005, the Downingtown Area School District made a commitment to student, faculty, and staff health and wellness. This commitment included a district level wellness advisory committee, K-12 wellness teams, the federally mandated local wellness policy and a school board wellness goal which formally aligns student health and learning. Today, the DASD continues to support and promote a healthy school community and an expanded wellness focus on the whole child. A district-wide wellness plan and individual K-12 action plans provide the framework for wellness goals, priorities and measurable outcomes to help all students make healthy choices and reach their full learning potential.

The DASD 17 year commitment to health and wellness provides an unprecedented opportunity to create K-12 healthy school communities where students receive consistent health messages and participate in health-promoting activities to support healthy choices and academic success.

During the 2021-2022 school year, **all 16 schools and the district wellness advisory committee** assembled wellness teams with documented outcomes, action plans, and strategies aligned with the district level wellness goals. DASD K-12 wellness committees celebrate a total of **216** fully-implemented strategies to promote and support the health of students and staff.

## The Downingtown Area School District focused on the following (5) Wellness Goals:

**Goal #1: To increase protective factors and decrease risk factors associated with the use and abuse of harmful substances and behaviors.**

- Outcome: Increase prevention of substance use and abuse through education and awareness for parents, staff, and students.
- Outcome: Engage youth in advocacy initiatives to raise awareness and educate peers on effects of substance use and abuse.

**Goal #2: To promote safe and supportive schools for positive school culture, and healthy social and emotional development.**

- Outcome: Increase mental health and suicide prevention education for parents, staff, and students.
- Outcome: Increase prevention education addressing (e.g. cyber, texting/sexting, verbal, physical bullying including gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity, orientation, for parents, staff and students.

**Goal #3: Sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.**

- Outcome: Meet criteria and compliance with the Downingtown Area School District wellness policy including nutrition education, physical education, physical activity, food services, nutrition standards, and other school-based activities.

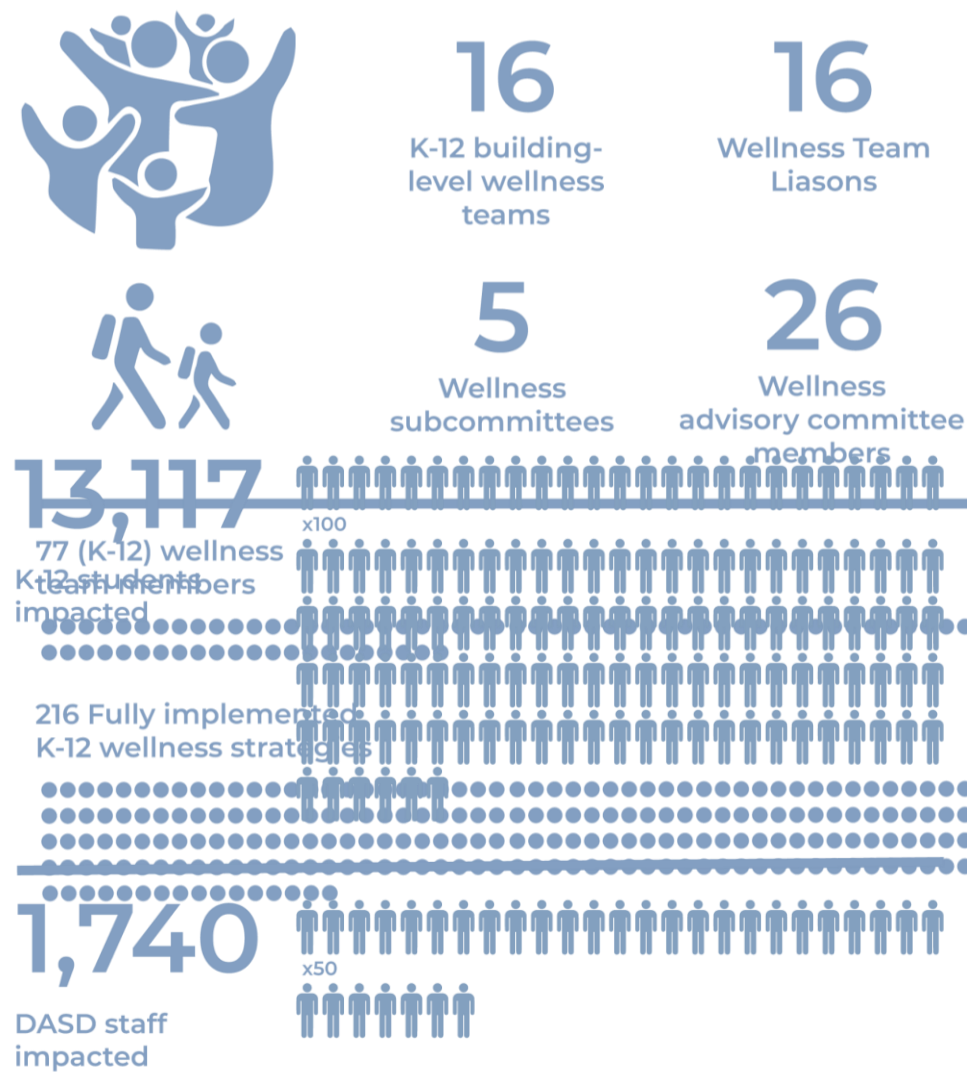
**Goal #4: To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of DASD staff.**

- Outcome: Increased knowledge and skills of DASD staff to support physical, mental, emotional, and

social well-being.

**Goal #5: To support families in the DASD to meet the health and wellness needs of youth.**

- Outcome: Increased opportunities for DASD families to engage in health and wellness programs and utilization of community resources to promote physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of youth.



## INTRODUCTION

Health and learning are inextricably intertwined. Health problems and risk behaviors of: inadequate diet, physical inactivity, drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, intentional and unintentional injuries, and sexual behaviors which result in HIV/AIDS, STDs, and unintended pregnancy significantly compromise student health, learning, and overall academic achievement.

Research in the fields of education and health present a compelling case for the causal role that health plays in closing the education achievement gap. The nation's schools are committed to helping all children succeed. Yet, every school day children and adolescents come to school with physical, mental, emotional, and social health issues which prevent them from fully participating in and benefiting from the efforts of school administrators and teachers to help every child learn and achieve. Health promoting behaviors improve health, increase the likelihood of academic success, and support and promote healthy families and communities. Coordinated school health is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as a strategy for improving students' health and learning in our nation's schools.

The healthy development of children and adolescents is influenced by many societal institutions. After the family, the school is the primary institution responsible for the development of young people in the United States.

The health of young people is strongly linked to their academic success and the academic success of youth is strongly linked with their health. Thus, helping students stay healthy is a fundamental part of the mission of schools. After all, schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy.

- Health-related factors, such as hunger, chronic illness, or physical and emotional abuse, can lead to poor school performance.
- Health-risk behaviors such as substance use, violence, and physical inactivity are consistently linked to academic failure and often affect students' school attendance, grades, test scores, and ability to pay attention in class.

The good news is that school health programs and policies may be one of the most efficient means to prevent or reduce risk behaviors and prevent serious health problems among students. Effective school health policies and programs may also help close the educational achievement gap.

The **Downingtown Area School District** recognizes and supports the link between student health/wellness, and learning. The DASD local wellness policy and school wellness goals establish the foundation for creating K-12 health school communities. The DASD District Wellness Advisory Committee, wellness sub-committees, and K-12 School Health Councils advocate for and raise awareness of the connection between student health and academic success.

### **Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (ASCD and CDC, 2014)**

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model “provides an important framework to address the collaborative relationship between learning and health.” The whole child approach ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged and sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success. The new model calls for greater alignment, integrations, and collaboration between education and health to improve each child’s physical, social, and emotional development.

The new model includes the (5) tenets of the Whole Child including: Health, Safe, Engaged, Supported and Challenged. The new expanded model includes the home and school community: Health Education, Physical Education and Physical Activity, Nutrition Environment and Services, Health Services, Counseling and Psychological and Social Services, Social and Emotional Climate, Physical Environment, Employee Wellness and Family and Community Engagement.

The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model focuses attention on the child, emphasizing a school-wide approach and acknowledging learning, health, and the school as being a part and reflection of the local community. The overarching message of the new model is “Coordinating Policy, Process, and Practice” and “Improving Learning and Improving Health”. Schools have contact with 95% of U.S. children ages 5-17, and schools represent the primary institution responsible for childhood development, after the family.

It is essential that schools have an effective and comprehensive school health model in place during

these critical years of social, psychological, physical and intellectual development.

The Downingtown Area School District wellness initiative has adopted and is in alignment with the “Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child collaborative approach to learning and health. The structure of the district level advisory committee and each of the K-12 school health councils applies the model to setting wellness goals, outcomes and action plans to support student health and learning. ([www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth) and [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)).



## Reporting K-12 Wellness Committee Success

### Elementary (K-6) Summary of Wellness team activities:

**Goal #1: To increase protective and decrease risk factors associated with the use and abuse of harmful substances and behaviors.**

- Grades 3-6 Health Education curriculum
- Avidum
- Morning Messages
- Second Step (SEL) curriculum
- Habits of Mind
- School Health Services
- Community Outreach
- Footprints for Life curriculum

**Goal #2: To promote safe and supportive schools for positive school culture, and healthy social and emotional development.**

- Grades 3-6 health education mental and emotional health lessons
- PBIS

- Guidance Lessons
- Class Meetings
- Social and Emotional support groups
- Kindness Week
- Habits Of Mind
- Community Outreach
- Buddy Bench
- Pro Social Skills
- Signs of Suicide curriculum
- Spirit Days
- School-wide assemblies
- Running Club
- Wellness Fair
- Yoga Club
- Wellness Week
- Outdoor classroom day
- Weekly BAST meeting
- Respect Rocks
- Internet / Cyber Safety
- Behavioral Record Keeping - communication with parents
- Holiday Bulletin Board
- Review 360 Behavior Screening
- Culture Club
- Treat a Teacher / Staff Day
- Family Fun Run
- Brain Breaks
- Cougar Club

### Goal #3: Sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.

- K-6 Health and Physical Education lessons
- Field Day
- Healthy Eating: Go For the Greens
- Health Eating: School Raised Bed Garden
- Eat A Rainbow Week

- Kids Heart Challenge
- Special Olympics
- Running Club
- Turkey Trot and Bunny Run
- Staff Volleyball
- Yoga Club
- Girls on the Run
- Wellness Week
- Intramural Program
- Salad Bar Days
- PBIS Fun Run
- I Walk
- Jump Rope for Heart
- PTO Fun Run
- Spring Dance
- Garden Club
- Sensory Pathway
- Brain Breaks
- Move - A - Thon
- Biggest Loser- Staff
- Wellness Wagon - Staff
- Salad Tastings

**Goal #4: To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of DASD staff.**

- Living Well at DASD
- Educator Shout-Outs
- Challenges - Biggest Loser, Wellness Wagon, Staff Volleyball
- Spirit Days
- Kindness Week/ Day
- Staff Outings
- Fitness Club
- Treat a Teacher/Staff

- Teacher/Staff Lunch Appreciation
- Learning Summit
- DASD district wellness program
- Fun Runs and Walks for students , staff , and families
- Yoga
- Wellness Wednesday
- Wellness Week
- Sunshine Committee ( monthly staff treat/ recognition, holiday, end of year parties, gifts for special occasions)

### Goal #5 To support families in the DASD to meet the health and wellness needs of youth.

- Yoga club
- Girls on the Run
- Family fun runs / walks
- Daily Emails
- Weekly Bulletins
- Monthly Agendas
- Salad Bar Day
- Mustang Strong
- Kindness week
- Move-A - Thon
- Community Outreach
- Spirit Days

## Secondary (Grades 7-12) Summary of Wellness team activities:

### Goal #1: To increase protective and decrease risk factors associated with the use and abuse of harmful substances and behaviors.

- Grades 7-10 Health Education Curriculum
- Student Assistance Services

- Prevention Specialists
- HYPE – Healthy Youth Positive Energy (CTC) sponsored clubs
- Wellness Day
- DEHS Wellness Course Page (folders for staff with lessons for all topics including wellness activities, brain breaks, mental health resources for staff)
- Red Ribbon Week ( ribbons, stickers, certificates, pledges , bracelets, HYPE and staff)
- Online resources for substance use prevention, gambling,
- National Alcohol and Drug Awareness Month (April)
- Meditation / Stress Management

## Goal #2: To promote safe and supportive schools for positive school culture, and healthy social and emotional development.

- Grades 7-10 Health Education Curriculum
- Grade 9 Suicide Prevention Lessons
- QPR and Signs of Suicide prevention curricula for Grades 6-12
- HYPE (Healthy Youth Positive Energy) CTC sponsored club
- Avidium
- Student Assistance Services
- Prevention Specialists
- Zen Den
- DEHS Wellness Course Page (folders for staff with lessons for all topics including wellness activities, brain breaks, mental health resources for staff)
- Meditation/ Stress Management
- Kindness Day / Week
- Wellness Days
- National Suicide Prevention Day
- National Bullying Prevention Month
- National Day of Silence
- Autism Acceptance/Awareness Month
- Day Without Hate
- Puppies visit with students and staff
- Community projects including (Hurricane Ida Relief, Holiday food baskets)

- Run and Walk for Mental Health
- Student and Staff Mindfulness Day
- Inspirational Posters and Messages in the school building
- Music Fridays
- Power Down Fridays
- Caught Being Kind Month
- Word Find in Daily Announcements
- Social and Emotional (SEL) Lessons

**Goal #3: Sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.**

- Physical Education curriculum
- DASD Wellness Policy
- Digital Sworkit Workout
- Fitness Challenge
- Wellness Day
- Yoga
- Runs and Walks

**Goal #4: To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of the DASD staff.**

- Meditation / Stress Management
- Yoga
- Wellness Day
- Chat and Chew
- Virtual Staff Bingo Night
- Secret Elf
- Staff Spotlight
- Coffee/ Hot Chocolate/ Sweets

- Weight Loss Challenge
- Wellness Week
- Puppies Visit
- Winter, Spring Wellness Days
- Kindness Week
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Step Contest

**Goal #5 To support families in the DASD to meet the health and wellness needs of youth.**

- Promote DASD / CTC Parent Speaker Program

## Downingtown Area School District State of Wellness (2020-2021)

DASD Wellness in 2020-2021 was a year of creativity, flexibility, and resiliency with a focus on meeting the health and wellness needs of DASD students and staff. Wellness strategies implemented were informed by the DASD Pennsylvania Youth Survey data, outcomes from the 2019 - 2020 wellness subcommittee work, consequences of the COVID pandemic, and parent and community concerns for student and staff wellness during a pandemic.

DASD administration, school board, and staff are committed to responding to health and wellness priorities and in 2020-2021 built an infrastructure of (5) subcommittees. Each subcommittee was chaired by DASD staff and representation included: parents, community partners, administrators, staff (teachers, school counselors, prevention specialists, HR, Food Services, school board). Sub-committees were charged with the mission to create and implement a roadmap around the (5) wellness goals.

**Highlights of each committees work includes:**

**Wellness Subcommittee: Goal (1) To increase protective factors and decrease risk factors associated with abuse of harmful substances and behaviors.**

**Strategies Completed:**

- Implementation of a pilot cessation program for students. The information was sent to all parents via the Administrative weekly blast and posted on Schoology. Parents were also given the information at Disciplinary Hearings with Dr. Reed. Unfortunately, no students took advantage of the program.

**Strategies in progress to continue in 2022-2023 school year:**

- Work with the School Board to make the cessation program mandatory for policy violators.
- Research and implement a program to address THC vape use during school hours.
- Increase student participation in prevention programs that address drug and alcohol use.
- Support and promote HYPE (Healthy Youth Positive Energy) clubs in Grades 6-12
- Support and promote parent programs addressing substance use prevention and mental health
- Review PAYS 2021 data to align committee work addressing risk of protective factors of substance use.

**Wellness Subcommittee: Goal (2) To promote safe and supportive schools for positive school culture, and healthy, social and emotional development.**

**Strategies Completed:**

- Review of K-12 Youth Truth data to determine priorities (student and family ) related to social emotional learning.
- K-5 Second Step curriculum survey completed by school counselors and teachers to identify status of program implementation, challenges, and resources needed to support program fidelity, and parent engagement.

- Reviewed DASD Youth Truth data to identify practices and processes to improve student social-emotional wellness through academics, relationships, and culture.
- Reviewed DASD Youth Truth data to identify practices and processes to improve staff engagement and culture.
- Developed recommendations for professional development and staff community building.

### **Strategies in progress to continue in 2022-2023 school year:**

- Overall the SEL subcommittee met the intended goals and will reevaluate the continued needs of the district to meet student mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Administer a survey of staff regarding implementation of the Second Step curriculum .
- Explore strategies for professional development to enhance staff engagement and culture.
- Identify additional areas related to social and emotional well-being for students, families, and staff.
- K-8 implementation, program fidelity, evaluation and parent engagement with Second Step curriculum (SEL)
  - Professional Development
  - Program oversight
  - Program evaluation
  - Communication with families
- DASD Parent Speaker series and parent small group meetings including SEL topics
- PBIS
  - All (3) high schools were trained in PBIS. Conversations beginning at high school level to connect PBIS with proposed Lunch and Learn. STEM is looking for implementation 2022-2023 with Lunch to Learn and East and West considering a similar strategy following completion of construction projects.
- K-12 transition practices including move up days, 9th Grade peer mentoring program, course selection nights, Ready Day, Orientation (STEM), Grade 9 picnics, 9th and 10th grade teaming (STEM), Seminar/ Revision Time in schedule (STEM) Lunch and Learn, Counselors following students in Grades 5-8, Share MTSS between schools, Sending counselors meet with Receiving counselors to support students (DCA, IEP, 504, MTSS plans)
- Supporting K-12 mental health and suicide prevention lessons and resources for youth and parents.

Wellness Subcommittee: Goal (3) Sustain a healthy school environment for healthy eating and physical activity.



## DASD Food Service in Partnership with Aramark

As Downingtown Area School District's Food Service Partner, our Aramark team is passionate about creating an excellent student dining experience to save families from losing time together to pack a lunch! We are always looking to improve our program to be more exciting, healthy, and fun for both our team and our students. We encourage lifelong, healthy behaviors through an approach that is student-centric, evidence-based, comprehensive, integrated, and based on operating experience and excellence.

The 21-22 school year was certainly filled with challenges, but we had a fantastic year and are excited to share our progress we were able to make despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. No matter the challenges our schools and operation faced this year, we jumped at the chance to make the most of the situation and to continue to provide for our student's nutritional needs.

**This year, our focus areas were:** To Provide a Wide Variety of Nutritious Foods, to Teach Students to Make Healthy Choices, to Create Appealing and Healthy Eating Environments, and to Build Healthy Resources for The Community.

### Provide a Wide Variety of Nutritious Foods

**Choose My Plate:** Offerings for the 21-22 school year included foods and that were nutrient rich, high quality, safe, wholesome and healthful (including snacks), environmentally responsible and local when available.

### ***What's On My Plate?***

*Fresh produce, fruits and vegetables*

*Salads with reduced fat dressings*

*Low and nonfat dairy option*

*Lean beef, chicken and/or fish*

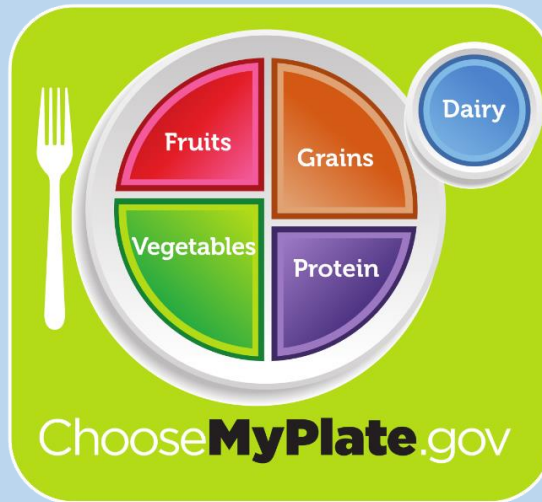
*Whole grains*

*Lower fat cheeses*

*Lower sodium items*

*Juice or light syrup packed fruit*

*100% juice and water*



### ***What's Not On My Plate?***

*Excessive sugar and salt*

*Added trans fat*

*Fatty fried foods*

*Candy and soda*

**Some History of Wellness at DASD:** The prevalence of obesity among our nation's children has been increasing in recent years, putting our children at higher risk for heart and other associated diseases as they move into adulthood. Many of these diseases are preventable if we work together now to help children learn to eat balanced, healthy meals. To help ensure a healthier generation of children, in 2010, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which authorizes funding and sets policy and standards for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) core child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. As a result, new menu planning requirements and updated nutrition standards for school meals were required to be met as part of the federal child nutrition programs.

In the early days of the formation of the DASD Coordinated School Health Council, Aramark and DASD began to implement upgrades to nutrition standards. In the spring of 2012, prior to the official start of the new regulations, Aramark released a new standard menu, which was implemented here at DASD.

This menu featured an expanded variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, more legumes and only low-fat and skim milk. Student feedback and production records were used to help finalize menu cycles to coincide with the rollout of the new regulations.

For the 2014-2015 school year, additional regulations were required for breakfast meals. In 2017-2018, Aramark and DASD continued to roll out menus for breakfast and lunch which met and exceeded the new USDA requirements. Some highlights are:

- Weekly energy levels (calories) are set for breakfast and lunch meals and are separated to reflect the needs of children in each of three grade groups: K through 5, 6 through 8, and 9 through 12.
- Meats and Grains have a weekly portion range with a daily minimum requirement.
- All of the bread and grain products served meet a new 'whole grain-rich' definition, designed to ensure that these products are a good source of fiber.
- Students must take at least ½ cup of a fruit or vegetable with each lunch and breakfast meal.
- Daily minimums are to be met for all components and weekly minimums are to be met for vegetable sub-groups for lunches: dark green, red/orange, beans/pea (legumes), starchy, and "other" vegetables.
- There is a limit on saturated fat only (not total fat).
- Sodium Targets were put in place.
- Only low-fat (1%) and fat-free milks are offered; flavored milks are only be available as fat-free or skim.

**PDE Administrative Review:** To ensure program integrity of administering the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, state agencies began Administrative reviews. The reviews focus on the certification and benefit issuance process and the accuracy of meal counting and claiming, whether meals claimed for reimbursement meet meal pattern and nutritional quality requirements, the maintenance of the nonprofit school food service account, and USDA Foods. General program compliance is reviewed regarding Civil Rights, School On-site Monitoring, Local School Wellness Policy, Competitive Food Services, School Meal Environment, Food Safety, Reporting and Recordkeeping, and Outreach. Our most review was conducted in the 19-20 school year and we were found to be fully compliant, meeting all nutrient standards, having staff properly trained and available for questions, and

being well-organized and receptive for the review!

## Teaching Students to Make Healthy Choices & Creating Appealing and Healthy Eating Environments



The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact our students and operation this year, through up-and-down student attendance, as well as widespread industry shortages related to staffing and supply chain. Despite all of this, we were able to capitalize on many opportunities to further our Wellness goals with our school breakfast and lunch program. Most important of all was the ongoing waiver that allowed us to continue to provide free meals to all of our students! This was an amazing privilege to impact more students than ever with our meal program. Below are some of the ways we were able to make an impact this year:

**Elementary Program Menu:** Despite the challenges we listed in the last section, we were still able to implement new fresh and healthy options at the Elementary level! We still worked to display our food in an appealing manner, no matter what container the food was found in. We offered a variety of healthy options in compliance with the USDA guidelines, and despite staffing challenges and food shortages were always able to provide a tasty and nutritious breakfast to each student who wanted one. And due to the USDA waiver for free meals, we saw more students than ever participating in our breakfast program – some Elementary schools saw hundreds of students lining up for breakfast each day!



For our Elementary lunch menu, we continued our investment in our pre-order technology, which presented a win for our parents, the Business Office, and our operation. Parents gained additional insight and influence over their students' menu selections, the Business Office will have an easier time of



ensuring payment for meals (if/when the paid lunch option returns in the future), and our operation was afforded additional flexibility due to this system. We were even able to offer school-specific menus to create unique offerings for each location! The pandemic created a natural transition point to implement this technology, and considering how successful these efforts were, we intend to continue its use into the future to innovate and improve our program long-term.

Our Elementary lunch menu also saw many new fresh and healthy menu options! Students enjoyed **Falafel with Pita** which was very well-received. We also created new menu templates, that highlighted **Meatless Mondays** and daily **Vegetarian Options** to reach as many students as possible. We featured other new menu options, such as **Black Bean**

**Burgers, Italian Salad, and Breakfast For Lunch for National School Breakfast Week!**



Finally, DASD again received our **Farm-to-School Grant** which awarded us \$15,000 towards the purchase and promotion of local produce. We used this to buy local apples from Highland Orchards and even held a sampling event to highlight this local produce – we even made **Local Apple Crisp** for students to try!

**Secondary Program Menu:** We took the opportunity that the free meal waiver afforded us to also invest our Secondary Program. Our Secondary schools likewise saw an amazing uptick in daily student diners for breakfast and lunch, and our focus was to serve every student efficiently while maintaining our healthy student favorite menu options. This year, we featured **Sausage Sandwiches** with **Peppers & Onions**, **Chicken**

**Dumplings**, and **BBQ Chicken Filet Sandwiches**.



Our largest long-term investment was through redesigning the STEM cafeteria in preparation for their new Lunch & Learn schedule and the soon-to-be expiring waiver for free meals in the Fall. We received student insights and interest on our proposed changes, and we're excited for the new healthy menu options we'll be able to offer next year. We even have a brand-new **Made-to-Order Sandwich Station** (the unfinished station is pictured) in the works for this program! To build excitement, we also held a sampling event for student to vote on

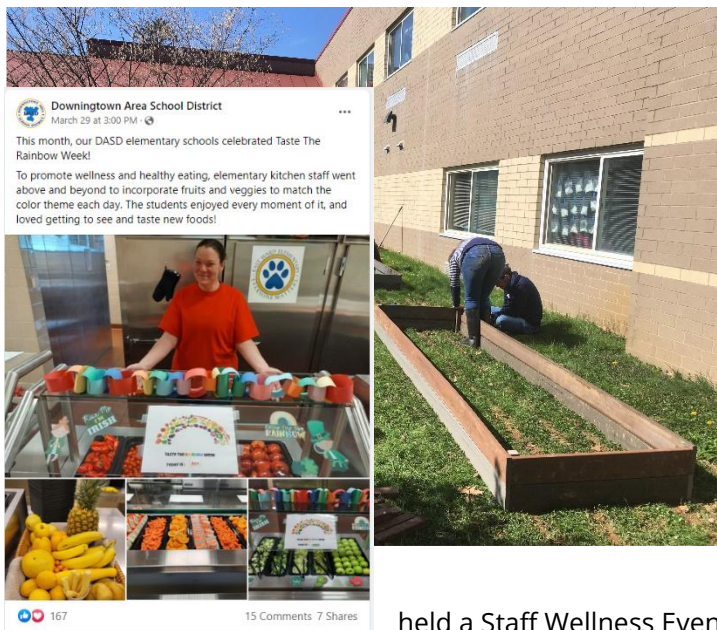
the name for our new **Alpha Burrito** – containing eggs, chicken sausage, and fresh pico de gallo!



## Building Healthy Resources for the Community

**School Garden Funding:** This year, Aramark made a donation to improve the DASD Wellness Program and worked with the Wellness Department to fund our school gardens! Each school that requested funds received \$400 towards annual expenses and garden maintenance.

One of our teachers responsible for their school's garden had this to say: **"Please extend my gratitude to the people who made these grants to all the DASD schools possible. The grant will help our kids learn how to grow and eat fresh, healthy food - and make more of it available to marginalized families in our own BH community. And especially, please accept my very deep gratitude to you for seeing what we were doing at our school and wanting to help us do even**



more. You really are making a difference with this!"

**Taste The Rainbow Week:** Each of our Elementary Schools participated in Taste The Rainbow Week, a week where each day features a different colored fruit and vegetable for students to learn about. This was an existing event that we were able to enhance through our meal program. Students were amazed at our spread and got to try many new food items!

**Sampling at Staff Wellness Event:** DASD held a Staff Wellness Event at West High School, which was attended by hundreds of DASD faculty and administration. At the event, we sampled our Southwest Chicken Salad and even held three cooking demonstrations to get everyone excited about the work we were doing. We even added this option to our Trestle Place Meal Menu as a special feature!

**Wellness on Social Media:** We worked with the DASD Communications Department on a number of occasions to display our wellness initiatives for the whole community to see!



**Partnering with HPE:** We sampled healthy snacks during Bradford Heights Elementary's field day this year. Students were excited to get a nutritious option while they rested between sessions!

**DASD Committees:** Our management team provided support and offered expertise in their participation with the following District committees and teams:



- **District Wellness Advisory Committee & Wellness Policy Subcommittee:** Will Van Patter headed the Wellness Policy Subcommittee as we looked to communicate and execute the Wellness Policy as it relates to the consumption of food by students during the school day (outside of the breakfast and lunch programs). We also discussed how to make our recess discipline policy more consistent between our schools, and how to incorporate more physical-activity related wellness initiatives!
- **Cultural Equity Task Force:** Many of our samplings and new healthy options also included recipes that appealed to students with a variety of cultural backgrounds. We were able to share some of these on DASD's Facebook page to promote our work!

- **District Safety Committee:** We attended committee updates and offered insight for safety best practices, as well as reviewing the updated policy.
- **Support to Building Administration:** We met with Building Principals for updates and to obtain feedback concerning District and individual building wellness needs and opportunities



**Wellness Subcommittee: Goal (4) To promote a healthy school environment to meet the health and wellness needs of DASD staff.**



# Living Well @ DASD

## **Background**

Living Well @ DASD was created almost 15 years ago. Our initial goal at the time was to help our employees “shape” their own future with a healthier lifestyle in order to help them in turn “shape” the future of their students. As we grew into this initiative, it became apparent that we could influence other factors with our wellness program. We saw that we could have a positive impact on the budget by containing the ever increasing health care costs and reducing absenteeism along with the costs related to absenteeism. In addition, the positive response from staff can have an effect on increasing morale and productivity. As the program has evolved and the need grew, we began to promote awareness about the importance of mental health and stress management.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, Living Well @ DASD has continued to maintain the following mission and supporting goals over the years. However, the program has used varying activities in order to achieve these goals.

## **Mission**

To create a progressive and sustainable wellness program that increases knowledge and skills in order to enhance the mental, social, emotional, and physical well-being of staff.



### Goal #1

To increase awareness of lifestyle choices, to encourage overall health and wellness, and to promote the resources available to employees to meet their wellness goals by creating an effective communication plan that reaches all employees through multiple vehicles.

### Goal #2

Provide staff with resources that allow them to address their wellness needs and improve their health.

### Goal #3

Contain costs and increase fiscal responsibility.

### Goal #4

Develop a culture that promotes and enhances student growth by combining efforts of student and staff wellness to have a District Wide Coordinated program.

### Goal #5

Increase participation in various staff wellness endeavors.



### Program

During 2021-2022 Staff Wellness was included as a goal in the District's Health and Wellness Action Plan. Our strategy to support our goals included:

- developing a district level staff wellness committee to identify, facilitate, and communicate programs and resources.

- partnering with K-12 wellness liaisons to communicate staff wellness activities, programs, and resources.
- creating professional development addressing physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being of DASD staff.
- developing messaging, strategies, and programs to support staff wellness.

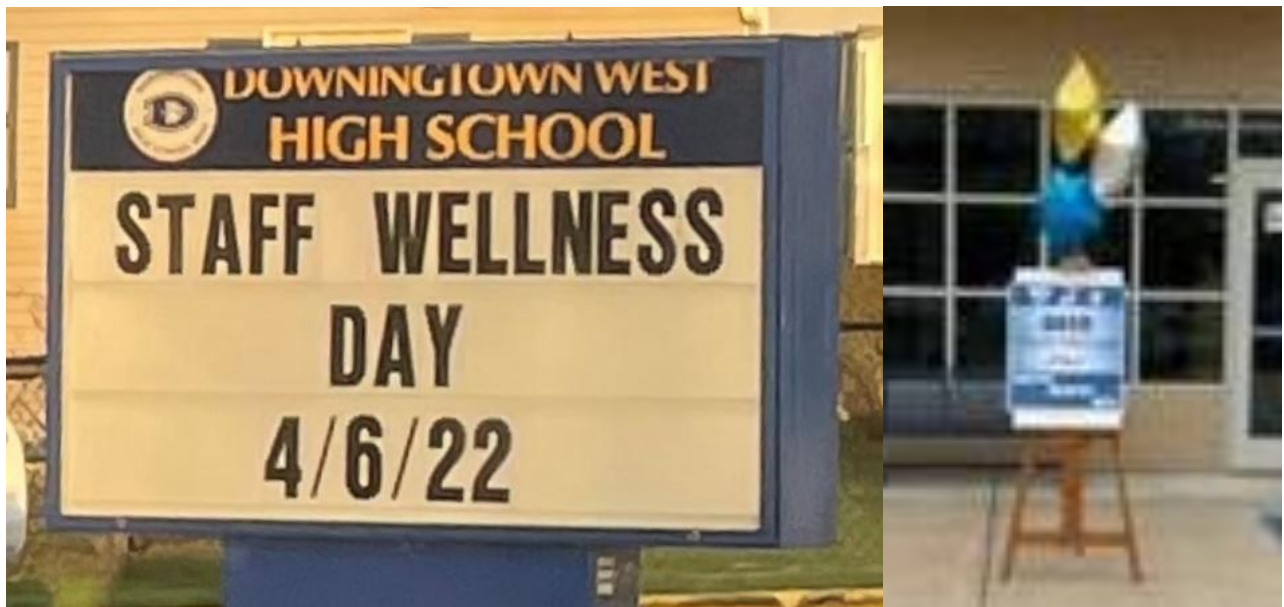
Our committee brought together staff members from across the District. During the year, the committee came together to implement and organize staff wellness activities and communications.

## Wellness on Schoology

Wellness continued to promote the Wellness Schoology course. Content was enhanced and added to make wellness more accessible. There are sections for staff including personal wellness, resources from our health benefits, Health Advocate, and even staff discounts. There are also sections for wellness activities to be used in the schools for both students and staff at the elementary and secondary levels. While we always had a website, this allows for a better organization of information in one place with the opportunity to 'chat' or 'post' messages. We will continue to build and develop this robust tool. To access this course, please go to <https://schoology.dasd.org/home>.



## DASD STAFF WELLNESS FAIR



Our big staff wellness initiative for 2021-2022 was a Staff Wellness Fair. In April, the District held our first Staff Wellness Fair since 2018. Our fair was on a professional development day and over 500 of our staff members took advantage of this exciting opportunity. Our Healthy Wealthy Wise Wellness Fair had over 50 local wellness vendors including gyms, nutritionists, chiropractors, massage therapists, financial planners, etc. Not only did we offer an exhibition area, we offered over 25 unique and diverse wellness classes. There were also chair massages, bio-metric screenings, blood pressure screening, smoothie

station, etc. Our benefit vendors were there, too, to help employees use their benefits to their advantage. An event of this nature takes hours and hours of planning to make it happen and our staff stepped up to the challenge. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and to everyone who attended the fair! Don't forget the puppies.



## WELLNESS AT THE LEARNING SUMMIT

In November, during the annual Learning Summit, we had the opportunity to add a little wellness to the day. Our benefit vendors joined us to answer staff questions, provide information regarding how to best utilize staff benefits, and even provided treats and giveaways. On top of that, we also presented a few wellness courses. Our EAP, Health Advocate, did stress management and resilience courses. In addition, Health Advocate helped out with IBC, to present a class on the wellness opportunities offered by our vendors as well as cost saving measures. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to participate.

## FLU SHOTS

This year, DASD offered our second Drive Up Flu Shot Clinic, which was even bigger than the first. Even though we did not have the COVID restrictions of the past year, we wanted to make the vaccinations available as safely as possible and it more convenient than ever. With this option, we actually inoculated well over 200 staff members.

## UGLY SWEATER CONTEST



In December, we launched our second Ugly Sweater Contest. All staff were invited to wear an UGLY SWEATER and send in a picture of the UGLY SWEATER for a chance to win an APPLE WATCH! (but more importantly, "bragging rights"). Winners randomly were selected K-12.



## WELLNESS ACTIVITIES

**The following staff wellness activities were implemented during the 2021-2022 school year...**

- ✓ Distribute emails to all staff with wellness resources available and current wellness initiatives.
- ✓ Promote Health Advocate newsletters, webinars, and other resources regularly.
- ✓ Provide Wellness Tips and News in Bi-weekly HReminders newsletter.
- ✓ Update Living Well @ DASD website and Schoology site on a regular basis with new content on current wellness initiative as well as links to community resources, insurance provider information, and other wellness resources.
- ✓ Have rep from each building as a liaison to further promote wellness initiatives in buildings.
- ✓ Wellness Advisory Council meetings with School Health Councils to share information and ideas.
- ✓ Complete School Health Index Needs Assessment and School Improvement plans.
- ✓ Flu Shots
- ✓ Ugly Sweater Contest
- ✓ Promote SwiftMD
- ✓ Health Advocate – Employee Assistance and Advocacy Program - Promote initiatives/webinars
- ✓ Staff Wellness Discounts from Local Businesses
- ✓ Promote wellness opportunities available through our insurance products; i.e. gym reimbursements, 6 free nutritionist visits, etc.
- ✓ Healthy Lifestyle Matching Program.
- ✓ Access to gym equipment after school hours.
- ✓ Healthy snack machines.
- ✓ Each building also had individual staff wellness activities for staff, such as fitness classes, nutrition classes, healthy foods, etc.



## Health Advocate

In 2013-2014, the District introduced Health Advocate. Health Advocate is the nation's leading independent healthcare advocacy and assistance company that provides several personalized services.

For employees, Health Advocate is a free, confidential program that offers EAP+Work/Life benefits to help employees address difficulties in their life by providing short term assistance with personal, family, and work issues that are having an impact on their life and ability to focus on work. There are 8 free

sessions for counseling per issue, one free session for legal, and one for financial work per issue. In addition, it simplifies the navigation of the health care system by helping employees find the right doctors, resolving billing and insurance claim issues, explaining benefit coverages, helping parents or in-laws with the complexities of Medicare, and much more!

Some of the topics that Health Advocate focused on this year were resilience, mental health awareness, emotional intelligence, managing addictive behaviors, finding balance in a digitally-driven world, finding the right balance between work and life, maintaining healthy relationships in tough times, suicide prevention, and much, much more.

Health Advocate has a mobile friendly design and app, which allows for easy access to help on the go, placing all of your Health Advocate EAP+Work/Life benefits right at your fingertips.



## SwiftMD

A benefit that was added in December 2016, but vigorously promoted was SwiftMD, a telemedicine company. The wellness effect of this benefit is to give employees as well as their dependents easier and quicker access to healthcare to treat minor illnesses. In looking at the number of employees and dependents taking advantage of this resources, we find that our numbers continue to grow. The expected result is more productivity from a healthy employee and less sick time used.



## IBC – Resource for Mental Health

Employees who elect medical benefits through DASD now have a new tele-behavioral health resource from IBC. The program is called On To Better Health and it offers an on-line option as well as the option to talk to a behavioral health provider by phone or video chat. The confidential online program can help you improve your emotional well-being, manage everyday stress, and feel better with self-assessments, articles, videos, and personalized and guided therapy — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



## Outcomes

Through the years, varying help shape our programs such as:

we have looked at measurements to evolving wellness

- **The cost of health care.**
- **The cost of sick days.**
- **Participation in wellness related activities.**
- **Feedback provided by employees.**
- **Utilization and trends found in DASD's health claims.**

Over the years, the wellness program has played a part in influencing costs, such as attendance costs and medical claims. However, similar to the last two years, we are unable to correlate the wellness program with a reduction in costs due to the unprecedented issues with quarantining due to COVID. Now with the loosening of restrictions, the costs have begun to increase dramatically. When we compare benefit costs from 202-2021 to 2021-2022, the healthcare costs increased almost 10%. Our Work Comp costs increased almost 25% as did our costs to cover substitutes due to absences. Unfortunately, our wellness measures cannot over this, but it can help to mitigate the costs.



## Next Steps

Our wellness committee has evolved into a group comprised of more members from different areas of our District. We have begun planning for next school year. Plans are underway for the 2022-2023 school year. Our overall goals will remain the same, but in order to maintain a robust program, our methods to achieve those goals may change. Committing time, money, and resources continue to be essential to achieving our goals.



**Wellness Subcommittee: Goal (5) To support families in the DASD to meet the health and wellness needs of youth.**



**The Downingtown Area School District works in close partnership with the Communities That Care of Greater Downingtown. CTC plays a vital role in promoting and supporting healthy school communities to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors linked to substance use and abuse and mental and emotional health issues.**

### **Strategies Completed:**

#### **Communities That Care of Greater Downingtown (CTC) and DASD Wellness:**

In partnership CTC and DASD offered a virtual parent speaker series to increase education and awareness on mental health and ATOD topics and provide parents with resources and support during the school year. CTC also hosted several collective partners as featured speakers, and attended K-12 joint home and school association meetings.

- (7) DASD / CTC Parent Speaker Programs;
- (3) DASD / CTC Parent - to - Parent Conversation Cafes (Uwchlan Hills Elementary School and West Bradford Elementary School);
- 600+ parents attended or viewed a parent speaker series event
- 28 Parent to Parent podcasts and blog articles published on the CTC website

- 1.3k Parent to Parent podcast downloads of 16 Podcasts and articles published on the CTC website.
- CTC and DASD website for parent resources - review of wellness website pages
- CTC and DASD promoting programs, events, and resources on social media
- Integration of DASD DEI with DASD Wellness parent sub-committee
- Grants submitted to support Parent2Parent

## Parent to Parent Podcast

CTC launched a parent-focused podcast as part of the Parent to Parent umbrella, “Parent to Parent: Real Life Tips to Raise Resilient Kids”. CTC staff Chrissie Dziembowski and Bethann Cinelli cohost the bi-weekly podcast and meet with experts and other parents to discuss topics related to raising healthy kids-- everything from drug and alcohol use to mental health to supporting independence. Each episode gives listeners concrete, hands-on tips that parents can use right away with their families, plus real life stories and support.

The podcast launched in November 2021, and most episodes featured CTC Collective partner organizations. To date the podcast has been downloaded over 1,300 times.

## Parent to Parent Podcasts:

### Welcome to the Water Bar Audioblog

### **We Were Lucky: A Parent’s Story of Supporting Their Child to Recovery**

Featuring Cynthia Black, DASD Parent, Former CTC Board President

### **Summer Plans for the Pod & WWBD (What Would Bethann Do)?**

### **Tech, Substances, the Law, and Our Kids: Q&A with Corporal Brian Gathercole, Upper Uwchlan Police Department**

### **Alcohol in Our Lives: Questioning Our Own Use & the Impact on Our Kids**

Featuring Dr. Jennifer Benjamin and Jerome Williams, Philadelphia Family Therapy Training Center

**Supporting Your Kids to Have Healthy Relationships & Friendships**

Featuring Joe Myers, Crime Victims Center of Chester County

**All Things Screens: How to find balance for your child (& yourself) in a tech-filled world**

Featuring Dr. Stephanie Diez-Morel, Reboot and Recover

**Gaming and Gambling: The Link Between Youth Problem Gambling & Video Games**

Featuring Josh Ercole, Council on Compulsive Gambling of PA

**Supporting Transgender Youth: A Journey to Our Truest Selves**

Featuring Dr. Bethann Cinelli and Aubrey Fetzer

**All Things Marijuana: Everything Parents Need to Know**

Featuring Gretchen Hagenbuch, Caron Treatment Centers

**Doing Nothing Is Not An Option: How to Navigate Mental Health Support for Your Kid & Find Your Path to Hope**

Featuring Holly O'Connell, A Path to Hope

**Bullying & Cyberbullying: It's in the Air of Society - How Bullying Has Changed & What Parents Can Do**

Featuring Joe Myers, Crime Victims Center of Chester County

**Happy Holidays from Bethann and Chrissie**

**It's Not About Being Right: How to have early and often conversations to prevent drug and alcohol use**

Featuring Laura Wiechecki, Compass Mark

**All Things Vaping: Essentials Parents Need to Know**

Featuring Selena Morresi, Caron Treatment Centers

**Not my kid is not a thing: Lessons learned from one family's journey of substance use to recovery**

Featuring Kim Porter, Be A Part of the Conversation

## Parent to Parent Blog:

Each month CTC writes a blog where Downingtown area parents can find support, information, and guidance to empower their youth to make positive choices and strengthen their families. In 2021-22, 12 blog posts were published.

The blog has received positive feedback from the community including this response from a community member (and DASD teacher) about a post regarding alcohol placement in young children's cartoons:

*"Just wanted to share with you how much I appreciate your efforts in publishing this Blog!"*

*I am a long-time educator in the district, but also a parent to 3 (almost grown) children who went through the schools here. These words, lessons, suggestions, and overall your content is POWERFUL to those with impressionable youngsters. Just wanted to thank you for your time, and commitment to reaching our most valuable possessions- it truly takes a village!"*

The blog and podcast web pages on CTC's website have garnered over **2,100 unique pageviews**.

## Parent Speaker Series:

CTC, in partnership with Downingtown Area School District, offered a virtual parent speaker series to increase education and awareness on mental health and ATOD topics and provide parents with resources and support during the school year. CTC hosted several collective partners as featured speakers. There were 7 events held in a webinar format and over 500 participants (attended the program live or watched the recording). See below for speaker and topics:

### **"Not Just Thriving but Surviving" Featuring Justin Brown, DASD**

Participants had an interactive experience and learned how to engage children in conversations about Covid-19, increased empathy for parents, teachers, students, and staff and enhanced understanding on how to navigate uncertainty and cope with change.

### **"Being Comfortable in the Uncomfortable" Featuring Dr. Jennifer Benjamin**

Being a caregiver requires engaging a child/teen in growth promoting conversations. Often, the more important a conversation the more uncomfortable a caregiver will feel. Being uncomfortable directly

influences if a caregiver will develop a “you can tell me anything” relationship versus a critical and dismissive relationship. Explore the importance of co-regulation, preparation, and using a checklist to stay comfortable in the uncomfortable with Dr. Jennifer Benjamin from the Philadelphia Child and Family Therapy Training Center.

### **“Mock Teen Bedroom” Featuring Be A Part of the Conversation**

During this event participants "toured" a teen bedroom, learned about trends in adolescent substance use and related devices, the warning signs of substance use, and how to best address these challenging topics.

### **“Chasing Childhood” Documentary Screening and Discussion**

What do kids need most to thrive? Chasing Childhood examines how free play and independence have all but disappeared from kids’ lives, replaced with relentless perfectionism and record high levels of anxiety and depression. The film spotlights experts and families who are empowering young people to explore their independence, enjoy unstructured time, and be free to thrive. Following the film CTC and DASD staff facilitated a guided discussion with participants.

### **“Search for Identity” Featuring Be A Part of the Conversation**

Many young people are searching for their identity, feeling pressured by a label, or just trying to belong. How does this journey put some young people at risk for substance use or other behavioral disorders? How can family members best support youth by nurturing their identity? To answer questions like these, a panel of behavioral health professionals and Downingtown Area staff explored risks and warning signs, and provided families and educators with the tools needed to empower young people with a healthy sense of self.

### **“Navigating Social Media” Featuring Justin Brown, DASD**

This presentation was a meeting style format including a discussion about social media - the good and the bad - and how to manage its use in your family. We discussed: Popular social media platforms; the role parents play in its use, and how to stay connected to your child and their social media presence. Participants learned how to find a balance in smartphone and other screen use.

### **“Mental Health 101: College & Beyond” Featuring Holly O’Connell, A Path to Hope**

This presentation is designed for parents and students (11th and 12th graders) preparing to leave for college. Participants learned practical advice on: Accessing mental health services on/off campus, managing medications, insurance tips, emergency medical leave, legal documents, accessing crisis services off campus, and developing an emergency plan.

Overall during the 2021-22 school year there were 511 parents that attended programs (the total is 634 including those that viewed recorded events). The total number of parents that registered for events was 1,180.

### Strategies Ongoing for 2022-2023

- Parent Speaker Series
- Parent to Parent Conversation Cafes
- Parent Wellness Subcommittee with CTC
- Review data from Youth Truth Survey (2022) and Pennsylvania Youth Survey (2021)
- Partnership with DEI and joint home and school association
- DASD and CTC parent podcasts
- Parent blogs, website, social media

### HYPE: Healthy Youth Positive Energy

- (5) HYPE clubs in Grades 6-12 including Downingtown East High School and Downingtown West High School , STEM, Lionville Middle School, and Downingtown Middle School
- (82) students participated in HYPE clubs
- (15) prevention strategies implemented by HYPE clubs
- First Annual “Healthy Youth Summit” hosted at Downingtown West High School including (37) youth in Grades 6-12
- Role Models for Change program with presentations from Downingtown West High School HYPE club and students at Downingtown Middle School
- CTC Youth Prevention Video Conference “ Be the Change” students in Grades 7-12

## Our Wellness Advisory Committee Members

Dr. Lou Chance

Sarah Brooks

Dr. Nick Argonish

Dr. Patricia Bell

Dr. Bethann Cinelli

Pia DiSanto

Kim Gardner

Tim Hubbard

Justin Brown

Alicia Krebs

Caroline Duda

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Mindy Ross

Ann Berios

Cierra Martinez

Dr. Emilie Lonardi

Eric McComsey

Tom Mulvey

Cynthia Newlin

Dr. Rob Reed

Jennifer Shealy

Meghan Dennis

Corey Sigle

William VanPatter

Caryn Ghrayeb

Greta Neff

Mary Wallin

## Our K-12 School Wellness Liaisons

Kaylyn Kirschner

Amy Tompkin

Mark Young

Meghan Pealer

Ashley Procopio

Ashley Garrison

Beaver Creek Elementary School

Bradford Heights Elementary School

Brandywine Wallace Elementary School

East Ward Elementary School

Lionville Elementary School

Pickering Valley Elementary School

Shamona Creek Elementary School

Brett Garrison	Springton Manor Elementary School
Michele Powell	Uwchlan Hills Elementary School
Megan Kay and Nicole Stabilito	West Bradford Elementary School
	Marsh Creek 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Center
Catherine Parks	Downingtown Middle School
	Lionville Middle School
Jynelle Sass	Downingtown High School East
Dr. Patricia Bell and Kim Sapper	Downingtown High School West
Lorena Sevi	STEM Academy

## Our School K-12 Wellness Committee Members

Ashley Procopia	Amy Tompkins	Susan Tancredi	Bridget Atkins
Travis Orth	Amy Kleaver	Michelle Ruzzi	
Karley Weidner	Jill Farina	Brett Garrison	
Steve Orendorff	Lisa Montemuro	Natalie Whiteley	
Holly Lipow	Paula Knaster	Jen Force	
Laura Martini	Emily Kelly	Julia Formicola	
Mary Kate McGowan	Michelle Powell	Nicole Stabilito	
Mrs. Thakkar	Kelly Hale	Megan Kay	
Mark Young	Robert Giering	Jackie Simmons	
Dr. Shawn Wright	Dr. Patricia Bell	Danielle Koch	
Melanie Nolan	Kim Sapper	Terri Blackburn	
Rhonda Tredway	Billie DiMarcella	Lauren Booz	
Kaylan Kirschner	Susan Yeager	Cassandra Gery	
Dawn Lawless	Ryan Carrig	Jackie Deane	
Devon Hennessey	Laura Mallouf	Jackie Convery	
Ann Marie Kirk	Rachel Immel	Caroline Piergiovanni	
Jill Miller	Christina Grandizio	Dave Faga	
Dana Nardello	Susan Heffernan	Teresa Small	
Jess McGonale	Whitnie Weaver	Meghan Pealer	

Rachel Kass	Michelle Mahan	Dr. Nick Argonish
Sara Kwiathkowski	Heather Farrell	Katie Rastetter
Taylor Bradley	Nicole Becker	Alyssa Bost
Rachel Whiteman	Alyssa Browning	Sara Dun

***This report was produced by the Downingtown Area School District Wellness Advisory Committee – June 2022***  
***Sarah Brooks, District Wellness Liaison and Bethann Cinelli, Wellness Consultant***



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